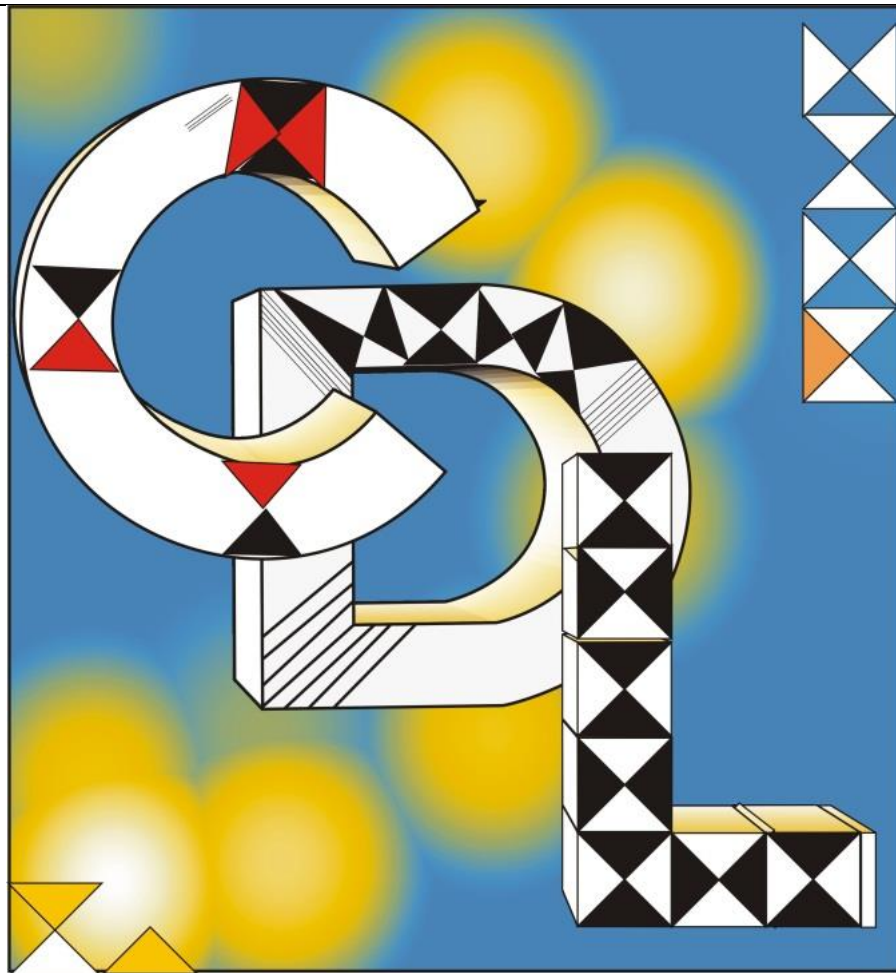




# **UNIVERSITY OF MAIDUGURI CENTRE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING**

**GST 211: COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH II**



## PROVISO

This work is a Manual for Communication in English II. It is produced through garnering of intellectual minds to meet the immediate need of students of the Centre for Distance Learning, University of Maiduguri. To achieve this objective, and considering the immediacy of the students' need therefore, the parts are made of adoptions and compilations from different acknowledged sources to serve as lecture guide. In the course of this work we have immensely enjoyed the contributions of J.D Murthy's *Contemporary English Grammar* (2012) for the Idioms and Figures of Speech. For parts of the Essay writing, Phonetics and Studies on Lexis, we 'hurriedly' adopted from a document that has been in use by the Division of General Studies, University of Maiduguri from Mohammed Mele and Baba Mai Bello in Koroma, D.S.M, Bulakarima, S. U and Bello B.M. (2007). *A Student's Companion: Readings in General Studies. Vol.II*, Division of General Studies, University of Maiduguri. The section that deals with Public Speech and the Art of Oral Presentation is an extract from Carnegie D. (1998)' *How to Develop Self-Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking*. Benin City: Rhema with ideas from Kumar, v. (2006). *The World's Greatest Speeches*. Lagos: Mindex Publishing. For Letter Writing and other parts of the essay writing we have taken from: Hodges, J. C and Whitten E. M (1967). -\* *College Handbook*. New York: Harcourt, Brace a Word, Inc. We would like to express acknowledgement and thanks to all authors and writers whose books we have consulted in the preparation of this manual. Some of the books consulted include: *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* by H. W. Fowler, *Current English Usage* by F.T Wood, *A Handbook of English Grammar* by Zandvoort, *High School English Grammar And Composition* by PC Wren and H. Martin, *English Grammar, Composition and Usage* by J.C. Nesfield, *A Second Book of English Idioms* by V.H Collin and *Oxford advanced learners dictionary of current English* (1988 and 1990 editions). All other examples are products of our teaching experience in English or taken from various sources and which are appropriately acknowledged as References and Suggestions for Further Readings at the end of each module.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Communication in English II builds upon *Communication in English I*. It concentrates on some basic aspects of English that have not been discussed in detail in the said Course. Communication in English II as a course of Study is not intended to train professional speakers and writers but to develop in the learner a general proficiency in the use of the English Language. It is recommended, not only to students of the Distance Learning Program, but also to all those who perform functions requiring the use of the English language. To meet this objective, a pedagogic voice throughout the text has been used to reach out to the reader. It is hoped all will come to value it in proportion as they strive for success in the use of the English language. Among the aspects treated are: Importance of Phonetics in English Pronunciation, Sounds of English, Description of English Sounds, Lexis and lexical relationship, Figurative use of words-idioms and proverbs, Essay types and Essay writing, and Public Speaking and the Art of Oral Presentation

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## MODULE 1: SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION IN ENGLISH

### INTRODUCTION

Module 1, introduces you to phonetics and its importance in English pronunciation. Here you will learn about the English sounds and how they are realized in pronunciation.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

When you have studied this module, you should be able to explain/ illustrate:

- 1.1 the importance of phonetics in English pronunciation
- 1.2 the sounds of English
- 1.3 the description of English sounds
  - 1.3.1 consonant sounds
  - 1.3.2 vowel sounds

### 1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF PHONETICS IN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

It is not a new thing to native and non-native English speakers that the spelling of English is one of its most difficult characteristics. The main reason is that the English spelling system is not based on a phonetic correspondence between sounds and letters, as is the case with the spelling of languages like Spanish or Hausa. Instead, in English, the same combination of letters can produce different pronunciations. This actually reflects the historical development of the language. Similarly, different combinations of letters can produce the same pronunciation.

The discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation in English is illustrated in the six different pronunciations of the letters **ough** in the following words: **bough, cough, rough, thorough, thought**

and **through**. The spellings are retained from a time when **gh** represented a consonant that was pronounced. Another discrepancy is the many different spellings of the **sh** sound, as in **anxious**, **fission**, **fuchsia**, and **ocean**.

The correspondence between sound and spelling in English is not phonetically exact for two main reasons. First, spelling changes did not keep pace with changes in the sound system after the development of printing and of conventions for spelling. For example, the *k* in *knife* and the *gh* in *right* are relics of the Middle English period (from about 1100 to about 1500 AD), when they were pronounced as separate sounds. Second, some imported spelling conventions persist. For example, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *b* was inserted in *doubt* (formerly spelled *doute*) on the authority of the Latin source of the word, *dub it are*, although the *b* is silent in English.

American English developed its own spelling conventions, largely as a result of the work of spelling reformer Noah Webster. Webster attempted to remove some of the irregularities from the English spelling system and distance American English from British English. Some examples of differences between British and American spelling are given below:

### **British Spelling**

### **American Spelling**

Centre

Center

Theatre

Theater

Colour

Color

Honour

Honor

Defence

Defense

Organise

Organize

Since the spelling of English does not correspond with its pronunciation, there is often a considerable difficulty, especially on the part of non-native speakers, to pronounce certain words correctly. This is so because we mostly make our first contacts with such words in written rather than spoken form, since we do not have direct contact with native speakers of the language. As a result, some of our pronunciation stand to be orthographic (based on spelling), rather than phonetic. Hence it is a common tendency to pronounce, for instance, the ‘b’ in ‘*debt*’ or the ‘p’ and ‘s’ in ‘*corps*’, which are otherwise silent.

But the fact that we do not have direct contact with people that speak impeccable English is not an excuse for mispronunciations. We can, if we like, find out the exact and correct pronunciation of a word by checking a dictionary. Every good dictionary contains, as a rule, the phonetic transcription of each of its entries. To be able to make sense of these transcriptions, however, one needs to have a basic working knowledge of the phonetic symbols that are used for the transcription. Below is a description of all the sounds of English and their representations.

**ITQ:** Give one major importance of phonetics in English pronunciation.

**ITA:** The major importance of phonetics in English pronunciation is that the English spelling system is not based on a phonetic correspondence between sounds and letters, as is the case with the spelling of languages like Spanish or Hausa. Instead, in English, the same combination of letters can produce different pronunciations. Phonetics is a handy solution to this problem because it

## 1.2 THE SOUNDS OF ENGLISH

There are 44 phonemes (sounds) in English. Out of these, 24 are consonants and 20 are vowels. The vowels are further classified into *pure vowels* or monophthongs (those involving only one sound) and diphthongs (those involving two sounds).

In dealing with these sounds, it is important to always bear in mind the fact that there is, in most cases, no one to one relationship between a sound and the way it is spelt in a word. In many instances, a letter of the alphabet may be pronounced in many different ways. For instance, the letter “C” is pronounced /s/ in *centre*, *nice*, *place* etc. but is pronounced as /k/ in *cat*, *come*, *score* etc. Similarly, the letter “S” is pronounced /z/ in *dogs*, *rise*, *Wednesday* etc., /ʃ/ in *passion* and *mission* but /s/ in *assume* and *assign* while it is pronounced /ʒ/ in *vision*, *fusion* etc.

On the other hand, however, a particular sound can have different ways of spelling. For example, the sound /k/ is spelt with the letter “k” in the words *king*, *kit*, *kid* etc.; with “X” as in *six*, *fix*, *box*, *except* etc.; with “Q” as in *quay*, *clique*, *conquer* etc. and with “C” as in *cat*, *court*, *can* etc. Similarly, the sound /f/ is spelt in a number of ways: with “F” as in *food* and *farm*; with “PH” as in *phone* and *graph*; and with “GH” as in *cough*, *laugh*, *rough* etc.

One other indicator of the spelling-pronunciation inconsistency is the tendency of some letters to be “silent”, i.e. not pronounced even though they appear in spelling. The cases of initial “K” and “W” being silent when followed by “N” or “R” as in *knee*, *know*, *knocked*, *wreck*, *wrong* etc. are just a few examples of these. Other examples include silent “B” in words like *doubt*, *debt*, *lamb*, *womb*, *comb* etc. There is then the case of silent “P” in *psychology*, *Psalms*, *corps* etc. as well as that of silent “N” in *condemn*, *solemn*, and *column*.

Although all our examples above are with respect to consonant sounds, vowels also exhibit this tendency. For instance the vowel ‘A’ can have multiple ways of pronunciation. It can be /a/ in *hat*, *mat*; /eɪ/ in *state*, *late*, *mate*; /e/ in *many* and /o:/ in *war*.



The three features of English sounds discussed above can be clearly captured in the list below, which shows words in which all the 24 consonants and 22 vowels occur.

#### Vowels

**ɑ:** father ['fɑ:ðə], **alms** [ɑ:mz], **clerk** [kɑ:lk], **heart** [hɑ:t], **sergeant** ['sɑ:dʒənt]  
**æ** cat [kæt], **plait** [plæt]  
**ɛ** **bet** [bet], **ate** [et], **bury** ['beri], **heifer** ['hefə], **said** [sed], **says** [sez]  
**ə** **potter** ['pɒtə], **alone** [ə'ləʊn], **furious** ['fjʊəriəs], **nation** ['neɪʃən], **the** [ðə]  
**ɜ:** **fern** [fɜ:n], **burn** [bɜ:n], **fir** [fɜ:], **learn** [lɜ:n], **term** [tɜ:m], **worm** [wɜ:m]  
**i** **pretty** ['prɪti], **build** [bɪld], **busy** ['bɪzi], **nymph** [nɪmf], **pocket** ['pɒkɪt], **sieve** [sɪv], **women** ['wɪmɪn]  
**i:** **see** [si:], **aesthete** ['i:sθetɪt], **evil** ['i:vəl], **magazine** [ˌmæɡə'zi:n], **receive** [rɪ'si:v], **siege** [si:dʒ]  
**ɒ** **pot** [pɒt], **botch** [bɒtʃ], **sorry** ['sɒri]  
**ɔ:** **thaw** [θɔ:], **broad** [brɔ:d], **drawer** ['draʊə], **fault** [fɔ:lt], **halt** [hɔ:lt], **organ** ['ɔ:gən]  
**ʊ** **pull** [pʊl], **good** [ɡʊd], **should** [ʃʊd], **woman** ['wʊmən]  
**u** **zoo** [zu], **do** [du], **queue** [kju], **shoe** [ʃu], **spew** [spiʊ], **true** [tu], **you** [ju]  
**ʌ** **cut** [kʌt], **flood** [flʌd], **rough** [rʌf], **son** [sʌn]

