
M.A. English

SEMESTER I

Course I

**ACADEMIC READING
AND WRITING**

BLOCK

I

**Basics of Academic Reading
and Writing**



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ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING

BLOCK I

BASICS OF ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This course in Academic Reading and Writing is intended as a foundation course to help you get the most out of the other papers in your M. A. course and enable you to be an independent scholar. You have done your school and undergraduate courses and may be familiar with some of the points in study skills that will be discussed here. This course will train you with particular reference to the subject you have chosen, namely, literature.

You might wonder why you need instruction in reading and writing at this level. Reading and writing can happen at varying levels of depth and intensiveness. As you venture into higher academics it is this intensiveness in both reading and writing that is needed for your success. The level of competence that you achieve through this course will enable you to pursue whatever you wish to do after your M.A., either further research or work, with a greater degree of confidence. The immediate concern, however, is that you approach the other seven courses in this programme with the kind of attention that is needed to successfully qualify yourself.

The course is divided into four blocks with four units in each block. The blocks are organized in a way that reading and writing blend into one another as a composite skill. This, in fact, is the nature of study that you will undertake.

Block I will introduce you to the basics of academic reading and writing, giving you the necessary tools for approaching the two areas. Exemplification of the various features involved will precede their active application.

Block II will lead you into the kinds of reference skills that are an integral part of studying literature. It will also help you in developing critical reading skills by equipping you to form a perspective of whatever you are reading against whatever other sources of information you may have access to and your previous knowledge. It helps you in learning how to sift fact from opinion and justifying opinions formed on the basis of objective, rational justifications.

Block III takes this forward by introducing the features of critical comparisons and the basics of exposition and argumentation which will be required for higher academic tasks such as reviewing research articles and commenting critically on original writing.

Block IV consolidates your skills by recapitulating the genres that you are likely to encounter in this field of study and prepares you for whatever might follow your M.A. in English Literature.

We sincerely hope that this course will be a useful support to your academic endeavours!

INTRODUCTION TO THE BLOCK

This introductory block will deal with the nature of academic reading and writing. By qualifying 'reading and writing' as 'academic', we are categorizing it as a special kind of activity. This is necessary to enable you to get the most of what you encounter in the course of your studies on the M.A. Programme.

Unit 1 will deal with the purposes for reading and the distinguishing features of academic and non-academic texts. This leads to the purposes for writing and the consideration of the reader.

Unit 2 will help you identify the features that hold together sentences and ideas within a paragraph. It will give you practice in distinguishing the topic sentence from the rest of the sentences in a paragraph. It will also take you through the steps of writing a topic sentence and adding sentences to it with supporting details and examples.

Unit 3 will deal with how sentences are linked to one another grammatically and lexically. It will focus on sequence linkers, reason/cause effect linkers and discourse markers. The principles of cohesion and coherence will be discussed.

Unit 4 moves into connections across paragraphs. It presents the rationale for paragraphing and sectioning of long texts. The purpose for discourse markers is elucidated. The unit also focusses on different signposting devices.

While all this is basic to any kind of reading and writing, we will study these in detail so that your writing for any of the assignments, term papers or examination answers, will have a high degree of readability. It would involve specific training in something that is generally taken for granted and left to independent readers to cultivate on their own.

We hope that you will find a significant improvement in your reading and writing abilities after you do the activities in this block. Your training in academic reading and writing will then equip you for all other kinds of reading and writing that you do outside the course.

Unit 1
BASICS OF ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING

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Unit 1

THE NATURE OF ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING

1.0 Introduction

You have enrolled yourself for a postgraduate course in English. This will involve a great deal of serious reading of primary and secondary texts, understanding them in detail, and critically writing about what you have read. In this introductory unit you will learn about the nature of academic reading and writing and the basic elements involved in it.

Successful reading and writing involve processing information and critical thinking. When we read a text, we take in the information or viewpoint that the text seeks to convey. We also respond to it mentally, agreeing or disagreeing, or making mental notes for future use.

This unit will initiate you into the features of academic texts and the purposes and ways in which we access information. While most of us have studied in the formal system for several years, we may still find it difficult to process texts and write originally when we have to do it in higher academic contexts. Some steps to achieving clarity in reading and writing suggested here will help you in studying all your other papers in this course, as well as lay a foundation for any future academic pursuit you may choose to undertake later.

