UNIT 1 UNDERSTANDING ISSUES OF LANGUAGE, VOCABULARY, PHONETICS AND GRAMMAR

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit the student will be able to:
- appreciate the meaning of writing good language;
- understand Phonetics;
- recognize grammatical skills needed by an editor; and
- realize the importance of vocabulary.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Every written text employs the usage of language and the issues of vocabulary, phonetics and grammar play a very important role in it. This forms the foundation of any text. An editor has to understand and fully comprehend these developmental concepts before he embarks on his journey towards editing. Writing is a difficult task and editing can prove to be quite daunting. The tracking of the development of language is of primary importance to any editor.

Language is also constantly evolving and changing. The editor has to constantly update himself with its concerns in order to make his job easier and more successful. The editor has to understand and appreciate the language and in this case English. We will be looking at primarily English as a language in this Unit for the sake of convenience but one can apply the concepts to other languages as well.
1.2 A LOOK AT LANGUAGE

Language involves both written and oral communication. This can be defined, as cited in Wikipedia, "a dynamic set of visual, auditory, or tactile symbols of communication and the elements used to manipulate them". Language can also refer to the use of such systems as a general phenomenon. Language is considered to be an exclusively human mode of communication; although animals also make use of quite sophisticated communicative systems, none of these are known to make use of all of the properties that linguists use to define language.

Language involves some kind of exchange and contact between the communicator and the receiver. We shall be primarily focusing on written texts and writing structures of language in this unit. As the editor is primarily concerned with the written text, it becomes important for us to consider this form of language. Texts are a meeting point in which ideas are exchanged by the author and the reader. The editor becomes the bridge to this communication. He facilitates the easier reading of the text and makes the language more accessible and approachable to the reader.

In this sense, we can say that writing and the reading of texts is a process of social interaction between people's point of view. Writing is a strategic, social activity. Language persuades people into thinking and critically analyzing themselves. It does so by motivating the reader to read and comprehend a variety of topics. Language primarily in focus being the written language uses narration, descriptions, arguments, style, vocabulary, phonetics and grammar to develop its subject matter. These will be looked in detail later in the following sections.

Before we go into the specifics of these strategies of writing it is important to note that texts are primarily meant for readers. The written language means something to someone. They do not come into being abstractly. The context becomes important for the written language. The settings may vary greatly and this becomes apparent in the ways in which we read a text. The cultural conditions that determine the text are of primary importance. The editor, along with the author, in a way puts some kind of pressure on the reader to agree with the text and persuades the reader to negotiate with it and also develop an evaluative attitude towards it.

We can say that:

1) Language involves both written and oral forms of communication.
2) All texts are written and read within social contexts and represent the social attitude to the subject matter.
3) Texts influence the readers' understanding of contexts.
4) Through strategies in language, texts persuade the readers in their conception of the social context.

Check your progress 1

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

1) Define language.

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1.2.1 Understanding the components of written language

Texts involve various components and have several features. An editor has to understand its features in order to edit in an effective manner. Effective communication demands a clear style in writing. The characteristics of the written word are the foundation of the style. An editor has to be well versed in style that will lead to professional communication. Just acquiring good grounding in grammar is not enough for an editor. The finer points of style and its presentation also make all the difference between a good and mediocre publication. Written language involves the use of many components, which are discussed in detail below.

1.2.2 Understanding description

There are four modes of writing a text namely 1. description, 2. narration (telling what happens), 3. exposition (explaining something) and 4. argument (presenting a case). These are the main forms of textual representation, and they represent some aspect of the text.

Description is one of the common forms of writing. This is recreation of a visual image. For example, a description of a political leader, actor or a wrestling match. This may involve more than the appeal of the visual senses and often use sensory inputs, for example the description of a fresh towel and smelling of laundry or the sound of a heavy metal group with its guitars and drums. Descriptions involve the use of perspective. In this, a description happens in relation to other things and the position of the reader as well as the author is taken into account. Often the writers’ perspective is established with the help of personal pronouns like "I" and "we". For example in travel writing and instructional books often personal pronouns are used.

The use of writing description is often objective. Often the author and the editor have to make choices, which largely depend upon the focus of the description. In this the editor often uses his objectivity, which means that he keeps his emotional choices aside and uses his rationality. Many descriptions are subjective in which the feeling of the person or the object is emphasized. This is used to create an impression in the minds of the readers. It can have contradictions, for example, a woman can be described as strict teacher but a loving and caring mother. Most descriptions also have an order, which provides the background of the context. It always follows some kind of organization. Words and phrases, when arranged sequentially, help in establishing this order.

