NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: ENG316

COURSE TITLE: COMMUNICATION FOR BUSINESS

COURSE GUIDE

ENG316
COMMUNICATION FOR BUSINESS

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Introduction

I welcome you to Course ENG316: Communication for Business, a course of 2 credit units for 300-level students. You have probably heard about the concept of "English for Specific Purposes", a concept which implies that there are ways which are more appropriate for communicating in different areas of our lives. This particular course deals with the ways which are appropriate for communicating, in both the oral and written modes, in the business world.

Course Aims

The aims of this course are two-fold: first, to get you to become aware of the fact that, in the business world, some styles of writing and speaking are more effective in achieving the goals of an organisation than other ways; secondly, to help you to master those ways of speaking and writing appropriately and effectively, to help you to master those ways of speaking and writing appropriately and effectively in the business world. You will achieve these goals by understanding what communication means, understanding its kinds and characteristics, acquiring the tools and understanding the styles for communication effectively and applying those tools and styles to real-life practices in communication.

Course Objectives

Each unit of this course (14 in all) has its own specific objectives. These are stated at the beginning of the unit. They have been carefully thought out; so, it will be worth your while to note the objectives carefully, refer back to them from time to time whenever necessary to ensure that you are really sticking to the track for achieving those objectives. However, for the whole course, we have the general objectives that, when you have finished studying the course, you should be able to:

1. define communication and identify its kinds, and characteristics;
2. explain the guides to effective communication;
3. name and describe the elements of effective communication;
4. outline the process of communication;
5. identify and describe the tools of communication;
6. demonstrate the writing of different forms of practical communication, namely, the letter and other forms of correspondence, reports and minutes, and
7. write samples of oral presentations and show by practical performance how oral communication is carried out.

Working through This Course

To master this course, you have to study each unit carefully, using a pen and a notebook for making notes as necessary, and also using any other equipment that will be prescribed. At any point of a unit at which I deem it necessary, but quite definitely at the end, I shall give you an evaluation exercise in the form of a Self-assessment Exercise (SAE). These are for you to use to find out how well you have understood the material. So, you should do the exercises conscientiously. If your attempt at doing the exercises reveals a weakness or some weaknesses in your understanding of the material, you must meticulously go back to the unit to remedy such a weakness or such weaknesses. At the end of each unit, a comprehensive test called Teacher-marked Assessment Questions (TMAQs) is given. You are to answer the questions and send your answers to your tutor for marking. The TMAQs of the whole module and the formal examination at the end of the course form your TMAQs file, which constitutes your overall score in the module.

Course Materials

The primary material that you will need v his course consists of the following:-

1. This Course Guide.
2. The course units combined in a module.
3. The assignments file.
4. Relevant textbooks, including the ones listed under each unit.
5. If the course is broadcast or telecast on radio or TV, you will need to listen to or view the programmes.
6. You should endeavour to read any material relevant to the course in newspapers, journals and similar publications and to discuss the material with any course mates and similar persons that may be known to you.

Study Units

Altogether, there are 15 units in the whole course, grouped into three modules, each containing five units. The scheme is outlined below:

Module 1 An Introductory Overview

Unit 1 Communication: Meaning and General Characteristics – A Review

Unit 2 Communication and Its Influencing Factors: Ancillary Activities in Written Business Communication and Guides to Effectiveness of Communication

Textbooks and References

Relevant books for references and further reading are recommended at the end of each unit. Many of these may be difficult for you to obtain although you may be able to have access to their contents in large libraries and on-line. However, the three listed below are the most important. You should certainly be able to obtain the last two. If you are unable to obtain the first, it should certainly be available on-line.

Mack, Angela (1979). *English for Business.* London: Futura & B.B.C.

Ogbulogo, Charles (2004). *Business Communication in Practice.* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study, Vol. I: Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd.

Assessment File

An Assessment File and a marking scheme will be made available to you. In the assessment file, you will find details of the exercises you must submit to your tutor for marking. There are two aspects of the assessment of this course – the Tutor-marked Questions and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make your final mark. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the course time-table and the Assignment File. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score.

Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMAs)

You will have to submit a specified number of the TMAQs. Every unit in this course has a Tutor-marked Question. You will be assessed on four of them but the best three scores from the TMAQs will be used for 30% of grading. When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a Tutor-marked Assessment Question form to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submission. If for any reason you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor for a discussion on the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date except under exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination will be a test of three hours. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the course all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the kinds of self-assessment exercises and tutor-marked assessment questions you have previously encountered. All aspects of the course will be assessed. You should use the time between completing the last unit and taking the examination to revise the entire course.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	**Marks**
Assignments (best three assignments out of four marked)	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	**100%**

Presentation Schedule

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date for completing the study units and the dates for examinations.

Course Time-Table/Course Overview and Presentation Schedule

Unit	Title of Work	Week	Assignment
Module 1	**Communication: An Overview**		
1	Communication, Meaning and General Characteristics – A Review	1	1
2	Communication and Its Influencing Factors: Ancillary Activities in Written Business Communication and Guides to Effectiveness of Communication	2	2
3	Factors, Systems and Methods of Business Communication	3	3
4	The Elements, Vocabulary and Register of Business Communication	4	4
5	The Process of, and Technology in, Modern Business Communication	5	5
Module 2	**Business Correspondence and Oral Communication**		
1	The Business Letter: General Features (I)	1	1
2	The Business Letter: General Features (II)	2	2
3	Kinds of Business Letters	3	3
4	Other Forms of Business Correspondence and Communication	4	4
5	Routine Business Office Interactions and Public Speaking	5	5
Module 3	**The Business Report**		
1	Reporting for Management Decisions: General Considerations	1	1
2	Planning, Designing and Researching for Business Reports	2	2
3	The Business Report	3	3
4	Writing the Minutes of Business Meetings: General Considerations	4	4
5	The Writing of the Minutes of Business Meetings	5	5
	Revision	17	
	Examination	**18**	

How to Get the Most from This Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning: you can read and work through specially designed study material at your own pace and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you where to read in your text material or set books. You are provided with exercises to do at appropriate points, just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item gives an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and explains how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and with the course as a whole. Following this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives help you to know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. When a unit is completed, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives or not. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the substance of the subject-matter.

Below is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any difficulty, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask him/her to provide it.

1. Read this *Course Guide* thoroughly; it is your first assignment.

2. Organise a *Study Schedule.* Design a *Course Overview* to guide you through the course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on, and write in, your own dates and schedule of work for each unit.

3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they fall behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please, let your tutor know before it is too late for him/her to help you.

4. Starting with Unit 1 of Module One, read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.

5. Assemble the study material. You will need your set books and the unit that you are studying at any point in time. As you work

through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.

6. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be constantly available there.

7. Well before the relevant due dates for submission of answers to Tutor-marked Questions (about four weeks before the due dates), keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignment carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and will, therefore, help you to pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.

8. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.

9. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

10. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also on the written comments on the ordinary assignments.

11. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (stated at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (stated in the *Course Guide*).

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

Information relating to the tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments. Keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you on the course. You must take your tutor-marked assignments to the study centre well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor if you need help. Contact your tutor if:

- you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings;
- you have difficulty with the exercises, or
- you have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have a face-to-face contact with your tutor and of asking questions – which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

This *Course Guide* gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. The course teaches you the basic principles and practice of business communication and how these principles and practices can be applied.

We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it interesting, stimulating and useful.

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Course Guide Communication for Business

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MODULE 1 AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

UNIT 1 COMMUNICATION: MEANING AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have given a broad introduction to the subject of Business Communication, which is the focus of this course, ENG 316. In this Unit 1 of the course, we are highlighting the meaning and general characteristics of communication. These general characteristics consist of the common and practical forms of communication, the modes of communication, the purposes of communication, qualities of effective communication and the barriers to effective communication. It is important that you understand these general forms, so that it will be possible for you to understand the specific character of business communication as presented in this course.

