

## **Learning Unit 2**

### **Learning strategies**

After completing this Learning Unit, you will be able to use learning strategies, by successfully completing the following:

- Summarise and use information for learning purposes.
- Select and apply specific techniques appropriately.
- Use a range of reading and/or viewing strategies to understand the literal meaning of specific texts.
- Use strategies for extracting implicit messages in texts.
- Respond to selected texts in a manner appropriate to the context.
- Listen to/view spoken/signed input for detail, interpret and analyse it for a given context.
- Identify and respond to manipulative use of language.

## **Learning strategies**

In Unit 1 we looked at learning resources, what they are, where to find them and how to select them. In Unit 2 we will be looking at how we can use such resources for learning. We will look in some detail at the strategies that we can use to help us learn more effectively. We will consider the strategies of summarising, questioning, reading actively, listening actively and learning by communicating with others. We will work in groups and individually, learning to select and apply a number of techniques. Finally we will examine how effectively we are able to apply these strategies and techniques in practice.

### **2.1 Summarise and use information for learning purposes**

Summarising is one of the most important skills that we can use for learning. It makes us read the text with understanding, and therefore helps us to learn what we are reading. We will therefore look closely at some techniques for summarising information that is presented in a written text.

Consider the following description of how a plant grows<sup>1</sup>:

#### **THE GROWTH OF A SEED**

A flowering plant starts life as a seed. The seed itself contains everything needed for the growth of a future plant. Protected inside is the embryo of the future plant: a tiny plumule which already shows the form of tiny leaves, and a radicle which holds the future root in its potent cells. Surrounding this delicate structure is a ready-made food supply, the endosperm that contains a precise balance of nutrients – carbohydrates, oils, minerals and vitamins – to suit the needs of the particular species of plant. Finally, wrapping the whole seed is a testa, a custom-made coat that helps to shield the seed from chemical, bacterial or mechanical injury.

The seed stays like this, alive but unchanging, waiting to grow. Depending on the type of plant, it can lie dormant for years. But growth or germination will be triggered at some point. Usually, it is a change in season that sparks growth. Most plants are caught in an annual cycle, and the arrival of rain, or warmth, or longer daylight hours, or a combination of these factors, will trigger the growing process.

But for some plants the seed waits for a different trigger. Some proteas of the Western Cape will germinate only after fire. Coconuts stay dormant as they float across the sea but as soon as they land on a beach they germinate.

Once germination has started, each structure in the seed plays its part. The first sign of change is the emergence of the radicle; it bursts through the testa and lengthens until it has clearly formed a small root, capable of drawing in water for the plant. The plumule begins to grow, and soon small leaves are evident as they grow upwards on a tiny stem. Of course this growth does not come from nowhere: it relies on the food supply or endosperm. This may be contained in the cotyledon. If there is one of these the seed is a monocotyledonous plant such as the grasses, onion or lilies. Two cotyledons tell us that it is a dicotyledonous plant, like the bean or the sunflower. The cotyledons act as early leaves, providing food to help the growing plant to become established.

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<sup>1</sup> Sourced by Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance from AgriSeta learning material

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A summary is based on the main ideas in a passage. Remember for a summary you need to:

- look for main ideas
- identify the key sentence in each paragraph – this should ‘cover’ or include all other points
- not confuse main ideas with examples
- omit (leave out) detailed descriptions or extensions

To look for the main ideas, take the following steps:

- Look at the title: this will give you the theme of the passage, in this case "The Growth of the Seed". This immediately makes you aware of two aspects: seeds and growth.
- Then, because of the way writing is structured, we usually find a main idea in each paragraph. How many paragraphs do we have here? Three. We will therefore base our summary on three main ideas. Because the paragraphs follow on from one another, these ideas must also link to one another.
- Starting with the first paragraph, let us identify the key sentence. What aspect of ‘the growth of the seed’ is being described? The paragraph is describing the parts of a seed, but what is the common idea that links these descriptions? We can answer this question by looking more closely at the description of each part. First it would be helpful to underline the words that name each part, e.g. embryo, plumule, radicle, endosperm, nutrients, carbohydrates, oils, minerals, vitamins, testa. Which of these are key words? Which are less critical? Rereading the paragraph, we may decide that the words nutrients, carbohydrates, oils, minerals, vitamins, are not critical because they are extending the idea of (that is, giving more detail about) the endosperm. So we are left with the keywords. embryo, plumule, radicle, endosperm, testa. Each of these items has its own description:
  - protected inside is the embryo of the future plant
  - a tiny plumule which already shows the form of tiny leaves
  - a radicle which holds the future root in its potent cells
  - a ready-made food supply, the endosperm
  - a testa, a custom-made coat

So each has its own description, but back to our question: what is the common thing that is said about all of them? Is there a key sentence, i.e. a sentence that covers all of these points? If we take such an overview, we will see that the second sentence, *“The seed itself contains everything needed for the growth of a future plant”*, contains this binding idea. Everything that is said about each part of the seed adds to that key point.

With that as the key sentence, and our list of key words, we can start a point-form summary, or you can plan your summary using a mind map.

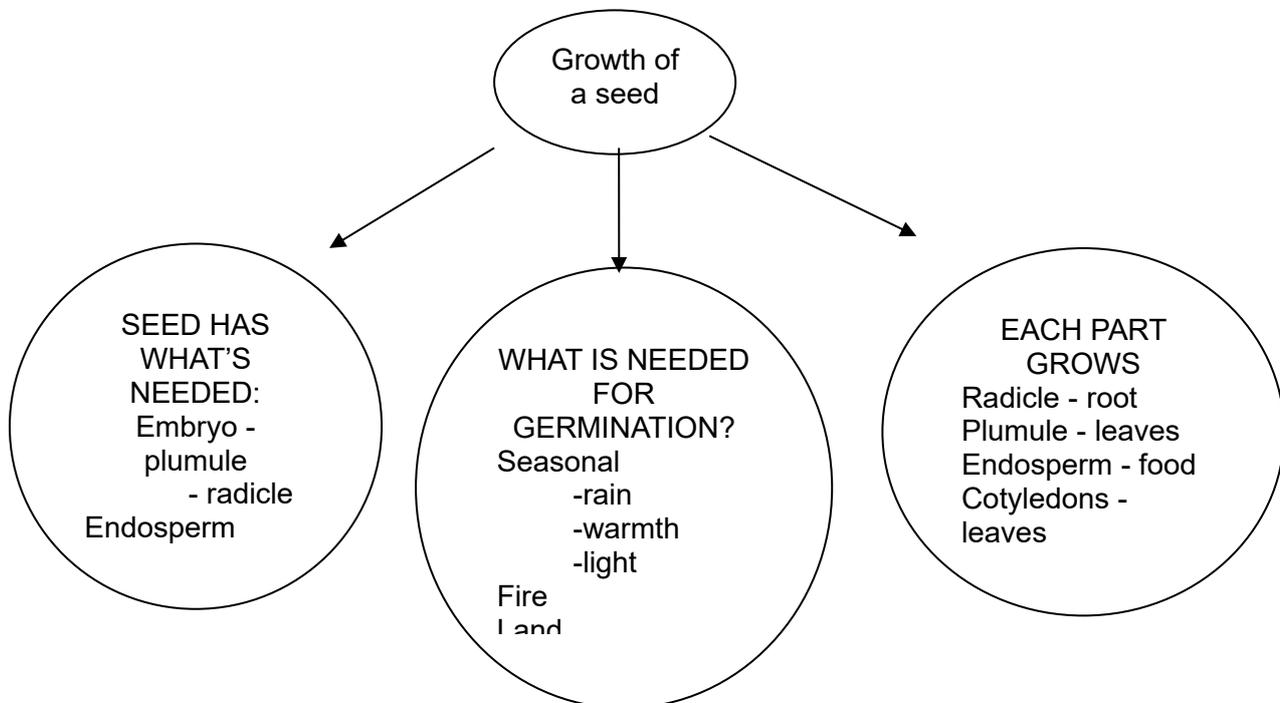
Now look at the second paragraph. What aspect of "the growth of the seed" is being described here? Which sentence "covers" the meaning of the other sentences i.e. what is our key sentence?

Note that the paragraph describes the start of germination, i.e. the "triggers" that start the growth process. But none of these examples can be the key sentence, as a number of different examples of these triggers are given – introduced by the words usually, most, some. In this case, we cannot say there is one trigger that works for all plants. The statement that applies to all others is: "but growth will be triggered at some point". That is the one sentence that covers all the others. Once you have made that key generalisation, you can give the three different kinds of trigger that it covers – seasonal factors (of which three examples – rain, warmth, day-light – are given), fire, beach.

Now try the third paragraph for yourself, looking first for the main idea, then the key sentence, then the key details. Write down your own answers before looking at the ones that have been given:

Main Idea	Key Sentence	Key Words
<b>Possible Answers</b>		
Each part grows	Once germination has started, each structure in the seed plays its part.	Radicle, root; plumule, leaves; endosperm, food; cotyledons, leaves

The mind map that follows shows one way of recording the key points for your summary, or you may want to simply list the key points. The important thing is that your points must make sense to you.



If you are going to turn your point-form summary back into sentences, you should use your own words. Of course the key words will stay the same if they are special terminology (as

many of the words in this passage are). But if you use these words in your own sentences, you will really be helping yourself to learn.

## **2.2 Select and apply specific techniques appropriately**

In this section we will look at some of the techniques that we use for effective learning.

If you understand the technique and its terminology, you will be able to use it effectively when the need arises to do so.

### **2.2.1 Use learning resources effectively**

This is a summary of some of the techniques<sup>2</sup> that we use for effective learning. You should make sure that you understand each term so that when you are asked to use the technique, or when an opportunity comes up, you can use it effectively.

#### **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is a process that encourages creative thinking; where a group of people gets together just to make suggestions about a topic. Suggestions are recorded (usually by writing them down) and the only "rules" are firstly that there are no 'no' ideas (that is, no ideas may be rejected at first), and secondly that there is no discussion about any suggestion. All ideas are therefore recorded. Brainstorming encourages "right-brain thinking" i.e. the creative sides of our brains are encouraged to think freely, by associating one idea with another and not censoring ourselves or each other.

