

**CML3102 WRITING TECHNIQUES:
MODULE OUTLINE
Term 1**

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1. Module coordinator

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2. This handout

Welcome to this year-long level 3 module which looks at how the effects of written communication are affected by the linguistic choices made by writers. As well as looking at how language creates effects, you will also develop your own abilities to use language in order to create effects.

This handout provides general information about the module, including:

- its aims
- how it relates to other modules in CML and in other subjects
- how it is assessed
- attendance requirements
- what we'll be doing each week
- an initial reading list for the module

If there is anything you need to know which this handout doesn't tell you, don't hesitate to contact me in person (office hours at Trent Park: Mondays 1-2pm and Thursdays 11am-12noon), by email or by phone. Note: email is the most reliable way to contact me.

3. Aims

This module explores the connection between decisions writers make and the effects they have on readers. One aim is to make connections between perceptions of structure in the writing and the rhetorical purpose and effect of the writing. Looking at different styles of writing will ultimately enable you to plan and structure your own writing more efficiently. This includes being able to identify your target readership, knowing how best to engage and sustain interest, and also express yourself clearly and efficiently. Different aspects of linguistic structure will be examined each week, and you will work on exercises designed to make use of this knowledge. Once you have recognised the tactics used by other writers to convince or evoke reactions in their readers, this should help you to deploy your own methods more

successfully in your writing as well as enabling you to look more critically at the published writing of others.

We will look at writing in a range of genres and for a range of purposes. If you indicate particular types of writing where you aim to develop, I will try to focus on these in class.

At the end of the module, you will have developed your understanding of:

- the names and general properties of linguistic elements and structures
- explanatory models of linguistic/stylistic devices and their effects
- established frameworks for the analysis of written discourse

And you will have developed your ability to:

- show a clear grasp of formal, theoretical accounts of discourse structure and functions
- apply relevant formal theories to natural data
- measure, interpret and evaluate the significance of data gathered on pieces of written discourse
- critically evaluate specific proposals about written discourse
- identify and analyse specific linguistic elements and structures in natural texts
- rewrite texts "to order" by changing elements and restructuring sequence
- evaluate, edit, and comment critically on the writing of others with reference to its intended and achieved effects

The ideas discussed in the module are applicable to writing in any style or genre, and you will have the opportunity to focus particularly on kinds of writing which interest you.

Throughout the semester, we will encourage you to keep your eyes and ears open for interesting examples of writing. These could be interesting for a number of reasons, including their aims and how they have been achieved or not, how they illustrate ideas discussed in class, or controversies surrounding their intended and achieved effects. Remember that some writing is intended to be heard (or seen and heard) rather than read. Speeches, for example.

4. Communication about the module

One aim of the course will be to discuss things fairly informally in class and to work through the material systematically, so that the different parts of the module build on each other in a logical and coherent way. **If this seems not**

to be working, please tell me right away. The easiest place to discuss the module is in class. Please don't hesitate to say something during any class, whether it's to ask a question, to comment on the topic being discussed or to say anything relevant to the topic.

Don't hesitate to tell me about how things are going. I'll do everything I can to present the course in the way that best suits each of your needs. And the more you tell me about how things are going, the easier that will be.

5. Weblogs

Weblogs, or 'blogs', as well as other websites, are often a good source of interesting examples and ideas. 'London Language' is a weblog for English Language staff and students at Middlesex. It's at:

<http://tinyurl.com/londonlanguage/>

The main aim of this blog is to publish things that come up in class which might be relevant to a wider community. Posts are moderated and you need to sign up to post. If you would like a username and to start posting, email Billy Clark (b.clark@mdx.ac.uk) and he'll add you to the list of users.

6. This module and other modules

This module presupposes some understanding of aspects of human language and communication. The topics we cover here could also form the basis of work on CML3993 Proposition Module.

Work on this module should complement work in other subjects which are concerned with written communication, e.g. courses in English Literary Studies, Media and Cultural Studies, Journalism & Communication Studies, Publishing & Media Studies. Your work here should also help you to understand decisions you make in your own writing in any genre.

7. Assessment

This module is assessed by three pieces of coursework.