By the end of this unit you should be able to

- identify the purposes for reading
- distinguish between academic and non-academic texts
- establish the purposes for academic writing

1.1 Purposes for reading

We read for various purposes. We read novels, short stories, poems etc. for pleasure; we read newspapers and magazines for information about current events and also for pleasure; we may read gadget manuals and medicine labels for instructions, we may read notices and announcements for information and so on. We also need to read textbooks and reference material when we enroll for a course of study. We need to read official documents for work-related purposes.

Activity A

Let me begin by asking you to list what you have read in the last two days.

Discussion:

I asked my neighbours to do the same exercise and listed below is what they read.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Ramesh Shah
(Technocrat) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Science and technology page in the newspaper➤ Office documents➤ Letter from a friend➤ A project proposal from his client➤ An email message from his brother |
| Sheela Shah:
(Customer Care) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Sales brochure/catalogue➤ Short story➤ Operating manual of a washing machine➤ Page 3 of the newspaper➤ Article on Bird flu on the internet |
| Siddharth
(high school student) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Latest <i>Harry Potter</i> novel➤ Textbooks➤ Sports page in the newspaper➤ Text messages on his cell phone➤ e-mail from his friends |
| Ankita
(middle school student) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Book on origami➤ History notes to prepare for an exam➤ Textbooks➤ School notices➤ <i>Tinkle</i> |

Was what you listed similar/ different from what each of them read?
You will see that what each of them read varied, depending on their reasons for reading.

You will also know from your own experience that we read what we read in different ways, that is, the way in which we read differs depending on our purpose. Listed below are some of the purposes people have for reading:

- to get information
- to understand a subject or topic
- to update oneself on the latest developments
- to learn how to do something
- for pleasure
- for sharing personal experiences

As you have seen in Activity A, Ramesh Shah and his family read a variety of text types in English. They read each for a different purpose. Let us try and identify the purposes for which they read each text in Activity B, which follows.

Activity B From the Shahs' list, identify what they read for each purpose:

- to get information
- for pleasure
- to understand a subject/a topic
- to learn how to do something

Discussion:

This is how I have tried to derive the various purposes for reading from the list:

To gather information:

Science and technology page in the newspaper
Office documents
School notices

For pleasure

Short story
The latest Harry Potter novel

Tinkle

To understand a subject/a topic

Project proposal from his client
Article on Bird flu on the internet
Textbooks
History notes to prepare for an exam

To learn how to do something

Operating manual of a washing machine
Book on origami

When we look at the different texts the Shahs read under the four headings listed above, it becomes clear that all of us read different kinds of material for different purposes. The way we read each kind of material will also differ according to the material. The time we need to read each kind of material will also vary, because when we need to understand a subject or topic, for example, we will need to read it more carefully and slowly than a short story.

Review Question I

- a. List the purposes for which we read.
- b. How does the purpose affect the way in which we read?

1.2 Purposes for writing

Just as we read for different purposes we write for various purposes. A few of us write for pleasure. We might write poems or short stories and show it to our friends or send them for publication. But most of us do not write unless we have to. Don't you agree? And there are many occasions when we cannot escape writing. One inescapable writing activity is writing assignments and examination answers.

Activity C

List the items you generally write and the purpose for which you write against each:

Kinds of Writing	Purpose
Letters	Convey messages
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Discussion:

You must have listed writing letters either through post or e-mail as one of the writing items. We write letters in order to convey information, make requests, invite people, explain matters and the like. We might have to take down notes, messages or write out shopping lists etc. But we write in a major way as students and at the workplace. We have to make notes, summarize what we read and present material appropriately.

To summarize what we have said so far, all of us read, and need to read different types of material in our daily lives. How we read depends on what we read. Also, we have to change our style or manner of reading depending on why we read a particular text and what we will use it for later – when we read to gather information, for example, our reading involves an intensive study of the details in the text. The information we get from the text is often applied or used for some purpose. It has been found that efficient readers often make good writers – your skills as a reader get transferred to your writing. As we saw in Activity C, to be a good writer you must vary your writing style to suit your purpose and

the person or people you are writing for. The language you use to write an assignment and the way you organize and present it, will differ from the way you send an e-mail to a friend. Since our concern in the M.A. course is with making you more efficient readers and writers in an academic context, we will now move on to try and distinguish between the characteristics of academic and non-academic texts.

1.3 Academic and non-academic texts

Let us begin by trying to define academic texts.