#### **Group analysis**

Group analysis takes place after a brainstorming session, when the group looks again the brainstorming suggestions that have been recorded and starts to analyse these ideas. Now we return to left-brain thinking, where we discuss ideas more critically, choose the most suitable ideas and sort them into a logical plan to suit the task.

#### **A mind-map**

A mind-map is a scheme or plan which takes selected information in point-form and arranges it on a page, in a way that shows how the points are related to each other.

You have used mind maps a number of times, including in the previous unit of this unit. It is a technique that suits the way some people think (so-called visual learners), and for them it can be a great help in learning or planning. If you like working with mind maps, you are probably a visual learner (someone who learns best in pictures).

#### **Note taking**

Note taking is a technique that can be used in any situation in which we are getting information by reading, listening or watching. It uses skills that are very similar to summarising, because to take notes, we need to be selecting key points all the time. We cannot write down everything we are reading or listening to or seeing. To take good notes you need to concentrate and understand enough to take in the information and make decisions about what is important enough to write down, and what not. If it is a formal lecture you can probably take more orderly notes (in point form), as the topic is being given to you in an organised way. If you are making

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notes out in the field, it is often best to write down just the key words, in case you miss something while you are busy writing.

### Memorising



Memorising is not the same as learning. To memorise something (to "learn it by heart") may not necessarily involve understanding it. There are times, however, that we need to be able to memorise something. One way of helping our brains to do this is to use a mnemonic (said "nemonic"). This is a word or sentence which spells out the letters (or the first letters in the names) that we are trying to remember. For example, anyone who has learned music before may know that the progression of notes up the scale is EGBDF. But it is more likely that they will know the sentence "Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge", which is much easier to remember than the letters. Another example is

the 'name' Roy G. Biv, which does not make sense unless you know that it spells the colours of the rainbow in their correct order.

### Key words

Key words are the most important words in a particular context. They carry the main ideas. As we saw in the previous activity, identifying key words in a passage is an important step of summarising the passage. The process of identifying key words helps us to understand the meaning of the passage.

### Underlining

Underlining is a technique that can help us to focus on a passage, but it is not as effective to help us to learn as some of the other techniques, for example key words or summarising. But it can be a way of starting to understand a text. Remember, though, that we should only use underlining when we are working with our own notes or photocopied material. **Never** mark a library book, by underlining or in any other way. It is public property and other people will need to use it after you.

### Skimming

Skimming is the technique of running our eyes over a text very quickly in order to get the general idea of the content. In doing so, our eyes pick up some words across the text, so that we get some idea of what the text is about. Skimming gives us an idea of the scope of the content (i.e. what information the text contains in general) but not much idea of the detail. It is more useful for selecting a text than as a learning strategy, because it is a quick way of checking to see if the text is going to be useful to our needs.



### Scanning

Scanning is another reading technique. When you scan a text you also read it very quickly but this time you are looking for something specific, and so you are allowing the eye to pass quickly over the page while looking for a particular item. For example, when we look up a name in a telephone directory, we 'tell' our eyes to look for a particular name and we automatically ignore all the other names. Try looking at this page but look only for the **bold** print. Do you notice how your eyes basically ignore the other print? Now try taking the first letter of your name, and scan a few pages to spot that letter (as a capital letter). Are you able to spot that letter among all the others?

### Peer assessment

Peer assessment is assessment from a classmate. This can be an effective learning strategy because it can be very helpful to have another person of equal standing to reflect back to us what we have done. Peer assessment should help us to re-view our work, i.e. to see it again from a new perspective. For this to happen, the peer who is assessing the work should be sympathetic but honest. Peers doing peer assessment should use clear criteria that everyone has agreed upon in advance.

### Self-assessment



Self-assessment is a demanding task, as it requires the same honesty as peer assessment, but this time it is applied to oneself. Clear criteria should also be used during self-assessment. To be able to assess our own work, we should be able to be objective about it, i.e. to look at the work in a neutral way, without any self-interest in mind.

Regardless of how hard we have worked on a task, we must learn to be honest with ourselves: give credit where it is due and see where we could improve. The real value of self-assessment is not in the grades we give ourselves, but in learning to monitor our own learning processes.

## 1.3 Use a range of reading strategies to understand the literal meaning of specific texts

You can use various reading strategies in order to understand any text. Knowing what these reading strategies are will help you to analyse and understand their meaning.

- **Previewing: Learning about a text before really reading it**

This enables you to get a sense of what the text is about and how it is organised without actually reading and assimilating the information. It is almost the same as skimming; you briefly look at the headings or other introductory material to get an overview of the content and organisation of the text.

- **Contextualising: Placing a text in its historical, biographical, and cultural contexts**

While you read you will always have your own ideas and experience that you use to help you to better understand the text. Sometimes the information that you read has historical value and has been written in a radically different time and place. To read critically, you need to contextualise the information (place it in the context in which it was written, and to recognise the differences between your own modern values and attitudes and those at the time the text was written).

This therefore leads to another strategy, namely **examining your personal responses**.

When you read you should be in touch with your own responses, and notice where your own personal attitudes, beliefs, or status are being questioned and challenged. Make a brief note in the margin about what you feel or about what in the text created the challenge. Be aware of your patterns as you read.

As we have discussed, it is important to keep an open mind. The text does not have to be the absolute truth. Testing the logic of a text as well as its credibility (reliability) and emotional impact is an important part of in reading strategies.

Be critical, an argument has two essential parts: a claim (that what is said) and support (evidence). In order for an argument to be acceptable, the support must be relevant to the claim and the statements must be consistent with one another. By comparing and contrasting related readings you will also become aware of a bigger picture.

- **Language features and conventions can be managed for learning purposes**

Language has certain features and conventions, which can be managed for learning purposes. There are a number of skills, features and conventions or standards that will facilitate learning. In the following section, we will look at how to recognise these features and conventions and utilise them for effective learning<sup>3</sup>.

### 2.3.1 Identify unfamiliar words

What do we do when we come across a word we do not understand? Let's look at some techniques you can use to help you figure out the exact (literal) meaning of certain unfamiliar words in a piece of writing or part of a talk.

We are not always aware of how much information comes to us through hearing it, or reading. To make the best use of all this information, we need to actively listen and take care to read rather than just accepting what we have heard or read.

Listening well means staying focused on what is being said. You must listen for:

- **detail:** where the information is stated directly in the text
- **interpretation:** where the idea is there but not stated directly
- **analysis:** where you add your own ideas based on what you have heard

If a word is unfamiliar to us there are certain strategies or techniques we can use to help us make an intelligent guess at what the meaning of the word is. In order to do this we need to know a little bit about how sentences are structured.

### Syntax

The word syntax can be defined as the organisation of words in sentences the ordering of and relationship between the words and other structural elements in phrases and sentences.

Look at the difference between these two sentences:-

- Drinking water from the streams is very dangerous as the run-off from mines and commercial farms has poisoned a lot of rivers.
- Commercial farms and mines run-off drinking water from very dangerous streams, which have poisoned a lot of rivers.

The order in which we have placed the words, the syntax, has made all the difference in meaning between the two sentences.

Now look at this sentence:

- Themba was playing a pleasant tune on the mbiro when his mother called him.

We may not know what the word "mbiro" means but from where it is in the sentence we can guess that it is an object of some sort. It is a musical instrument which may be described as a

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'thumb piano' and is of sub-Saharan origin. We can thus see how syntax gives us some clue as to the meaning of an unfamiliar word.

### Word attack

Another useful strategy for trying to understand what an unfamiliar word means is word-attack skills.

Word-attack skills refer to looking at the unfamiliar word in its context, and trying to see what you can work out from the context and the syntax and any other clues, such as capital letters, to help you understand the word.

An example could be the word 'malnutrition. If we had never heard the word before and heard the following sentence "The statistics shows that there are cases of malnutrition in most of the ECD centres" we could do a word attack on "malnutrition" by thinking of its parts. We are familiar with "mal" as the last three letters of abnormal. We also know the word "nutrition" as referring to food/feeding, so we could guess that 'malnutrition' is something, which could be seen as abnormal eating or feeding.

### Context

Context can be defined as the text surrounding a word or passage; the words, phrases, or passages that come before and after a particular word or passage in a speech or piece of writing. The context helps to explain the word's full meaning.

When we looked at the word "malnutrition", the context in which it was used also helped us guess its meaning. We picked up clues from the fact that it was connected to ECD and concerned with feeding.

### Unfamiliar words

Sometimes we borrow words from another language. Borrowed words are foreign words and we can usually only use the context and syntax in our word-attack to try and work out what they mean, as the parts of the word will not be familiar to us.

Look at the syntax, and context in which the word that is in bold is used. Use your word attack skills to try and work out what it means if you are unfamiliar with the word. Then look at the solutions.

- "**Escargot** is my favourite dish," said Francois.
- My hunger was satisfied with the ostrich biltong which was so **lekker**.
- I would rather watch **flamenco** than classical ballet.
- Will you be having the **legumes** and chips with your steak?
- That **gogo** must be over 80 years old.
- These **samoosas** are delicious.
- We survived poverty through sharing and **ubuntu**.

We can see from the context and syntax that escargot refers to a food item. It is in fact French for snails.

We can see from the context and syntax that biltong is a food. This is derived from Afrikaans and is dried raw meat. "Lekker" is Afrikaans for delicious.

We can see from the context and syntax that flamenco refers to a type of performance. It is a Spanish word describing a particular style of dancing.

We can see from the context that legumes are a type of food to be eaten with steak.

Legumes in French mean vegetables.

We can see from the context and syntax that gogo refers to an old person. It means granny in Zulu.

We can see that samoosas refer to a food item. It is an Urdu (Indian) word for a spicy delicacy that is triangular.

We can see that poverty was alleviated through ubuntu. Ubuntu is a Xhosa word for family/friends helping each other in all circumstances.