#### Diphthongs and triphthongs

**aɪ** **dive** [daɪv], **aisle** [aɪl], **guy** [ɡaɪ], **might** [maɪt], **rye** [raɪ]  
**aɪə** **fire** ['faɪə], **buyer** ['baɪə], **liar** ['laɪə], **tyre** ['taɪə]  
**aʊ** **out** [aʊt], **bough** [baʊ], **crowd** [kraʊd], **slouch** [slaʊtʃ]  
**aʊə** **flour** ['flaʊə], **cower** ['caʊə], **flower** ['flaʊə], **sour** ['saʊə]  
**eɪ** **paid** [peɪd], **day** [deɪ], **deign** [deɪn], **gauge** [ɡeɪdʒ], **grey** [ɡreɪ], **neigh** [neɪ]  
**ɛə** **bear** [beə], **dare** [deə], **prayer** [preɪə], **stairs** [steɪz], **where** [weə]  
**ɪə** **tear** [teɪə], **beer** [beɪə], **mere** [mɪə], **tier** [teɪə]  
**oʊ** **note** [noʊt], **beau** [boʊ], **dough** [doʊ], **hoe** [hoʊ], **slow** [sloʊ], **yeoman** ['joʊmən]  
**ɔɪ** **void** [voɪd], **boy** [boɪ], **destroy** [dɪ'strɔɪ]  
**ʊə** **poor** [puə], **skewer** ['skjuə], **sure** [ʃʊə]

## Consonants

<b>p</b>	<b>p</b> ig [pɪɡ], <b>b</b> ig [bɪɡ], <b>t</b> ea [ti:], <b>d</b> actylology [ˌdæktɪˈlɒlədʒɪ]
<b>k</b>	<b>k</b> angaroo [ˌkæŋɡəˈju:], <b>c</b> acophony [kəˈkɒfəni]
<b>g</b>	<b>g</b> et [ɡet], <b>gh</b> oul [gu:l], <b>g</b> uard [ɡɑ:d], <b>ex</b> amine [ɪˈɡzæmɪn]
<b>m</b>	<b>m</b> ammoth [ˈmæməθ]
<b>n</b>	<b>n</b> ychtophobia [ˌnɪktəʊˈfəʊbiə], <b>k</b> nowledge [ˈnɒlɪdʒ], <b>gn</b> otobiotics [ˌnəʊtəʊˈbaɪəˈtɪks], <b>p</b> neumatic [ˈnjʊmətɪk]
<b>ŋ</b>	<b>sing</b> [sɪŋ], <b>pharynx</b> [ˈfærɪŋks]
<b>r</b>	<b>r</b> adio [ˈreɪdɪəʊ], <b>rhinoceros</b> [ˌraɪˈnɒsərəs / ˌraɪˈnɒsrəs]
<b>f</b>	<b>f</b> oxtro [ˈfɒksˌtrɒt], <b>ph</b> oenix [ˈfiːnɪks] <b>v</b> arious [ˈveəriəs]
<b>θ</b>	<b>th</b> in [θɪn] <b>th</b> ese [ðiːz]
<b>s</b>	<b>s</b> illy [ˈsɪlɪ], <b>c</b> ircus [ˈsɜːkəs] <b>z</b> ebra [ˈziːbrə / ˈzebrə], <b>X</b> erox [ˈziəroks]
<b>ʃ</b>	<b>sh</b> ip [ʃɪp], <b>e</b> lection [ɪˈlekʃən], <b>ma</b> chine [məˈʃiːn], <b>mi</b> ssion [ˈmɪʃən], <b>pr</b> essure [ˈpreʃə], <b>s</b> chedule [ˈʃedjuːl]
<b>ʒ</b>	<b>treasure</b> [ˈtʃeɪzə], <b>az</b> ure [ˈæzə], <b>ev</b> asion [ɪˈveɪʒən]
<b>h</b>	<b>h</b> otel [həʊˈtel]
<b>l</b>	<b>l</b> ateral [ˈlætərəl]
<b>j</b>	<b>y</b> es [jes], <b>on</b> ion [ˈʌnjən], <b>v</b> ignette [vɪˈnjɛt]
<b>tʃ</b>	<b>ch</b> ew [tʃu:], <b>n</b> ature [ˈneɪtʃə]
<b>dʒ</b>	<b>j</b> aw [dʒɔ:], <b>ad</b> jective [ˈædʒɪktɪv], <b>sold</b> ier [ˈsəʊldɪə], <b>us</b> age [ˈjuːsɪdʒ]
<b>w</b>	<b>w</b> et [wet], <b>w</b> heel [wi:l]

b bed,[bed] ball[bɒl],bread[bred], rib[rib]

d dog [dog], kid[kɪd],

v van [vaen],of[ɒv]

z zebra [zɪbrae], reason [rɪzən], advise [ədvaɪz]

t take [teɪk], picked [pɪkt]

ð them [em], bathe [beɪ],

### 1.3 THE DESCRIPTION OF ENGLISH SOUNDS

In order to facilitate identification and explanation of these sounds, linguists have devised parameters for describing them. This is based on the articulatory characteristics of each sound.

#### 1.3.1 CONSONANT SOUNDS

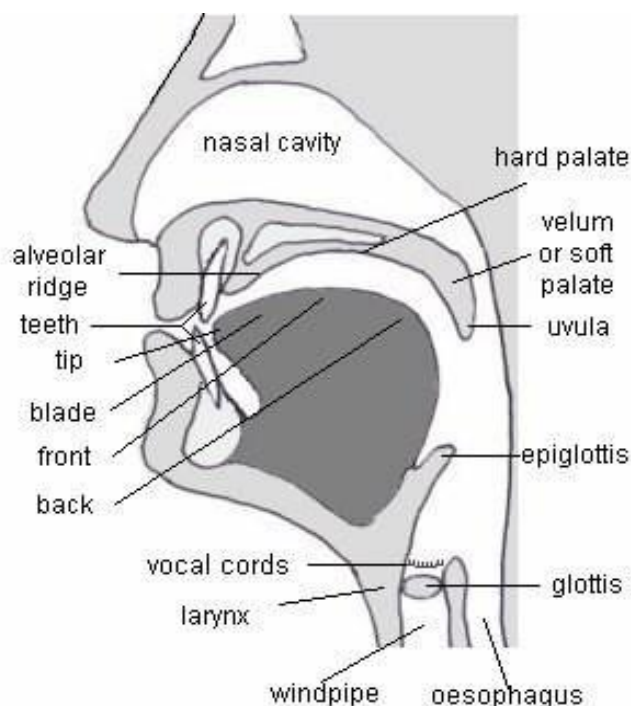
Consonant sounds are sounds that are produced with some obstruction of air as a result of contact of vocal organs. Three parameters are used in the classification of consonant sounds. These are:

1. Place or organs of speech that are employed during the production of a given sound
2. The manner in which these organs contact each other
3. The position or degree of opening and closure of the *glottis* (the vocal tract via which air passes)

### *Place of Articulation*

This refers to the organs that make contact with each other in the course of consonant production. These organs are termed *organs of speech*. They are the lips, the teeth, the tongue, the velum and the glottis among others. In most cases, two of the organs contact each other to produce a given sound. For example, the two lips come together to produce *bilabial sounds* such as {p, b, m and w}. Similarly, the lower lip can rise to make contact with the upper teeth, the result of which is a *labio-dental sound* [i.e. *labio* (lip) and *dental* (teeth)]. Examples of labio-dental sounds are /f/ and /v/. On other occasions, the tip of the tongue is moved up to make contact with the alveolar ridge, (the gum just above the teeth from within). When this happens, sounds like {t, d, s, z, n, l and r} are produced. They are known as *alveolar sounds*.

### A diagram of human speech organs



The upper and lower teeth are also responsible for the production of the dental sounds  $\theta$  and  $\delta$  while the middle of the tongue and part of the roof of the mouth (known as the hard palate) produce the palato-alveolar sounds {s and z}. The palatal sounds {ts, dz and j} are produced when the middle of the tongue makes contact with the soft palate while the velar sounds like {k, g and ŋ} are the result of contact between the back of the tongue and the soft palate. Finally, the glottis – the opening of the vocal cord, produces the sound /h/.

#### *Manner of Articulation*

By manner of articulation is meant the nature of contact between the organs that produce sounds. The manner in which this contact is made varies from the pronunciation of one sound to another. Thus, two sounds can be produced by the same organs but have different degrees of contact. For instance, both the sounds /b/ and /m/ are produced by the two lips (bilabial) but they differ simply because the manner of contact is different.

In the pronunciation of some sounds, the organs come into very firm contact with each other, such that there ensues a total blockage of air in the mouth. This is then followed by a sudden separation of the organs, allowing (the trapped) air to escape with an explosion. Sounds produced this way are known as plosive sounds, by virtue of the explosion that characterizes their production. The six plosive sounds of English are /p/, /t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, and /g/.

In some other cases, the organs contact each other firmly, just as in the pronunciation of plosive sounds, only that the release is gradual, rather than sudden and air escapes with a continuous flow. Affricates is the name given to these sounds, of which only two exist in English – /ts/ and /dz/

The third category of sounds using this parameter are the Fricative sounds. In their production, the organs, instead of making contact, only come very close to each other, whereupon air is gradually released. A large number of English sounds are characterised by this process, namely /s/, /z/, /f/, /v/, /θ/

The term nasal is used to refer to sounds that are produced through the nasal cavity (nose). Unlike the case with oral sounds in which the velum (soft palate) is raised to allow passage of air into the mouth, in the production of nasal sounds, the velum is lowered, so that the oral cavity is blocked. This forces air to escape through the nasal cavity. Three English sounds are characterised by this activity. They are: /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/

Sounds referred to as glide or approximants are those in whose production no real contact is made by the organs. Instead, the articulating organs simply ‘glide’ towards the direction of each other without making any contact. /w/ and /j/ are the two glide sounds in English.

The lateral sounds are those in whose pronunciation air passes from either or both sides of the mouth, rather than from the central part, which is the characteristics of most sounds. The only lateral sound in English is /l/.

### State of the Glottis

The glottis is an opening within the windpipe through which air coming out of the lungs passes into the oral or nasal cavity on its way out. In the pronunciation of English sounds, the glottis (or vocal cords) can take two primary positions. It can be widely open, allowing for a free flow of air without any obstruction that may cause vibration. Sounds produced in this manner are called voiceless sounds. These include /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /s/, /t/, etc.

In other instances, however, the glottis can be narrowed down, so that as air passes, enough obstruction is created to result in some vibration. Sounds produced in this manner are known as voiced sounds – e.g. /b/, /d/, /g/, /r/, /l/, /m/, and /n/, d/, z/, etc.

The chart below contains all the sounds described above, indicating the place and manner of their articulation as well as the status of the glottis during their production. Note that each column in the chart represents one place of articulation, and each row represents degree of constriction of the air passage, nasality, and laterality. Symbols on the left are voiceless consonants and those on the right are voiced consonants. Note also that the chart contains the consonant sounds of all languages including the 24 English consonants.

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 1993)												
CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)												
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal	
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ	
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ			
Trill	ʙ			r					ʀ			
Tap or Flap				ɾ		ɽ						
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ	
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ								
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ				
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ				

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

### 1.3.2 VOWEL SOUNDS

Vowels are produced with a relatively freer flow of air than consonants. In the classification of vowels sounds, four parameters are generally used.

1. Position of tongue during production of sound (this can be *high*, *mid* or *low*).
2. Part of tongue used (*front*, *central* or *back*)
3. Shape of the lips (*rounded* or *unrounded*)
4. Length of the vowel in question (*tense* or *lax*)

It should be noted that these parameters basically apply to the monophthongs (i.e. the twelve pure vowels) since the diphthongs and the **triphthongs** are combination of the pure vowels.

Using the position of the tongue as a parameter, four vowels are classified as high, namely /i/, /i:/, /u/ and /u:/; six as mid (/e/, /ɜ:/, /o/, /ʌ/, /ə/ and /ɔ:/) and two as low (/æ/, /a:/)

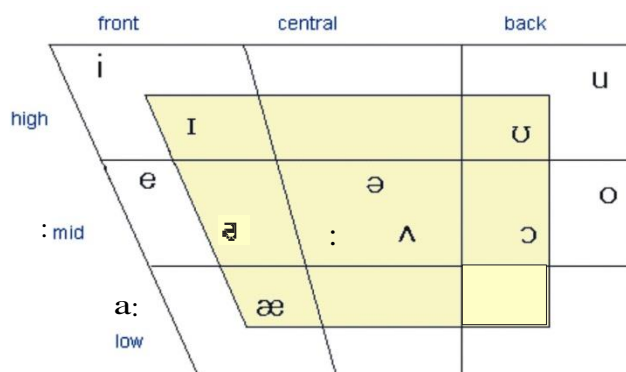
For part of the tongue criterion, /æ/, /e/, /ɜ:/, /i/ and /i:/ are front, while /u/, /u:/, /o/ and /o:/ are back and /ʌ/ and /ə/ are central.

In terms of shape of the lips, only /u/, /u:/, /o/ and /o:/ are rounded while the rest are unrounded. This shows that all back vowels are rounded, while the rest are unrounded.

Of the 12 pure vowels being discussed, five are tense/ long while the remaining seven are lax/short.

In the symbols, the two dots are used to represent long vowels. A close observation of the vowels would show that five appear in pairs of long and short.

The chart below contains all the vowel sounds as discussed above.



## 1.4 SUMMARY

In Module 2, you have learned that there are 44 phonemes (sounds) in English. Out of these, 24 are consonants and 20 are vowels. The vowels are further classified into *pure vowels* or monophthongs (those involving only one sound) and diphthongs (those involving two sounds). You have also learned that these sounds have their own unique manner and places of articulation.

**ITQ:** List the parameters used in classification of consonant sounds

**ITA:** The parameters used in classification of consonant sounds include: Place or organs of speech that are employed during the production of a given sound, the manner in which these organs contact each other and the position or degree of opening and closure of the *glottis* (the vocal tract via which air passes)

## 1.6. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Now that you have completed this module, you can assess how well you have achieved its learning outcomes by answering the following questions. Compare your answers with the notes on Self-Assessment Questions at the end of the module or the material.