You need about three hours for studying the unit. Make sure that you understand every aspect of it thoroughly. Consult also the publications listed as references and for further reading and, if necessary, other publications in hard copies or on-line. You must also conscientiously attempt the Self-assessment Exercise and answer the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions and submit your answers to the latter, as you have been directed, for evaluation by your tutor. It is my hope that you will find the unit interesting and exciting.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain when one has really communicated, i.e., when a piece of communication has actually taken place
- list and describe the general kinds of communication and particular forms of practical communication
- identify the qualities of effective communication
- explain the barriers to effective communication.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition

One writer, Breth (1869:5) defines communication in industry as "a method by which the feelings of specific groups of people towards management are established, maintained or improved". "Industry" here, of course, can represent many groups of people who share a common interest, such as a school of various levels from the nursery or kindergarten school to the university, a bank, a government ministry, and so on. On the other hand, "management" refers to the persons who hold senior positions among these groups of people (or organisations).

We know that, in any organisation, there are different groups of people. In the school, for example, we have pupils or students; we have teachers in different ranks; we have the Principal, the Provost, the Rector or the Vice-Chancellor; there are also non-academic staff members at various levels of seniority, and so on. In the bank, we have cleaners and messengers (or office assistants); there are tellers, supervisors, managers at various levels, and so on. We find this kind of grouping in every organisation. So, Breth's definition means that communication refers to the ways in which these different groups of people make their feelings (and, of course, thoughts) about many issues in the organisation – working conditions, salaries, fringe benefits, and so on – known to the management. Of course, management also makes its own feelings about many issues relating to the organisation known to the different groups of people in the organisation. That process of making its own feelings known to the different groups of workers also forms part of communication.

However, Breth goes further in the source of our first quotation (this time on page 2) to define communication as “the methods or media by which human relationships are established. Also, Desmond W. Evans (1984:24) defines what he interestingly calls “business communication” as the “overcoming [of] the problems of human interaction in the world of work”. These two additional definitions give communication its real and fullest meaning of denoting all forms of interaction between or among human beings. Thus, in general, communication takes place between two people or among more people when the contents of one person’s mind (or of the minds of one group of people) – contents which could be made up of thoughts, ideas or feelings – are transferred to the mind of the other person or to the minds of the other people. So, whenever we converse with or gesticulate or signify something to other people, we are engaged in communication. Thus, human beings are constantly engaged in communication.

The medium or agency of the transfer of the contents of one person’s mind to that of the other could be (as already implied) a gesture of some kind (such as a wave of the hand, a nod of the head or a twitching or blinking of the eye) or a sound of some sort made without the use of words (such as the sounds made by the animal world).

This course is concerned with communication in the business world. However, we have gone to a great length to explain what communication means in totality so that we can have the fullest understanding of what the concept denotes. Henceforth, we shall concentrate on communication in the business world.

3.2 Kinds of Communication

We shall discuss kinds of communication under two notions, i.e., 1) General Kinds, and 2) Common Forms of Practical Communication.

3.2.1 General Kinds of Communication

We have referred to communication carried out without the use of words. All these forms of communication carried out without the use of words are called ***non-articulate*** or ***non-verbal*** communication. On the other hand, communication made by the use of words is called ***articulate*** communication.

Human beings do make use of non-articulate communication, but, of all creation, they exclusively use *articulate communication* (i.e., communication conducted by the use of words). Indeed, as already stated, articulate communication is a preserve of the human species of creation, and it is believed that it is on account of man's possession of articulate communication that man acquires culture – that complex of man's social (i.e., group, gregarious and interactional) life which dictates man's mode of manifesting every aspect of his life and differentiates one society from another. Articulate communication is, of course, vastly more powerful and effective than non-articulate communication.

We also use the expression, *mode* of articulate communication, to refer to the two modes of oral and *written* use of words in communication.

3.2.2 Common Forms of Practical Communication

The functions and activities demanding employment of practical communication in workplaces and other places (leave alone the other spheres and arenas of daily life) are literally innumerable, but the few confronting the business employee with the greatest challenges can be identified as follows:

3.3.2.1 The Oral Mode

In the oral mode, these are:

(i) routine workplace communication among workers;
(ii) communication at meetings, including briefing sessions, joint consultations between management and the workforce, the grapevine (or popular rumour) and so on;
(iii) telephone conversations and radio and TV broadcasts;
(iv) instructional communication at lectures, demonstrations and group discussions of various kinds;
(v) interactions at interviews of various kinds, and
(vi) presentation of proposals for supply of commodities and offer of services.