See what other examples of borrowed words you can think of. We have many from Afrikaans and from Malaysia.

### **Complex terms**

A complex term is a word made up of more than one word in order to combine two ideas together. Complex is the opposite of simple; it means having many parts: made up of many interrelated parts.

We probably all know what marine means and we know what biology means. Marine Biology is the specific complex term used to refer to the study of life forms that are related to the sea and coast.

## Acronyms

An **acronym** can be defined as a word formed from initials; or parts of several words, for example "NATO", from the initial letters of "North Atlantic Treaty Organisation".

The context will usually help us understand what the acronym might be referring to, whether it is an organisation or a group of people. Sometimes we use acronyms without knowing what the individual letters stand for. For example we talk about SMS-ing somebody. Did you know that SMS stands for Short Message Service? Did you know that e-mail stands for electronic mail? Do you know what AIDS stands for?

**Here are some acronyms with their less familiar full names.**

ECD	Early Childhood Development
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
SO	Specific Outcomes
AC	Assessment Criteria
NCS	National Curriculum Statements

The next time you see an acronym try to work out from the context what the letters might stand for. Remember it is another unfamiliar word on which to practise your word-attack skills.

## Neologism

A **neologism** can be defined as a new word or meaning, or a recently coined word or phrase. An example is the word "hoover". This was the name of a popular make of vacuum cleaner in the 1950's that then started to be used as a word in its own right, meaning "to clean with a vacuum cleaner" as in "I will Hoover the room with the Electrolux".

## Colloquialisms and slang

A colloquialism is an informal expression; an informal word or phrase that is more usual in conversation than in formal speech or writing, e.g. "I am beat" meaning I am tired; "I am now finished and klaar" meaning "I am tired" Or "I want to give up".

Slang is also an informal manner of speech. Slang can be defined in two ways, firstly as very casual speech or writing when words, or expressions, are casual, or playful replacements for standard ones; slang words or phrases are often short-lived, and are usually considered unsuitable for formal contexts.

Secondly it can be defined as language of an exclusive group; a form of language used by a particular group of people, often deliberately created and used to exclude people outside the group, e.g. "hang ten" is a phrase that comes from surfers' slang.

We all use colloquialisms and slang in our ordinary day-to-day speech and also in e-mails or other forms of written communication to our friends and family. In the formal settings however we should guard against using them to our superiors and to our colleagues. In the professional world it is more acceptable to use more formal standard ways of expressing ourselves, whether in writing or in oral communication.

As always we need to be aware of our audience (listeners).

Look at these examples of slang and colloquialisms that are in bold font. If you are not familiar with them, look at the syntax and context, and use your word-attack skills to try to figure out what they mean. Then look at the explanations below:

1. Charlize is an **ace** actress.
2. Thabo asked where the **action** was in Mbekweni.
3. Tomorrow our boss is bringing in the **big guns**.
4. If Marlena doesn't go on diet soon she will end up a **blimp**.
5. Ismail never touches any **booze**.
6. If the weather is nice tomorrow Senta is going to go and **catch some rays**.
7. I did an **all-nighter** to get my work finished on time.

#### Explanations:

- a) very impressive
- b) most interesting place
- c) important people
- d) very fat person
- e) alcohol
- f) suntan
- g) stayed up late

Think carefully about whether you use too much slang or too many colloquialisms in your formal communications.

#### Jargon

**Jargon** can be defined as specialist language; it is language that is used by a particular group, profession, or culture, especially when the words and phrases are not understood or used by other people, e.g. farmers' jargon, or medical jargon.

Jargon is not a good way of communicating with the general public. Often the words used are so specialised that unless we are familiar with the field it is very difficult for a person off the street to work out what is meant by something. If we are with people who are in the same profession or a group of friends who share the same hobby, it is perfectly acceptable to use jargon.

*Read this extract that is aimed at people in the computer field (the jargon is in bold)*

"Many people use **MWEB** as their **ISP**. When doing a search on the net you may just want to browse. If the page is written in Java or in **HTML** then you can scroll up and down. You can also download on to a floppy or a stiffy. A frustrating thing that happens is when the **URL** cannot be located, even though you have done a good search with keywords, or the server is down".

How much did you understand? If you are very computer literate you may have understood a great deal bit. If you know little about computers or the Internet this talk would not have meant very much to you.

This is an example of jargon. Can you think of ways that could help you understand this better? You could ask someone who is an expert or you could find a good reference book to explain these terms.

Remember; do not get intimidated by jargon. If someone like a doctor or a salesperson uses jargon that you do not understand you should always ask for a clear explanation.

Now think of a field in which you know quite a bit, such as facilitation techniques.

Do you ever use jargon that would not be understood by people outside this field?

How do you think it makes your listener (audience) feel?

### Dialects

A **dialect** can be defined as a regional variety of language, with differences in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. For example in the United Kingdom there are many different dialects such as Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Cockney, etc.

South African English as used by first-language English speakers can be seen as a single dialect, and the main differences can be found in accent. It is not very different from standard (British) English although a number of different dialects have been identified that are spoken by non-first-language speakers. These include a number of varieties of 'township' English and the Cape Flats dialect (although this last dialect is a mixture of English and Afrikaans).

***Here is an example of Standard English "translated" into Scottish dialect.***

"We are having a great time and are learning to communicate better in South African English."

"We ur havin' a braw time an' ur learnin' tae communicate better in Sooth African sassnach".

Here is an example of Standard English "translated" into an Ali G dialect:

"Hallo everybody! What are you up to on this fine day?"

"Alo everyone! Wot iz yous up to on dis wicked day?"

Could you have used your word-attack skills to work out what "braw", "sassnach", and "wicked" mean in this context?

### 2.3.2 Test different options for the meanings of ambiguous words

Ambiguous words are words that have more than one meaning.

A word, phrase, sentence, or other communication is called **ambiguous** if it can be reasonably interpreted in more than one way. The simplest case is a single word with more than one meaning. Let us look at the word "bank", for example, which can mean "financial institution" or the "edge of a river". Sometimes this is not a serious problem because a word that is ambiguous when used by itself is often clear in the particular context in which it is used. Someone who says "I deposited R100 in the bank" is unlikely to mean that she buried the money beside a river!

Look at these sentences. They will not make sense in terms of the word in bold (which has more than one meaning) unless we know the context.

1. Sophie picked up the bat. (small animal/sport's equipment)
2. Henry went to the bank. (financial institution/edge of the river)

3. We will not finish at this rate. (speed or pace/amount you get paid)
4. Mandla is obviously absent today. (not present/inattentive)
5. Imelda brought the acid. (type of drug/chemical solution)
6. We are going to sit under the planes. (type of tree/aeroplane)

You should be able to see from these examples how important context is when you decide on the correct meaning.

### 2.3.3 Separate main ideas from supporting evidence and paraphrase/summarise it

**Paraphrase** is to rephrase and simplify; to restate something using other words, especially in order to make it simpler or shorter, e.g. "he was suffering from an acute case of influenza and thus absented himself from his place of learning", could be much more simply put as "he had bad flu and so didn't come to college".

**Summarise** is to make a summary; to make or give a shortened version of something that has been said or written, stating its main points, e.g. "The farm could have been over a million acres, it looked as if it could stretch to outer space" can be summarised as "the farm was very big".

In order to paraphrase (and summarise) we need to be able to separate the main ideas from the supporting evidence that is used as examples or additional material.

Look at the examples of fairly long complicated sentences that are given here and see if you can separate the main idea from the supporting evidence in each case.

Write down what you think the main idea of each sentence is.

- Dr Tshabala, who is a kind and honourable man and who has received much recognition for his excellent service to the community, is currently working at the university.
- AIDS is a terrible illness which strikes at the immune system of rich and poor alike and has caused the death of millions worldwide in a horrible and tragic manner.
- All the players in the orchestra and by this I mean even the most insignificant clasher of cymbals, need to focus their total and undivided attention on the conductor at all times, indeed, for every second of the performance.
- The successful Early Childhood Institute, which has been conducting classes since the year 2000 and is situated in the Boland with more than a thousand students registered at the moment, is investigating merging with other educational institutions.

### 2.3.4 Recognise and explain the purpose of visual and/or graphic representations in texts

Graphic representations are a form of non-verbal communication.

#### Graphic communication

Graphic communication tells us information at a glance and is often a more effective way to communicate than words. Devices such as pictures, drawings, photographs, aerial photographs, mind maps, maps, schema, bar graphs, pie charts, illustrations, cartoons and diagrams are examples of graphic communication.

## Illustration

An **illustration** is a general term that refers to the picture that complements a text. An illustration can be a drawing, a photograph, or a diagram that accompanies and complements a printed, spoken, or electronic text.

## Photographs

We are all familiar with **photographs**. It is said that the camera cannot lie but of course we can always choose what we include in a photograph – so photographs do not necessarily always tell the whole truth. They do, however, always provide a permanent record of visible objects. Sometimes photos can be too realistic and will not be included with text, e.g. a close-up photo of a child who has been mutilated (disfigured) in a hand-grenade attack. Can you think of any other examples where a photo would be too realistic?

## Aerial photography

**Aerial photography** refers to a particular type of photo that is taken from an aeroplane. It can be used to show the layout of a neighbourhood (similar to a map) or to estimate the number of people living in a particular area. It could also be used to show the particular features of a piece of land, in relation to the surrounding areas. Think of the view you get from an aeroplane when you are coming in to land and try to think how this perspective could be used to illustrate a text.

## Pictures

We are also familiar with **pictures**, which can be described as something that is drawn or painted; a shape or set of shapes and lines that have been drawn, painted or printed on paper, canvas or some other flat surface, especially shapes that represent a recognisable form or object.

## Drawings

A **drawing** is an outline picture; that is, a picture of something made with a pencil, pen or crayon, and that usually consist of lines. Shading is sometimes used, but generally drawings are without colour.