With Relevant diagram point out the places of articulation of English vowel sounds.



## 1.7 SAA (SELF-ASSESSMENT ANSWERS)

This could be achieved by reproduction of the diagram showing human organs of speech

## 1.8 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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Division of General Studies, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

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## MODULE 2: LEXIS

### INTRODUCTION

In Module 1, you will learn about Lexis and Lexical Relationship under the following sub-headings include antonyms and synonyms, Homophones, Homonyms, Polysemy, Hyponyms and Metonyms

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this module, you are expected to learn about lexis and its related features as outlined below:

- 2.1 Lexis
- 2. 2. Lexical Relationship
  - 2. 2. 1 Synonyms
  - 2. 2. 2 Antonyms
  - 2. 2. 3 Homophones
  - 2. 2. 4 Homonyms
  - 2. 2. 5 Polysemy
  - 2. 2. 6 Hyponyms
  - 2. 2. 7 Metonyms

### 2.1 LEXIS

The vocabulary of English is one of the richest in the world. This “wealth of words” is largely attributed to the different fields of endeavour in which the English language is indispensable.

Whatever activity people are engaged in, English somehow comes to play a crucial role in establishing contacts among these people. As a result of this role, the language has found it necessary to expand its vocabulary. Consequently, English has quite conveniently borrowed from many languages- chief among them being French. Linguists argue that as many as 60% of the words used in English are of French origin. One only needs to look at any French text to confirm this. The table

below, culled from **Omniglot** (a website dedicated to language issues) illustrates this case of borrowing from French.

<b>French</b>	<b>Literal Meaning</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>adieu</b>	until God	Used like "farewell": when you don't expect to see the person again until God (when you die and go to Heaven)
<b>agent provocateur</b>	provocative agent	A person who attempts to provoke suspected individuals or groups into committing unlawful acts
<b>aide-de-camp</b>	camp assistant	A military officer who serves as a personal assistant to a higher-ranking officer
<b>à la carte</b>	on the menu*	French restaurants usually offer a menu with choices for each of the several courses at a fixed price. If you want something else (a side order), you order from the carte. *Note that menu is a false cognate in French and English.
<b>attaché</b>	Attached	A person assigned to a diplomatic post
<b>brunette</b>	small, dark-haired female	The French word brun, dark-haired, is what English really means by "brunette." The -ette suffix indicates that the subject is small and female.
<b>café au lait</b>	coffee with milk	Same thing as the Spanish term café con leche
<b>carte blanche</b>	blank card	Free hand, ability to do whatever you want/need
<b>cause célèbre</b>	famous cause	A famous, controversial issue, trial, or case
<b>cerise</b>	Cherry	The French word for the fruit gives us the English word for the color.
<b>c'est la vie</b>	that's life	Same meaning and usage in both languages
<b>chaise longue</b>	long chair	In English, this is often mistakenly written as "chaise lounge" - which actually makes perfect sense.
<b>chargé d'affaires</b>	charged with business	A substitute or replacement diplomat
<b>chef d'oeuvre</b>	chief work	Masterpiece

<b>cheval-de-frise</b>	Frisian horse	Barbed wire, spikes, or broken glass attached to wood or masonry and used to block access
<b>cheval glace</b>	horse mirror	A long mirror set into a moveable frame
<b>chic</b>	Stylish	Chic sounds more chic than "stylish."
<b>cinéma vérité</b>	cinema truth	Unbiased, realistic documentary filmmaking
<b>comme il faut</b>	as it must	The proper way, as it should be
<b>cordon sanitaire</b>	sanitary line	Quarantine, buffer zone for political or medical reasons.
<b>coup de grâce</b>	mercy blow	Deathblow, final blow, decisive stroke
<b>coup d'état</b>	state blow	Overthrow of the government
<b>crème de la crème</b>	cream of the cream	Synonymous with the English expression "cream of the crop" - refers to the best of the best.
<b>critique</b>	critical, judgment	Critique is an adjective and noun in French, but a noun and verb in English; it refers to a critical review of something or the act of performing such a review.
<b>cuisine</b>	kitchen, food style	In English, cuisine refers only to a particular type of food/cooking, such as French cuisine, Southern cuisine, etc.
<b>cul-de-sac</b>	Bottom (butt) of the bag	Dead-end street
<b>debutante</b>	Beginner	In French, débutante is the feminine form of débutant - beginner (noun) or beginning (adj). In both languages, it also refers to a young girl making her formal début into society. Interestingly, this usage is not original in French; it was adopted back from English.
<b>déjà vu</b>	already seen	This is a grammatical structure in French, as in Je l'ai déjà vu=> I've already seen it. It can also disparage a style or technique that has already been done, as in Son style est déjà vu=> His style is not original. In English, déjà vu refers to the scientific phenomenon of feeling like you have already seen or done something when you're sure that you haven't: a feeling of déjà vu = une impression de déjà vu.
<b>de rigueur</b>	of rigueur	Socially or culturally obligatory
		The newest fashion or trend

<b>encore</b>	Again	A simple adverb in French, "encore" in English refers to an additional performance, usually requested with audience applause.
<b>enfant terrible</b>	terrible child	Refers to a troublesome or embarrassing person within a group (of artists, thinkers, etc.).
<b>en garde</b>	on guard	Warning that one should be on his/her guard, ready for an attack (originally in fencing).
<b>en masse</b>	in mass	In a group, all together
<b>en route</b>	on route	On the way
<b>en suite</b>	in sequence	Part of a set, together
<b>Esprit de corps</b>	group spirit	Similar to team spirit or morale
<b>fait accompli</b>	done deed	Fait accompli seems more fatalistic to me than done deed, which is so factual.
<b>faux</b>	false, fake	I once saw an ad for "genuine faux pearls." No worries that those pearls might be real, I guess - you were guaranteed fake ones. :-)
<b>faux pas</b>	false step, trip	Something that should not be done, a foolish mistake.
<b>femme fatale</b>	deadly woman	An alluring, mysterious woman who seduces men into compromising situations
<b>fiancé fiancée</b>	engaged person, betrothed	Note that fiancé refers to a man and fiancée to a woman.
<b>Finale</b>	Final	In French, this can refer to either the final in sport (e.g., quarter-final, semi-final) or the finale of a play. In English, it can only mean the latter.
<b>fin de siècle</b>	end of the century	Hyphenated in English, fin-de-siècle refers to the end of the 19th century.
<b>force majeure</b>	greater force	Refers to superior/greater force, or to an unexpected or uncontrollable event.
<b>gamine</b>	playful, little girl	Refers to an impish or playful girl/woman.
<b>gauche</b>	left, awkward	Tactless, lacking social grace

<b>genre</b>	Type	Used mostly in art and film - "I really like this genre..."
<b>laissez-faire</b>	let it be	A policy of non-interference
<b>maître d' maître d'hôtel</b>	master of master of hotel	The former is more common in English, which is strange since it is incomplete: "The 'master of' will show you to your table."
<b>nouveau riche</b>	new rich	Disparaging term for someone who has recently come into money.
<b>nouvelle cuisine</b>	new cuisine	
<b>par excellence</b>	by excellence	Quintessential, preeminent, the best of the best
<b>protégé</b>	Protected	Someone whose training is sponsored by an influential person.
<b>raison d'être</b>	reason for being	Purpose, justification for existing
<b>rendez-vous</b>	go to	In French, this refers to a date or an appointment (literally, it is the verb se rendre - to go - in the imperative); in English we can use it as a noun or a verb (let's rendez-vous at 8 pm).
<b>RSVP</b>	respond please	This abbreviation stands for Répondez, s'il vous plaît, which means that "Please RSVP" is redundant.
<b>souvenir</b>	memory, keepsake	A memento
<b>tête-à-tête</b>	head to head	A private talk or visit with another person
<b>toilette</b>	Toilet	In French, this refers both to the toilet itself and anything related to toiletries; thus the expression "to do one's toilette" - brush hair, do makeup, etc. See eau de toilette, above.
<b>touché</b>	Touched	Originally used in fencing, now equivalent to "you got me."
<b>tour de force</b>	turn of strength	Something which takes a great deal of strength or skill to accomplish.
<b>vis-à-vis (de)</b>	face to face	In French, when vis-à-vis precedes a noun and means facing, next to, or towards, it must be followed by the preposition de. In English it means "compared to" or "in relation with": vis-à-vis this decision=> vis-à-vis de cette decision.
<b>voilà !</b>	There it is!	

Of course, this heavy borrowing from French is a direct by-product of the colonisation of England by the French. During that period, French was imposed as an official language – just the same way English was later imposed on British colonies like India, Ghana and Nigeria among others.

Another language from which English has borrowed is Arabic. This is because of contacts between Arabs and the British, but especially as a result of the influence and prestige of the Arabs in the Middle Ages. For example, the word “admiral” was borrowed from the Arabic phrase “Ameer Al-Bahr”, (commander of the seas). From Ameer itself comes the word *emir* while “tamarind” originates from *Tamir Hind* (date of India) and “checkmate” (used in the game of chess) from “Shah Matt” (The king is dead.)

Because English is not native to us, we tend to have limitations as regards expressing ourselves or even comprehending what other people have said or written. While these limitations may be justifiable in some instances, in many more instances, they are nothing more than predetermined fear. That is, in many instances, people just make up their minds that certain words are difficult to understand. In some cases, for instance, words may be unfamiliar or difficult merely because they are long. When this is the case, the simple thing to do is to dissect the word into its components because majority of long words are largely a result of affixes in the first place. Dissecting them into components requires nothing more than the knowledge of English prefixes and suffixes. (See Chapter One for a detailed discussion on prefixes and suffixes)

With affixes, a short simple word like “happy” is made into a longer word by adding either a prefix (at the beginning) or a suffix (at the end) to it. Thus, un + happy = unhappy. This word can in turn be made longer by adding affixes to both sides (i.e. Un + happy + ness = unhappiness). Using the same

process, one can derive “revitalization” from the word “vital”; “insensibility” from the word “sense” and even a word as long as “antidisestablishmentarianism” from the simple word “establish”.

From the above examples, it is easy to see how the meanings of long words can be easily deduced by dissecting them into parts, especially knowing the fact that such words are the products of affixation.

**ITQ:** State the reason that led to heavy borrowing of French words by the English.

**ITA:** This this heavy borrowing from French is a direct by product of the colonization of England by the French. During that period, French was imposed as an official language—just the same way English was later imposed on British colonies like India, Ghana and Nigeria among others.

## 2.2 LEXICAL RELATIONSHIP

Just like human beings, words also tend to share relationships with one another. Just like we as humans have friends, foes, brothers, sisters, parents and look-alikes, so do words. One word can share the same meaning with another, resemble another word or be opposite in meaning to another. Quite a few of these relationships exist among English words but for our present purpose, we discuss the following relationships:

Synonyms

Antonyms

Homonyms

Homophones

Hyponyms

Meronyms

## 2.2 SYNONYMS

Synonyms are words that are similar in meaning. This relationship of similarity is such that one word can be used in the place of another. Thus, “boy” can be used to express the same meaning as “lad” or “kid” and “girl” the same meaning as “lass” etc. It should, however, be noted that these words are not absolutely the same. Semanticists have often argued that there are no such things as



perfect synonyms. Words claimed to be synonyms are most likely to differ in a number of ways. In this regard, there may be a distinction between formal and informal usages (e.g. encounter/come across; tolerate/put up with) between borrowed and native words, e.g. foretell (native) prophesy (Greek) and predict (Latin); American and British (faucet/tap), emotional and neutral – kill and murder, etc. Other examples of synonyms, adopted from Best (1996), are given below:

<b>WORD</b>	<b>SYNONYMS</b>
domicile	home, house
edible	eatable, palatable
elucidate	explain, clarify
erudite	learned, knowledgeable
exorbitant	costly, dear
fecundity	fruitfulness, fertility
gigantic	huge, large
hilarious	funny, humorous
indigent	poor, destitute
indolent	lazy, sluggish
lethal	deadly, fatal
matrimony	marriage, wedlock
mysterious	strange, puzzling
nostalgia	homesickness, melancholy
obese	fat, stout
proximity	nearness, immediacy

### 2.2.2 ANTONYMS

Antonyms are defined as words that are opposite in meaning. It should be noted that the relationship between words that are said to be antonyms is not merely that of difference in meaning. In other words, when we say X is an antonym of Y, we are not merely saying that they differ in meaning but also that X stands in opposition to Y. Thus, boy and girl are opposed in meaning to each other as do other pairs of parts of speech such as big/small, high/low, dead/alive etc.

## TYPES OF ANTONYMS

The relationship of opposition between words can be expressed in a number of ways. In other words, because the nature of words differs from one to another, the relationship they exhibit also differs. Thus, words like *boy* and *girl* differ because they have inherently different attributes (i.e. male /female). *Buy* and *sell* differ in such a way as to involve different action or state of affairs. Informed by these differences, antonyms are classified as follows.

### *Binary Antonyms*

These antonyms have definable or clear-cut opposition such that an entity can never (under normal circumstances) possess the two attributes at once. For instance, an entity cannot be *alive* and *dead* at the same time. Other examples of binary antonyms are:

boy	girl
man	woman
male	female
stallion	mare
bull	cow

### *Gradable Antonyms*

Here the opposition is seen as a kind of scale that goes up or down. Thus, when we say something is “young” or “old”, there is no fixed position in terms of age or as to what constitutes youth or old age, since they are relative. In other words, such antonyms are not fixed. For instance, a 20 year old person might be young to a 50-year-old person but the same 20 year old will be seen as old to someone 5 years old. In the same way, a 50 year old may himself be seen as young by an eighty year old. The same thing applies to height because someone who is four feet tall is short from the point of view of someone six feet tall.

