



Effective **ENGLISH** Communication

For Tertiary Institutions

EDITED BY

Anthony E. Ogu | Obiajulu A. Emejulu
Richard C. Ihejirika | Dan Chima Amadi

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all our English teachers at all levels of education, who lit the light in us that is now a source of illumination to many.

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CHAPTER THREE

WRITING: ESSAYS, LETTERS AND PARAGRAPHING

Richard C. Ihejirika, Mary C. Okere and Chinomso P. Dozie

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we shall attempt to discuss different types of essay writing, letter writing and paragraphing. The objective is to enable the reader recognize the appropriate procedure to follow in writing each type of essay. But before we do that, we shall begin with general discussions which apply to all forms of writing.

Out of all the four skills of language acquisition and learning: reading, writing, speaking and listening, writing appears to be more complex and laborious. The reason is that in writing, apart from battling with the correct use of language, one has to organize one's ideas in such an acceptable fashion in order to achieve the desired effect. The problem of writing is made more complex in a second language situation such as ours where one thinks in his mother tongue (L1) and writes in English language (L2). However, these problems can be adequately taken care of if one painstakingly goes through the rules and regulations governing writing, understands them and tries to put them into practice.

There are different forms of writing with their individual peculiarities. However, there are some issues in writing that cut across all types. In this context, those issues have been



tagged “General Considerations in Writing”. Our aim in this section is to discuss those issues.

3.2 STAGES IN WRITING

There are three basic stages one has to go through irrespective of the form of writing one is involved in. These are: Pre-writing, Writing and Re-writing stages.

3.2.1 PREWRITING STAGE

This is the first stage of any writing exercise be it an essay or a letter. This stage can be likened to the foundation of a building. Every building process begins with the laying of foundation. It is on this that the blocks are systematically arranged and held together. The pre-writing stage involves the following activities.

Choosing a Topic

In the prewriting stage, the first thing you should do is to choose a topic. In doing so, it is advisable that you choose a topic you are familiar with and can properly handle. The examiner will not give you extra mark for choosing a difficult topic. You should choose a topic for which you have enough points to develop and enough time to finish. If a topic turns out to have a large scope, it could be narrowed down to meet the exigency of time and space. For example, the topic “Drug Abuse among Youths” is very wide. In tackling this topic as it is, the writer should discuss, among other things, what drug abuse is, causes, effects and solutions to it. A clever student would observe that ordinarily it is somehow impossible for one to do justice to this topic within an examination time. In such a circumstance, what the student

should do is to indicate in the introductory paragraph the angle from which he or she intends to tackle the question (i.e. whether the emphasis should be on the causes, the effects or the solutions to drug abuse).

Gathering of Ideas

After you have settled for a topic, the next thing to do is to think out ideas. This stage is known as brainstorming stage. During the brainstorming session, a writer thinks up ideas relevant to the topic which he or she will write about. The ideas can come in any order and you should write them down as they come. Again, where time permits, you can carry out a library research for more ideas to supplement your own. Once this happens, ideas borrowed from other sources must be acknowledged in order to avoid plagiarism.

Organizing the Ideas

There is always the need to organize the ideas/points already gathered. It is not good to put the points together just anyhow. A writer should decide the appropriate sequence of the ideas. It is at this stage that outlining comes in. An outline is the arrangement of the skeletal ideas that are relevant to a topic and the way they are related. An outline is very important to a writer because it does not only help him or her to arrange the ideas logically and sequentially, but also helps him or her to remember the ideas when the writing is in progress. It is important that a writer draws an outline for any topic he or she wants to write before commencing the writing. For example, the topic, "Drug Abuse among Youths", can have the following outline:

1. Introduction
 - i. What is drug abuse?
 - ii. Instances of drug abuse
2. Causes of drug abuse
 - i. Ignorance
 - ii. Peer group influence
 - iii. Poor family upbringing
 - iv. Frustration
3. Effects of drug abuse
 - i. Mental ill-health
 - ii. Death
 - iii. Reduction in work force
 - iv. Imprisonment
4. Solutions
 - i. Counseling
 - ii. Good up-bringing
 - iii. Creation of job opportunities
5. Conclusions

3.2.2 WRITING STAGE

It is at this stage that the writing proper is carried out and the outline put into use. A writer at this stage adds flesh to the skeletal ideas listed on the outline. There are certain steps that should be taken to ensure that one's writing is not only effective but also achieves the desired objective. The steps include: paragraph development, use of appropriate language style, and effective use of the mechanics of the language. The writer should also develop a good structure for his essay.

A. Paragraph Development

Paragraph, as we all know, is a collection of sentences on one idea. A good paragraph should be an embodiment of one central idea which is usually expressed in the topic sentence. While other sentences go on to elaborate the main idea.

With the outline already in place, all the writer needs do is to pick the ideas one after another and develop them in paragraphs. In doing so, efforts should be made to ensure that the qualities of paragraph – unity, coherence and emphasis are emphasized.

In addition, the individual paragraphs should not be left hanging. They should be made to link with one another in a chain-like manner. The cohesion between the paragraphs could be achieved through the use of transitional words and paragraph linkers or connectives. The following connectives should be noted and put in use when necessary.

	Function	Linkers
1.	addition	moreover, further, and, also, in addition, etc.
2.	concession	although, though, even though, etc.
3.	emphasis	in fact, indeed, certainly, etc.
4.	contrast	however, but, on the other hand, on the contrary etc.
5.	explanation	as I was saying, in other words, that is, etc.
6.	example	for instance, for example,

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|---|
| | | to illustrate, etc. |
| 7. | order | first, second, third, finally,
next, etc. |
| 8. | similarity | like the last, similarly, in the
same manner, etc. |
| 9. | clarification | in other words, that is,
in particular, etc. |
| 10. | intensification | particularly, most important, etc. |

B. Use of Appropriate Language Style

For any writing to succeed, the language and style must be appropriate. For any topic, there are words which are the most suitable. There should be effective use of language. The level of vocabulary, the register and diction should be appropriate.

The choice of words should not only agree with the topic but also suit the audience and the occasion. Formal occasion should require formal language while informal language should be suitable for informal situation. Emphasis should also be placed on sentence types. They should be varied and blended where necessary.