Advertisers might choose to use drawings rather than coloured pictures to save money. In certain contexts a coloured picture may be too distracting, such as in certain text books or reference books. A simple drawing might then be chosen. Next time you see a drawing ask yourself whether a more detailed coloured picture would improve the message, or rather draw attention away from the real purpose of the illustration.

Look at the following examples of marketing campaigns and decide whether you think the producers would use a photograph or a picture as an illustration to promote their ideas:

1. a brochure advertising a really impressive hotel with stunning views of the sea
2. an advert trying to sell a farm that has been neglected but shows potential
3. a pamphlet promoting a range of carefully crafted African beaded jewellery
4. an illustration for promotional material showing a range of different fruits that are being sold at cost price because they are slightly damaged
5. an illustration for a children's book showing happy puppies all playing together

6. an illustration for an advert to sell a tractor
7. an advert for a sea cruise portraying the large, impressive but neglected ship
8. an illustration for a brochure promoting a range of practical courses that can be attended by a smiling, enthusiastic bunch of students
9. an illustration for an advertising campaign showing contented old people in a particular old-age home

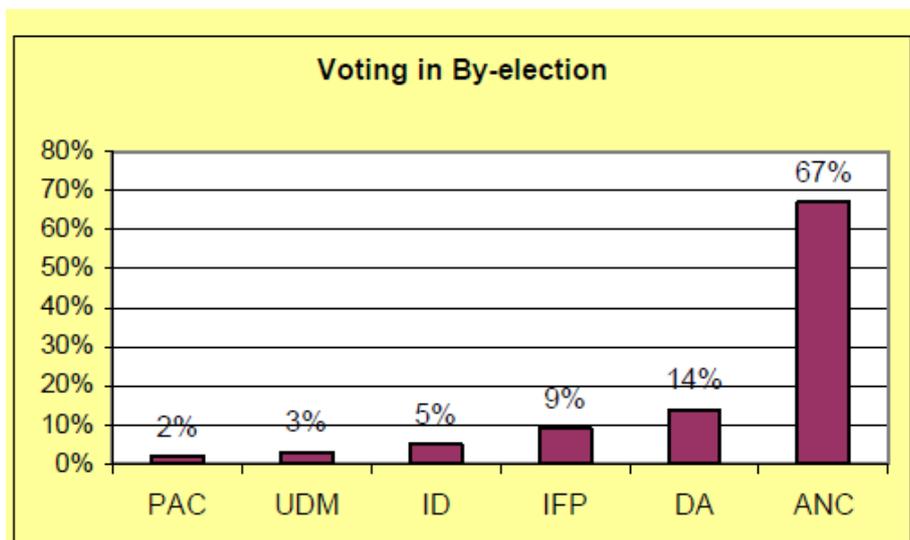
## Graphs

### The bar graph

A **bar graph** is a graphic representation where vertical or horizontal bars or columns represent some information. The length of the bar tells us the size of the illustrated item. If the numbers in the bar graphs are representing percentages, these must add up to 100%. Bar graphs are sometimes called bar charts or bar diagrams.

When drawing a bar graph remember the following:

- Bars should be of equal width.
- There should be spaces of equal width between the bars.
- Bars can be vertical or horizontal.
- The bars are usually of different colours to show the difference between the various sets of information.
- Label each bar showing the exact value of each bar.



Each column or bar represents the number of votes that was received by a political party in the last local by-election. The bars are numbered 1–6 from left to right. Number 1 represents the PAC; number 2 represents the UDM; number three represents the ID; number 4 represents the IFP; number 5 represents the DA and number 6 represents the ANC.

Now see if you can answer these questions based on this example.

- Which party received the most votes?
- Which party received the least votes?
- Which party received the second highest number of votes?
- Which party received the second lowest number of votes?
- Which party received the third highest number of votes?
- Which party received the third lowest number of votes?

## The pie chart

A **pie chart** is a graphic representation of data in the form of a circle or pie, which is divided into wedges. The total of the pie represents 100%. Pie charts are relatively easy to understand and are popular ways of graphically representing numerical data to the public.

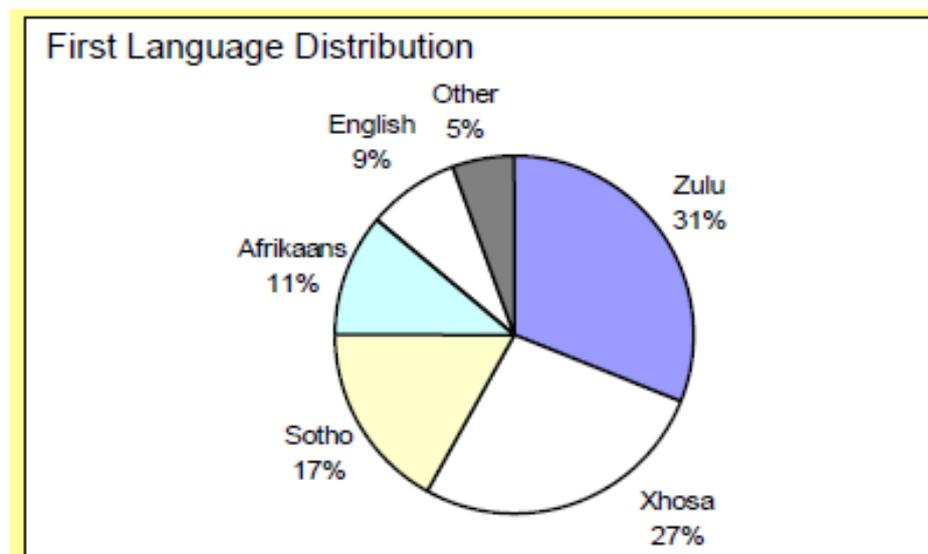
### **Tips for reading pie graphs:**

Read the title of the pie graph if there is one. It explains what the pie graph is about.

Look at the different colours or shadings. This tells you how many parts or sections there are that make up the whole.

Notice the size of each section. Find the biggest and smallest sections.

Look for any numbers that give you information about how big or small each section is.



Above is a pie chart representing first language distribution in Johannesburg. (Please note: it is not an actual reflection – it is a made-up example.)

The languages represented are English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa and Other ("other" is a combination of all other languages).

Look at the pie chart carefully and see if you can answer these questions:

- What first language is the most common?
- What first language is the least common?
- What first language is the second most common?
- What language is the second least common?
- Into which category would Hindi fall?
- What type of article would this pie chart illustrate? Think of reasons for your answer.

## Diagram

A **diagram** and a **schema** can be defined as a simple explanatory drawing that shows the basic shape, layout, or workings of something in order to explain it.

Examples of a diagram are:

- a diagram showing the cross-section of a flower
- a diagram showing the manner in which a piece of machinery should be put together
- a schema of the layout of the ECD centre

- a schema of the layout of the ECD centre's garden

All the parts of diagrams and schema should be clearly labelled. Diagrams are often included with products we buy, for example a video machine will come with a booklet that has diagrams showing us what each piece represents and how it should be used. Textbooks on subjects such as Life Sciences as well as medical books will often be illustrated with diagrams.

Look at these examples and decide what the most appropriate form of graphic representation for each would be:

- a leaflet on how to assemble a Weber braai
- a graphic representation to a group of language experts that shows the number of English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, and Zulu speakers living in Khayelitsha
- a graphic representation that shows the percentages of people infected by HIV in four provinces for a talk at the community centre
- a section in a textbook that deals with the reproductive system of the plan.

## Maps

A **map** can be defined as a geographical diagram; it is a visual representation that can show all or part of the Earth's surface with many of its geographical features, urban areas, roads, and other details. For example, "We carefully studied the map of Africa to see exactly where Zanzibar is when we won tickets to go there."

It can also be defined as a drawing that shows a route or location; a diagrammatical drawing of something such as a route or area made to show the location (position) of a place or how to get there. For example, "I asked her for a map showing where her house was as I had never been to Bellville before."

## Cartoons

A **cartoon** is a sequence of drawings that tell a short story. They are often humorous and, published in a newspaper or magazine. Examples of cartoons are the comic strips that appear in the newspaper, or cartoon versions of written texts such as "The Tale of Two Cities".

It can also refer to a satirical drawing or a humorous drawing that is published in a newspaper or magazine and comments on a current event or theme. For examples, look at the 'Letters Page' in all daily newspapers for a cartoon on some current event.

Cartoons are used to lighten the mood of a text or to make a serious point in a humorous way. They can convey a message in a powerful way. They are often used in campaigns aimed at the youth, e.g. a campaign launched in June 2004 to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, made use of cartoons, in the form of talking condoms.

### 2.3.5 Explain how features of visual texts impact on meaning

One very important feature of any visual text is the use of pictures in context of the text being read. Magazines and newspapers would not be half as popular if there were no visuals. Let us have a look at what impact they have on what you are reading.

Print media is an entire industry and therefore the use of images is of great importance. Visuals promote understanding of the text and also attract interest. This is also relevant to the advertising industry.

You may know that when placing an advert you will pay more to place it on the left-hand page in the beginning of a newspaper or magazine and on the right-hand side in the second half of these printed media. This is because your eyes automatically go to the left of the page!

Photographers follow very specific principles that guide the manner in which they take photographs. We will now briefly discuss these principles.

### **Focus the viewer's attention**

A technique that photographers use to make sure that the attention is focused on the subject is to effectively position the subject in the frame in such a way that it draws the viewer's eye exactly to where you want it. This is achieved in many creative, artistic and figurative ways. Size, colour, shape and how the object contrasts with the rest images within the photograph (foreground, middle ground and background). For example, the subject image may be in colour and the rest of the photograph in black and white.

### **Balance, layout, arrangement**

The layout of photographs manipulates how the viewer sees the image. When the photographer composes (put together) an image there needs to be a balance in the colour, object placement and the lighting within the frame's rectangle. Balance in a photograph means that it is pleasing to the eye. This can be achieved by being creative with where and how the camera is actually placed, so that the composition has a unique perspective, or view of the world. For example, lying on the rocks to take a photo of a lighthouse or taking a photo at animal or pet level, will give the photo a more interesting composition and perspective than if the camera were held at full height while looking down at the pet object. Like many art concepts, perspective and composition may be based on instinct, or it can be developed through practise and study.