Activity D

- a. From the list of activities read by the Shahs given in Activity 1, choose the items that you would term ‘academic’.

- b. Try to define what you mean by ‘academic’:

Discussion:

Texts that you have to read and study in a formal educational setting may be said to be academic in nature. They usually give you factual information. Such texts are expository in nature.

In a course of language instruction, you may have literary narratives and poetry in addition to expository texts. Narratives also carry with them a great deal of descriptive writing, either of human nature or scenes and places. When you read such texts, you may have to look closely at development of plot, delineation of character or details in the description that may have a bearing on the events in the story or the poem. When you read poetry, especially, you sensitize yourself to the way in which the poet has used symbols and imagery or the different way in which words or sentence structures have been used. Whereas, a novel may be read for pleasure and aesthetic appreciation by a lay reader, it may be a focus of intensive, attentive reading if prescribed as a coursebook.

You may also come across texts which justify a point of view or argue for a particular proposition. The way in which arguments are organized to emphasize a point needs close study. You may have to take down points or summarize the argument.

There are different kinds of material that we read in our everyday life for information or for pleasure. These may be classed as non-academic texts.

The way we read academic texts is generally different from the way we read non-academic texts. Academic texts involve intensive reading and deep-level processing of information.

When you read an academic text for study purposes, say as part of an M.A. programme, ask yourself why you are reading it and what you hope to learn from it – are you reading it to get a general idea of the topic, to get information about a writer or age in which he wrote, to understand how language use has changed over time, or simply because it is part of prescribed reading?

Activity E

Read each of the following texts and mark Academic (A) or Non-Academic (NA) in the brackets given against each.

Say

- *where you might find it (e.g. review, blurb of a book)*
- *whether it is formal or informal in style*
- *who the intended reader (audience) is.*
- *what the reader's purpose might be in reading this text*

One example is worked out for you.

A. The thin line dividing fact and fiction is not often distinct in this collection of ten short stories. The central theme of each piece is what is experienced in day-to-day life and the writer brings out sharply the stark reality of social and economic injustice and inequalities. (NA)

From where? : This is from a review in a newspaper.

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal: Semi-formal

Intended reader: The general reader

Reading purpose: To know whether the themes would interest him/her and whether the book is worth buying.

B. Chaplin, Sir Charles (Spencer), KBE 1975; producer, and actor in films; b London, 16 April 1889; both parents (deceased) in theatrical profession; s of Charles Chaplin, variety comedian and Hannah ((Lily Harley), singer; m 1st, 1918 Mildred Harris (marr.siss); 2nd, 1924, Lolita McMury (Lita Grey) (marr.diss.) 3rd, 1936, Paulette Goddard (marr. Diss.) 4th, 1943 Oona, d of late Eugene O'Neil, three s and fice d formed his own producing organization and built Chaplin Studios, Hollywood, California, 1918. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

.....

C. The advanced nations face no population problem since they are steadily settling down to the zero growth rate in population. Zero growth means that population will keep steady through generations and that births will be just enough to compensate deaths, never more. Advanced countries, by and large, have remained surplus in food production. It is the developing and underdeveloped countries that have the dual problems, heavy shortages in vital articles of food and galloping population figures; as a result, the standard of living is very low. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

D. As a student, I once took part in a debate, which had a gold medal. The topic of the debate was on nutrition and I had 30 minutes to prepare for it. Thanks to my 'gift of the gab', I ended up winning the gold medal. Lifelong that gold medal became a talking point in all my job interviews. It shaped my career and I ended up specializing in nutrition. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

E. Sealed tenders are invited by Dredging Corporation of India Ltd., Visakhapatnam, from Towage Contractors for "Towage of DR XVIII from Mazagaon Dock, Mumbai to Marmagoa Port". The tender document can be had from office of the General Manager, Dredging Corporation of India Ltd, Port Area, Visakhapatnam-530035 within a month from date. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

F. The third stage is retrieval or recall. When we need to use the information we have stored in memory, we access it and recover the information for active use. We may do this in two ways: free recall and cued recall. That is, in some cases, it is possible to immediately recall what we have stored in memory, often verbatim, as some poem that we have learnt in childhood. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

G. This series demystifies the demigods of theory. It provides an invaluable background for students who want to understand the principal ideas of key thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries. More importantly, these books locate their subjects in history, offering lucid and accessible accounts of how intellectual practices and traditions emerge. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

.....