C. Effective Use of the Mechanics of the Language

The mechanics of the language include punctuation, spelling, tense, concord etc. A writing is bound to fail where effective use of these mechanics is not made. Experience has shown that examination candidates lose marks in their essays because of poor application of the mechanics of the language. Therefore, students should ensure that their

writing is devoid of wrong punctuation, spelling, tense and concord.

D. The Structure of the Essay

A well written essay, no matter the type, usually has three parts namely: the introduction, the body and the conclusion.

(i) The Introduction

The purpose of the introduction of an essay is:

- (a) to stimulate the interest of the reader.
- (b) to introduce the topic; and
- (c) to establish the manner in which the topic is to be treated.

Remember that first impression lasts long. A dull and drab opening sentence will invariably prejudice the mind of the reader and ultimately affects adversely the mark such an essay will earn. Therefore, the introduction should be devoid of all mistakes or misinformation which may discourage the reader. There is no one way of introducing an essay. Introduction varies from topic to topic and from writer to writer. A writer might, however, begin his essay with:

- (a) A direct statement on the topic
- (b) An apt quotation relating to the topic
- (c) An anecdote (short but suitable story leading to the topic), and
- (d) An explanation of the subject matter

Notice that introducing an essay with a definition is only appropriate when the topic is not a familiar one or when a writer wants to examine a topic from his own perspective

other than the universal view of the topic. In this case, the writer wishes to have his working definition of the topic.

(ii) The Body

The body of an essay contains all the discussions, explanations, facts and figures. The body of an essay should be developed in line with the outline earlier drawn. The ideas should be developed in paragraphs and the paragraphs properly linked.

(iii) The Conclusion

The conclusion of an essay sums up the discussion. At times, some essays are concluded by reiterating the main ideas already stated in the body. A good conclusion naturally signals that the essay has come to an end, and after it, nothing more can be said on the topic in that context.

Students should ensure that the concluding part of their essay is sound enough because conclusions just as introductions hardly escape the critical eyes of the reader.

3.2.3 REWRITING STAGE

One's writing may not be perfect at first attempt; hence, the rewriting stage is inevitable in a writing process. This is a stage in writing when the writer goes through what he has written with the aim of effecting necessary corrections. The nature of the corrections depends on the situation. If it were examination situation, the much the writer can do at this stage is simply reading through the piece meticulously and effecting necessary corrections as much as time can permit. But if the situation is such that one is writing for oneself and has all the time, this stage may imply outright rewriting of the piece with the intention of producing a better write-up.

In view of this explanation, students are advised to always carve out time to go through what they have written before submission or dispatch whether in examination situation or when they are writing on their own. It is a way of saving marks or saving oneself from embarrassment.

3.3 TYPES OF ESSAY

There are basically four types of essay. They are:

1. Descriptive Essay
2. Narrative Essay
3. Argumentative Essay
4. Expository Essay

However, according to James et al. (1990, p.110), "scholars are still in search of a more precise classification of essay types since one cannot draw rigid lines of demarcation between one type and another. It has, for example, been established that there is an element of exposition in argument, and an explanation of a process is sometimes required during narration."

3.3.1 DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

A descriptive essay is one that attempts to describe a person, place object, event, scene etc. Take for instance; if one's friend is missing, he or she can write a description of him or her and give to the police to enable them find his or her friend. Also, one can describe his or her father's compound to somebody else who does not know it. All these are instances of descriptive essay. The import of descriptive essays is to create a true picture of a person, object or an event through description. To be able to achieve this goal, one should possess descriptive power as much as possible.

There is also the need to possess a wide range of vocabulary. A descriptive essay does not give room for exaggeration as the aim is usually to present a true picture of what is being described.

According to Uzoma et al. (1990), the points to note for more effective description are:

1. Describe only what you know well and limit the scope of your topic.
2. Choose your words carefully and for the best effect. To be able to do this, you require a wide vocabulary.
3. In describing events, it is better to proceed orderly from what happened first to what happened last.
4. In describing persons, decide whether to start with simple external aspects such as dress, physical characteristics etc. or with personality and character.
5. Involve all your senses in the description, shapes, colours, sound, smell, sizes, feelings, etc.
6. Use a lot of analogies, similes, examples, etc. to make your description clearer and richer.
Also compare and contrast with what you think the reader already knows.
7. There should be variety in your description. Some description can be simple and straight forward, others can be more emotionally charged because of your involvement.

Below is a sample of a descriptive essay:

The Mad Man of Obia Village

In Obia, Ukala, the mad man, is as prominent a landmark as the giant achi tree which stands in the centre of the village square. It is said that he was made mad by a jealous business partner somewhere in Ibibio land many years ago.

Ukala is dark-complexioned and of medium height. He has a very pronounced bow-leg and his hands are abnormally long. When he walks, he reminds one of a chimpanzee. His eyes are very remarkable indeed; they are widely set apart, dark and piercing. Despite his age and difficult circumstance, there is no tinge of grey in his dark hair. His bushy moustache is, however, snuff-stained.

It is said that Ukala's madness is a seasonal one which is controlled by the moon. During his normal, or shall we say off-season period, one can hardly know that Ukala is a mad man. He is as hardworking and clean as the next man. Perhaps he is a bit too hardworking then, for he not only worked his aged mother's farms, he also fetches firewood, sweeps and cooks like a young girl. The work of the day done, he would sit with the men under the achi tree listening to their conversation, but he would not say a word. When others retire, he goes back to his mother's hut to eat and sleep.

Ukala has neither a house of his own nor a wife. But when Ukala starts wandering about the village, talking to himself and laughing loudly, everybody knows that his madness has returned. He would not go near his mother's hut; rather he would sleep out in the open and go to the village rubbish

dumps to scavenge for food. During this period, his looks change dramatically. His eyes take on a lunatic sheen, his hair tangled and unkempt, while his dress become dirty and ragged. And as he wanders the village paths night and day, his maniac laughter rings out, the people avoid him for now because his tongue has sharp and biting edge.