A description provides some kind of sensory experience. It uses adjectives, adverbs, phrases and clauses to create an impression in the minds of readers. They are also full of metaphors that help determine the features of the described subject.

Check your progress 2

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

2) How is perspective used in description?

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1.2.3 Understanding narration

Narration is another important component of the written language. It can be defined as an account of events that occur over time. A good narration involves time relationships. For example, a good story will always involve characters, their actions and background setting. Narrator, in a time axis organizes these. Narration also employs some kind of chronology and this largely depends on the plot structure. Narrative fiction often uses time phrases, which not only structure the text but also serve an insight to the feelings of a character. Motives are also fixed in the time references, for example phrases like in "matter of seconds", "moments later", "years ago" etc. well establish the motive.

Narrations are distinguished on the basis of verb tense. For example, a story about a fortuneteller uses forecasts to establish this kind of narration. Time often creates suspense on what has to happen and often creates a discrepancy between expectation and experience. As we have already noted every narration has a narrator. The subject matter is thus told from a specific point of view in which the narrator's viewpoint before and after the events were being constructed. For example, we can see that in both biographies and autobiographies narration in a chronological order and point of view play a central role in its structuring.

A narrator can establish this point of view by a combination of tenses, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs. By this, narrator establishes connections between the action and the characters. Sometimes we see that in historical writing narration plays a central role.

1.2.4 Understanding exposition

The main purpose of exposition is to provide information through explanation. We come across this form in our everyday lives as in newspapers, textbooks and manuals. Newspaper articles use exposition to explain the news and sometimes a whole discipline is explained to the readers through this form of communication.

Just like description and narration, exposition relies on logical organization for unity and coherence. Exposition often has several choices to explain a subject and the choice mainly depends on the subject to be covered. The best way to explain something is to describe it and it can also use a chronological order.

Although descriptive and narrative techniques are used to present expository texts spatial and temporal logic may not be applicable to all cases. Once again it depends totally on the nature of the subject matter which will determine the means of structuring and development of an explanation. Sentences are the primary means through which ideas are presented. This can be said to be independent set of words that forms a grammatically correct unit. One determines three main types of sentences: simple, compound and complex. A simple sentence has one type of clause and contains a single subject that expresses one idea. For example, the hare slept on the road. A compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses for example, the hare slept on the road while the tortoise ran ahead. Usually the conjunction joins the two important sentences.

The complex sentence has one independent clause and one smaller dependent one. This develops complicated relationships. For example, the students went for a party even though they had an assignment due the next day. Here we can see that the subordinate clauses add information to the main clause and hence, create a kind of significance. When we, as editors, recognize these three types of sentences they will add variety to the way we write and express ourselves. They will also help in creating meanings.
Sentences are important to our language both in speech and writing and paragraphs relate only to writing. An editor must also be well familiar with them. Paragraphs guide reading and help in understanding of the text. They also help in breaking up a subject and help in the organization of the material. Well-written paragraphs just do not happen but they are often carefully thought out and organized. The main idea is reflected through the topic sentence and all the other sentences in the paragraph elaborate that idea. Often a topic sentence occurs in the beginning of a new paragraph.

Since a paragraph expresses one single idea the notions of unity are of primary importance. This is done centrally by sticking to the point and by its relevance. Digressions, no matter how interesting, can confuse the reader. A paragraph also needs to maintain a perspective and either a personal or an impersonal view is often considered. A correct tone also needs to be maintained by the editor, which can either be formal or informal, serious or humorous, depending on the subject matter.

An editor should make sure that there is coherence in the paragraph and this means that the paragraph needs to be coherently organized so that it can help the readers to understand the relationships between the central idea and the supporting points. A paragraph can be developed by definitions, illustrations, classifications, comparing and contrasting and by cause and effect.

Illustrations are the easiest way in which an editor can develop an expository paragraph. In contrast to this, definitions can prove to be more difficult. This will help to tease out of the meanings in several contexts. Classification organizes information and helps to present ideas into categories and classes. Different categories are used in different subjects. Comparing and contrasting will also help to establish the correct facts and figures. While in the last case of cause and effect the editor can develop causal relationships.

Paragraphs can be developed with the help of links that facilitate to connect various ideas together and set up relationships between sentences. The following kinds of connectors are used.

Numerical words such as first, second, third.

Repetition of key words and phrases.