Other examples of gradable antonyms are:

hot	cold
light	heavy
near	far

cheap                  expensive

### *Converse Antonyms*

In converse opposition, the presence of one word immediately brings to mind the existence of its counterpart (or antonym). This is so because for the one to exist or happen, the other must also exist. For instance, for there to be a wife, there must be a husband; for there to be the act of buying, there must be a corresponding act of selling. Likewise, for X to be below Y, Y has to be above it. Below are examples of converse antonyms:

borrow	lend
give	take
up	down
prey	predator
teach	learn
teacher	student

### *Reversative Antonyms*

The opposition relationship here involves reversal or re-ordering. Hence, “undo” is the reverse of “do”. Since the two are opposed in meaning to each other, they are regarded as antonyms. Other examples include:

forward	backward
ascend	descend
enter	exit
rise	fall
build	demolish
connect	disconnect

### *Multiple Taxonomies*

There are words that stand in opposition to several words instead of just a word. In this instance, the relationship of opposition is not seen merely between one word and another but between one word and several others that in turn stand opposed to one another. A classic example of this are colour terms. When asked what the opposite of the colour “white” is, the immediate answer is likely to be “black”. But what will then be the opposite of red, green or

blue? The fact is that each of these colours can be the opposite of any one colour. It is by virtue of their having similar relationships with one another that they are called multiple taxonomies.

### *Homophones*

These are words with exactly the same pronunciation but different spellings and meanings.

Examples include:

Peace	piece
Key	quay
Son	sun

### *Homonyms*

These are words with the same form (spelling) but different meaning. Examples are:

Bank	bank
Ball	ball
Can	can
Bear	bear
Game	game
Tear	tear
Might	might
Will	will

### *Polysemy*

This is also a relationship indicating sameness in form but with difference in meaning. In this instance, unlike the case with homonyms, the words somewhat have some similarity because they usually derive from the same source. Examples of **polysemous** words are:

#### **foot**

- part of the body
- foot (base) of the tree
- foot (bottom) of the page.
- to foot (pay) the bill.

#### **head**

- part of the body

head (boss) of the department.  
head (top) of the stairs

### bridge

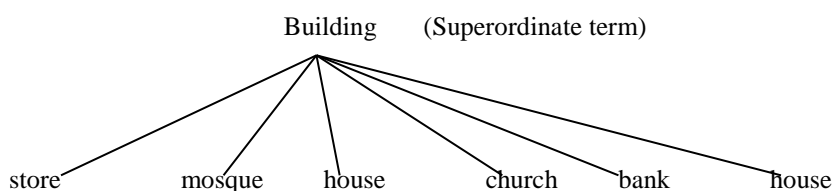
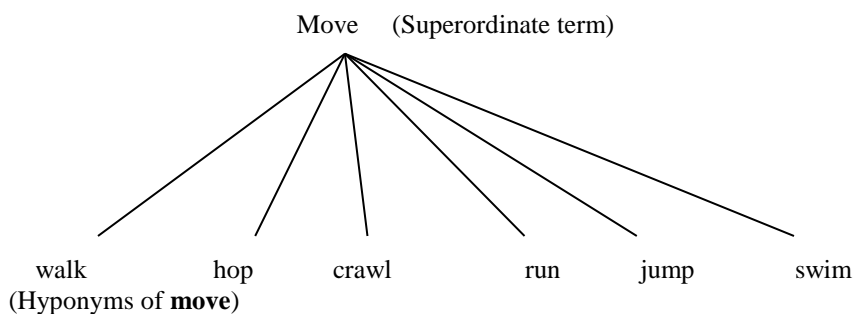
structure over a river  
bridge (bony part) of the nose  
bridge (close) the gap between the rich and the poor

### game

form of play  
to be game (willing) to do anything  
game (animals)  
gaming (gambling)

## Hyponyms

This is technically referred to as *the relationship of inclusion*. it is the general tendency of units to subsume in them the meaning of others. In other words, a single word may have with it the general meaning of several other words. For instance, the words boy, girl, man and woman can be referred to as human beings. Similarly, the words fly, walk, run, swim, crawl and jump can be subsumed under the term “move” since all of them involve some sort of movement. In this kind of relationship (**hyponymic relationship**) the words that carry the general meaning such as “human” or “move” are known as *superordinate* words while those under them are called *hyponyms*. Below are illustrations of this relationship:

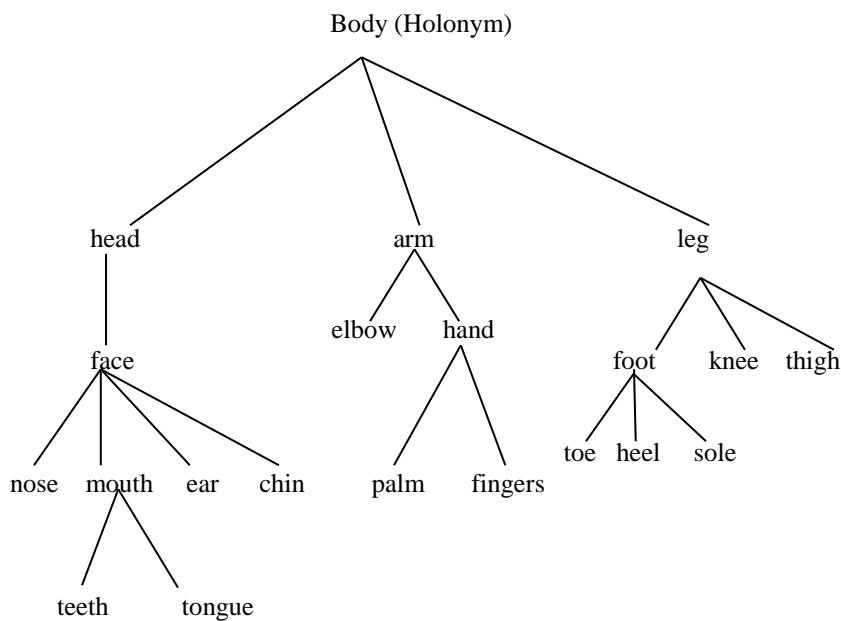


(Hyponyms of **building**)

cf Cruse 1986

## Meronyms

While hyponyms exhibit relationships of inclusion, meronyms exhibit whole-part relationships. This implies that a particular word constitutes a part of another. For instance, we say that a branch is a part of a tree. Here ‘tree’ is called the *holonym* and ‘branch’ is the *meronym* of tree. Similarly, *head*, *leg*, *arm* and *head* are all meronyms of *body* since they are all parts of the body. This relationship is illustrated below:



From the above, it is clear that the body can be dissected and further dissected into several parts so that it is possible for a meronym to be a holonym with other smaller parts (meronyms) of its own. Thus, we can say that all the words in the diagram are parts of the body.

## 2.3 SUMMARY:

in Module 2, you have learned that words tend to share relationships with one another. One word can share the same meaning with another, resemble another word or be opposite in meaning to another. Quite a few of these relationships exist among English words but for our present purpose, we discussed these relationships under the following subheadings: Synonyms Antonyms Homonyms Homophones Hyponyms Meronyms

**ITQ:** What does the term Hyponym refer to?

**ITA:** This is technically referred to as *the relationship of inclusion*; it is the general tendency of units to subsume in them the meaning of others. In other words, a single word may have with it the general meaning of several other words. For instance, the words boy, girl, man and woman can be referred to as human beings.

## 2.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQ)

Now that you have completed this module, you can assess how well you have achieved its learning outcomes by answering the following questions. Compare your answers with the notes on Self-Assessment Questions at the end of the module or the material.

**SAQ:** With relevant examples, explain the term synonyms.

**SAA:** Synonyms are words that are similar in meaning. This relationship of similarity is such that one word can be used in the place of another. Thus, “boy” can be used to express the same meaning as “lad” or “kid” and “girl” the same meaning as “lass” etc. It should, however, be noted that these words are not absolutely the same. Semanticists have often argued that there are no such things as perfect synonyms.

## 2.5 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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## MODULE 3: IDIOMS AND FIGURATIVE USE OF WORDS

### INTRODUCTION

This module introduces you to idioms and figures of speech. In each case, some examples will be given so that you will be guided in the correct use of both idioms and figures of speech. These manners of speech, important as they are, are not the same thing as often confused by some people. You will appreciate their differences in this module and appreciate the beauty they add to communication in English.

### 3.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

When you have studied this module, you should be able to explain/ illustrate:

idioms and phrases

idiomatic noun and adjective phrases

idiomatic pairs

idiomatic verbal phrases

miscellaneous idioms and phrases

Proverbs

Figures of Speech

### 3.1 FIGURATIVE MEANING

A particular word or expression in a language may have various meanings. Words tend to develop new meanings over long periods, sometimes very different from the original or literal meanings. Some of these later meanings occur because of similarities between things or situations. Thus, for instance 'foot' literally refers to a part of the body. However, because of the position of the foot, other

references such as '*foot* of a tree', '*foot* of a mountain' are formed. Similarly, '*shield*', literally means a piece of armour (protective metal “clothing”). This word has, however, come to be used figuratively for any type of protective plate attached to a machine or a person who acts as protection. Such uses of words with meanings besides the literal ones are said to be *figurative*.

Below are examples of some words in their literal and figurative senses:

WORD	LITERAL SENSE	FIGURATIVE SENSE
<b>boil</b>	action of heated liquid (He boiled the rice)	agitation (I boil with anger when he lies)
<b>cold</b>	of low temperature (It is cold in winter)	unemotional (His attitude to the enemy was cold)
<b>fish</b>	kind of animal living in water (I caught a fish with my hook)	move in order to discover (The spy fished for the secret)
<b>hammer</b>	carpentry instrument (The hammer is new)	emphasize an issue (He hammered on the dangers of HIV)
<b>hatch</b>	bring forth young birds from an egg (Our hen hatched four chicks)	plan, plot (They hatched a plot and killed the king)
<b>herald</b>	official to the king (The herald announced the king's entry)	fore runner (The young voices heralded the chorus)
<b>lame</b>	crippled by injury to the leg (John is lame; he limps)	imperfect (The silly boy gave a lame excuse)
<b>mine</b>	a place where minerals are dug out (There are coal mines in Enugu)	somebody rich in something (He is a mine of information)
<b>pepper</b>	strong spice (put more pepper in the soup)	throw violently at (They peppered him with stones)
<b>root</b>	part of a plant normally in the soil (The root of the plant is not strong)	source (of problem) (Find the root of the problem)

### 3.1.1 IDIOMS

An idiom is a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot often be understood from the ordinary meanings of the words in it. For instance, the expression 'bell the cat' means 'take responsibility for doing something dangerous'. This meaning can hardly be arrived at from the ordinary meanings of 'bell' and 'cat'.

English idiomatic expressions are used just like words in the language such that they can be in the present, past or future tense. In addition, they as well take inflection for person and number. For example:

He bells the cat all the time.

He belled the cat.

He will bell the cat.

Other examples of idiomatic expressions are:

<b>Idiom</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>To be out of touch with</b>	to be no longer familiar with.
<b>To gatecrash</b>	to attend (a party etc) uninvited.
<b>To keep open house</b>	to be ready to welcome guests
<b>To have too many irons in the fire</b>	to do so many things at a time
<b>Take a leaf out of someone's book</b>	to emulate someone
<b>To look for a needle in a hay sack</b>	look for something with a slim chance of finding it
<b>To lead by the nose</b>	to lead blindly
<b>To mind your Ps and Qs</b>	to be very particular about your behaviour
<b>To buy a pig in a poke</b>	to buy something without examining it
<b>The proof of the pudding is in the eating</b>	people are judged by their actions
<b>A Pyrrhic victory</b>	an expensive victory
<b>To be on the tenterhooks</b>	to be in a state of anxiety

<b>To throw in the towel</b>	to acknowledge defeat
<b>Empty vessels make the most noise</b>	those who know or have little often talk the most
<b>To pull the wool over someone's eyes</b>	to mislead or deceive someone

### 3.1.2 IDIOMATIC NOUN AND ADJECTIVE PHRASES

1. *An apple of discord.* (Cause of contention or quarrel.) Example: Halima is an apple of discord in our college.
2. *The apple of one's eye.* (very dear) Raphael is the apple of his father's eye.
3. *A bed of roses.* (A very comfortable and pleasant condition). Journalism is not a bed of roses.
4. *A bird of passage.* (A person who travels widely). The teacher is a bird of passage.
5. *A big gun.* (A person of great importance). David Mark is a big gun in Nigeria.
6. *A cock and bull story.* (A false story). Bukar tried to convince me with a cock and bull story.
7. *Crocodile tears.* (False tears). When Victoria died, her husband shed crocodile tears.
8. *Evil genius.* (An able person who is keen at doing harm or mischief.). A terrorist is an evil genius because he is interested in destruction.
9. *A bull in China shop.* (An unnecessary person or evil). Halidu is a bull in China Shop because she creates tension among us with her arguments.
10. *A broken rid.* (A weak point or support). My wife proved to be a broken reed when I was in trouble.
11. *A fool's paradise.* (An imaginary happiness). It is no use living in a fool's paradise.
12. *A man of letters.* (A great literary artist. Achebe is a man of letters.
13. *The fag end.* (The lose). We are at the fag end of poverty.

14. *A red letter day.* (A very important day). 1<sup>st</sup> October is a red letter day in the history Nigeria.
15. *An utopian scheme:* An ideal or perfect (imaginary) scheme (dream).