### **Use contrast**

Contrast in lighting is another manner in which you can increase an effect; it means that there is the difference between the lightest light and the darkest dark in a photograph. Manipulating this component creates depth and adds to the three-dimensional quality of a photograph.

### **Framing**

This is when you use a frame within the restricted area of your camera lens, such as taking a photo through a window onto a subject. The trick in this case is to make sure that the frame has clear shape and lines, and is in sharp focus. The viewer's attention will immediately be taken to exactly the subject matter of the composition.

### **Background and foreground**

Photographs can have a blurry foreground or background. This can enhance the composition of photos by more clearly separating the main subject from everything else around it. This is achieved by manipulating the depth of field, which is controlled by the lens' aperture, focal length and object's distance from the lens. This technique helps to create more interesting images.

### **Differences in perspective**

This is the manner in which the photographer views the objects in the camera frame depending on where he or she places the camera. For example, the same subject will have different perspectives when photographed at eye level, from above or from ground level. By varying the perspective the viewer is influenced in what they see.

Now that we have discussed how imagery can affect text, how can you use the actual text to manipulate a reader's viewpoint? Here are a few examples:

- THIS IS CONSIDERED TO BE SHOUTING IN SMS TEXT OR IS USED TO EMPHASISE A HEADING. Text in capital letters can be used in a headline to make it stand out – a headline is a heading at the top of an article or page in a newspaper or magazine.
- Using **Bold** can also draw attention to emphasis of a point or as a heading in order to let it stand out.
- Italics can create a *subtle* use to emphasise as if you are dropping your tone when speaking or to introduce a *gentle emphasis* on text. Colour also can help with the visual representation of text. Titles and captions below photographs or visuals tell you a bit more about the picture as well as assisting in reading the text accompanying.

## 2.4 Use strategies for extracting implicit messages in texts

In this section will look in particular at how to use a range of strategies to identify implicit (unspoken and subtle) messages in texts. These include:

- source of text
- author's attitude
- promotion of line of thought.

### 2.4.1 Identify the source of text and discuss it in terms of reliability and possible bias

We deal with a variety of texts in our everyday lives. We read adverts, listen to news broadcasts that have been written by someone, receive e-mails, read lecture notes, notices, marketing material, magazines, newspapers and books.

#### Reliability

Reliability means the extent to which the text is likely to be accurate; the extent to which text may be trusted to be accurate, correct or to provide a correct result, e.g.

"I don't think the report that aliens have landed is very reliable."

One way to check reliability is to look at the source. If we heard on the 7 o'clock news that aliens had landed we might be seriously concerned. We assume that news reports are fairly reliable. We also assume that newspaper reports are fairly reliable, so again if we read in the *Cape Times* that aliens had landed we would take it fairly seriously. If, however, we read this in a sensationalist magazine we should have serious doubts about it.

#### Sensationalism

Sensationalism refers to the use of shocking material; the practice of emphasising the most horrifying, shocking, and emotive aspects of anything under discussion or investigation, especially by the media.

Some magazines specialise in sensationalism. They publish stories which are difficult to back up or prove, and they focus on that part of our personalities that enjoys being shocked. Such magazines may be fun to read but their claims should not be taken too seriously. We need objective and reliable evidence to back up wild claims.

## Objective

When a statement is objective, it means that it is free of bias or prejudice that is caused by personal feelings. It means that statements are based on facts rather than on thoughts or opinions, e.g. it is an objective fact that drug use among teenagers is increasing in Cape Town.

Sometimes an implicit or implied message is transmitted through a biased source.

## Bias

Bias can be defined as an unfair preference for or dislike of something, e.g. "The teacher is biased against black learners – she always picks on those learners unfairly"; "The report on the gay club was biased against homosexuals – it gave a very negative impression of them."

### 2.4.2 Explore attitudes, beliefs and intentions in order to determine the point of view expressed

#### Attitude

**Attitude** can be described as a personal view of something; an opinion or general feeling about something, e.g. "Many people in South Africa have a positive attitude to change"; "Rapists have a very negative attitude to women".

#### Belief

**Belief** can be described as the acceptance of the truth of something; acceptance by the mind that something is true or real, and is often based on an emotional or spiritual sense of certainty, e.g. "She has a strongly held belief in an afterlife".

It can also mean to have trust or confidence that somebody or something is good or will be effective, e.g. "He has a great belief in democracy".

Finally belief refers to an opinion that is a firm and considered one, e.g. "I have a firm belief in the superiority of women".

What an author believes and what his/her attitude to something is will have an influence on the message he/she is putting across. The attitudes and beliefs of the author may be directly stated or put across in an indirect, implied, more subtle manner. An example to illustrate this is: when someone states "I do not like women" they are directly stating their attitude; if they were to say "Women are a very difficult bunch" they would be indirectly expressing a negative attitude to women; the message would be implied.

#### Intentions

**Intentions** can be described as the aim or objective of something; something that somebody plans to do or achieve, e.g. "The students learnt about educational practices so that they would become good practitioners". Authors can have a huge variety of aims or intentions, e.g. they may wish to entertain, to educate, to convince readers of a political point of view, to persuade people to believe in a cause, to convince readers to purchase something, to express their own point of view publicly and so on.

We can usually work out what the author's intention in writing something was, but sometimes their point of view may be hidden or implicit because the stated intention is not the only one. For example in the apartheid era, the stated intention of history textbooks was to educate learners on national and international history. However, by conveying history from a certain

perspective, learners were educated to reinforce their position within apartheid society, rather than to question the injustices of apartheid.

### 2.4.3 Explore techniques and explain them in terms of purpose and audience

An important term here, is the **register** of language use. **Register** in this context means language of a type that is used in particular social situations or when communicating with a particular set of people, e.g. "When speaking to her boss, Meranisa used a formal register." When you are using slang you are using an informal register.

We use different registers depending on whom we are communicating with and what the purpose of our communication is. Friendly e-mails, notes or letters are usually written using an informal register, if our purpose is to communicate with someone we know well.

Office memos, business letters, faxes (for official business) and business e-mails will be written using a formal register.

We all have the ability to use either a formal or informal register and we swap between the two depending on who our audience is. This is called **code-switching**. Watch how your style changes depending on who you are writing to. A lecturer or a business associate would be very surprised to receive a letter that started with "Howzit?" and ended with "Lots of love"!

Look at these examples and decide which is written using a formal register and which is written in an informal register.

1. We should all assemble at 8.30 a.m. in the Main Hall for the fire drill.
2. Let's go out and party tonight guys!
3. I wish to inform you that your article on genetic modification has arrived at the Library.
4. Kindly re-instate your debit order for R235 per month.
5. All students in residence must read, agree to and sign the rules in the admissions book.
6. I am really taking serious strain trying to finish all my work today.
7. My mom and I are so excited about our fantastic trip to Knysna.
8. When completing an order form for educational toys, please ensure it is done in duplicate.
9. I haven't written for ages because I've been killing myself studying for the exams.

In a text that is relatively simple and aimed at a general public, where the author wishes to make sure that his/her purpose is clearly communicated, shorter sentences will be used. Shorter sentences are generally easier to follow than very long complicated ones.

Look at these two texts and decide which one would be aimed at an audience consisting of computer experts and which one would be aimed at people who were not yet computer literate. Give reasons for your choices.

- First turn on the computer. You do this by pressing the button on the tower. Your computer is then on. Next look at the keyboard. You will see the familiar typewriter's keyboard. There will however be some additions. These additions are called Function keys. You will notice other differences as well. There is a section to the right of the keyboard. You will see numbers and words on these keys. We will learn what each one means.
- Your Internet Service Provider should ensure an excellent connection to the Web at all times otherwise your browsing and searching or scrolling up and down the pages will be to no effect. As you all know, the uniform resource location of your web page will

reflect either hypertext mark-up-language or Java script which is closely linked to the former, both in design and function and both of which originate with the beginnings of icon based word-processing.

**Note:**

Both the sentence length and the content tell us about the purpose and the audience.

**Punctuation**

**Punctuation** is critical to the reader as it helps us for example to know when to pause, when to stop and when people are speaking. A poorly punctuated piece of writing is usually very difficult to understand.

If an author was composing an advert that contained dialogue it would be critical both for his/her audience and the purpose of the advert to make sure that the punctuation was correct. For example, look at the difference in meaning between: "Ms Viljoen said I am too slow when I move", and, Ms Viljoen said: "I am too slow when I move!"

**Choice of words**

The choice of words depends a great deal on who the intended readers are and what the purpose or intention of the author is. If we want to ensure that our communication is understood by any reader we would obviously choose simple, clearly understood words. If we knew we were writing to a person, or people, who were totally familiar with the topic, we could use words they would understand.

The general public do not always understand technical jargon or slang.

Another technique is to vary how much figurative language they use.

**Figurative language**

**Figurative language** refers to language that is not literal. Literal is the actual meaning of the word, so figurative language means using language that contains a non-literal meaning. For example, she will use her teeth to remove your head; the sense in which it is used is figurative here, meaning "she will get very angry if you tell her that".

**Humour**

**Humour** is a way that authors use to entertain, relax or amuse the reader. Humour would be out of place in a very formal text. Advertisers often make use of humour; certain companies such as Vodacom and Kulula have very humorous advertisements.

**Irony**

**Irony** can be defined as a type of humorous technique that is based on using words to suggest the opposite of their literal meaning, e.g. "That is great news!" as a response when hearing your working hours are to be extended.

**Sarcasm**

Sarcasm is cutting language: remarks that mean the opposite of what they seem to say and are intended to mock or ridicule, or make fun of something or someone.

Sarcasm and irony are effective ways of communicating for friends or in informal settings. It is generally inappropriate to use sarcasm or irony when you address people in a formal context, or people who are senior to you.