H. Statistics prove air travel is extremely safe. You are much safer up in the air than travelling on the ground. Due to the tremendous publicity given to aviation accidents, the popular misconception is that travelling by air is unsafe. It is the safest mode of transportation available in the world. Here's how to make your journey more comfortable and safe. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

I. In the interactive mode, language needs to be generated by the user. It is used to get things done through a variety of forms: statements, commands, questions and so on. The same content in the textbook can serve as the stimulus for the task. Thus both content(language) and communication patterns are acquired. Tasks provide opportunities for authentic communication. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

J. Source and sell in the world's most vibrant textile market at a unique event covering the entire textile portfolio from home and apparel fabrics and accessories to technical textiles and nonwovens. ()

From where?

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal:

Intended reader:

Reading purpose:

Discussion:

What are the features that make one text different from the others?

The first is, of course, the field in which a text appears. Is it a newspaper, a textbook or an advertisement? For example, an advertisement would be informal in style to arrest the attention of the casual viewer. A sales brochure would be semi-formal in style as it seeks to give serious information, persuades the reader to buy and at the same time is not very formal. Advertisements and sales brochures will also be accompanied by visuals. In an advertisement, especially, the visual and the text would be a foil for each other. The same matter in an official sales letter would persuade the reader more formally.

The level of formality is thus crucial in identifying the nature of a text. Is it formal, semi-formal or informal? This will depend upon where it occurs and who the intended reader is. Levels of formality are achieved through the kind of words used or sometimes the structures used.

The next clue is the intended reader.

The same content could be addressed to a layperson as well as a student of the subject. Some texts indicate that the writer is persuading the reader to do something. Academic texts explain a concept, give examples, establish cause-effect relationships.

Business texts and advertisements are as formal as academic texts, perhaps more so, but they seek to give information that would lead to some other action.

Now let us examine each of them in detail:

A. (NA) It is an excerpt from a review in a newspaper. It is semi-formal in style. It is addressed to a prospective reader of the book who is perhaps contemplating buying the book.

The words and the sentence pattern used in the first sentence indicate that it is not very formal. A description of a book in an academic text would be presented differently. Here the first sentence begins abruptly in an attempt to arrest the attention of the reader. An academic text would perhaps begin with the title of the book and its description as a collection of short stories, before going on to describing it.

B. (NA) This is from the Wikipedia. It is semi-formal. It is a biographical note on Charlie Chaplin listing the major events in his life for a general reader. It does not use complete sentences but lists the events and packs as much information as possible, using abbreviations to economize on space. It is aimed at the reader who wants quick information from a reference source.

C. (A) This is from an article on an economics subject. You must have guessed that it is a very formal kind of text. It gives information,

explains terms, derives effects from causes. The text obviously will be of value to a student of economics.

- D. (NA) From a newspaper interview. It is an autobiographical anecdote, conversational and informal in style. Phrases like *thanks to my 'gift of the gab'*, mark it as colloquial. It aims to strike a personal note and addresses the reader who is interested in the human aspect of professionals.
- E. (NA) From a notification in a newspaper. This is very formal in style. Notice the passive voice forms. However, it is not academic. It is a newspaper tender notice addressed to a particular section of contractors for a job undertaking.
- F. (A) Obviously, from a textbook. The excerpt begins with an indication of listing of stages: 'the third stage'. The first two stages must have been discussed earlier. The third stage is named in the first sentence. The second sentence explains this. The third sentence introduces a classification. The last sentence elaborates with an example. The text targets a student of psychology.
- G. (NA) From the blurb of a book series. Semi-formal. Persuasive in function. Aims at the student but does not get into the content. Recommends the book to the student. May have been written by an editor or publisher.
- H. (NA) From an in-flight magazine article on safety measures. Semi-formal. Addressed to the airlines customer. Informs and persuades.
- I. (A) From a textbook on language teaching. Formal style. It uses technical terms for the various functions for which language is used: like statements, commands, questions. It states, explains with examples, gives reasons and highlights benefits of the method.
- J. (NA) From a promotional leaflet for a textile expo' or exhibition. Informal. Invites prospective exhibitors to set up stalls and participate in the event. Persuasive in style highlighting business advantages. Note the use of the imperative form to address the business people directly.

The reason for asking you to do the above activity was to make you aware of the features of texts that mark it as academic or non-academic. . Attention to the language used for academic functions is the basic step to understanding and writing in academic environments.