Coursework one: exercises

This coursework consists of a number of short exercises designed to test and develop your understanding of concepts we have discussed during the module. This will be given out on the 12th of October 2009 and will be due **by 4pm on Friday the 27th of November 2009**. This will account for 20% of your overall grade for the module.

Coursework two: written text, evaluative discussion and exercises

For this coursework, you will produce a written text, discuss it in terms of linguistic decisions you have made, and complete a series of very short analytical exercises. This will also be given out on the 12th of October 2009 and will be due **by 4pm on Friday the 10th of December 2009**. This will account for 30% of your overall grade for the module.

Coursework three: set of exercises including one section where you are asked to choose between writing an essay or an analytical discussion of a written text.

This piece of coursework will be given out on the 18th of January 2010 and will be due **by 4pm on Wednesday the 5th of May 2010**. It will account for 50% of your overall grade

You need to submit your work in **two ways**:

Electronic submission:

First, you should **submit an electronic copy via turnitin software on oasisplus (we will show you how to do this in class)**.

Hard copies:

Second, you should **submit a hard copy to the campus student office** where you will be given a date-stamped receipt. Keep the receipt as proof of submitting the hard copy of the work. Note that you will not have met the deadline unless **both the electronic and the hard copy are submitted on time**.

You must **follow University Guidelines on the presentation of coursework**. All work must be typed or word-processed, double-spaced and on only one side of each page. You must also follow our **English Language subject style guidelines** in the subject handbook which will also be made available to you during the term.

8. Attendance

You are expected to attend 100% of the sessions. If your attendance falls below 75% of the sessions, you will be considered no longer to be attending the module and you will have to retake the whole module in order to complete it.

9. Teaching methods

The formal teaching of this module will take the form of one two-hour session every week. Each session will involve group work, full class discussion and some lecture-like delivery of material. Relevant comments or discussion from anyone in the class will always be welcome in both sessions we participate in, particularly important in this module where you will be presenting and discussing your own work and giving constructive feedback on other students' work.

As always, it is really important that you follow up work in class with private reading. Make sure you have always done the advance reading for every class, that you follow up work in class with supporting readings, and that you take an active part in class discussions. You will also benefit if you discuss your work informally with other students.

10. Programme

As always, this programme is to some extent provisional. We can move things around if that seems to make sense, based on how things go from week to week.

Exercises each week will combine analysing the writing of others and creating small texts of your own, manipulating the language of both to find out more about the effects of particular language uses.

Week 1, 28.09.09: Introduction: What you 'say' and how you 'say' it

Key term: *decisions*

We'll start quite informally looking at the kinds of linguistic choices we make every time we write or speak, regardless of how conscious we are of making these decisions. We'll also look at how different kinds of writing (genres) have an effect on the decisions we make about our writing.

Week 2, 05.10.09: Choice and context 1

Key terms: *contextual assumptions, meaning, inference*

We'll focus on contextual assumptions and the way they affect discourse production and interpretation. We'll also look at how readers make inferences and how writers can influence the inferences readers make.

Reading: Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams chapter 5; Saeed; Blakemore

Week 3, 12.10.09: Choice and context 2

Continuation from last week.

Week 4, 19.10.09: Textual structures 1

Key terms: *cohesion, coherence*

We'll look at cohesion and textual structure: inter-sentential relations, paragraph structure and macro-structural relations amongst paragraphs. We'll also consider issues of coherence and the logical connections we use to glue together the elements of a text.

Reading: Wright & Hope, chapter 4

Week 5, 26.10.09: Textual structures 2

Continuation from last week.

Reading: Wright & Hope, chapter 4

Week 6, 02.11.09: Writing, speech and grammar 1

Key terms: *the noun phrase*

This week and next week, we'll look at rules we have to comply with when writing and revising the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive grammars. We'll introduce some basic grammar, starting with a look at 'the noun phrase', going on to examples of how these are used in actual texts, and the effect something as simple as a choice of noun can have.