It is, however, during the annual Igba Ekpe Festival that Ukala becomes the undeniable showman of the village. During this period, he always contrives to be mad. On top of that, he becomes the clown and conscience of the village. He jokes and imitates shady things that villagers had thought they were doing in secrets. Ukala, in this mood, does not exempt anyone. He calls the names of prisoners, adulterers, fornicators, thieves, etc. and gives the date and place of each misdeed. Because of his eccentricity, Ukala has not only, paradoxically, become the star performer at Igba Ekpe Festival, but he, ironically, keeps Obia village morally clean.

(Culled from *Use of English for Advanced Students* edited by C. O. Uzoma)

CLASS ACTIVITY: Do Exercise 1 of Chapter Three in the workbook to practice descriptive essay writing.

3.3.2 NARRATIVE ESSAY

A narrative essay is the one that tells a story. For instance, an essay on the topic, "My First Day as a Student in a University" or "The Most Interesting Journey I Made" or "The Most Memorable Day in my Life", is undoubtedly a narrative essay. A narrative essay, just as a story, can only succeed if it is capable of sustaining the interest of the reader. Therefore, in

writing a narrative essay, one should try as much as possible to ensure that the story is good enough to sustain the interest of the reader. In doing so, it is not out of place to bring in element of exaggeration.

According to Uzoma et al. (1990), a narrative essay can be planned as follows:

1. Follow a chronological order. This is because in life, events take place one after the other. For example, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age or seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years.
2. Make your introduction simple and direct.
3. Each idea should contain one main idea. There should be a topic sentence.
4. Concentrate on those details and facts that are important to your narrative. Don't allow long winded explanations to destroy your essay. Give your narration a setting – locality and characters. Stories do not take place in a vacuum.
5. Add dialogue and humour to your narration when necessary. It makes it interesting and lively.
6. Avoid repetition and vary your sentence structure.
7. Begin with an exciting incident (in an imaginary narrative). And if you want to point out a lesson, state it simply and clearly at the end.

Although we have been attempt to delineate descriptive and narrative essays, it should be pointed out that none of them is entirely exclusive. The reason is that in descriptive essay, for instance, some situations may call for narration. On the

other hand, it is also possible to have some elements of description in a narrative essay. Below is a sample of a narrative essay:

THE NARRATIVE ESSAY SAMPLE: THE SPELLING BEE

Learning something new can be a scary experience. My twin and I were born on the first day of June 2006. Like most identical twins, it was difficult to tell us apart. Our parents often told us they had a hard time telling who was who at some point. As we grew older, we began to show our individual characteristics.

My sister was very sound academically and was always tops in school. She represented the school at various levels in competitions. She won trophies for the school and the state as well. My sister was the toast of the town. Our parents and relatives were most proud of her. I, on the other hand, was very domestic and equally did my best in school but I was nowhere close to my sister in academic. I was the older twin and at our ages, what mattered most to our parents and others was our academic performance. That made my twin shine each time we were at a gathering and even at home.

Quite naturally, her brilliant performance and admiration from people got into her head and she began to look down on me. In fact, she often taunted and ignored me even when we were supposed to work at something together. She would prefer to do her assignment alone and hand me the solutions to copy down as mine. She made no efforts to help me through my difficulties and inadequacies.

One fateful night as she was doing her homework I went to her and implored her to assist me with a puzzle in our English language textbook. To my utter amazement, her response was "even English language spellings". That answer broke my heart and I broke down in tears. My sister was not moved. I wept all night but refused to share that experience with our parents because I was convinced they would support her regardless. I was devastated and withdrawn.

Several weeks later, I went to my parents and told them it would be best to get me into another school. I made them believe I needed a change of environment where I was not known and where my not-so-good academic performance would not always be in the limelight as against my sister's outstanding progress. Thankfully, they agreed and enrolled me into another school. I swore to do my very best.

As terms rolled by, I made appreciable progress and the teacher began to take particular interest in me. They noticed my English language was very good and they encouraged and enrolled me for Intra School spelling competitions. It was not exactly easy as I continued to burn the midnight oil. I was bent on winning a trophy at least once in my life. I made very consistent progress and was selected for the inter school spelling competitions. The competitions went from stage to stage till I was chosen to represent my school at the grand finale. As usual, my twin was also chosen to represent her school.

On the D-day, our parents took us to our schools and of course got to the venue of the competition. The struggle for the most coveted prize began. My sister and I went from stage to stage till the moment when the last two standing

were to compete against each other. It was a real shocker when our parents found out we were the last two standing and were pitched against each other. It was a wake-up call and I vowed to pick up the prize. We went on and on till we were given the word for the year "PULCHRITUDE". My sister tried to spell the word three times to no avail. It happened to be the same word in the puzzle for which my sister shamed me.

Guess what! With pride I picked up "THE TROPHY".....

ANOTHER SAMPLE NARRATIVE ESSAY:

My First Trip to Bauchi

It was a Saturday morning, the 26th of September, 2015. Some days earlier, I had gotten a call that I had been transferred from Gombe state to Bauchi state, and so I had to begin preparations for my transfer. I decided to take a road trip to my new office in Bauchi so as to acquaint myself with my soon to be new office. It was roughly a two-hour trip and I had no misgivings about it. I had already gone to the park the previous day to book my ticket. So, when I got to the park the next morning, it was easy settling down as I had no luggage. The journey kicked off at 7:06am; I planned to return to Gombe that same day. The vehicle was a Toyota Sienna hatchback and it was packed full with people and goods. It was stuffy and uncomfortable at first, partly because of the smell of unwashed bodies and absence of leg room. I said a quick prayer to be able to survive that ordeal. The driver turned out to be quite friendly as he apologised in Hausa language to passengers for the discomfort and

pleaded with us to bear with him, jocularly adding that he had lots of mouths to feed.