Some of the common academic functions are:

Defining
Describing

Explaining
Elaborating
Illustrating/Exemplifying
Inferring
Showing cause-effect relationships
Classifying
Comparing and Contrasting

A few examples are given below to make you understand what we mean by academic functions.

One of the important functions in an academic text is defining terms. Most textbooks in particular disciplines begin by defining or stating in one sentence what the subject is about. For example, “*Semiotics is the study of all aspects of sign systems used for communication*”. Or chapters may begin by defining a concept that they deal with: “*Culture may be defined as the complex system of values, traits, morals, and customs shared by a society. Culture teaches people how to behave, and it conditions their reactions.*”

Definitions of terms are often also explained and elaborated upon as in the following example:

Headings are a device for highlighting information. They help writers to organize information and help readers to absorb main ideas and separate them from details. Moreover, headings enable a busy reader to skim familiar or less important information. They also provide a quick preview or review.

What I have done above is illustrating or giving examples which is another important academic function.

You can look at this example of classifying:

There are three main ways in which the role of culture can be studied – by comparing native discourse across cultures, by examining the discourse of non-native speakers of a second language, and by examining and comparing the discourse of people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds

When we have information of this kind you can represent it as a branch diagram.

You can now look closely at the books you are studying to identify the various functions that academic language performs. These will be dealt with in detail in Block III.

Review Question II

List the factors that distinguish an academic text from a non-academic text.

1.4 Purposes for academic writing

In the previous section we looked at some of the basic features of academic texts and what distinguished them from other kinds of texts. We also looked at some of the functions performed through academic texts.

In this section, we will examine the purposes of academic writing.

Activity F *Think of the kinds of writing you had to do during your undergraduate programme. List them here.*

Discussion:

I recollect the following from my undergraduate days:

- i. Taking down notes from lectures
- ii. Making notes from reference books
- iii. Writing assignments
- iv. Writing examination answers

You may have added the following:

- v. Writing project reports
 - vi. Writing seminar papers
 - vii. Writing journals or records of lab experiments
-

Let us next look at the purposes for each of these activities and how it is shaped by the audience for whom it is intended.

i. Taking notes from lectures [Mode: Listening and writing]

When we listen to lectures, it is not possible to take down the entire text. We take down important points so that we can refer to them in future and recollect the gist of what we heard. We can then write on the topic in our own words and according to our own interpretation. The notes we take down are an aid to rewriting the content. When we write notes, we are sifting the main points from the details. The main points help us in recollecting the details later on. Notes are for one's own reference.

ii. Making notes from reference books [Mode: Reading and writing]

Higher studies involves referring to various sources to gather relevant information. All the information has to be organized in a manner that can be easily understood for later reference and use. Short forms and symbols are created for oneself. These serve as cues to the content. Here again, they are for one's own reference.

iii. Writing assignments

Assignments are written in order to show the tutor that what was taught has been understood and applied to do the given task, a question or a project. They are usually done out-of-class so that there is enough time to do them. They are usually on discussion topics and are longer than conventional answers to questions. They cover a broad area relevant to the topic. The student has to refer to other books on the topic. Assignments demand extensive reading and in-depth critical analysis.

iv. Writing examination answers

This demands focused writing. Like assignments, this kind of writing is again addressed to the examiner. What the paper-setter and examiner expect in the answer will need to be considered. Often students write answers that are not directly related to the question. It is a kind of check on the extent of information that has been taken in. It is time-bound and hence needs a great deal of preparation before the session so that the writing is organized and structured.

v. Project reports

These are written to record what has been done and under what conditions. They usually have sections comprising objective, procedure, observation, findings and interpretation of the findings. This kind of writing is preparatory to higher level technical writing. Even if these are mostly read by the project supervisor, they have a wider readership in view.

vi. Seminar papers

These are prepared to be read out to an audience: peer-group and tutor. They also are very highly structured documents, often supported by pictures, diagrams, charts and tables. With the widespread use of technology, these are now converted into power point slide presentations. The complete papers may be sent for publication in academic journals.

vii. Experiment reports

These detail the objective, procedure and observations in sections. They are factual reports, often supported by tables, figures or charts.

These are some of the writing activities that university students engage in. Research articles, textbooks etc. are other writing activities that subject specialists engage in. The purpose of these writing types is dissemination of information.