Connectives such as however, nevertheless, meanwhile and therefore.

Pronouns such as her, you, them and me.

Demonstratives such as this, that, these and those.

**Check your progress 3**

**Note:** 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;

   2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

3) What are the three types of sentences?

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1.2.5 Understanding argument

Arguments are frequently used in academic writing. In this, the editors have to pay close attention to the organization of the material that will help create a coherently constructed text. In arguments the raw materials are not things but propositions. This means putting forward something that can be considered, accepted, or adopted. In arguments we need to thus argue for or against the proposition. In this case the point of view that is put forward becomes of primary importance.

In arguments a specific point of view is established and details are arranged in such a manner that supports it or denies that viewpoint. In this kind of language the viewpoint is stated openly and it is defended with evidences and other details. An argument is constructed by developing a proposition into a case by using description, narration, exposition and logic.

It should be noted by editors that the structure, planning and drafting of arguments is of primary importance. One must consistently follow clear spatial and temporal logics and have to be well planned out in advance. Through this, the writer decides how to arrange the explanation and make comparisons. In order to become more convincing and correct an argument needs careful consideration and planning.

As the propositions are often open to debate, the arguments must flow fluidly and clearly. One can best describe a seven paragraph argument to develop in the following manner:

INTRODUCTION: Thesis statement, Indication of supporting ideas
1st PARAGRAPH: topic sentence 1, explanation of supporting idea
2nd PARAGRAPH: topic sentence 2, explanation of supporting ideas
3rd PARAGRAPH: topic sentence 3, explanation of supporting ideas
4th PARAGRAPH: topic sentence 4, explanation of supporting ideas
5th PARAGRAPH: topic sentence 5, explanation of supporting ideas
6th PARAGRAPH: topic sentence 6, explanation of supporting ideas
7th PARAGRAPH: summing up/conclusion

In the above case it is clear that our ideas depends upon the support that we can give from evidences and has to match up in its validity and persuasiveness. Often drafts are needed to explain our ideas in an argument. An introduction to our argument is of vital importance. This is because it will set up the idea or the topic and lay down the basic plan and also will give the validity of the argument. The introduction helps in the following manner:

1) To raise the topics or the subject matter
2) To put forward propositions
3) To define the key terms
4) To announce the thesis statement
5) To indicate the supporting points

The main function of the central body of the argument is providing the evidence that will illustrate or support the thesis statements. This section is the longest in the argument. This should be written well and should not confuse the readers. The main functions of central body include:
1) To provide and explain evidence and support
2) To make the transitions clear between different points
3) To respond to the opposing viewpoints

Editors must understand that the evidences must go from point to point and must be well related to each other. One must also respond to the opposing views, which will emphasize the main body of the argument. It also must be added here that while an introduction sets out the arguments, aims and objectives, the conclusion offers the chance to reflect on what has been written. In short, this is the closing statement to what the argument has to show. Writing the conclusion is one of the most important aspects to writing of an argument. The conclusion also serves as an indication to the future directions that the argument hopes to proceed towards.

Check your progress 4
Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;
2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.
4) What are the conclusions in an argument?

1.3 ISSUES OF VOCABULARY

Appropriate choice of words is of paramount importance that imparts the deep sense to any given context. Vocabulary can refer to the choice of words. As an editor is concerned with words he must understand some concerns of a good vocabulary.

The editor must make sure that not only the spellings of the words are correct but also must guard him from overusing fashionable words or any sloppy phrases. He must also know whether some words are hyphenated or not. Let us now look at some of the specifics of vocabulary.

1.3.1 Common spelling errors

Often we see confusions arising in the ways of spelling, for example advisor or adviser. A useful rule, in this case, is that if the word is preceded by a t or an ss verb, then the spelling is usually er. At the same time it must be remembered that allege has no d. Confusions often occur between passed and past. In this case the past tense and the past participle of the verb to pass is passed as in passed it from me to you and where as past as an adjective describes events that have occurred in past times.

For words that have more than one syllable ending in ed or ing the stress is in the last syllable and the final consonant is doubled, for example permit becomes permitted. Whereas the last syllable is not stressed like focus and target the final consonant will not be doubled. Words that end in "l" will see the last consonant doubled like labelled, travelled etc. It should be noted that similar sounding words such as canvas and canvass and dependant and dependent often cause confusion. Some other words that cause confusion are principal and principle and stationary and stationery.
1.3.2 Use a dictionary

It becomes difficult to memorize the spellings of all difficult sounding words, so the editor should be constantly reaching out for the dictionary. Computers are good as spell checks but are not always fool proof.