3.2.2.2 The Written Mode

In the written mode, there are:-

(i) reports of both the executive and minutes-writing types;

(ii) letters, cables, telegrams, the fax, the telex, e-mail, etc.;
(iii) memoranda and communiqués;
(iv) research and investigation (enquiry) reports, and
(v) books and articles in newspapers, magazines and journals.

The definition of communication given above applies to all these forms of communication. Special treatment of those among these forms of communication considered to be most relevant to the workplace constitutes the subject of this course.

3.3 Purposes or Functions of Communication

1. Communication makes co-operative and collective action among people possible. The Biblical story of the Tower of Babel confirms the indispensability of words for knitting people together in co-operative action.
2. Communication provides the vehicle and means for motivating and directing people in an enterprise or undertaking.
3. Communication helps to mould attitudes and to impart beliefs for the purpose of convincing and persuading people and influencing their behaviour.
4. Communication is the means by which people can be introduced and orientated to their environment.

It is hardly possible to isolate all the ways in which communication is useful to human beings. It is obvious that, without it, human group life (such as in business) cannot go on and that all the concerns, interests and enterprises of man's existence cannot be carried out. Therefore, no effort at perfecting human communication (for our purpose in this course, at the business place) can be seen as a waste of time, energy or resources.

3.4 Qualities of Effective Communication

For communication to achieve its objectives in whatever vista of life we operate (business, religion, and social, political and economic relationships and others), it should possess certain qualities or attributes:-

1. ***Accuracy*****:** This refers to accuracy (i.e., correctness and reliability) of data or information, of interpretation of the data, and of the handling of language (sentence construction, expression, articulation, phrasing, punctuation, spelling and other elements, the mishandling of which can lead to ambiguity and imprecision of meaning). So, careless handling of data or statistics, inept phrasing, specious reasoning with little supporting evidence, misspellings and sparse or superfluous punctuation are to be avoided.

2. ***Completeness*****:** This means including in a piece of communication all information relevant to it without withholding any such information (perhaps for some personal purpose) and expressing all such information in language which the intended recipient can understand fully. A recipient's confidence in a piece of communication flows from the completeness of the communication. Completeness requires that, besides, for example, the courses of action recommended, possible alternative courses of action be examined and rejected for reasons which should also be given in the piece of communication. Any possible undesirable side effects of recommended actions should be indicated. The subject should be covered so thoroughly that the recipient has no need to raise any questions or seek alternative or additional answers. Negative recommendations require convincing evidence, which should emerge from a thorough evaluation of the issue and full documentation of evidence.

However, a piece of communication should not be overloaded, or a recipient bored, with unnecessary information. Depending on how much information the intended recipient or target audience is known to have, some pieces of information may be added or deleted.

3. ***Clarity*****:** This is essentially a function of language use. This is the area of communication in which the language expert finds his most important role, while the management expert finds his in such other aspects as content, channel, timing or occasion, place of communication and other elements of a similar kind. One important practice for achieving clarity is re-writing and rehearsing. It is rare that the first draft or plan of a piece of communication achieves perfection. Written communication should go through at least three stages of preparation, namely, the *draft*, the *proof* and *final* versions. Drafts and plans should be made well enough in advance of use and allowed to exercise the writer's mind for a few days in the course of his routine activities. If – in such an interval – the writer employs the well-known aids to vocabulary control and language mechanics (see Okenimkpe, 2004, Chapter Two) for making necessary corrections, much improvement in the document can be accomplished.

4. ***Conciseness***: In spite of the need for completeness as explained above, conciseness – a vital quality of effective communication – must not be compromised. Over-writing often arises, not from the necessity of including all vital information, but from the writer's desire to impress the recipient or audience with the writer's fund of information or knowledge, from pedantic verbosity and from such other faults as a lengthy discussion of methods used in the gathering of data and in the composing of the report. Often, reading a report aloud or rehearsing a speech can help a communicator to decide on what should be pruned out.

5. ***Readability*****:** This refers to the beauty, charm, attractiveness and simplicity of the style of a piece of communication. It is again squarely a function of language use. It results from an amalgam of clarity, conciseness, flawless grammar, accurate spelling, functional punctuation and a warm, original style of writing.