### 3.1.3 IDIOMATIC PAIRS

#### 3.1.3.1 NOUNS

- i. *Bread and Butter:* Material Welfare, food  
Example: The Government must provide for bread and butter to every citizen.
- ii. *At the beck and call.* Be ready at the service.
- iii. By leaps and bounds: Rapidly  
Example: Nigeria is progressing in all fields by leaps and bounds.
- iv. Fire and fury Example: My servant is always at my beck and call: Enthusiasm  
Example: PDP Leader, Jonathan's speeches were full fire and fury.
- v. By hook or by crook: By fair or foul means  
Example: Most African politicians desire to come to power by hook or by crook.
- i. Tooth and Nail: Completely  
Example: We must eradicate poverty tooth and nail.

#### 3.1.3.2 ADJECTIVES

- i. All in all: Supreme  
Example: The manager is all in all in the office.
- ii. Better half: Wife  
Example: Hyelni is my better half
- iii. At sixes and Sevens: In disorder  
Example: On returning home, I found my books at sixes and sevens.
- iv. Safe and Sound: Quite well

Example: My uncle returned from London safe and sound.

- v. Hard and fast: Definite

Example: There is no foolhardy and fast rule to success in life.

### 3.1.3.3 ADVERBS

- i. Again and again: Very often

Example: I tried to see Pamela again and again:

- ii. Over and above: Besides

Example He was paid over and above his wages.

- iii. Ever and anon: Now and then

Example: Now and then

She comes to me ever and anon.

- iv. Off hand: Without forethought

Example: I recited Brutus' poem "To my friends and helpers" off hand.

- v. By heart: Learn by memory

Example: I Learnt Soyinka's Poems by heart.

- vi. Few and far between: Very rare or small in number.

Example: Her merits as a good house wife are few and far between.

### 3.1.3.4 ADVERBIAL PHRASES

- i. With might and main: (With full power). Example: I do everything with might and main.

- ii. In the Nick of the time: (At the right time). Example: The Fire Service arrived on the scene of the inferno in the nick of the time.

- iii. In full swing: (In Progress). Example: The Company is in full swing this year and earning heavy profits.

- iv. At the eleventh hour: (At the last moment). Example: My friends came forward to help me at the eleventh hour.

- v. Out of sorts: (Unwell). Example: Amina is out of sorts now.

### 3.1.3.5 PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

- i. In the teeth of: (In the face of). Example: The bill was passed by the senate in the teeth of opposition.
- ii. In quest of: (In search of). Example: A scholar is always in quest of knowledge.
- iii. Instead of. (In place of). Example: Hamta came to me instead of her sister.
- iv. From pillar to post: (From one place to another). Example: A postman has to go from Pillar to post to deliver letters.
- v. At odds: (In conflict). Example: The two wives are always at odds.

### 3.1.3.6 IDIOMATIC VERBAL PHRASES

- i. Be up to: (Be equal to). Example: Your essay is not up to the standard.
- ii. To be up and doing: (To be actively engaged). Example: You must be up and doing in your studies otherwise you will not get distinction.
- iii. To be at loss: (To be confused). Example: I am at a loss how to express the love I have for my sister.
- iv. To be weak in the storey: (To be feeble minded). Example: She is weak in the storey and so she cannot come up in life.
- v. To be at the helm of: (At the head of). Example: The principal is at the helm of affairs in everything in our college.

### 3.1.3.7 MISCELLANEOUS IDIOMS AND PHRASES

- i. New broom sweeps clean: A new employee works with zeal  
Example: Mary is a newly appoint secretary. She is very keen at taking down dictation and typing it neatly. It is evident that a new broom sweeps clean.
- ii. Ill at ease: Restless

Example: I felt ill at ease at the interview.

iii. On the rack. Tormented

Example: The Police put him on the rack to extract the truth from him.

iv. First water: Highest grade

Example: The leather is of first water.

v. High time: It is already late

Example: It is high time that you gave up smoking.

vi. Black-hearted: Evil minded person

Example: Stella is a black-hearted girl.

vii. Arcadia: A place of natural beauty and simple

Example: The romantic poets of England always lived in an arcadia.

viii. A mentor: An experienced and trusted adviser

Example: She is a mentor to the company and so she plays a limited role.

ix. Man of parts: Talented

Example: Soyinka is a man of parts

x. Hobson's Choice: No choice at all

Example: She has only a Hobson's choice. So she has to employ him.

**ITQ:** "To be all ears" is an example of which category of idioms?

**ITA:** Idiomatic verbal phrases



### 3.1 PROVERBS

A proverb is a wise saying that defines or expresses a people's understanding of nature, the environment and general human temperament. It shares some resemblances with idioms in that its meaning cannot normally be understood at the surface level. Note that an important aspect of the proverb is that it transmits culture and tradition as well as worldviews. Thus, it can help in understanding people, their experiences and philosophy of life. Below are a few examples of English proverbs from Best (1996):

*A bad beginning makes a good ending*

*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*

*A drowning man can clutch at a straw*

*A shortcut is often a wrong cut*

*Barking dogs seldom bite*

*Be not the first to quarrel nor the last to make it up*

*Catch the bear before you sell its skin*

*Diligence is a great teacher*

*Do not cut off your nose to spite your face*

*Do not spur a willing horse*

*Eat to live but do not live to eat*

*Fingers were made before forks*

*Flattery brings friends and truth enemies*

*If wishes were horses, beggars might ride*

*Liars should have good memories*

*Marry in haste, repent at leisure*

*Men are as old as they feel, women as old as they look*

*Men make houses, women make homes*

*Rumour is a great traveller*

*The less people think, the more they talk*

### 3.3. FIGURES OF SPEECH

Figures of speech are words or group of words used to give particular emphasis to an idea or sentiment. The special emphasis is typically accomplished by the user's conscious deviation from the strict literal sense of a word, or from the more commonly used form of word order or sentence construction. From ancient times to the present, such figurative locutions have been extensively employed by orators and writers to strengthen and embellish their styles of speech and composition. A number of the more widely used figures of speech, some of which are also called *tropes*, are shown below:

- i. **Anti-climax** - sequence of ideas that abruptly diminishes in dignity or importance at the end of a sentence or passage, generally for satirical effect. For example, "Among the great achievements of Benito Mussolini's regime were the revival of a strong national consciousness, the expansion of the Italian empire, and the running of the trains on time."
- ii. **Antithesis** - Juxtaposition of two words, phrases, clauses, or sentences contrasted or opposed in meaning in such a way as to give emphasis to the contrasting ideas. As in this line by the English poet Alexander Pope, "To err is human, to forgive is divine."
- iii. **Apostrophe**- Device by which an actor turns from the audience, or a writer from readers, to address a person who is usually either absent or deceased, an inanimate object, or an abstract idea. The English poet John Milton, in his *Poem II Penseroso* invokes the spirit of melancholy in the following words; "Hail divinest Melancholy, whose saintly visage is too bright to hit the sense of human sight."
- iv. **Caesura**- Pause or break in a line of poetry dictated by the rhythm. Is either initial (near the beginning), medial (near the middle), or terminal (near the end).
- v. - Is an extended simile and develops the comparison more fully for the purpose of explanation or illustration.
- vi. **Climax**-Arrangement of words, clauses, or sentences in the order of their importance, the least forcible coming first and the others rising in power until the last, as I the following

sentence; “It is an outrage to bind a Roman citizen; it is a crime to scourge him; it is almost patricide to kill him; but to crucify him – what shall I say of this?”

- vii. **Conceit**-An elaborate, often extravagant metaphor making an analogy between totally dissimilar things. The term originally meant “concept” or idea. The use of conceit is especially characteristic of 16<sup>th</sup> century English metaphysical poetry. An example occurs in the poem “A Valediction: forbidding Mourning,” by John Donne, where the image of the joined arms of a pair of compasses is used to illustrate the devotion of a pair of lovers; even when one moves, the two are joined so closely as to be one.
- viii. **Epigram**-Originally a short poem of two or four rhyming lines making a selling, often humorous statement. Now any brief single line which sums up a poem is referred to as epigrammatic.
- ix. **Euphemism**- Substitution of a delicate or offensive term or phrase for one that has coarse, sordid, or otherwise unpleasant associations, as in the use of “toilet” for “lavatory”, and “pass away” for “die”.
- x. **Exclamation**- Sudden outcry or interjection expressing violent emotion, such as fought, grief, or hatred. It is illustrated in this line from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, spoken by Lady Macbeth, “out, out, damned spot ...” and also in *Hamlet*, where the prince cries, “O villain, villain, smiling damned villain?”
- xi. **Enjambment**- Principally used to describe the running on of sense beyond the second line of a couplet into the first line of the next; generally used to describe run-on lines. Important for lyricism, musically and rhythmic flow of verse.
- xii. **Extempore**- To perform on the spur of the moment without previous practice.
- xiii. **Hyperbole**- Form of inordinate exaggeration according to which a person or thing is depicted as being better or worse, or larger or smaller, than is actually the case, as in the sentence from an essay by the English writer Thomas Babington Macaulay; “Dr. Johnson drank his tea in oceans”.

**Image**-Verbal and imaginative representation, evoking sensations or impressions which make possible or more immediate understanding or perception of an idea or experience.

**Irony** - Use of words which are clearly opposite to the professed meaning; works by awareness and exploitation of incongruity between words and their meaning, actions or experience. It can also mean dryly humorous or lightly sarcastic mode of speech, in which words are used to convey a meaning contrary to their literal sense. An instance of irony is the suggestion put forward with apparent seriousness by the English satirist Jonathan Swift in his *Modest Proposal*, to the effect that the people of Ireland should rid themselves of poverty by selling their children to the rich to eat.

**Litotes** -Understatement employed for the purpose of enhancing the effect of the ideas exposed, e.g. “The Nigerian Poet Wole Soyinka shows no inconsiderable powers as a prose writer”, meaning that Soyinka is in fact a very good prose writer.

**Metaphor**- Use of a word or phrase denoting one kind of idea or object in place of another word or phrase for the purpose of suggesting a likeness between the two. Thus, in the Biblical Book of Psalms, the writer speaks of God’s law as being “... a light to his feet and a lamp to his path”. Other instances of metaphor are contained in the sentences “He intend a volley of oath” and “The man tore through the building”.

**Metonymy**- Use of a word or phrase for another to which it bears an important relation, as the effect for the cause, the abstract for the concrete and similar constructions. Examples of metonymy are “He was an avid reader of Brutus” when the Poems of Brutus are meant; “The hostess kept a good table”, when good food is implied.

**Metre**- Regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. The basic unit is the ‘foot’ which is iambic, trochaic, anapestic, dactylic, spondaic or pyrrhic depending on number of syllables and position of the stress in the foot.

**Monologue**-Literarily, a one-person conversation. Hence an address by a single character to an assumed audience which reveals the character’s own thoughts, desires and motivation e.g. “The of Malaya” by Okotp’Bitek.

**Onomatopoeia**- imitation of natural sounds by words. Examples in English are the italicized words in the phrases “the humming bee”, “the cackling hen”, “the whizzing arrow,” and “the buzzing saw”.

**Oxymoron**- Juxtaposition of two words with opposite meanings to heighten effect, e.g. “*Dangerous safety*” in Senghor’s “In memoriam”

**Paradox**-Statement or sentiment that appears contradictory to common sense yet is true in fact. Examples of paradox are “mobilization for peace” and “a well-known secret agent”.

**Parallelism**-Placing phrases or sentences of similar construction and meaning side by side or in sequence to balance, contrast or reinforce each other. Common in oral, and satiric poetry. Important for musical and incantatory quality of verse.

**Personification**-Representation of inanimate objects or abstract ideas as living beings, as in the sentences “Necessity is the mother of invention”, “Lean famine stalked the land”, and “Night enfolded the town in its ebon wings”.

**Poetry**- Form of imaginative literary expression that makes its effect by the sound and imagery of its language. Poetry (the term is often used synonymously with the term verse) is essentially rhythmic and usually metrical, and it frequently has a stanzaic structure. It is those characteristic that the difference between poetry and other kinds of imaginative writing can be discerned.

**Pun**-Play upon words which are either identical or similar in sound, but very different in meaning e.g. the words *beer* and *bier* in Kwesi Brew’s “The Dry Season”.

**Rhetorical Question**- Asking of question not to gain information but to assert more emphatically the obvious answer to what is asked. No answer, in fact, is expected by the speaker. The device is illustrated in the following series of sentences: “Did you help me when I needed help? Did you once offer to intercede in my behalf? Did you do anything to lessen my load?”

**Sarcasm**- Bitter remark intended to hurt someone’s feelings by using words which clearly mean the opposite of what is thought or felt.

**Simile**- Specific comparison by means of the words “like” or “as” between two kinds of ideas or objects. Examples of the simile are contained in the sentences “Christianity shone like a beacon in the black night of paganism” and “Reason is to faith as the eye to the telescope”.

**Synecdoche**- Figurative locution whereby the part is made to stand for the whole, the whole for the part, the species for the genus, and vice versa. Thus, in the phrase “50 heads of cattle”, “head” is used to mean whole animals, and in the sentence “The president’s Cabinet contained the best brains of the country”, “brains” is used for intellectually brilliant people.

**Tone-** Writer's attitude toward his subject and audience reflected in the manner, mood and moral outlook implied in the work. May be serious or light, formal or intimate, scornful or sympathetic, direct or ironic.

**Understatement-** The opposite of Hyperbole, a representation which underemphasizes the importance of the subject.

**Witticism-** Humorous or clever remark, striking by its brevity and aptness.

### 3.4 SUMMARY

This module treats idioms and figures of speech. You have learnt that words tend to develop new meanings over long periods. You have also learnt that Idioms are fixed expressions with nonliteral meanings: a fixed distinctive expression whose meaning cannot be deduced from the combined meanings of its actual words. Every language has its own idioms and they are an integral part of the language. While Figures of Speech are words or group of words used to give particular emphasis to an idea or sentiment. The special emphasis is typically accomplished by the user's conscious deviation from the strict literal sense of a word, or from the more commonly used form of word order or sentence construction.