1.3.3 Is it ending in ‘ise’ or ‘ize’

Both these types of spellings are common in U.K. while in North America the ize spellings are usual. Some words that use ise in the end must use these spellings like advertise, advise, and televis. Many style gurus object to the use of capsize, sterilize and familiarize. One must remember that the words end in ize in North America throughout.

1.3.4 Hyphenated words

Many words are happily hyphenated while some are not. Some words find themselves joint together without remorse like railway man, turn out etc. are used in everyday speech without hyphenation. Many use the term alright instead of all right, There are confusions about the word forever and for ever. It is to be remembered that many words are eventually set up as one as they favored to do so. It is advisable to use a good dictionary like the Oxford English Dictionary when one comes across any such confusion.

1.3.5 Clichés

Many words that form a part of particular vocabulary often become clichés and overused. The editor has to real like these difficulties like terms -having said that, nevertheless, in depth, no problem etc.

1.3.6 Model verbs

Model verbs like shall/will, can/could and may/might carry different sense of meanings and are mood reflectors. Hence, these are known as modes of action. The general rule to be followed is that shall and should goes with the first person singular while will and would goes with others. Thus, should accompanies I and we while would goes with you and she.

The words shall and will reflect intention and one is taken more seriously when one mentions I will rather than I shall. Should has a moral intention behind it whereas would acquires a mild conditionality. Difficulty may also be expressed when using might/may. Permission is expressed through may and might expresses some possibility.

One should keep in mind that slang must be avoided at all costs in case of children’s literature. Even though slang finds within the expression of everyday communication, it should not find its way in everyday written speech.

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<td>5) Explain model words.</td>
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1.4 ISSUES OF PHONETICS

The way the words are spoken is just as important as they are written. Phonetics helps establish the pronunciations. Phonetics can be described as the study and description of the physical sounds that occur in the natural languages of the world. It determines how they are produced physically in the vocal tract, their acoustic properties, how they are perceived.

Phonetics is important to understand word formation. Symbols are used to help in the pronunciation of some words. Given below is a chart that will help to easily distinguish the sounds.

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(Reference www.geocities.com)

Some more examples can make the following points clear. (Quoted from www.hum.aau.dk)

1. Ä ñ = a in father (fāqur), o in mop (māp) [ä]
2. A a = a in can (kan) [a]
3. B b = b in bib (b?b) [b i]
4. D d = d in dead (ded) [d i]
5. Q q = th in thus (qus) [qu]
6. Ê ë = a in make (mēk) [ë]
7. E e = e in set (set) [e]
8. F f = f in fife (fā?f), ph in Phoenix (Fīn?ks) [ef]
9. G g = g in gag (gag) [ag]
10. H h = h in ham (ham) [hē]
11. Ы ñ = i in machine (muşîn), ee in meet (mût) [i]
12. I ? = i in sit (s?i) [i]
13. J j = y in yes (jēs), i in union (jūnjun), h in ship (sj?p) [je]
14. K k = k in kite (kä?t), c in cut (kut), ch in ache (ëk) [kë]
15. L l = l in lull (lul) [ɛl]
16. M m = m in main (mäm) [em]
17. N n = n in nine (nä?n) [në]
18. Ö ö = o in lone (lön) [ö]
19. O o = o in log (log), au in Pause (poz), aw in laws (loz) [o]
20. P p = p in pipe (pä?p) [pë]
21. R r = r in roar (ruör) [ar]
22. S s = s in sister (s?stur) [es]
23. T t = t in tight (tät?) [të]
24. C c = th in think (cänk), c in ciencia {Castilian} (cë?ncëtu) [cë]
25. Ü ú = u in plume (plüm), oo in boot (büüt) [ü]
26. U u = u in run (run), o in union (junjun), a1 & a3 in banana (bunanu), e in nerve (nurv) [u]
27. V v = v in verve (vürv) [vëi]
28. W w = w in way (wë) [wë]
29. X x = ch in loch (läx), x in Quixote (Kixötë), X [Greek Ch] in X?????? {Christos} (Xristös), X [Russian Khah] in X?????? [Khrushchov] (Xröüshtsjoj) [läx]
30. Ý ý = ow in cow (kë), a in Albert (Ylbur), ou in couch (këtsj) [ý]
31. Y y = oo in book (byk), use for u in une {French} (yn), y in Physik {German} (fyzïk) [y]
32. Z z = z in zebra (zëbru), s in is ('z) [zë]