Week 7, 09.11.09: Writing, speech and grammar 2

Continuation from last week

Reading: Wright & Hope, chapter 1; Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams

Week 8, 16.11.09: TUTORIAL FEEDBACK WEEK

(No lecture or seminar this week - arrange a tutorial instead)

Week 9, 23.11.09: Phrases and clauses 1

Key terms: *phrases, clauses, sentence structure*

We'll consider the structure of phrases and clauses and what is the minimum we need for a clause. We explore the relationships between noun phrases

(NPs) and verb phrases (VPs) and between subjects, objects and complements. We consider again the nature of adverbials, their function, their optionality, where they can occur, and what effect their distribution has on a text. We compare main clauses with subordinate clauses and look at co-ordination, ambiguities and interrogatives.

Reading: Wright and Hope, chapter 3

Deadline for coursework one: 27.11.09

Week 10, 30.11.09: Phrases and clauses 2

Continuation from last week.

Week 11, 07.12.09: Vocabulary

Key terms: *vocabulary, words/lexis, semantic fields*

We'll briefly look at word formation, distinguishing bound from free morphemes, before moving onto semantic fields, collocation and synonyms. All of these topics require us to focus on the 'meaning' we want to convey more accurately.

Reading: Wright & Hope, chapter 5

Deadline for coursework two: 10.12.09

Week 12, 14.12.09: TUTORIAL FEEDBACK WEEK

(No lecture or seminar this week - arrange a tutorial instead)

**** CHRISTMAS BREAK ****

Week 13, 11.01.10: Recap and introduction: reading, writing, and studying

Key terms: *reading, writing, studying*

We look back over what we have covered so far and provide a context for work we will do during the rest of the module.

Week 14, 18.01.09: Stylistic Analysis 1

Key terms: *stylistics, writing, choice, effects*

We look at the discipline of stylistics, beginning by looking at one example of stylistic analysis by Ron Carter (a very famous linguistic and stylistician who was awarded an MBE in last year's New Year's Honours List)

Advance reading: Carter, R. 1982. *Style and interpretation in Hemingway's 'Cat in the Rain'*. In Carter, R. (ed.) *Language and Literature*. Allen and Unwin, London: 64-80

Week 15, 25.1.10: Stylistic Analysis 2

Continuation from last week

Week 16, 01.02.10: Meaning, inference, reading and writing 1

Key terms: *writing, inference, implicature*

We look at how writers and readers make inferences and how writers can influence the inferences readers make

Advance reading: Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams chapter 5; Saeed; Blakemore

Week 17, 08.02.10: Meaning, inference, reading and writing 2

Continuation from last week

Week 18, 15.02.10: TUTORIAL FEEDBACK WEEK

(No lecture or seminar this week - arrange a tutorial instead)

Week 19, 22.2.10: Editing and proof-reading

Key terms: *editing, proof-reading, style*

The job of an editor is not just to correct grammar, but also to pay attention to the way in which things have been expressed, and to decide whether modification of style will make for a more elegant or coherent piece of writing. Building on work you may have done previously, you'll make suggestions for repairs to previously unseen texts. You'll write your own short texts (topics will be provided) and pass this on for editing to your neighbour...

Advance reading: Wright & Hope, chapter 3

Week 20, 01.03.10: Writing and Rewriting to a Brief 1

Key terms: *audience, intentions, choice, effects*

For the next three sessions, we will look at a number of writing briefs and ways in which we can work individually and in groups to achieve specific writing aims. We will be putting into practice what we have discussed previously in the module.

Week 21, 08.03.10: Writing and Rewriting to a Brief 2

Continuation from last week

Week 22, 15.03.10: Writing and rewriting to a brief 3

Continuation from last week

Week 23, 22.03.10 TUTORIAL FEEDBACK WEEK

(No lecture or seminar this week - arrange a tutorial instead)

Note: I will be away this week so you will need to arrange a tutorial for week 22 or week 24

Week 24, 29.03.10: Summary: choices and genres

We look back over the module and summarise what we have learned about how different linguistic choices give rise to different effects.

11. Preliminary reading list

The following is a general guide to reading which should be useful. It is, of course, up to you to decide how best to use it and to identify your own reading of books and journal articles not included on this list.

Main Text:

Wright, L and J. Hope. 1995. *Stylistics: a practical handbook*. Routledge, London. (Explores ways in which analysing the language of texts can help us to understand their effects. Introduces linguistic concepts clearly).