Look at these examples of sarcasm:

- In Hollywood a marriage is a success if it outlasts milk. -- Rita Rudner
- I love being married. It's so great to find that one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life. -- Rita Rudner
- Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary. -- Robert Louis Stevenson
- Politics is the skilled use of blunt objects. -- Lester Pearson
- Every time I look at you I get a fierce desire to be lonesome. -- Oscar Levant

### Satire

**Satire** can be described as the use of wit – especially irony, sarcasm, and ridicule – to attack people's evils and stupidity. For example, a play in which politicians are represented as greedy children is a satire, as it was making fun of politicians.

In South Africa Pieter-Dirk Uys is the best known satirist. His creations of Evita Bezuidenhout and others were done in order to poke fun at the Nationalist government. During the apartheid era, his plays were sometimes banned. Some politicians, however, found his satires amusing.

Example:

Choose which is the literal meaning and which the figurative for each of these pairs of sentences.

1. The chameleon turns green when walking on a leaf.
2. When Cindy saw Buyiswa's new hairstyle she went green.
3. If Lunga drops it, the goat will eat his hat.
4. If you finish Comrades I will eat my hat.
5. There were millions of people at Ayesha's party - she is so popular!
6. Millions of people live below the bread line in the Third World.
7. The weather is so hot today it is boiling outside.
8. You can hear when the water in the kettle is boiling.
9. You can never believe politicians – their words are made of straw.
10. The new basket I bought is made from straw.
11. Ask Simpiwe to monitor the plants – he has such green fingers.
12. Busieka put his hands in the paint and when he took them out he had green fingers.
13. The workers were given the boot without any compensation.
14. Sharon was given the boot which she thought she had lost.

#### 2.4.4 Identify promotion of, or support for, a particular line of thought/cause

Let us now move on to look at how a particular line of thought or a cause is promoted and supported. We can do this by **selecting or omitting** (leaving out) certain materials.

### **Selection or omission of materials**

In the apartheid era history textbooks often left out critical information relating to the role that black people played in creating our nation.

Let us look at another example. An author wants to promote the cause of allowing baboons in Pringle Bay to freely roam the neighbourhood. Imagine that he/she has four facts at his/her fingertips. These are:

1. It is the baboons' natural dwelling place.
  2. The baboons are causing great destruction in the neighbourhood.
  3. It is relatively simple to 'baboon-proof' your house.
  4. The baboons have attacked two children and three dogs.
- Which two facts would he/she choose to include in a letter to the press promoting the cause of allowing the baboons free range of the neighbourhood?
  - What would the implicit message in the letter be?

### **2.5 Respond to selected texts in a manner appropriate to the context**

In order to respond to texts in a manner that is appropriate to the context we have to follow instructions and requests and examine how to use text-type, format and register on the correct level of formality.

Different texts have different contexts and we need to respond to these in different ways. We need to ensure that we respond appropriately.

This section will look at responding to selected texts in a manner that is appropriate to the context.

These include:

- instructions and requests
- text-type, format and register

#### **2.5.1 Act upon instructions and requests**

##### **Requests**

Let us look at text that consists of a **request**. Certain texts require us to respond in certain ways - for example, we are asked or requested to supply our personal details when we apply for a student loan or bursary.

There are times, however, when we will need more information in order to respond to a request. There are other times when we need to sort out the order of things that are being requested in order to be able to respond appropriately.

For example: If you were asked to help a developing farmer choose the most suitable crops for her area you would first need to establish a lot more information about where her farm was, how much land she had, what type of soil she had and other relevant points.

Requests are often, but not always, phrased as questions.

##### **Instructions**

Instructions may be defined in two ways: firstly as orders, e.g. "I was just following instructions when I forwarded that e-mail"; "acting on instructions that we received we went on to the next lesson". Secondly, they may refer to a list of things to do; printed information about how to do, make, assemble, use, or operate something, e.g. "the instructions are printed on the back of the packet".

Look at the following statements and decide whether they are instructions or requests:

1. Finish the work today or you will be fired.
2. Please go to Worcester then to Robertson.
3. You must fill in this form.
4. Will you help the grape grower choose his cultivars?
5. You need to first check the plug and the switch carefully, then use the power point.
6. Please fill in Section A followed by B, then C, then D.
7. Please could I have more information?
8. To determine the type of soil you are working with here is a very easy test: Take a spade full of the soil and moisten it with a bit of water. Work the soil until it no longer changes in feel. Now press the soil between your thumb and fingers, note the feel of the soil and now try to squish the soil into a long thin strip.

### **2.5.2 Use text-type, format and register on the appropriate level of formality**

#### **Text-type**

Text-type refers to the font you choose to use when using the word processor. This text you are reading has been printed in Arial, font size 12.

Examples:

Here are some examples of text-type or font:

- Hi! My name is Avela and I live in Gugs.
- Please reply to this letter by return of post.
- Old texts looked like this.
- This is a more formal type of font.
- This is quite a complicated font and is not so easy to read.
- When would you use this font?
- Which one is your favourite font?

#### **Format**

Format refers to the structure of something; the way in which something is presented, organised, or arranged; specifically in this context it refers to the way a written communication is presented or structured.

Look at these two examples of business letters. Which one do you think has the more appropriate format? Give reasons for your answer.

A)

		11 Firfireld Road
	Athlone	Cape Town
		7780
		22 June
	2013	
Salesperson Garden Goodies P.O. Box 121 Cape Town		
<u>Re: My order for seedlings</u>		
Dear Mr Hendricks		
I want to ask about my order for seedlings that I placed six weeks ago. I have heard nothing yet from you. My address is given above and you can write to me there.		
The order was for 6 daisy bushes, 12 Peace rose bushes and 14 Pinotage grape cultivars.		
When can I expect a reply? You can phone me on 0217624989.		
Thank you very much.		
Regards Annie Blackburn		

B)

		11 Firfireld Road
	Athlone	
		Cape Town 7780 22 June
	2013	
Salesperson Garden Goodies P.O. Box 121 Cape Town 8000		
<u>Re: My order for seedlings</u>		
Dear Mr Hendricks		
I want to ask about my order for seedlings that I placed six weeks ago. I have heard nothing from you yet. The order was for a variety of plants.		
Just to remind you, the list of things required was:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 Daisy bushes;</li><li>• 12 Peace roses;</li><li>• 14 Pinotage grape cultivars.</li></ul>		
When can I expect a reply? My address is given above and you can write to me there. You can phone me on (021) 762 4989.		
Regards Annie Blackburn		

**Register (also see the section where we discussed it earlier)**

Register in this context means the type of language that is used in particular social situations or when communicating with a particular set of people. For example, when speaking to her boss Meranisa used a formal register; when you are using slang you are using an informal register.

We use different registers depending on whom we are communicating with and what the purpose of our communication is. Friendly e-mails, notes or letters would tend to be written using an informal register, if our purpose was to communicate with someone we know well.

Office memos, business letters, faxes (for official business) and business e-mails would be written using a formal register.

We all have the ability to use either register and we swap between the two depending on who our audience is. This is referred to as code-switching. Watch how your style changes depending on who you are writing to. A lecturer or a business associate would be very surprised to receive a letter that started with "Howzit?" and ended with "Lots of love"!

Look at these examples and decide which is written using a formal register and which is written in an informal register.

1. We should all assemble at 8.30 a.m. in the Main Hall for the fire drill.
2. Let's go out and party tonight guys!
3. I wish to inform you that your article on genetic modification has arrived at the Library.
4. Kindly re-instate your debit order for R235 per month.
5. All students in residence must read, agree to and sign the rules in the admissions book.
6. I am really taking serious strain trying to finish all my work today.
7. My mom and I are so excited about our fantastic trip to Knysna.
8. When completing an order form for plants, please ensure it is done in duplicate.
9. I haven't written for ages because I've been killing myself studying for the exams-

### 2.5.3 Explore and explain how language structures and features may influence a reader

In this next section we will see how choice of words/signs, language usage, symbols, pictures and tone/sign size and pace shape or support a point of view.

#### Bias

Bias can shape or support a particular point of view. We have mentioned bias in an earlier section. Remember that we said bias is an unfair preference for or dislike of something. Bias is unfair, because it is not typical of how we should treat people. In South Africa we are lucky enough to have an extremely good Constitution that protects us all. Our Constitution does not permit us to discriminate against, or treat unfairly, any people on the basis of cultural or ethnic identity, gender, religion, age or sexual preference. This guarantees us all our basic human rights.

Look at the statements below that were made by someone about somebody else. See if you can match the bias with one of the speakers who are mentioned in the list below the examples.

1. "Of all the Nguni speakers, Xhosas are the most intelligent."
2. "All Moslems are fanatically against the Jewish people."
3. "Only people under the age of 25 are capable of learning anything new."
4. "All the American forces have been involved in torturing Iraqis."
5. "Only black people should be allowed to vote in the next election."
6. "All white people are greedy and power-mad."
7. "Women belong in the kitchen, not in the workplace."
8. "I will only let my own age-group join any club I run."
9. "Old people are just a burden on society, they contribute nothing."
10. "Gay people are really evil and should not be allowed into churches."

Possible speakers:

- a. a person who is biased against homosexuals; a homophobic person
- b. a person who is biased against women; a sexist person
- c. a person who is biased against old people; an ageist person
- d. a person who is biased against a certain culture; culturally biased
- e. a person who discriminates against a particular group; treats them unfairly
- f. a person who is biased against people on the basis of their race; racist person
- g. a person who is showing bias towards their own peer group

- h. a person who is against people of a certain religion; showing religious bias
- i. a person who is showing bias by misrepresenting facts
- j. a person who is biased towards a certain age group; an ageist person

Bias occurs frequently. We have to be careful that it does not influence us to make unfair judgements about people. Most of the research done in South Africa shows that we have more in common with each other than we think. Newspaper surveys show that people from all race groups, income groups and age groups, of both sexes and genders have similar fears about life in South Africa. We all worry about crime, unemployment, the cost of living and corruption. Of course there will also be differences, but to be biased against people for any of the reasons shown in the example above is to cut yourself off from experiencing the rich diversity this country has to offer us all.