### 3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Now that you have completed this module, you can assess how well you have achieved its learning outcomes by answering the following questions. Compare your answers with the notes on Self-Assessment Questions at the end of the module or the material.

**SAQ:** Differentiate between proverbs and idioms.

**SAA:** A proverb is a wise saying that defines or expresses a people's understanding of nature, the environment and general human temperament. It shares some resemblances with idioms in that its meaning cannot normally be understood at the surface level.

### 3.6 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Figures of Speech and their examples-EnkiVillage[www.enkivillage.com/figure](http://www.enkivillage.com/figure-of-speech) –of-speech

[www.english-for-students.com/figure-of-speech](http://www.english-for-students.com/figure-of-speech)

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## MODULE 4: ESSAY WRITING

### INTRODUCTION

This module introduces you to logical presentation of papers. This is to equip you with the necessary precision and coherence in writing and to suite your writing to appropriate audiences and purposes. In this module emphasis is placed on essay writing and essay types. An essay is a written composition of moderate length exploring a particular issue or subject. It covers a wide range of varieties of writing skills such as narration, description, exposition, and argumentation as essay forms. Apart from how to write these kinds of essays, you will also learn about the techniques involved in letter writing as a form of essay.

### LEARNING OUTCOME

When you have studied this module, you are expected to learn about essay types.

#### 4.1 ESSAY

The word *essay* could have different senses, from the highly technical to the common. But in its broadest sense – the one we use for our purpose here – an essay a piece of writing on a particular subject. In other words, it is simply a piece of communication using the medium of writing. The length and focus of an essay depends on the content/quantity of information being relayed and the attitude of the writer towards his/her subject matter.

Since this differs radically from speech, which is often spontaneous and transient, it is important that we *plan* and *revise* very well whatever we write. This is even more so since our readers are bound to judge us from our words – i.e what we write. Hence, if a write-up is full of grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, illogical statements and incoherent thoughts, it is very likely to create an unfavourable impression of the writer.



A good essay therefore demands not just planning, but also being meticulous as well. In addition, it is important to bear a number of crucial factors in mind. For one, it is important to know your **audience** i.e. **whom** you are writing to. This is not merely in terms of their appearance, age or sex, but rather in terms of their communication needs as regards the subject you are writing on. What do they know and what do they need to know? This is necessary because if you do not know these, you might end up telling them what they already know (and do not need to know) or not telling them what they do not know (and need to know). Either of these can make a very inefficient writer of you.

### *Purpose of Writing*

It is important also to know your **purpose** – i.e. **why** you are writing, what you hope to achieve or what impact you aim to make on your readers: do you aim to convince, entertain or educate them? Once you are clear on this, you will easily determine what details you need to include and what kind of language (words and expressions) is suitable.

**Medium** is another important factor to be considered while writing an essay. Generally, we can distinguish between oral and written media. In doing this, the point of emphasis is on the fact that when one speaks, there is always the added advantage of the use of paralinguistic features like gesture (‘body language’) facial expression, voice modulation etc. In addition, since this is face to face encounter, there is the added advantage of an immediate feedback, where a speaker can instantly weight the reaction of listeners to his message and modify, reinforce or rephrase it if necessary.

But when it comes to writing, all these are lacking and the writer is left all alone to not only conjecture his readers possible reactions and difficulties (in understanding) but also use expressions that are clear enough to curtail any possible difficulty of interpretation. This means that if we are to write effectively, we need to be able to integrate into our words and expressions, all the features inherent in oral communication.

A second sense in which medium is regarded is that obtained in the distinction between formal and informal medium. This distinction is largely made with respect to setting. If the setting of our write up is informal (e.g. letters to friends and close associates) we usually tend to use colloquial expressions such as the use of familiar words, slang expressions, contracted or abbreviated forms of words, etc. But if the setting is a formal one, there would be no room for such colloquialisms, since the setting and topic are seen to be serious ones.

It can be seen from the foregoing, that writing can be more systematic and demanding than we might think. It is an activity that requires serious planning and it does much more than conveying messages since it can change people's line of thought or influence their decisions among others. However, this can only be achieved when the writing is effectively done. In order to excel in written English, we need to not only master the vocabulary and grammar of the language, but also read widely and observe how other people write. Mastery of the subject or topic of discussion is also very essential, as is our ability to use persuasive language.

#### **4.1.2 ESSAY TYPES**

Depending on the topic and purpose for which we are writing, we could find ourselves using different modes in developing our essay. This depends on whether we are narrating a past event, describing an entity or explaining a procedure.

##### **4.1.2.1 NARRATIVE ESSAY**

If we are narrating, the requirement is to *relate* an event or incident as an eyewitness would. This is the art of story-telling, and a wide experience in the reading of short stories, novels and so on, is required. In this instance, it is required that the essay be interesting and convincing: the reader should enjoy reading it and be led to believe that what he is reading is true. Not only that, the reader should also be carried away, to such an extent that his/her interest and eagerness keep increasing with every word he/she reads.

The narrative should follow the order in which the events took place, gradually moving the reader to the climax of your story. You have only to state the facts as they were.

Study the following passage about robbery as culled from *Exam Focus* (English):

It was pitch-dark outside the bedroom. It must have been that the security light was not switched on before we went to bed. There was some movement outside one of the windows. I listened. As I got up from bed to check at the window, a flash of light through the window dazzled my eyes. I shouted 'thief', and the next I heard was a bullet shot.

The writer here tries to paint a picture in words. It is only by your own imagination that the picture can be made more beautiful. Now examine the following ideas that emerge from the passage:

- (i) An element of fear in the reader, introduced by the use of the adjective 'pitch-dark'.
- (ii) The scene was at night, and the narrator was in the house
- (iii) The excuse for not having switched on the security light. Is it not possible that the thief damaged it to provide cover of darkness?
- (iv) The movement! Could the narrator be sure of the number of people outside the window?
- (v) The dazzled eyes. What was the source of the light?
- (vi) The plan of the thief or thieves.

Now ponder on the following questions:

- (i) Do you remember ever hearing or reading similar stories?
- (ii) What are the points of difference?
- (iii) What can you imagine to be the next series of actions?

It will be clear from the above that reading or writing a narrative essay requires imagination. This is because the reader expects not only to hear but also to feel, with the five senses, and along with the writer both in body and in mind.

#### 4.1.2.2 DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

A descriptive essay is one that requires one to write a description of, for example, an object, a person, an animal, an incident or a scene. When writing a descriptive essay one should have very clear picture in ones mind of what one wants to describe. The clearer the picture the better the description.

Assume that you want to write a description of a memorable rainy day you will live to remember. In doing this, beside being able to describe the ordinary details of a rain – what kind of rain, how long it lasted, how heavy it was, and so on, you must not forget to consider also its effects: both the comfort which the rain brought and the inconveniences or damage it caused. Your essay will also make more interesting reading if you do not limit your consideration to the area where you live (urban or rural).

You will earn credit by showing great imagination in your description. The rainy day could be the day your elder brother who had studied abroad was due to return home finally. Part of the effect of the rain could be that, even though you heard the sound of the aircraft bringing him, the plane could not land as a result of bad weather or flooded run-way, and had to be diverted to a nearby airport. Such ideas as these will make your essay an interesting and effective piece of writing.

Ensure that your presentation follows a logical order. Take, for instance, the topic given above. You should make sure that you finish describing incidents that took place in the morning before moving on to those that followed in the afternoon and then later in the evening. It is poor planning, in normal circumstances, to jump forwards and backwards in such an essay. After your description of the day's events, you should try to conclude by giving your own assessment of the events of the day or summarizing the effects of the rain on that day. Whatever you do, however, always bear in mind the needs and background of your readers.

Descriptions are usually of three types: Events, Persons and places. Below are some examples of descriptions of persons and places, as culled from E. Strauch's *Creative Writing for Africans*.

### **A Hunter**

There is a hunter who lives in a town called Kumshe in Bama Local Government Area of Borno State. The hunter is named after a certain wild animal known in the Kanuri language as Bundi. This name expresses the man's bravery because the animal itself is known to be wild and ferocious. The hunter is about five feet tall and is extremely black in complexion. He is well built. All the muscles in his

arms, chest, and legs are like large, smooth rocks. His blood vessels resemble a tributary river over a black land. He has a big, round head, which looks like a large egg stood up on end. Because he has no hair on his head, the sunlight makes his skull shine like a copper kettle rubbed with oil. His eyes are fiery red. His short, thick neck makes his chin rest on his collarbones. The hunter's face is full of scars. He has thick lips. When he laughs, his teeth look like scattered animal bones with the gums between. He has a broad chest, flat, muscular abdomen and big buttocks. From head to foot, he resembles a kind of upside-down pyramid. He covers himself with animal hides and wears shoes made from goatskin.

### **The Library**

The former University of Maiduguri library is a one-story building. From the outside, one would think the building is made of glass. The reason is that it has tall windows divided only by widely placed pillars that bear the weight of the building. All around the building is a wire fence which prevents the sliding glass windows from being manipulated. Just inside the entrance doors is a rectangular enclosure where the librarians lend out books. About halfway between the entrance doors and the opposite wall are two doors – one on the left and the other on the right. These doors are part of massive glass walls that divide the reference section from the serials section. If it were not for the printing on the glass doors, one would not know doors were there at all except, of course, if one sees students passing through them. To Get upstairs, one uses a circular staircase concealed in a round stairwell – the steps spiralling around a single, steel column. The large hall upstairs is also divided in two – one for special reference and the other for books to be borrowed. The books in the lending library are kept on long shelves divided broadly according to subjects. The orderly arrangement makes it easy to find what you want in the library.

### **4.1.2.3 ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY**

An argumentative essay tries to convince the listener to change his/her position, point of view or opinion about something and accept that which is being proposed by the other party in the argument. An argument succeeds with diplomatic presentation of the opposing view and weighing it against an existing opinion. When this is done in an essay form it is called argumentative essay. In such an essay the writer is not supposed to make a plea, command, appeal or dissuade but rather persuade or convince your reader to accept your position as the most valid and tangible.

#### 4.1.2.4 EXPOSITORY ESSAY

Expository essays explain something to the reader or to inform him/her about something like: explanation of how a material is produced, e.g. by a local craftsman, scientific kind of process or how an activity is usually conducted. Writing an expository essay is as good as writing with the intent of digging into the depth of knowledge so as to educate the reader. The expository essay therefore serves to explain, explicate, or elucidate an idea or new found knowledge to enable the reader appreciate what is current in the field of knowledge. Therefore while writing such an essay; you should always start straight away stating the first thing that has to be done, always decide carefully what your readers needed to be told and group your instructions into paragraphs dealing with the main stage in the procedure and number those paragraphs consecutively.

**ITA:** Name the four kinds of essay.

**ITQ:** There four major kinds of essay: narrative essay, descriptive essay, argumentative essay and expository essay.

#### 4.1.3 HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

In any kind of essay writing, there should be clarity of expression and good thoughts. These depends on the following: topic, suitable opening, adequate development of points, a good paragraphing and linking devices, balance, unity, coherence and a suitable conclusion. In between these elements are necessary indicators that join to make an essay comprehensive. First is punctuation; it makes clear what we want to present. For instance, inverted commas “X” around direct speech and appropriate use of brackets. Punctuation marks should not be used too much or else it will slow down the essay and makes it difficult to read. Secondly, correct spelling of words

is very essential in essays; if you are not sure of the spelling of a word, you should check it up in a good dictionary or use a suitable synonym. Consistency in spelling (American / British) is really important. You should adopt one style all through preferably the British form. Examples could be seen in the elements below:

	<b>AMERICAN</b>	<b>BRITISH</b>
i.	Traveler	Traveller
ii.	Labor	Labour
iii.	Theater	Theatre
iv.	Center	Cwntre
v.	Neighbor	Neighbour

Thirdly, relevant details must be included, since the essence is to give information which, will help the reader to recognise what is being said. Below are the steps you should take towards writing an essay.

**Choosing a topic:** The first step one takes towards writing a good essay is to select a topic. This topic should be about a subject that interests you most. It is this interest you have in the chosen topic that will spur you and help you in sustaining your write up.

**Orgainisation :** Arrange your ideas about the subject you are about to write in sequence, so that when you begin to write, the items will flow smoothly. Depending on what you are writing about or the argument you are propagating, your points should be ordered in chronological order, spatial order or according to their degree of importance. You may choose to develop your essay using comparison and dissimilarity or cause and effect pattern. This involves Planning and Outline: There is need for an essay writer to bring out a structure or outline of what he intends to write. This will serve as a guide towards sustaining the essay on its chosen course. This is done by

listing the points, organizing the points in logical order and reviewing the list. The outline is to guide the essay writer to maintain his course of discussion in an order that flows

Consistency in point of view: Your essay should establish a point of view which you sustain throughout the essay. Apart from sustaining your theme or point of view, the lexical items and sentence construction should maintain a consistency. Use simple clear language. The vocabulary should be appropriate, use simple words and phrases which will exactly express your ideas. There should be no abbreviations or the like of b/4, b/cos, btwn, etc. repetition and colloquialism or slang should be avoided in formal writing. Begin a fresh sentence whenever you wish to express a new idea; minor points should be placed in subordinate clauses or phrases but not in separate sentences.

Aim: Before one begins to write, there should always be a defined purpose and so every word and sentence of the essay should be deliberately selected carefully towards achieving the said purpose.

Audience: Always keep your audience in mind as you write your essay. This is very important, because except you have a target audience in mind, you may end up addressing no body. The audience should be specific: children or adult, as in teacher/student, politician/party-members, clergy/worshippers, or employer/employee relations. Selection of an audience affects both the materials you select for inclusion and your way of presenting it. When the target audience is not defined, your essay is likely to derail from its course.