Our journey continued without hitches until we got to the first police checkpoint. The mobile police man took one look at everyone in the vehicle and barked at me in a stern voice to alight. I wondered what my crime was but raised no objections. A few passengers offered words of support or encouragement; I couldn't tell which. I got down from the vehicle and I was subjected to a humiliating frisk over. The man dipped his hands into my pockets as if he had gotten a tip off that I was carrying contraband. He pulled out my wallet from my back pocket and opened it, peered into the contents, took one look at me, gave a stupid grin and proceeded to the other pocket, while still latching on to my wallet. He pulled out my rosary chaplet, opened his palm, looked at it with an unsure expression and handed it back to me. Then, without another word, he passed the wallet back to me and motioned for me to get back into the car. It was the longest and most embarrassing two minutes of my life. When I got back into the car and we got moving once again, several passengers launched invectives at the law enforcement officer. One of them rhetorically asked why I was the only passenger singled out for that search and another offered that it was probably because I was heavily bearded. I am hirsute and I have no apologies. Everyone wondered when it became a crime to be hairy. I only remained mute and thoroughly embarrassed. I hoped it wasn't going to happen again and I knew I wasn't going to shave those beards in a hurry. The trip eventually ended sans anymore hassles. I called my contact at the new office who furnished me with directions on how to find the office. Again,

it was easy and everyone turned out to be friendly. Since it was a Saturday, the office closed quite early and my contact proceeded to take me on a brief tour of the town. We ended up at a relaxation centre where we chatted and had refreshments as time passed very quickly.

I realised with a start that I was supposed to make a return trip. He persuaded me to stay the night but I insisted on heading back. It was nearing 6pm. I got a motorcyclist who took me to the park and the long wait for more passengers began. We got moving at about 6:34pm and I was confident I'd be in Gombe by 8:30pm, max. We had gone only about 2 kilometres when the vehicle, a Toyota Sharon, started stalling. The driver pulled over to the curb, got out and raised the bonnet. I could see him fiddling with the engine and I silently prayed. Suffice it to say that that trip was intermittently truncated with the car's stalling and the driver's fiddling. We eventually got a good Samaritan who offered to tow us the rest of the way. I hopped out of our malfunctioning car and jumped into our helper's. When I got home, it was 11:56pm. I set about preparing for church for the next day.

It was a harrowing first Bauchi trip.

CLASS ACTIVITY: Do Exercise 2 of Chapter Three in the workbook to practice writing narrative essay.

3.3.3 ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

This is the type of essay in which attempt is made to prove that one side of a thing is better than the other side. Argumentative essay is a debate in writing in the sense that an argumentative topic has two sides which can be argued

for or against. The essence of argumentative essay is to assess one's ability to critically evaluate and pass judgment. Since this type of essay is an argument or a debate, one can only succeed in writing it if his or her argument is sound and convincing. Therefore, efforts should be made to ensure that one's stand or opinion is buttressed with concrete and convincing evidence. There should be no room for ambiguous statements.

In examination situation, argumentative essay could be presented in form of a debate. The writer should take cognizance of the situation and present the essay in a speech form. The essay should, therefore, begin with the usual vocatives as in debates, thus:

The Chairman,
Panel of Judges,
Accurate Time Keeper,
Fellow Debaters,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

The vocatives should be followed by greeting and statement of the stand of the writer (i.e. whether the writer is proposing or opposing).

In the body of the essay, the writer should use expressions that would indicate the presence of an audience. This could be achieved through the use of rhetorical questions (questions that do not require answers). At the end of the essay the writer should also indicate that the essay has come to an end by thanking the audience.

As regards the structure of an argumentative essay, the choice of structure depends on the writer. Since it is an

essay that has two sides i.e. proposing and opposing, a writer might take a stand and go on to argue to defend his stand. However, a more mature approach to this kind of topic is the one in which the writer begins by advancing arguments which sparingly support the contrary side only to turn around to take a contrary stand and goes on to support his stand with strong arguments. Take for instance the topic "Should Capital Punishment be Abolished"? A writer who wants to oppose it may begin by first advancing some loose arguments in support of the topic as a kind of preamble only to turn around and take an opposing stand and goes on to support his or her stand with strong arguments. Here is an example:

A Sample of an Argumentative Essay in a Debate form

Our Forefathers Lived a Happier Life than we Are

The Chairman,
Panel of Judges,
Accurate Time Keeper,
Fellow Debaters,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have on several occasions listened with keen interest to arguments over whether or not our forefathers lived a happier life than we are. No matter how strong the points on the contrary may sound, I stand here to support the proposition.

I know very well that my opponents would want to argue that we are happier than our forefathers because we live in decent houses. They would want to point out that we have much equipment both in the house and at work places

which perform a number of duties for us. They may add that we have vehicles that take us around. Equally, they may argue that we are more learned than our forefathers. Besides, they may stress the point that we have a better system of ensuring justice because there are policemen, lawyers and judges.

However, no matter how strong these arguments sound in the ears of the proponents, they do not hold any water. Yes, we may have more decent accommodation than our forefathers, but our houses today are far more expensive than theirs. How many people can afford to build the kind of houses we have in our cities and towns? What has actually happened today is that only a few people are able to build and very many are tenants. This implies that very many people are slaves to the few landlords. There were no tenants in the days of our forefathers. Every family was able to erect the simple mud house that was in vogue then and that was comfortable for them.

On the point that we have much equipment that make life easier for us, we should not lose sight of the fact that our forefathers did not need the equipment. Their lives were simple. They did not engage themselves in the very many activities which we occupy ourselves with today. Again, they did not need to travel often over distant places. Aside this, the fact is that our equipment and vehicles do not make us happier. Think of the very many road and domestic accidents that we have today. Do these accidents and the attendant deaths mean happiness?

The point that we are more learned than our forefathers has no basis. We only appear to be more learned because we can manufacture some equipment that do some

work for us. But our knowledge has caused more misery than happiness. Think of the health hazards posed by water and air pollution emanating from the equipment. What of the many cyber-crimes we have to contend with on daily basis? Are they not the outcomes of our knowledge? Our forefathers may not have received formal education but they knew the geography and history of their community. They knew their local hills, valleys and plants. They knew when they were to expect rain and when to expect drought. They knew the right times to plant, hunt, fish and harvest. Through games like 'ayo', our forefathers exhibited knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The simple implements and tools they needed for their simple life style were constructed by them with ease.

Finally, my opponents argued that we are happier than our forefathers because we have a better system of ensuring justice because we have the police, the court, the lawyers and the judges. The Chairman and everybody here, how often do we hear or read about people who are denied justice in the law court pointing accusing fingers at the police and even judges for perverting justice after taking bribe? Permit me to say, very often. But in the days of our forefathers, idols and deities played judicial roles. For the deities, purity and uprightness was the watchword and as a result, the people would not engage in wrong decisions and judgments for fear of immediate negative consequences. In those days, no offenders in their right senses would want to be brought before a deity because they knew the consequences.