If an author has a particular point of view which is biased, what he/she writes will reflect this bias. The choice of words that the author uses may influence us. **Facts** are statements we can test whereas **opinions** are what someone thinks. Opinions may often be biased. If the author has a biased opinion about some group he/she will express his/her point of view by using biased language. Always be careful of statements about groups of people that contain the word "all" in them. It is seldom possible to make statements like "all black people are bad-tempered" or "all fat people are lazy" or "all young people use drugs" or "all Zulus are brave" without being guilty of bias. The behaviour within groups of people varies enormously and these kind of generalised statements are seldom accurate.

We must also guard against misrepresenting facts and showing bias in that way - because some members of a particular group behave in a certain way that does not mean that all members follow this behaviour. It is a misrepresentation to say, for example, that all British soccer fans are thugs.

How else can the written word influence the reader? What other language usage or choice of words do authors use to shape or support a point of view?

**Humour** can influence the reader in indirect ways. If we constantly read or hear jokes about how dumb blondes are or how stupid a particular race is, we can start to be influenced by this. There are many examples of humour that are based on negative messages about a particular group. Some examples are jokes about fat people, disabled people, old people, and so on. We have already mentioned earlier in this module how humour can be used in adverts to influence a reader. While humour can add a great deal to our enjoyment of things and can successfully be used to influence readers in positive ways, we should be aware that humour that is based on the supposed weakness or vulnerability of a particular group is usually being used to attempt to influence us in a negative way about that group.

See if you can find **examples** of humour that are based on an implied (subtle) negative message about a group.

Now we are going to move on to look at how the use of **omission** and **silences** can influence a reader. We have already looked at the example of the baboons that wreaked havoc earlier in the Lesson. Let us look again at how not including information about something can influence a reader.

Look at this list of facts available to an author who is going to write an article on "Banning of Smoking in Public Places to be considered."

1. Passive smoking is a danger to non-smokers.
2. The most toxic fumes are produced by factories, not smokers.
3. Smokers have rights as well.

4. Banning smoking on aeroplanes has led to increased incidents of air-rage.
5. Non-smokers need to be protected.
6. Banning smoking in the workplace has led to a decrease in productivity.
7. Banning smoking in public places is supported by 60% of the people surveyed in a recent poll.
8. There has been a decrease in litter in cities where smoking in public places is banned.

Which facts would?

- a writer who wished to support the ban, use?
- a writer who is against the ban, use?

### **Figurative expressions**

Figurative expressions make written language more interesting. To say someone was a tiger in a fight or as strong as an ox, is to enliven the written word. Because figurative expressions grab our attention, they can be used as devices or strategies by authors to convince us of a point of view.

Consider the earlier example of the antismoking campaign. If the author had written a passage describing smokers in a highly figurative way, he/she could make their point even more strongly. An example might be "Huffing and puffing, the smokers clutch desperately on to their cancer-sticks, dragging at them for all they are worth. What a pitiful bunch! They pollute the perfect atmosphere with foul smelling yellow clouds of poison!" Would the reader of this passage be in any doubt as to what point of view was being put across? If you had no particular objection to smokers, would reading a passage like that influence you at all? In what way?

### **Repetition**

Repetition is another example of a technique that an author can use to influence the reader and build support for a point of view. By stating the same facts or opinions over and over again in different ways, the author can push his/her point of view.

### **Hyperbole**

Hyperbole can be defined as exaggeration; it is deliberate and obvious exaggeration that is used for effect, for example, "I could eat a million of these".

"There are miles of people waiting in the queue."

Hyperbole is an effective way for a writer to make his/her point of view clear and to try and influence the reader.

### **Typography**

Typography refers to the layout of a page or pages. The visual impression that is created by a piece of text is important and can influence readers. If a page is well and neatly laid out the readers are more likely to take its contents seriously.

Magazines that appeal to a broad-based readership – popular magazines in other words– often use typography that is quite eye-catching. There will be lots of big headlines and accompanying pictures.

Magazines that appeal to a more serious readership such as specialist current affairs magazines will use a much less dramatic layout.

Go to a bookstore and look at the magazines that are for sale. In particular, look at a "You" magazine and an "Economist" magazine. Take note of the differences between them. Can you see how their typography differs? What other differences do you notice?

Can authors influence readers by their use of typography? A fast zippy layout that is eye catching and accompanied by many pictures is likely to signal to readers that they are about to be entertained. A more serious appearing, straight forward layout with not much variation in font and few accompanying visuals, would show a reader that what they were reading was a fairly seriously piece of writing.

## Grammar

Grammar or correct language usage is another technique of which authors need to be aware if they are trying to build support for an argument. A well-written piece of text is likely to have a greater impact on readers than something which is full of errors.

Grammar and typography together form the **style** of the written word. Style refers both to appearance (how text looks) and to how a text reads. Different authors write in particular styles.

## 2.6 Listen to spoken input for detail, interpret and analyse it for a given context

We have been listening to spoken input for detail, interpreting it and analysing it throughout this programme. For example, in the class activities we could not have completed the activities without questioning each other in pairs, in groups of four and as a whole class.

Working with others in a group helps learning because of the following reasons:

- It exposes us to more ideas than our own. We saw the value of this in brainstorming.
- It can assist our creative thinking when a number of people share their ideas, which we also saw in brainstorming.
- It helps us to organise our own ideas when we speak about them, and this reinforces our learning.
- It gives us a chance to test out our own ideas, when our peers give us constructive criticism.

You can possibly think of other ways in which communicating with others helps us to learn more effectively.

Also remember the following points:

- Successful communication needs not only good speaking skills, but also good listening skills. When we listen to someone attentively (paying attention) and empathetically (thoughtfully and with understanding), we help that person to express their ideas more clearly, and we therefore help their learning process.
- The opposite is also true: if a listener interrupts the speaker constantly, or has a negative attitude, it can interfere with the speaker's thoughts, and therefore block their learning processes.

Some people work better on their own. We should respect this. However, we all need group interaction some of the time.

### 2.6.1 Ask relevant questions

As a learner, much of your work involves reading. Reading is something we do in many different contexts, and for different purposes.

We may sit down with a book or magazine and read for pleasure or relaxation. We may read for simple information such as when we read a bus timetable or a telephone directory.

Sometimes we read involuntarily, for instance when we see an advertisement on a billboard using a single word in huge writing. When we read a SMS from a friend we may be reading for fun.

Reading for learning, however, is different from all of these because we are then reading in a very directed, goal-oriented way. Success in reading to learn depends on our use of certain 'attack' skills when we approach the text. It is useful to be aware of the strategies that we can use to get information out of the text.

It is a good idea to first look at the format of a passage i.e. the way it is set out on the page (or screen). This will help you to navigate the text. Is there a title? Is it written in paragraphs? Is it a table? Are there subheadings?

All of these factors will allow you to approach the text in a more organised way, and therefore increase your ability to learn from it.



When we read the text for the purpose of learning, we should read for:

- detail i.e. extract information that is stated directly in the text
- interpretation i.e. extract the meaning where the idea is there but not stated directly
- analysis i.e. use the content to draw a conclusion or add your own idea; you have to sort out some information in the text to find an answer, or assess something in order to give an opinion

### 2.6.2 Respond to the ways others express themselves sensitively to differing socio-cultural contexts

We are now going to look at how the way we respond to the manner in which others express themselves is affected by and is sensitive to **different socio-cultural contexts**.

In South Africa we have a wide range of cultures. We are in the fortunate position that we have since 1994 been exposed to people from a range of different socio-cultural backgrounds both at work and in our social interactions. While this is generally a positive thing, which leads to an interesting diversity in our lives, it can also lead to misunderstanding if we are not aware of differences in cultural contexts.

Let us look more carefully at what we mean when we use the word "culture".

Culture refers to the system of values, beliefs, traditions and behaviour of a particular group. It also refers to the accepted social practices of a particular group of people which makes this group unique. In South Africa people often define themselves as belonging to a certain culture on the basis of language and ethnicity, as well as religious, geographical or political affiliation and relationships.

How is communication affected by cultural context? The socio-cultural context in which we operate influences how we express ourselves. In South Africa we often have to take part in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is communication between groups of people from different cultures. When we are engaged in **intercultural communication** we must keep the following important points in mind:

- People from different cultural groups might have different world views.
- People from different cultural groups might use different communication styles – both verbal and non-verbal.
- When people from different cultural groups communicate there is often an element of anxiety that they may be misunderstood.
- When people from different cultural groups communicate it is essential that they communicate very carefully.
- When people from different cultural groups communicate the results are not always completely predictable.

Example:

- An elderly Xhosa man might object to being told how to plant grapes by a young English speaking man.
- In some African cultures it is considered impolite to make eye contact with a superior. This could be interpreted by a Westerner as a sign of shiftiness (sneakiness).
- A farm worker whose home language is Sotho may feel very anxious about having to express herself in English to the person taking down her personal details for UIF purposes.
- A young urban person may use the word "cool" to indicate that everything is alright; if the audience is from a rural cultural group they may not understand this use of the word and take it literally.
- You may believe that you have treated an older rural Tswana woman in a polite manner by being distant and formal; she may feel as if you have been abrupt and unfriendly.

Remember that our response to the ways that people from different groups express themselves is influenced by the socio-cultural context in which communication takes place. Here are some tips to ensure that you communicate successfully with your audience in an intercultural context:

- Avoid apathy (a don't care attitude): Be aware of and sensitive to socio-cultural differences between yourself and others.
- Do not make assumptions: Never assume that what you have heard about other cultures is true – check this out for yourself.
- Avoid stereotyping: Do not fall into the trap of making generalised negative statements about a certain socio-cultural group.
- Be flexible and open: Do not resist change and always be open to new possibilities - listen carefully to new ideas and be prepared to change your old attitudes to those from different socio-cultural groups.
- Be aware of and sensitive to different world views.
- Be aware of and sensitive to the fact that others may speak a different language.
- Be aware of differences in non-verbal communication from different socio-cultural groups.
- Get rid of your prejudices: Some of us have strong negative beliefs about certain cultures – this is a terrible barrier to effective communication.
- Always try to build trust: Effective communication is more likely in an atmosphere of trust.