**ITQ:** In writing an essay of any type, five key points are essential, list them.

**ITA:** These are audience, aim, consistency in point of view, organization and choosing a topic.



#### **4.1.4 LETTER WRITING**

All the principles of good essay writing set forth above apply to letters and should be used by the student whenever he/she is called on to write letters. Letter writing is a means of communication to a distant relation. This relationship could be formal or informal which defines the type of letter to be written. We all write letters in everyday life and often this medium helps us to convey our ideas more forcefully than when they are orally spoken. Letters also serve as written records which the recipient may not ignore or discard easily.

##### **4.1.4.1 KINDS OF LETTERS**

Broadly speaking letters are of three kinds categorized mainly based on their functions; the business, the personal and the official.

##### **4.1.4.2 BUSINESS LETTERS**

Business letters are written to trading organizations, shopkeepers and journals. These letters follow prescribed usage with respect to the six essential parts; heading, inside address, salutation (or greeting), body of the letter, complimentary close and signature. Business letters, except otherwise specified, are preferably typewritten on one side only of a sheet of paper, if its body does not require a second page. This sheet is folded either once or horizontally and twice in the other direction to fit a matching envelope. In both form and content, writers of business letters are advised to follow patterns that bring out clarity, conciseness and competence of the writers, reflecting the qualities which business and industry consider indispensable.

Business letters, most especially applications letters seeking for one job or the other, are the most important you letters you may be required to write. As you write such letter, keep the following points in mind:

- i. Be specific of the position you are applying for and the source of your information from which you learnt of its existence.
- ii. Inform the reader about your education and previous employment directly and accurately but be brief about it.
- iii. Always provide three referees to include people you have studied the courses relevant to the post you are applying for and those who you have worked under and who can testify to your moral conduct. Permission must be sought from such referees before their names are listed in your application.
- iv. It is always appropriate to provide a fairly full listing on a separate sheet of paper under the heading Resume or Curriculum Vitae. Where such is provided, your letter should only highlight in summary form the important data regarding your qualifications and working experience. The business letter should demonstrate all the six essential parts that such letters carry:
  - i. The heading carries the full address of the writer and the date of the letter. The heading is always blocked as shown in the model, and end punctuation is regularly omitted with the blocked-heading. If there is a letterhead, which supplies the address, the date may be written either under the letterhead or flush with the right margin.
  - ii. The inside address should be identical with the address to appear on the envelope and must give the name and the full address of the person to whom the letter is written. The inside address

must be consistent in form with the heading. The inside address is typed flush with the left margin about six spaces lower than the heading.

iii. The salutation or greeting should be consistent with the tone of the letter, the first line of the inside address, and the complimentary close. The salutation is written flush with left margin two spaces below the inside address and is followed by a colon (:). The following salutations are used for men: Dear sir: Dear Dr. Marcus: or Gentlemen: and for women: Dear Madam: Dear Mrs. Ibrahim: or Ladies: The masculine salutation is used to address an organization (Gentlemen) or an individual (Dear Sir) whose name the writer does not know. In some instances a business letter is addressed to an organization or a department of an organization but marked for the attention of a particular person. In such letters, the “attention line” is placed two spaces above the salutation, thus:

Attention: Mr. Sunday Buba

Gentlemen:

For the proper form of salutation in letters to government officials, ecclesiastical dignitaries, etc., consult a good dictionary. In salutations and addresses, abbreviations are generally disapproved except for *Mr.*, *Mrs.* and *Dr.*

iv. The body of the business letter should follow the principles of good essay writing. Typewritten business letters are usually single-spaced, with double spacing between paragraphs. All paragraphs should begin flush with the left –hand margin, as in our model business letter, or should be indented equally, usually five spaces. The subject matter should be well organized and paragraphed, but the paragraphs will frequently be shorter than ordinary writing. The style should be clear and direct. Indirect, abbreviated, or outdated phrasing should be avoided.

v. Complimentary close should be consistent with the tone of the letter and with the salutation. Ordinary business letters addressed to strangers should close with *Yours truly*, *Yours very truly*, or *very truly yours*. Professional letters, or business letters addressed to an individual with such an opening as *Dear Mr. Sunday*, may well close with the more friendly *Yours sincerely*, *Sincerely yours*, *Sincerely*, *Faithfully yours*, or *Cordially yours*.

vi. The signature should be written directly below the complimentary close. If the writer's name does not appear in the letterhead, it may be typed just below the signature. Ordinarily, neither professional titles nor degrees should be used with the signature, but the writer's official capacity may be indicated. For example it is wrong to sign:

Anjikwi Bata LL.D,

But one can sign:

Anjikwi Bata  
Director

A married woman should sign her own name *Mary Georgina Kwatamdia* not *Mrs. John Mshellia*. In business letters her status is indicated by the use of parentheses as follows:

Mary Georgina Kwatamdia

(Mrs. John Mshellia)

Or

(Mrs.) Mary Georgina Mshellia

vii. When enveloping a business letter to fit the long standard envelope or small envelope, the following procedures are followed. For the long standard envelope, first fold bottom of letter up, then fold top of letter down leaving about quarter (1/4) an inch, then insert into the envelope starting with

the top of the letter. But if the envelope is the small business type, then you first fold bottom of letter up, after which you now fold left side of letter in, then fold right of letter over left, leaving about quarter of an inch (1/4) of the letter. Finally put into the small business envelope starting with the top of the letter.

#### 4.1.4.3 PERSONAL LETTERS

Personal letters could equally be referred to as private letters. We write these letters to friends, relations and other people we are acquainted with. The body of such letters could are not from essay composition because the writer may be writing about his touring experiences, visit to the Holy Land, first experience at school or about an occasion he attended. Friendly letters like this often omit the inside address, but if it is included, it may be placed either at the beginning, flush with the right margin or at the end of the letter, flush with the left margin.

The salutation is often followed by instead of the more formal colon. As in the business letter, the salutation should be in keeping with the complimentary close and with the tone of the letter. A letter beginning with *Dear Mr. Haman* may close with *Sincerely Yours*, *Yours Sincerely* or *Cordially Yours*. A more familiar salutations and complimentary close may be justified by the intimacy of the correspondents.

The body of such a letter varies greatly with the occasion and with the personality of the writer. An easy, informal style is always the best in writing personal letters.

#### 4.1.4.4 FORMAL NOTES

Formal social notes- announcements, invitations, answers to invitations – follow very definite conventions. Formal social notes or official letters are written to or by officials. For the rare occasions when formal notes are required, engraving or handwriting (not typing) is the rule. Official notes are always written in the third person. They have no inside address, no salutations, no complimentary close, and no signature. The writer's street address and the month and the date may be placed below at the left. Every word (except the street number and the abbreviations Mr., Mrs., and Dr.), is spelled out in full. Acceptances and regrets follow the form of the invitation closely, repeating the hour and the date to insure understanding.

#### 4.2 SUMMARY OF MODULE 4

In Module 4, you have learnt that:

- i. Narrative essays tell a story, either fictional or non-fictional. The events told in the essay, in most cases are based on the personal experiences of the writer.
- ii. Descriptive essays communicate to a reader the writer's impression of a person, a place or an object. Its main objective is to create a very clear and precise picture of something in words. What is required of the writer is the combination of good sense of observation with descriptive techniques so as to create a vivid and impressive picture of what is described.
- iii. Argumentative essays set out to convince a set of audience to its position, point of view or opinion about something and accept that which is being proposed through the argument.
- iv. Expository essays explain or inform the reader about new discovery in the field of knowledge or of any other thing the reader knows that he wants others to be aware of it.

- v. Apart from the kinds of essays, you have also learnt about three kinds of letters- business, personal and formal – and how to write them.

You have also learnt that in writing such essays the writer needs to organize his thoughts, be consistent in his point of view, identify his audience, has to plan and draw an outline for the essay.

### 4.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs) FOR MODULE 4

Now that you have completed this module, you can assess how well you have achieved its learning outcomes by answering the following questions. Compare your answers with the notes on Self-Assessment Questions at the end of the module or the material.

**SAQ** Write the following business letters:

- i Call the attention of your representative in the National Assembly to some urgent security threats in your locality, which is part of his constituency.
- ii. Apply for a position that you are competent to fill. Be sure to include the following: (a) a brief description of the job desired – be specific; (b) your qualifications, including age, schooling and experience; (c) at least three referees – people who know you well and are able to evaluate your ability; (d) a request for an interview.
- iii. Recommend to your employer, a young man or woman with whom you have worked, to fill the position you are about to resign.

**SAQ** Write the following personal letters:

- i. Answer a friend's inquiry about the courses offered by the Centre for Distance Learning, University of Maiduguri.

- ii. Accept an invitation to spend a weekend with a friend.
- ii. Congratulate a friend in another college on his election to some class office, or any other honour.

### **4.3 SOLUTIONS TO SAQs**

SAQs 7.2.1 & 7. 2.2 are tests on learning outcomes 2. 1 to 2.6. You can check your answers with the model letter provided in Module 4 putting into consideration what are expected of personal or formal letters and essay types.

### **4.4 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Hodges, J. C and Whitten E. M (1967). *Hargrave College Handbook*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc

Murthy, J.D. (2007), *Contemporary English Grammar*. Lagos: Book Master.



## MODULE 5: PUBLIC SPEAKING AND THE ART OF ORAL PRESENTATION

### INTRODUCTION

This Session introduces you to public speaking and the art of oral presentation. Public speaking has been defined in the Wikipedia as “the process of speaking to a group of people in a structured, deliberate manner intended to inform, influence or entertain the listeners.” As in any of form communication, five basic elements that encapsulate speech are often expressed as “**who** is saying **what** to **whom** using what **medium** and with what **effect**?” There are several classical parts to a public speech but this module shall be limited to “*Important Points to Note in Public Speaking*”. While In its simplest form ‘oral’ refers to ‘spoken’ rather than ‘written’

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of Module 5, you are expected to:

- 1.1 Appreciate important points to note in public speaking, and
- 1.2 Explain the art of oral presentation.

### 5.1 IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE IN SPEAKING

Public speaking includes, among others lectures, sermons, political campaign speeches, rally speeches, public lectures, and evangelical campaign speeches. Thus, it can range from the telling of stories, transmission of information to inciting people to do something by, for instance, instilling feelings in them or stroking their emotions.

An assortment of points, steps, tips or guides can be found from different sources on the best approach to adopt in preparing and delivering public speech. While the best of the world's orators might not have gone to any formal school of oratory, a number of steps are generally accepted as important in the making of public speech. One such guide can be accessed from the website of the *Advanced Public Speaking Institute* (<http://www.public-speaking-org/public-speaking-articles>).

To prepare a public speech, you must know what your audience needs and ensure that what you have for them will satisfy those needs. Then you must be familiar with the subject of your speech and try to arrange that logically. Give your audience their time's worth by making your speech captivating. In that way, their attention will be entirely on your speech. The saying that practice makes perfect applies aptly to speech making. Thus, a little rehearsal of your speech in front of a mirror, friends or colleagues can help put you at ease on the real speech occasion. You can make a tape recording of yourself and listen to the playback. That will help you know where your strong and weak points are.

During the presentation, consider yourself as an actor with all eyes on you. You might be judged partially by the way you look; so present the desired image to your audience. One way to do this is to, as much as possible, dress appropriately. Be solemn if your topic is serious. Try to present a picture of someone pleasant, enthusiastic, confident and modest. You have to be, or pretend if possible, to be calm even if you feel nervous. The pace of your speech should be moderate and your articulation clear. It is also important to establish rapport with your audience. Vary the tone of your voice and dramatize if necessary. Where a microphone is available, your voice should be adjusted to it accordingly.

The use of body language can enhance your speech presentation. It is preferable to stand or move about and use appropriate hand gesture or facial expression rather than sit down or stand still with head down reading from a prepared speech. Use audio-visual aids for enhancement if appropriate and necessary. Master the use of presentation soft wares such as PowerPoint well before your presentation.

To be able to persuade your audience effectively, you need to **speak with conviction**, in a way that will make your audience feel that you really believe in what you are saying. In other words, your presentation should have a logical progression from a clearly conceivable thesis statement (introduction) to strong supporting arguments in the form of accurate, up-to-date information (body) to a re-statement of the thesis or summary of the presented arguments (conclusion).

As a presenter, you are not forbidden from taking occasional glances of your written speech, though the golden rule says 'do not read from your speech'. However, speaking loudly and clearly as well as sounding confident is a virtue. Correct any slips and errors and continue unapologetically.

Another skill to use is to make everyone in your audience feel involved by maintaining eye contact with individuals in the audience. That is, have direct eye contact with members of the audience and every now and then, glance at the whole audience while speaking. A popular technique is to look straight into the eyes of a person in the audience for about three (3) seconds at a time.

As you make your speech, do not carry on like a train without brakes. You should learn to occasionally pause and allow yourself and your audience a little time to reflect and think. To ward off boredom, especially when your topic is solemn, you can bring in a little humour whenever appropriate and possible. This will keep the audience interested throughout your entire presentation. Remember that interesting speeches make time fly, but boring speeches are always long, however short they are.

You can make your audience really follow your speech when you have handouts ready. In such a case, give them out at the appropriate time and inform the audience ahead of time that you will be giving out an outline of your presentation.

It is necessary to know when to stop talking. Time can be saved by avoiding the use of unnecessary words in your written paper; to end your presentation, summarize your main points in the same way as you normally do in a written paper. This will save time. You can as well use a timer to time your presentation when rehearsing it.

In concluding your paper, do not start making another speech. You should end your speech by making an interesting remark related to your topic. That will leave your audience with a positive impression and a sense of completion. Rather than overstress your closing remarks, the required thing is to thank your audience and leave the stage.