From the foregoing, there is no doubt that I have been able to convince my opponents beyond any reasonable

doubt that our forefathers lived happier life than we are. On that note, therefore, may I call on my opponents to nod in agreement as I thank them for honourably throwing in the towel. Thank you.

CLASS ACTIVITY: Do Exercise 3 of Chapter Three in the workbook to practice writing argumentative essay.

3.3.4 EXPOSITORY ESSAY

This is the type of essay that attempts to expose, inform, interpret or explain with particular reference to a given topic. Take for instance, if a writer goes to explain the causes of road accident to the best of his or her knowledge, such a write-up is said to be expository. The research projects written by students in fulfillment of the award of NCE, first degree or higher degree are instances of expository writing. Expository essay can be in form of an article for publication either in a newspaper or magazine. It can also be in form of an address or a lecture. Whichever one it is, students are advised to ensure that they keep to the format.

A Sample of an Expository Essay

No Escape for Malnourished Children

Hunger and malnutrition are tremendous problems in our world today. According to the magazine, "Population Reports", about 18 million people, mostly children, die each year from starvation, malnutrition and related causes. This magazine also states that nearly 200 million children under age five – 40 percent of all children of this age – lack sufficient nutrition to develop fully. Tragically, children

suffering from malnutrition have little chance of living long, productive lives.

Malnutrition can lead to death, but long before that happens, poorly nourished children suffer from a number of physical problems. Extreme weight loss, stunted growth, and frequent infections are just a few of the physical problems resulting from poor nutrition. Because the immune system begins to shut down in malnourished children, they are also susceptible to life-threatening diseases such as tuberculosis, measles and diarrhea. According to Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General of the World Health Organisation, "much of the sickness and death attributed to major communicable disease is, in fact, caused by malnutrition."

One major form of malnutrition is called "marasmus" and occurs when children are weaned too soon and receive very few nutrients. Children with "marasmus" are extremely underweight, lack any body fat or defined muscles, and appear almost puppet-like with large heads, small bodies, and thin arms and legs. Eventually their skin sags, and their faces wrinkle. To compound the problem, their body organs decrease in size, their intestines begin to fail, and their pulse rate slows down. Simply put, marasmus causes the child's body to waste away.

Another form of malnutrition is called kwashiorkor and occurs when children are weaned later than normal and do not receive necessary protein and nutrients. Children with this disease have badly swollen bellies that actually make them look somewhat healthy. However, their stomachs appear large because their abdominal muscles are loose and weak. Their skin is pale or red, and their hair

becomes very thin. Eventually, children who suffer from this form of malnutrition simply stop growing.

In terms of their mental development, children lacking proper food become sleepy, dull, and withdrawn. As a result, their ability to learn decreases. Because these children have no energy, it is difficult for them to even learn how to walk and talk. According to "The Public Health News and Notes", iron and iodine deficiencies in children often impair their intellectual development. Even a small deficiency in iodine can reduce a child's development by as much as 10 percent. Studies have shown that poor nutrition in early childhood can continue to hinder development well into adulthood.

Malnutrition is a serious problem for people of all ages, but it takes its greatest toll on innocent children. And the problem is not likely to go away soon. New methods of farming, food distribution, and health care will be needed before a significant number of children can be helped. Those changes are just now beginning to take place.

Dawn Weilenga: Indiana State Standard

CLASS ACTIVITY: Do Exercise 4 of Chapter Three in the workbook to practice writing expository essay.

3.4 LETTER WRITING

3.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The skill of letter writing is one of the essential skills a student should possess. The reason is that at one time or the other one may be required to communicate through the channel of letter writing. It is therefore our aim in this section to discuss in full all aspects of letter writing and it is

our hope that the readers would find it interesting and useful.

3.4.2 TYPES OF LETTERS

Based on format, letters are traditionally classified into three. They are:

- i. Formal Letter
- ii. Semi-formal letter
- iii. Informal letter

3.4.2.1 Formal Letter:

Formal letter, otherwise referred to as business or official letter, is any letter written for official purposes. It includes such letters as:

- i. A letter of application for a job
- ii. A letter to government establishments or departments
- iii. A letter to the editor
- iv. A letter from the director or manager of a company to his or her employees etc.

The Formal Features of Formal Letters

The formal features of formal letter include the following:

- i. the addresser's address
- ii. the date
- iii. the addressee's address
- iv. the salutation
- v. the subject matter of the letter
- vi. the body
- vii. the subscription
- viii. the signature
- ix. the writer's name.

The Addresser's or Writer's Address

The addresser's address is usually stated at the right hand corner of the writing sheet. Note that it is wrong to write one's name on to of the address. Also, it wrong to state the address all in capital letters. Conventionally, the address could be presented either in block or indented form depending on the writer's choice.

Examples:

Block Style

Department of Physics,
School of Physical Sciences,
Federal University of Technology,
Owerri.

OR

No. 10, Douglas Road,
Owerri,
Imo State.

Indented Style

Department of Physics,
 School of Physical Sciences,
 Federal University of Technology,
 Owerri.

OR
No. 10, Douglas Road,
Owerri,
Imo State.

The inclusion of local government, state or even the country on the address is acceptable if the letter in question is meant to move from one local government to another, one state to another or one country to another. Take for instance, a letter meant for overseas can have the following address:

St. Peter's Church,
Umuoziri Inyishi,
P. O. Box 38,
Ikeduru L. G. A.,
Imo State,
Nigeria.

In the above examples, you would notice that at the end of each line there is a comma but one may decide to do without the commas only to have a final full stop at the end of the address as in the following example:

P. O. Box 45
Owerri West L.G.A.
Imo State
Nigeria.

The Date

After the addresser's address, what follows is the date. There should be no gap between the writer's address and the date if the letter is hand written.

The date could be written in any of the following formats:

9th February, 2016.

February 9, 2016.

9 February, 2016.

The Addressee's Address

This is the address of the recipient. It is written by the left hand margin of the writing sheet immediately after the date. It usually begins with the designation of the recipient followed by the address. Example:

The Personnel Manager,
Shell Development Company,
P. M. B. 1030,
Port Harcourt,
Rivers State.