### 2.6.3 Ensure that learning takes place through communicating with others

Communication is such an important topic and includes your communication with your peers and your learners. We can spend almost our entire day communicating. The 7 Cs listed below provide a checklist that you can use to make sure that your meetings, e-mails, conference calls, reports, and presentations are well constructed and clear – so your audience gets your message.

According to the 7 Cs, communication needs to be:

- **Clear** - When writing or speaking to someone, be clear about your objective or message with your colleagues or learners. Why are you communicating with this person, what is the purpose? If you're not sure, then your audience won't be sure either.  
Restrict the number of ideas in each sentence. Make sure that it is easy for your reader to understand your meaning. The reader should not feel confused about what message you are trying to get across.
- **Concise** - This means that you stick to the point and keep it brief. Use fewer words rather than more.
- **Concrete** - When your message is concrete, it means that the reader has a clear picture of what you are telling them. There is sufficient information and good focus. When your message is solid, the audience will have no doubt about your message.
- **Correct** - When your communication is correct, you have been sensitive to your target audience. This means that items such as spelling errors or incorrect information have been eliminated. The terms that you use should also be at the level of your audience's education and knowledge.
- **Coherent** - When your communication is coherent, it is logical. All points are connected and relevant to the main topic, and the tone and flow of the text is consistent.
- **Complete** - In a complete message, your message has been conveyed clearly and the audience such as other facilitators are clear with what to do or remember. There is clear instructions on what to do next, where to find more or what action should be taken.
- **Courteous** - Having good manners can never harm anyone; this means being friendly, open, and honest. There is no hidden agenda or passive-aggressive tones. You also have been culturally sensitive (i.e. courteous) to the audience.

### 2.7 Identify and respond to manipulative use of language

Sometimes we receive messages or pieces of information which are incomplete. How do we make sure that we notice the omission (leaving out) of necessary information and how do we address this? In order to avoid being manipulated and form our own independent opinions about certain events or products we need as detailed a picture of an issue as possible.

What are you  
NOT telling  
me?

The print media can be biased and not always present a full picture. News clips of the television are sometimes shortened and could omit important news. Factual information may also be represented in a biased manner. Sensationalism is often part of what sells magazines, newspapers and increase the number of viewers of television shows.

Think of advertisements that encourage the use of their products. The truth is that no particular product could change your life in the way some advertisements may claim. A few years ago a young man took a deodorant company to court because it claimed that women would flock to

him after using it. He won the case. Clever use of language is part and parcel of the media industry.

We need to be aware of what is **not** being said in the same way as we need to be aware of what **is** being said.

Sometimes information is deliberately omitted in order to present a certain point of view.

We may be given insufficient facts or information may be omitted which could lead us to form incorrect opinions. This is often the case in a factual type of report that seems to be objective. For example, if we hear of research that seems to prove something, we need to ask who did the research, on whom was the research done, where was it done, how does it compare with other research and so on. Only then can we make up our minds about the results.

What do we mean by "manipulate" and "manipulative"?

In the context of language use, to **manipulate** means to control or influence somebody or something in a clever or devious way. It can also mean to change or present something in a way that is false but personally advantageous. Some examples of where we find manipulative language are in news clips, political speeches, marketing material, and advertisements. Of course in our daily interaction with friends, our peers and family, we can also experience manipulation, and may even at times try to manipulate others.

Example:

- The farmer manipulated the residents into believing that he had not harmed the environment by using pesticides as he emphasised only the positive aspects of pest control.
- The producers of a solar energy device claimed that you would save thousands by using this instead of electricity but did not mention that the cost of the device was far beyond most people's budgets.
- The newspaper report manipulated the buyers to purchase advertised fruits by minimising discussion on the loss of nutrients caused by genetic modification of those foods.
- The manager of Canal Irrigation Services did not mention the disadvantage of the furrow method of irrigation where plants nearer the water source may receive more water than those further away, so that farmers were more likely to opt for this system of irrigation.
- The company initially denied liability for causing asbestosis, choosing to disregard the evidence of 7500 asbestosis victims in the Northern Cape where the asbestos plant was functioning, so that they could continue production.

### 2.7.1 Identify and distinguish facts and opinions

One of the topics that we will be covering a little later is research. If you are unsure about something that you are reading, take some time to research what is being said before accepting it as a fact.

Being able to distinguish between facts and opinions is an important part of understanding text.

What is the difference between a fact and an opinion? Dictionary.com puts it thus:

Fact:

- Something that actually exists; reality; truth: "Your fears have no basis in fact."
- Something known to exist or to have happened: "Space travel is now a fact."
- A truth known by actual experience or observation; something known to be true: "Scientists gather facts about plant growth."
- Something said to be true or supposed to have happened: "The facts given by the witness are highly questionable."
- Law. Often, an actual or alleged event or circumstance, as distinguished from its legal effect or consequence. Compare question of fact, question of law.

Opinion:

- A belief or judgment that rests on grounds insufficient to produce complete certainty.
- A personal view, attitude, or appraisal.

As you can see the two are grounded in very different worlds. Facts are supported by known factors, while opinions are more biased.

### **2.7.2 Note and address omission of necessary information**

Once you have done the necessary research in order for you to ascertain if the information that you have read is either a fact or an opinion, you then have an informed opinion that has "filled in the gaps" of what is true or not.

Simply by doing this, you become more knowledgeable. Should you find yourself in a conversation within a work or private context you will be able to prove your opinion in an informed manner.

### **2.7.3 Explain the implications of how the choice of language structures and features affect audience interpretations**

You should by now have a reasonably clear idea about how persuasive the English language can be and how speakers (and writers) can use language to manipulate their audience into doing or believing things. We are going to look at three features or elements of language that particularly affect the audience's interpretation of spoken texts.

#### **Persuasive language features**

The first feature is **tone**. Tone can be defined as a way of speaking; the way somebody says something as an indicator of what that person is feeling or thinking, e.g. "she spoke in a very sad tone about the death of her mother"; "she had a defiant tone in her voice when she argued with the vice-rector".

It can also refer to the general quality or character of something as an indicator of the attitude or view of the person who produced it, e.g. "the optimistic tone of the news report"; "the salesperson adopted a very sincere tone when talking about the vacuum cleaner."

Obviously the general tone of the speaker will have an effect on his or her audience.

An enthusiastic, optimistic speaker will be persuasive and could even be manipulative by making the audience feel happy and pleased about something when maybe they should be taking the issue more seriously, or asking more questions.

Similarly an incredibly pessimistic speaker who is full of doom and gloom will affect his or her audience and may even manipulate them into feeling nervous and anxious about something which is actually not all that frightening.

The next feature of language we need to consider is **style**.

Style can be defined as a way of doing something; a way of expressing something, especially a way of expressing a particular attitude; e.g. "She has a very confrontational style when she speaks to a large audience".

"He adopts a condescending (patronising) style when talking to his colleagues."

The style in which a speaker addresses his or her audience can also obviously have an effect on how the audience interprets what is being said. A persuasive style can be used to manipulate you, an exaggerated style can be used to stir up our emotions and stop us thinking clearly. A factual style could even bore us but it could, if it is used in a manipulative way, convince us to do something or buy something. Try to take note of what style of speech good effective public speakers use. Also if you have recently been persuaded to buy something or to believe in something, think what style the person who convinced you used.

Lastly in terms of language features that affect audience interpretation, we are going to look at **point of view**.

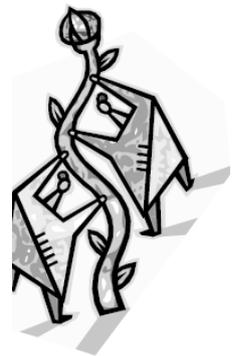
Point of view is someone's personal opinion on a subject, shaped by his or her own character and experience; e.g. "Because she is a staunch Roman Catholic, Noleen has the point of view that abortion is a sin". "It is my point of view that women should get paid more than men because I think they work harder."

A point of view can be negative or positive. Your point of view can be pro (for) something or anti (against) something. It is very hard to have a neutral point of view.

Political speakers often present their points of view as if they were facts when in reality they are simply opinions.

Advertisers also assume certain points of view are universally accepted whereas they are simply opinions. An example of this would be the way advertisers assume that we all have the point of view that to look younger than we are is a good thing. This is simply an opinion.

News reports can reflect a particular point of view. The way the facts are reported could be biased or slanted to reflect a particular point of view. Check this out for yourself the next time you listen to a news report.



### ***Knowledge of formats, conventions, protocols and contexts***

You have already seen that it is important to know which format to use in a particular context. In this section we are looking at what conventions and protocols in writing mean.

The term **convention** is used where there is a generally accepted usage or practice. The conventions of written English include such aspects as punctuation, the layout of a letter or a CV, the format of a book, etc.

In oral language, there are conventions for formal debates or sermons or speeches of welcome. The rules of a language are highly resistant to change over time, but conventions can and do change, both over time and from one audience to another.

**Protocols** are unwritten rules or guidelines that are peculiar to every culture or organisation, and are supposed to be observed by all parties when they do business, entertain, negotiate,

are involved in politics, etc. One could almost call it the “manners” of a particular group and the writer or speaker should be sensitive to this.

#### 2.7.4 Explore distortion of a contributor's position on a given issue

Let us now look at the idea of distortion of the spoken word.

**Distortion** in this context can be defined as misleading alteration; the altering (changing) of information in such a way that the audience is misinformed or misled.

e.g. "When she gave her talk on World War II she distorted the facts by leaving out the role played by black soldiers."; "When he spoke about Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape he distorted the facts by neglecting to mention that there were already people living in the Cape."

We can see from these examples that one way of distorting a presentation is to **omit** (leave out) certain key facts; another way is to only **select** information that reflects a particular point of view.



#### ***Class Activity 2: Learning strategies***

Please follow the instructions from the facilitator to complete the formative activity in your Learner Workbook.