1.5 The reader

The readers of academic writing also form a class different from other kinds of readers. The purpose of academic writing, as we saw in the above section, is to share information with other members of the academic community. They may be your teachers, your fellow scholars, scholars from other institutions or perhaps your students when you begin teaching. As we saw, writing notes from lectures and textbooks can be for your own reference.

The manner of writing will also change according to who you are writing for. A high school science textbook might have a text on a recently discovered scientific discovery. This may be based on a higher level research article in a journal. Whereas the journal article is addressed to the scientific community, the school text is read by a 14- or 15-year-old. It has to be simplified and made easily understandable for that age group. Nevertheless both the texts are equally academic.

Most of us have read Shakespeare's plays, "Macbeth" or "King Lear" or "Othello" in various versions in school and in college. You will agree, that at every level the kind of answers we wrote for the questions to the plays were different. The school teacher expects answers, perhaps at the factual level, where the story element was important. At the undergraduate level, your answers might have risen to the level of analyzing the characters, their motives, the plot and the style of the play. At yet another level, you could have a comparison of the playwright's art in the different plays, an evaluation of a playwright's earlier plays and his later plays. At this stage you are entering into a dialogue with your reader, who may be your Professor or your classmates. If your insights are perceptive enough you might be persuaded to publish your 'answer' as an article in a journal.

Do the next activity for a starter:

Activity G

Write down notes for yourself from this unit and then develop them into:

1. a home assignment to be submitted to your teacher
[Compare and contrast between academic and non-academic texts giving examples. Do not use the examples given in this unit.]
2. an answer in an examination where you are given 30 minutes
[What would be the differences in your approach in reading academic and non-academic texts?]
3. an interesting article in your study group bulletin

Discussion:

You would have found that although the subject matter is the same you had to modify it according to who is being addressed and the purpose for which you write.

In the home assignment you were expected to go beyond the lesson unit and bring in your own examples to explain the differences between academic and non-academic.

In the examination answer, you are expected to let the examiner know that you have studied the unit and have understood the main points.

In the bulletin article for your study group, you would have brought in your personal understanding of the subject and also used a little persuasion to make your reader see the interesting implications of the distinction. At this stage you have made the matter under discussion your own and incorporated your insights.

Review Question III

What are the different kinds of writing that we do in school or college?

How does the way we write change according to who the reader is?

1.6 Summary

In this unit, we first looked at the purposes for reading and how different people have different purposes when reading different types of text. We examined the distinguishing features of academic and non-academic texts. We looked at the purposes for academic writing and how the audience will determine the way we write.

In the next unit we will examine in detail the features of academic texts.

1.7 Answers to review questions

Review Question I

- a. Reading is a common everyday activity for most of us. There is a wide range of materials that we read. We read different kinds of texts for different purpose. We may read a textbook for information, we read a newspaper for a general awareness of what is happening in the world, we might read a short story or a novel or a poem for pleasure. We might read instructions in a manual for operating a machine.

The way we read each kind of material will depend on the purpose for which we read. A novel prescribed for an English course will have to

be studied intensively. I might have read the same novel earlier for pleasure.

Review Question II

Factors which distinguish academic from non-academic texts:

Academic texts are very focused in nature and address a specific group of readers who are members of the academic community, teachers and students. Academic texts are found in textbooks, academic journals and in educational websites.

The language of academic texts is formal. Generally they serve a specific set of academic functions, like defining or illustrating.

The text is addressed to meet the expectations of the reader. Hence these texts explain and clarify concepts in great detail and with many examples. The texts are accompanied with figures and diagrams where necessary.

Academic texts thus serve a specific purpose. They aim to explain and clarify concepts.

Review Question III

In academic settings, we write for purposes of studying. When we take down notes from lectures or make notes from reference books, we condense information. We do not write for some other reader. Hence it is enough if the abbreviated forms or diagrams that we use can be understood by us later. Note-taking and note-making, however, are specialized skills and have a particular form or structure.

Assignments involve application-oriented writing. They are addressed to the tutor or examiner who needs to be convinced that you have understood concepts and that you have done the extra reading and researching that is required.

The examiner is the reader for the examination answer too and this writing has to conform to what is expected in the answer. Relevance and completeness of information required is crucial.

Other kinds of writing involve presentations and reports. Here the readers are members of the academic community, both teachers and peers. Oral presentations in academic settings require written preparation. Reports involve factual recounting of what was undertaken, the purpose, the procedure and the findings.

The features of each kind of writing mentioned above change according to the audience as well as the purpose for writing.