OR

The Registrar
Federal University of Technology
Owerri
Imo State.

There should be uniformity in stating the addresser's address and addressee's address. If a writer chooses to use the block form, the two addresses should be written in block form.

Salutation

Any of the following salutations is suitable for an official letter:

Dear Sir,
Sir,

Dear Madam,
Madam,

Where it is not possible to know the sex of the recipient, it is better to write "Dear Sir".

The Subject Matter or Title

The subject matter of an official letter is usually summarised and stated immediately after the salutation. The title can either be capitalised or written with initial capital letters for the lexical words. The title should not be written before salutation and it is usually underlined. But if all the letters are capitalised, there is no need underlining again.

The Body

The body of an official letter is usually made up of three parts namely: the introduction, the message and the conclusion. In the introduction, there is no room for exchange of pleasantries instead the main aim of the letter is stated. Subsequently, the message of the letter is stated and developed in paragraphs. When the message is exhausted, the conclusion is drawn.

The language of a business letter is strictly official. By this we mean that there is no room for informal language. The use of slangy expressions, colloquial expressions and contracted forms is highly prohibited. The language should be polite as much as possible and should not degenerate into abuse no matter the emotional state of the writer.

The Subscription

The most acceptable form of subscription in an official letter is "Yours faithfully,". Take note of the capital 'Y' in 'Yours', non-use of apostrophe before "s" and the small letter 'f' in 'faithfully'. There is a mandatory comma immediately after 'faithfully'. It is, however, possible to write "Yours sincerely" as a subscription of a formal letter, especially if the salutation of such a letter is any of: Dear Prof. Ojo, Dear Mr. Okeke or a similar construction.

The Writer's Name and Signature

The writer's signature, full name and designation where applicable, are stated under the subscription. Note that the signature comes before the name and designation not the other way round. Note the following:

Yours faithfully,
signature
John Ade,
General Secretary.

Sample Formal Letter

Question: Your school has directed you to go on an industrial attachment for six months. Apply to any company of your choice.

Department of Transport Management
Technology,
Federal University of Technology,
Owerri.
20th November, 2012.

The Manager,
ABC Transport Company,
Owerri.

Dear Sir,

Application for a Position for Industrial Attachment

I wish to apply for a position for industrial attachment in your company.

I am a student of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. I completed the first semester of my fourth year in the Department of Transport Management Technology (Transport Option) in this current 2011/2012 academic session. My age is 20 years.

In my academic performance, I have so far kept a clean record. Till date, I have no reference in any course. Above all, my cumulative grade point average is 4.25.

The following people have given their consent to serve as my referees if the need arises:

1. Dr. P. C. Eke,
The Head of Department,
Department of Transport Management Technology,
Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

2. Dr. C. C. Okoro,
Department of Transport Management Technology,
Federal University of Technology, Owerri.
3. Mrs. B. A. Okon,
Assistant Registrar,
Student Affairs,
Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

In keeping to the University regulation, the industrial attachment is expected to last for six months beginning from July 2012.

If my application is considered for a position, I shall endeavour to keep the rules and regulations of your company and work very hard to justify the confidence reposed in me.

Yours faithfully,
Signature
Peter Obi.

CLASS ACTIVITY: Do Exercises 5 and 6 of Chapter Three in the workbook to practice writing official letters.

3.4.2.2 Semi-Formal Letter

Semi-formal letter, just as the name implies, is partly formal and partly informal. A good example of semi-formal letter is a letter to an adult friend or one's parent's friends. It can be a letter to one's boss or employer asking for recommendation.

The Formal Features of Semi-formal Letter

(i) The Addresser's Address and Date

Unlike formal letter, there is only one address in semi-formal letter and that is the addresser's address. All that was said with regard to addresser's address and date in case of formal letter also applies here.

(ii) The Salutation

Any of the following salutations is suitable for a semi-formal letter:

Dear Mr. Eze

Dear Mrs. Obi

Dear Sir

Dear Madam

(iii) The Body

The body of semi-formal letter usually has three parts as in formal letter. In semi-formal letter, the introduction states the theme of the letter followed by the message which is developed in paragraphs. Finally, there is the conclusion which is usually abrupt since there is no need for parting words.

The language of semi-formal letter is in between formality and informality. It is a combination of some features of formal and informal language. Whereas colloquial expressions such as contracted forms are permissible in semi-formal letter, the use of slangy expressions is not allowed. The language should be framed to reflect the relationship between the writer and the recipient.

(iv) The Subscription

The subscription of semi-formal letter depends on the salutation. If the salutation is Dear Mr. ... or Dear Mrs. ..., the subscription should be 'Yours sincerely'. But if the salutation happens to be "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam", the subscription should be "Yours faithfully".

(v) The Writer's Name

In a semi-formal letter, the writer's full name (first name and surname) without a signature is required.

Below is a sample of a semi-formal letter:

Question: As you are about to graduate from your university, write a letter to one of your lecturers who has impacted on you positively, pointing out some of his or her qualities that have impressed you and thank him for being your role model.

Answer:

Department of Physics,
School of Physical Sciences,
Federal University of Technology,
Owerri.
10 July, 2015.

Dear Sir,

I do hope that this letter will not come to you as a surprise. Having spent about five years in this University and had the course to pass through you, I can't but confess that your

attitude and personality impacted on me positively. And my mind tells me that if I fail to bring this to your knowledge, it is either I am ungrateful or irresponsible.

I recall with nostalgia my first semester in this University. A mere village boy who had just graduated from a community secondary school to a university, I didn't know my left from my right. The first set of lecturers I encountered could not help matters as their method of teaching and attitude to students made my predicament worse that I almost concluded abandoning the admission. But thank God I had the opportunity of attending your maiden lecture for the semester. It was GST 101. In fact, that lecture was a turning point in my seemingly academic crisis. At that lecture, you did not only teach to my understanding but also counselled the students as if you are a professional counsellor. As the lecture lasted, I almost concluded that you are a magician because all you said touched on the emotional trauma I was passing through as if somebody related it to you. But the high point of that encounter was that the solutions you proffered worked like miracle when I applied them to my problems. Thereafter, I never missed your lectures till the end of the semester.