Other Texts on language and writing:

Blakemore, D. 1992. *Understanding utterances*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford. (An introductory pragmatics textbook based on Relevance Theory.).

Brown, G. and G. Yule. 1983. *Discourse Analysis*. CUP, Cambridge. (Useful introductory text).

Chatman, S. 1990. *Coming to Terms: Rhetoric of narrative in fiction and film*. Cornell University Press, New York. (Very interesting discussion of narrative in novels and films).

Fromkin, V, Rodman, R. and N. Hyams. 2006. *An Introduction to language*, 8th edition. Wadsworth, Boston MA. (Very popular and clear introduction to linguistics, with exercises. Note: earlier editions, with Fromkin as first listed author, are just as useful)

Halliday M. and R. Hasan. 1976. *Cohesion in English*. Longman, London. (Very clear and useful introduction).

Leech, G. and M.H. Short. 1981. *Style in Fiction*. Longman, London. (A classic introduction to the linguistic analysis of fiction. Recently won a prize as 'the most influential book in stylistics or the linguistic study of literature published since 1980' by the Poetics and Linguistics Association).

Leech, G. 1973. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. Longman, London. (Despite its date, still relevant to anyone interested in the links between particular kinds of linguistic form and their effects).

Leith, D. and G. Myerson. 1983. *The Power of Address: Explorations in Rhetoric*. Routledge, London. (Useful discussion of persuasive techniques in language).

Saeed, J. 2008. *Semantics*, 3rd edition. Basil Blackwell, Oxford. (A general, and fairly comprehensive, introduction to contemporary linguistic semantics; wide-ranging, clear, good examples).

Short, M. 1996. *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*. Longman, London. (Useful introductory textbook)

Simpson, Paul. 2004. *Stylistics: A Resource Book For Students*. Routledge, London. (Useful introductory textbook)

Recommended for Reference:

Greenbaum, S. and Randolph Quirk. 1990. *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*. Longman, London. (A good reference on grammar)

Wales, K. 1990. *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. Longman, London. (Covers many key terms on linguistic approaches to writing).

Texts on writing but not (much) on language:

There are a large number of books which aim to help writers. Many of these don't discuss language (very much) but you might find it useful to look at some of these. Here are three possible examples.

Jute, A. 1994. Writing A Thriller, 2nd edition. A & C Black Ltd, London. (Not only relevant to writers of thrillers. Covers many standard ideas about structure and character for any genre of narrative fiction or drama).

King, S. 2001. On Writing: A memoir of the craft. New English Library Ltd., London. (More a memoir of life as a writer than a book on writing. Very positive about 'grammar').

Lamott, A. 1994. Bird by Bird: Some instructions on writing and life. Pantheon, London. (Motivational to a large extent. Recommended by Graham Linehan, writer of 'Father Ted' and 'The IT Crowd', when he spoke at Middlesex in 2005).

Useful Web-Based Resources:

Ling131 Language and Style

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/stylistics/>

Mick Short and colleagues at Lancaster developed this online stylistics course and made it freely available as a 25th birthday present to the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA). It has lots of useful and interesting resources.

PALA (Poetics and Linguistics Association) website

<http://www.pala.ac.uk/>

This is one of the biggest academic associations focusing on stylistics (which is about how linguistic decisions give rise to particular effects). There are a number of interesting resources here, including a number of online publications.

Pragmatic Stylistics

<http://pragmaticstylistics.org/>

Not very active yet, but this is a website which I set up for researchers interested in looking at how ideas from linguistic pragmatics can be applied in understanding texts.

London Language

<http://tinyurl.com/londonlanguage>

A blog for staff and students of English language at Middlesex, with examples discussed in class. Let me know if you'd like to post something.

The Language Log

<http://languageblog ldc.upenn.edu/nll/>

A lively weblog run by Mark Liberman and others at the University of Pennsylvania. There are often discussions of writing here. See, for example, several posts by Geoff Pullum attacking the prose style of Dan Brown. A recent post asked 'Where's Pullum?' because he has said so little on Brown's latest book.

Further reading and other resources will be recommended during the course.