Combination sounds:
ä? = i in like (lä?k), y in my (mä?)
jü = u in fume (fjüm)
hw = wh in what (hwät)
kw = qu in queen (kwën)
sj = sh in shirt (sjurt), ch in chic (sjïk)
tsj = ch in church (tsjurstj)
zj = z in azure (uzzjyr), s in treasure (tрезjyr)
dzj = j in jail (dzjïl), g in age (ëdzj)
ng = ng in sing (sïng)
ndzj = nge in singe (s?ndzj)

These pronunciation charts can be found in any standard dictionary. An editor should be well conversant with these points in order to make vocabulary easy to comprehend and understand.
1.5 ISSUES OF GRAMMAR

There are several points of grammar that an editor needs to keep in his mind. He needs to first understand what nouns, adjectives, adverbs and tenses to use. We will focus here on some points of grammar that he needs to understand while editing books. Often the editor has to take care of punctuation marks. The next subsection will look into the specifics of punctuation.

1.5.1 Punctuation

Taking good care of the punctuation shows that the editor has kept the reader in mind. Putting correct marks and by making sure that there are no unnecessary ones will clear any confusion. Most of the punctuation marks have a real place; they give the reader a breather, to pause and reflect and provide a change in the thought. The full stop is the best aid to a writer. A full stop brings the sentence to an abrupt halt, ready for the next one leading to an expansion in the thought process. Often we see that initials use full stop.

The comma is one of most used or misused when not needed. The comma also often qualifies an adjective like red, round sun. A comma must be used when a list of items are being used. The colon is used often to describe a list and the mark ":" is used.

The semicolon provides a stronger break and a longer pause and can perform the function of a comma. It adds value to two equal sentences. Exclamation marks and question marks are used in exclamatory sentences and interrogative sentences. When using a bracket the full stop must be inside the closing bracket. For example, (The red fox saw the crow.) It is only put on the outside if the words are continued, for example, the red fox (that saw the crow) decided to run away. Dashes are used as an afterthought and sometimes replace commas. Hyphens are used when two words go together. Apostrophes are used to indicate possessives.

Check your progress 6

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

6) When are the semicolon, exclamation marks and brackets used?

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

One can say that effective communication, especially written words, constantly use correct language, vocabulary, phonetics and grammar. A good editor must be well conversant with the issues confronting these communication skills so that he can become more effective in his job. He will be able to acquire a good grounding, which will firmly lay the foundations of his skills.
1.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1) Language involves both written and oral communication. These tactile symbols can be defined as cited in Wikipedia, a dynamic set of visual, auditory, or of communication and the elements used to manipulate them. Language can also refer to the use of such systems as a general phenomenon. Language is considered to be an exclusively human mode of communication; although other animals make use of quite sophisticated communicative systems, none of these are known to make use of all of the properties that linguists use to define language.

2) Descriptions involve the use of perspective. In this a description happens in relation to other things and the position of the reader as well as the author is taken into account. Often the writers' perspective is established with the help of personal pronouns like "I" and "we". For example, in travel writing and instructional books often personal pronouns are used.

3) One determines three main types of sentences: simple, compound and complex. A simple sentence has one type of clause and contains a single subject that expresses one idea. Usually the conjunction joins the two important sentences. The complex sentence has one independent clause and one smaller dependent one. This develops complicated relationships.

4) While an introduction sets out the arguments, aims and objectives, the conclusion offers the chance to reflect on what has been written. In short this is the closing statement to what the argument has to show. Writing the conclusion is one of the most important aspects to writing of an argument. The conclusion also serves as an indication to the future directions that the argument hopes to proceed towards.

5) Model verbs like shall/will, can/could and may/might carry different sense of meanings and are mood reflectors. Hence these are known as modes of action. The general rule to be followed is that shall and should goes with the first person singular while will and would goes with others. Thus, should accompanies I and we while would goes with you and she.

6) The semicolon (;) provides a stronger break and a longer pause and can perform the function of a comma (.). It adds value to two equal sentences. Exclamation marks (!) and question marks (?) are used in exclamatory sentences and interrogative sentences respectively. When using a bracket the full stop must be inside the closing bracket. For example, (The red fox saw the crow.) It is only put on the outside if the words are continued, for example, the red fox (that saw the crow) decided to run away. Dashes are used as an afterthought and sometimes replace commas.

1.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