The level of competence you demonstrated in handling the topics in your subject area is highly commendable. Before then, I had serious problem with English to the extent that I managed to have ordinary pass (p7) in the WASCE. But when I started attending your classes, I wished you had taught me before I took WASCE. I bet you nothing would have stood between me and an 'A' grade. I so admired your impeccable speech pattern to the extent that I started

imitating you. As a result, my classmates nicknamed me after you. Can you imagine!

Your moral uprightness stands you out from other lecturers. These days when 'sorting' is a way of life for many lecturers, you vehemently condemn it and advise students to work hard in order to avoid being victims. Your assessment of the students' performances has always remained objective. In fact, it is in your course that I was made to know that students can make an 'A' grade without first 'sorting' the lecturer. To the best of my knowledge and that of well-meaning students, your relationship with the female students has been that of father-daughter. You need to hear the good remarks the female students always make about you.

I can go on and on. But what is obvious is that you have set an enviable record as regards your personality and conduct. I have an ambition, and that is, to be your replica in all ramifications. I am really proud of you. Thank you immensely for shaping my academic, moral and social life. May God bless you.

Yours faithfully,
Chinedum Ogo.

CLASS ACTIVITY: Do Exercises 7 of Chapter Three in the workbook to practice writing semi-formal letters.

3.4.2.3 Informal Letter

Informal letter is also referred to as personal or private letter. This is the kind of letter written to a close relation or friend. This kind of letter is usually very common among students

because they are always writing to their relations (father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt etc.) or friends.

The Formal Features of Informal Letter

(i) The Addresser's Address and Date

These are as discussed previously under formal and semi-formal letters. Students should be reminded that on no account should they write their name on top of their address. Again, the address can either be stated in block or indented form.

(ii) Salutation or Greeting

This takes various forms depending on the recipient. The following salutations should be noted:

For Parents

My dear father,
My dear mother,

For Siblings

My dear brother/sister,
Dear brother/sister,
Dear Brother Mike,
Dear Chidi,
Dear Sister Mary,
Dear Chinyere,

Other relations

Dear uncle/aunt,
Dear cousin,
Dear Uncle John,

For Friends

Dear Ben,

Dear Joy,

Ben,

In an informal letter, it is wrong to write "Dear friend" as salutation when writing to a friend.

(iii) The Body

The body of informal letter just as other forms of letter is made up of three parts namely, the introduction, message and the conclusion.

The introduction is devoted for exchange of pleasantries. In some cases it could be a forum for the writer to acknowledge the receipt of a previous letter from the addressee. Whichever is the situation, the introduction is meant to establish the close relationship that exists between the writer and the recipient. Students should ensure that their letters are well introduced to stimulate the interest of the reader.

For every letter there is always a message or messages the writer wants to put across. After the introduction the message follows. The message should be developed in paragraphs, keeping the rules of paragraph development.

The conclusion sums up the letter. There is no one way of concluding an informal letter. A writer may conclude his or her letter by wishing his recipient well. Whatever the case

may be, the conclusion should be written to ensure that the letter has come to a conclusive end.

(iv) Subscription

The subscription of informal letter can take any form provided it is not "Yours faithfully" or "Your truly". Therefore, any of the following can be suitable:

Yours sincerely,
Yours ever,
Yours,
Yours affectionately,
Your son/daughter, etc.

(v) The Writer's Name

In informal letter, only the first name of the writer is required. The surname is not necessary. Thus, for a writer whose name is Emeka Njoku, only Emeka should be written.

The Language of Informal Letter

The language is strictly informal. You may write this kind of letter much as you would talk to the person you are writing to. Thus, the use of colloquial expressions such as contracted forms and slangy expressions are allowed. Note that where slang is used, it must be enclosed in quotation marks. The language of informal letter should also be chatty, hence some of the sentences are likely to be short.

Below is a sample of informal letter:

Question:

After years of trial and failure you have finally gained admission to read a course of your choice at your choice university. Write a letter to your friend informing him/her of the development and advising him/her to work hard so that he/she can also gain admission.

Answer:

Department of Medicine,
Faculty of Health Sciences,
Obafemi Awolowo University,
Ile-Ife.
22nd October, 2014.

Dear Emeka,

You may have wondered why I have not written for sometime. Surely, there is no cause for alarm for all is well. How about you?

As you can see from my current address, the storm is finally over. Guess what! At long last I'm now a medical student at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. What a dream come true! You may recall that over the years I've been on the struggle and I insisted that it must be medicine at no other university but "Great Ife". My experience and what I've passed through within these years have really proved to me that "ambition is made of a sterner stuff". I'm exceedingly indebted to God for answering my prayers because it is neither by my power nor might.

Emii, you remember I've always admired medical doctors and dreamt of a day I shall hang a stethoscope over my neck. As

it pleases God, I'm now on the path of achieving that lofty ambition at no other place but "Great Ife". Boy, the University is really great! No wonder it is acclaimed the most beautiful university in Black Africa. Talk of the beautiful architectural designs, the landscaping, the serene atmosphere that pervades every nook and cranny of the campus, and above all, the rich academic and social environment that characterise the University. Well, this may sound incredible to you but I assure you that I shall arrange for your visit so that you see things for yourself.

I've completed the registration formalities, and I'm gradually settling down to my studies. Usually, it is difficult to begin but I'm not taking any chances because I've a mission and a vision. I'll never let my parents or even you down.

Emii, I've known you as a hard working person. But I must advise you put more effort in your struggle to gain admission. I assure you that you will definitely make it. It is only a question of time. Never you drop your ambition of reading engineering but you can forget UNN. I've discovered it is a glorified secondary school, when compared with "Great Ife". Try Ife when next you put in for JAMB. If you succeed, that would be the best thing that would happen in our relationship.

Strengthen your faith in the Lord and remain prayerful. He will never fail you. My best regards to your parents and siblings. Bye for now and remain blessed.

Yours sincerely,

Uche.

CLASS ACTIVITY: Do Exercises 8 of Chapter Three in the workbook to practice writing informal letters.

3.5 THE PARAGRAPH

3.5.1 WHAT IS A PARAGRAPH?

The grammatical units - morpheme, word, phrase and clause culminate in the formation of the sentence which is the largest grammatical unit used to express thought. Higher than the sentence in expressing thought is the paragraph. As the lower grammatical units combine to form a sentence so also sentences combine to form a paragraph. Hence, a paragraph is defined as a combination of related sentences that express one given idea.