**ITA:** List out the points to note in public speech.

**ITQ:** The points to note in public speech include: use facts, figures and illustrations, begin with subject matter with which there is agreement, determine the exact subject clearly in your mind, think through the whole subject, formulate your own ideas, know the subject thoroughly, tell a story that is related to the subject or situation at hand, ask challenging questions, and lastly, your speech should be educative, thought provoking and inspiring.

## 5.2 THE ART OF ORAL PRESENTATION

In its simplest form ‘oral’ refers to ‘spoken’ rather than ‘written’. Obasi, in her contribution to the *Student’s Companion: Readings in General Studies*, a publication of the Division of General Studies, University Of Maiduguri, articulates that In order for oral communication to function successfully, there are three basic requirements. One of these requirements is the shared situational knowledge, which forms the base line of communication.

She goes on to argue that every communicative situation must have some background facts or information which the participants must share, if there is to be any form of effective communication. The various communication situations can be classified into two broad categories: Formal and Informal situations. Formal situation according to her has important characteristic feature which is “the presence of a planned discourse”. In such situation “scripted text has been thought out, planned and organized prior to expression.” This preparation may be for court sessions, sermons, conference and other functions that one is called upon to present a speech. It is expected that audience “have a shared situational knowledge”. The informal situation however is characterized by the use of an “unscripted text, casual, spontaneous and without organisation”. This happens especially during

“casual conversations, between commuters, exchange of greetings between neighbours” and other forms.

Secondly, another important factor or “successful oral communication is the ability of the sender to code the message in such a way that the receiver will be able to decode it easily.” This refers to the correct use of language, the medium which covers the message. Accuracy in speech makes understanding a reality. But defective punctuation, poor pronunciation, and erroneous sentences or misuse of words can hinder communication. The effect of bad English may result to misunderstanding as Confucius observes “If the language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant... Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said”. And in this line of thought, Chinua Achebe once said “I am convinced that the major flaw of our political culture is the inefficient and half –baked language in which we conduct our national affairs. The quality of the English language spoken and written in Nigeria has been falling rapidly and will fall more dramatically in the next few years”. The correctness of language is a very essential factor in oral communication.

Feedback is equally an essential element for “oral communication.” When the speaker addresses, it is expected that the audience “responds in one or more ways, depending on the demand of the message”. The feedback is the evidence that the audience has understood the message or not.

### **5.2.1 THE PRACTICE OF ORAL PRESENTATION**

Oral communication operates with words of the mouth. These words “vocal sounds” differ from one community to another. Oral communication includes describing, narrating, arguing, explaining,

persuading and the likes. These functions require the speaker to be equipped with self- confidence, practical techniques, and further suggested ideas added to those rules that will help everyone to meet people as individuals or groups, and to talk to them effectively. Below is a summary of the requirements for how to develop confidence and influence people by oral presentation. These can be effective also in all other forms of speech especially public speech.

### ***DEVELOPING COURAGE AND SELF CONFIDENCES***

When I am called upon to stand and speak (person after person wrote) I become so self-conscious, so frightened, that I can't think clearly, can't concentrate, can't remember what I had intended to say. I want to get self-confidence, poise, and the ability to think on my feet. I want to get my thoughts together in logical order and I want to be able to say my say clearly and convincingly before a business or club group or audience. In order to get the most out of your efforts to become a good speaker, and to get it with rapidity and dispatch, four things are essential:

- i. Start with and persistent desire- if your desire is pale and flabby, your achievements will also take on that line and consistency. But, if go after your subject with persistence, and with the energy of a bulldog after a cat, nothing underneath the Milky Way will defeat you.
- ii. Know thoroughly what you are going to talk about- unless you plan or thought out what you are about to say, you can't feel very comfortable when you face your audience.
- iii. Act confident – develop courage when you are facing an audience, act as if you already had. Granted that you know what you are going to talk about, step out briskly and take

out a deep breath. In fact, breathe deeply for thirty seconds before you ever face your audience.

- iv. Practice- this is emphatically the most important. The best way to develop self-confidence in speaking is to speak.

### ***SELF-CONFIDENCE THROUGH PREPARATION***

The urgent necessity of preparing a talk before one starts to make it, of having something clear and definite to say, something that has impressed one, something that won't stay unsaid, requires self-confidence. When a speaker is in that kind of mental and emotional state he will discover a significant fact: namely, that his talk will almost make itself. A well-prepared speech is already nine-tenths. Preparation means the assembling of your thoughts, your ideas, your convictions, and your urges. In essence, preparation refers to thinking, brooding, recalling, selecting the ones that appeal to you most, polishing them, and working them into a pattern, a mosaic of your own. In preparing a speech these are suggested steps to take:

- i Choose the subject in advance so that you will have enough time to think over it.
- ii. Ask yourself every possible question about the subject.
- iii. Do not talk about abstract preachment that bore your audience
- iv. While preparing, study your audience. Think of their wants and their wishes.
- v. In preparing some topics, it is very advisable to do some reading, to discover what others have thought, what others have said on the same subject. But do not read until you have first exhausted all your thoughts.



### 5.2.1.1 READ THE SPEECH OF FAMOUS SPEAKERS

Study the speech of famous speakers and see how they prepare their respective addresses. You will discover that there are not, as mentioned earlier, any infallible rules that will solve the question of the best arrangement. There are no designs or schemes or charts that will fit all or even a majority of speeches; yet here are a few speech plans that will prove usable in some-instances. Dr. Russell H. Collwell, the author of the famous *Acre Of Diamonds*, built many of his speeches on this outline: State your facts, Argue from them and Appeal for action.

However, many people have found this plan very helpful and stimulating: Show something that is wrong, show how to remedy it and ask for cooperation. Or, to put it in another way: Here is a situation that ought to be remedied. We ought to do so and so about the matter and you ought to help for these reasons: This outline is briefly still another speech plan:

- Secure interested attention
- Win confidence
- State your facts; educate people regarding the merits of your proposition
- Appeal to the motives that men act.

Suggested famous speakers to read include: Theodore Roosevelt, Senator Albert J. Beveridge, Sir Oliver Lodge, Benjamin Franklin, Barack Obama, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Jesse Jackson, Tony Blair, Abraham Lincoln, Socrates, Paul John Paul II, George Washington, Indira Ghandi, and a host of others. While some of these speeches are fiery and impassioned speeches, some of them are learned, philosophical, or reflective, satirical or humorous. These will inspire readers and provide public speakers with ideas for powerful openings, effective transitions, impressive endings, provocative themes, historic parallels and memorable quotations.

### **5.2.1.3 IMPROVEMENT OF YOUR MEMORY**

The first mandate of memory is this: get a deep, vivid, and lasting impression of the thing you wish to retain. And to do that you must concentrate. Five minutes of vivid, energetic concentration will produce greater results than days of mooning about in a mental haze. The natural laws of remembering are three: impression, repetition and association. When you are out to deliver, some of the features of natural speaking are to be employed in your conversation, use them as consciously as you digested your dinner and this comes only by practice. First, stress important words, and subordinate unimportant ones. Second, change your pitch, the pitch of your voices in conversation flows up and down the scale from high to low and back again, never resting, but always shifting like the face of the sea. Third, vary your rate of speaking; it is, in fact, one of the very best of all possible ways to make an idea stand out prominently. Fourth, pause before and after important ideas.

#### **5.2.1.4.1 PLATFORM PRESENCE AND PERSONALITY**

A personality is determined by inheritance and environment and is extremely difficult to alter or improve. Yet we can, by taking thought, strengthen it to some extent and make it more forceful and more attractive.

#### **5.2.1.4.2 HOW TO OPEN A TALK**

- i. Beware of opening with a so-called humorous story
- ii. Do not begin with an apology
- iii. Arouse curiosity

- iv. Begin with a story; we especially like to hear a speaker relate narratives from his own experiences.
- v. Begin with a specific illustration
- vi. Use an exhibit
- vii. Ask a question
- viii. Try a striking quotation from a famous man
- ix. Tie your topic up to the vital interests of your audience
- x. Starting with shocking facts
- xi. Do not make your opening too formal.

#### **5.2.1.4.2 HOW TO CLOSE A TALK**

- i. Summarize your points
- ii. Appeal for action
- iii. A terse, sincere compliment
- iv. A humorous close
- v. Closing with a poetical quotation
- vi. The power of Biblical quotations, a choice Biblical quotation often has a profound effect.

#### ***HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEANINGS CLEAR***

To be clear is highly important and often very difficult, but it is very essential in oral presentation and any other form of speech.

- i. Use Comparison to Promote Clearness; Christ made the unknown clear by talking of it in terms of the known.
- ii. Avoid technical terms when addressing a lay audience. Follow Lincoln's plan of putting your ideas into language plain enough for anybody to understand.

- iii. Appeal to the sense of sight; use exhibit, pictures, illustrations when possible. Be definite. Do not say “dog” if you mean “a fox terrier with a black splotch over his right eye”.
- iv. Restate Your Important Ideas in Different Words, but do not repeat, do not use the same phrases twice. Vary the sentences, but reiterate the idea without letting your listeners detect it.
- v. Use General Illustrations and Specific Instances; make your abstract statement clear by following it with general illustrations- and what is often better still, by specific instances and concrete cases.
- vi. Do not emulate the Mountain Goat; do not strive to cover too many points. In a short speech one cannot hope to treat adequately more than one or two phases of a big topic.
- vii. Close with a brief summary of your points

#### **5.2.1.4.4 HOW TO INTEREST YOUR AUDIENCE**

- i. Give them extraordinary fact about ordinary things
- ii. Our chief interest is ourselves; the person who leads others to talk about themselves and their interests and listen intently will generally be considered a good conversationalist even though he does very little talking.
- iii. Glorified gossip, stories of people, will almost always win and hold attention. The speaker ought to make only a few points and to illustrate them with human-interest stories.
- iv. Be concrete and definite.
- v. Sprinkle your talks with phrases that create pictures; with words that set images floating before your eyes.

- vi. If possible use balanced sentences and contrasting ideas.
- vii. Interest is contagious. The audience is sure to catch it, if the speaker himself has a bad case of it. But it cannot be won by the mechanical adherence to mere rules.

#### **5.2.1.4.5 IMPROVE YOUR DICTION**

We have only four contacts with people. We are evaluated and classified by four things: by what we do, by how we look, by what we say, and how we say it. How often we are judged by the language we use. Charles W. Eliot, after he had been President for Harvard for a third of a century, declared: “I recognize but one mental acquisition as a necessary part of the education of a lady or gentleman, namely, an accurate and refined use of the mother tongue.”

Your diction will be very largely a reflection of the company you keep. So follow Lincoln’s example and keep company with the masters of literature. Spend your evenings, as he often did, with Shakespeare and the other great poets and masters of prose. Do that and unconsciously, inevitably, your mind will be enriched and your diction will take on something of the glory of your companions.

- iii. Give your time to the reading of some enduring books, carry them in your pocket, and read them at odd moments during the day.
- iv. Read with a dictionary by your side. Look up the unfamiliar word. Try to find a use for it so that you may fix it in your memory.
- v. Study the derivative of the words you use. Their histories are not dull and dry: often they are replete with romance. For example, the word ‘salary’ really means ‘salt money’. The roman

soldiers were given an allowance for the purchase of salt. Some wag, one day created a bit of slang by refereeing to his wage as his salt money.

- vi. Do not use shop-worn, threadbare words. Be precise, exact, in your meaning.
- vii. Do not use trite companions such as “cool as a cucumber”. Strive for freshness; create similes of your own. Have the courage to be distinctive.

**ITQ:** List four points so essential in the practice of oral presentation.

**ITA:** The four points in oral presentation include: development of courage and self-confidence, self-confidence through preparation, reading of the speech of famous speakers and improvement of your memory.

### 5.3 SUMMARY

In Module 5, you have learnt about public speaking and the art of oral presentation. The information in this piece has been used successfully by many people as practical and valuable ways to influence the most important people in their life: their friends, business associates, their customers and their employers. This information can do the same thing to you; use it in your everyday speech.

### 5.4. SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Now that you have completed this module, you can assess how well you have achieved its learning outcomes by answering the following questions. Compare your answers with the notes on Self-Assessment Questions at the end of the module or the material.

**SAQ 5.1** Define public speaking.

**SAQ 5.5.1** Public speaking has been defined in the Wikipedia as “the process of speaking to a group of people in a structured, deliberate manner intended to inform, influence or entertain the listeners.” As in any of form communication, five basic elements that encapsulate speech are often expressed as “**who** is saying **what** to **whom** using what **medium** and with what **effects**?” There are several classical parts to a public speech but this module shall be limited to “*Important Points to Note in Public Speaking*”.

**SAQ 5.5.2** In its simplest form ‘oral’ refers to ‘spoken’ rather than ‘written’. In order for oral communication to function successfully, there are three basic requirements. One of these requirements is the shared situational knowledge, which forms the base line of communication.

## 5.6. REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Carnegie D. (1998) *How to Develop Self-Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking*. Benin City: Rhema
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- Kumar, v. (2006). *The world's greatest speeches*. Lagos: Mindex Publishing
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- Strauch, E.H (1995). *Creative Writing For Africans: How To Write Descriptions, News Report, Explanations, Essay And Original Stories*. Lanham: University Press Of Africa
- Public Speaking, Advanced Public-Speaking Institute ([http:// www.Public-speaking - org/public-speaking-articles](http://www.Public-speaking-org/public-speaking-articles))
- <http://www.amanet.org>>training >articles

\*NOTE: Most parts of this module are extracts from Carnegie D. (1998) and Obasi, U.(2007). You are advised to look out for these materials and improve on your knowledge of what you have learnt in this module.