In writing, paragraph is indicated by indentation from the margin of the first line. Introduction of a paragraph in a write-up usually signals the introduction of a new idea or a turn in the thought process. Besides, paragraph serves as a kind of punctuation mark in that it indicates a pause which is longer than a full stop.

3.5.2 PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

The nucleus of a paragraph is a topic sentence. The topic sentence is a sentence in a paragraph that contains the main idea. Other sentences that help in building the paragraphs are called elaborating sentences. There are three positions where the topic sentence can be found in a paragraph. The positions are the beginning, the middle and the end. However, the most common paragraphs are those that have their topic sentences at the beginning.

Paragraph has no specific length as the length varies according to the writer and the ideas being expressed.

However, there are one sentence paragraphs as can be seen in newspaper reporting and dialogues in novels. Also, long paragraphs which can consist of about ten sentences exist. Be that as it may, students are advised to vary the length of their paragraphs and ensure that the paragraphs are proportionate to the ideas and thought they express.

3.5.3 THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD PARAGRAPH

The three basic qualities of a good paragraph are unity, cohesion and emphasis.

i. Unity

A well-written paragraph should have unity. The unity can only be achieved if there is only one central idea, which is expressed in the topic sentence followed by other elaborating sentences, which illustrate the topic sentence. The principle of unity of a paragraph is violated if the writer, in the course of writing, includes materials that are not relevant to the central idea.

ii. Cohesion

Any paragraph whose sentences are not logically and sequentially arranged lacks cohesion. A coherent paragraph should be an embodiment of sentences that have causal relationship. Cohesion in a paragraph is usually a function of the logical sequence of ideas which are achieved through the following stylistic devices:

- 1. The use of transitional words or expressions and linkers:** Transitional words or expressions which help to link sentences in a paragraph abound but they perform different functions such as:

- a. Addition – moreover, furthermore, in addition, next, finally, etc.
- b. Contrast – yet, however, nevertheless, but, in contrast, on the other hand, Etc.
- c. Comparison – similarly, likewise, in like manner, by way of comparison, etc.
- d. Time – meanwhile, afterward, immediately, presently, etc.
- e. Result – consequently, as a result, accordingly, thus, therefore, etc.
- f. Illustration – for example, for instance, to illustrate, etc.
- g. Purpose – for this purpose, to this end, etc.

It should be pointed out that although the above transitional words and expressions are used within paragraphs in order to achieve cohesion, they are also used to link up paragraphs in the body of an essay.

2. **The Use of Pronouns:** Cohesion is also achieved in the body of a paragraph through the precise use of pronouns to reiterate their antecedents and link one sentence or idea to another.
3. **Repetition of key Ideas:** The Cohesion in the body of a paragraph can be achieved through the repetition of specific ideas, but not necessarily the same word or phrase.

iii. **Emphasis**

A well developed paragraph should have emphasis as one of its qualities. Granted a paragraph ideally should deal with

one main idea; the idea should be articulated in such a way that the reader is not left in doubt as regards what the paragraph is all about. The main idea could be foregrounded through the use of repetition or expression such as mainly, in the main, especially, most important, chiefly, etc.

3.5.4 TYPES OF PARAGRAPH:

i. **Loose Paragraph:** A paragraph is said to be a loose one if the topic sentence is positioned at the beginning of the paragraph. Consider the following:

PASSAGE A

Times are really hard. The cost of living has tremendously gone beyond the reach of an average man. There is no employment. Even those who are working hardly receive their salaries as at when due. Where the salaries are paid, the money hardly buys anything because of high rate of inflation. It is a sorry situation which has subjected the masses to severe hardship. Something should be done and urgently too to save the situation.

Comment

The above paragraph is a good example of a loose paragraph. The paragraph is made up of six sentences with the first sentence as the topic sentence. The topic sentence sums up the message of the paragraph while other sentences merely serve as elaborating devices.

ii. **Mixed Paragraph:** A mixed paragraph is one that has its topic sentence contained in the middle of the paragraph. Examine the following:

PASSAGE B

Failure is a natural phenomenon, which is contrasted with success. While everybody wants to be associated with success, nobody wants failure to come his way. Yet, some people succeed while others fail. The question then is why have people continued to be victims of failure even though nobody wants to be associated with it? The answer is obvious. First, one may be a failure in life because he has been pre-destined to be so. Second, failure may be self inflicted. The latter view appears to be more tenable because many who are victims of failure are people who have all it takes to succeed but could not because of their ineptitude.

Comment

The above paragraph is undoubtedly a mixed one because the topic sentence is neither at the beginning nor the end. The topic sentence of the paragraph is the sentence that begins: "The question then is why have people continued..." which is found in the middle of the paragraph.

iii. Periodic Paragraph: A periodic paragraph has its topic sentence at the end. A periodic paragraph usually begins with elaborating sentences which culminate into the summary of the main idea of the paragraph. Consider the following:

PASSAGE C

I have always watched Emi with keen interest. He keeps to his lecture timetable religiously and never misses any lecture. He does his assignments when necessary and ensures that they are submitted in time. In all departmental activities he is

always found in the forefront. A part from academic exercise, he participates actively in other extra-curricular activities such as Christian fellowship, clubbing and, of course, games. Emi is no doubt an epitome of diligence.

Comment

In the above paragraph, the last sentence is the topic sentence which summarizes the main idea of the paragraph. Periodic paragraphing is a useful device to create suspense.

It should be pointed out that none of the three types of paragraphs, loose, mixed and periodic discussed above is superior to the other. The one to be adopted depends on one's style and purpose. However, students should be advised to vary their paragraph types in a given write up instead of sticking to only one paragraph type as that would make their writing monotonous.

The three model paragraphs stated above should be a reference point to students. In developing the paragraphs, attempts have been made to keep to the standards and also ensure that the three qualities of paragraph – unity, coherence and emphasis – are maintained. Notice that each of the paragraphs has only one main idea which is capable of being summarized in one sentence.

CLASS ACTIVITY: Do Exercises 9 and 13 of Chapter Three in the workbook to practice writing paragraphs.



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