6. ***Quickness (or Timeliness):*** Quickness refers to the speed with which a piece of communication takes to travel from its source, called (as we shall alter see) the *communicator,* through its channel to its recipient, audience or *communicant.* It is believed that because of the natural subjectivity of information to distortion and misrepresentation as it travels through its channel between its release and arrival (source and destination), communication becomes dangerous if it takes too long to get down the line. Of course, in face-to-face communication – usually in the oral mode – this danger does not exist. In written communication and in oral communication disseminated through what is called "the line or chain of command", it is important to ensure prompt arrival of the communication at its destination.

Quickness also refers to the period between the emergence of a piece of information and its communication to those it concerns. Delayed information runs a serious risk of being misrepresented through what is referred to in organisations as the "grape-vine", i.e., the unofficial information channels of rumours and gossip.

7. ***Must receive a response*****:** Unless a piece of communication receives a response from those to whom it is addressed, the correctness of its reception cannot be ascertained. It is not enough to put a notice on a notice board or send a circular through the post or internal mail system (e.g., the e-mail) and assume that communication has been effectively executed. The targeted audience may not visit the notice board or sight the e-mail and may, in any case misunderstand the message. Nor is it adequate simply to speak to a person or audience and believe that one has effectively communicated with him or them. In all cases of communication, some feedback mechanism must be used to ensure that the information communicated has been accurately received.

8. ***Utility**:* A piece of communication should “sell” itself – should be “sellable”. This quality refers to the attribute of charm and attractiveness of presentation. Attractiveness offers a powerful stimulus for the favourable reception of a piece of communication. A shoddy speech, given in obscure diction and cluttered with distracting asides and anecdotes, cannot hope to hold the attention of the audience for very long. Nor can a piece of written communication, ungainly crowded onto pages in inept paragraphing, winding and fragmented sentences and unpolished language mechanics expect to be read by its audience. Sellability of communication is another important function of language use.

3.5 Barriers to Effective Communication

Another general matter which attaches to communication (in our case, business communication) is barriers, i.e., barriers to effective communication. These are discussed after the process of communication in Unit 4 of this Module One. This is because some of these barriers emanate from the process.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Answer “yes” or “no”: Communication is taking place in the following situations:

(a) When an accident victim is shouting or crying aloud: …………….
(b) When a child is sulking before his/her mother: …………………..
(c) When a boy is telling his father what happened at school: ……………..
(d) When a bird shrieks sharply in a flock perching on a string as a bigger bird is flying towards the flock: ………….
(e) When a General Manager puts a circular on a notice board: ……………

2. On what two modes of communication would you depend for a precise statement of an intention in an industry?
3. Teachers convey information to, and teach their students, skills. State *one* other very important objective which teachers aim at achieving when they teach their students.
4. Which do you consider to be the most important of the qualities of communication? Give reasons for your answer.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We conclude from this Unit that for one to communicate effectively, it is important for one to understand what communication is, what kinds of communication there are and the qualities which communication ought to have in order for it to be effective. If you consider how irritating a conversation can be when one of those involved in it is usurping the talking, you will poignantly appreciate just how important it is that people involved in a piece of communication understand the nature of communication. So, as you set out on this course, you must remember all the time the true meaning of communication, its kinds and the qualities which it ought to have.

5.0 SUMMARY

Communication was defined as the process by which the contents of a communicator's mind pass by some media or channel to the mind of the communicant or recipient of the communication. The types of communication are articulate (communication by use of words) and non-articulate (communication by non-verbal means) and the modes of articulate communication are oral and written. The purposes of communication include those of motivating people, facilitating co-operative action, moulding attitudes and imparting beliefs and introducing and orienting people to their environment. The qualities of effective communication identified include those of *accuracy* (of content and articulation), completeness (freedom from subjective additions or deletions), *clarity* (quality of not only being understood, but also impossible to be misunderstood), *conciseness* (avoidance of offensive padding), *readability* (quality of beauty, charm, attractiveness and simplicity of style), *quickness* (for the purpose of avoiding distortion through delay), the need to receive a *response* (a feedback, mechanism to ensure accuracy), *utility* (adequacy for intended purpose) and *sellability* (again, the quality of beauty and attractiveness).

It is to be hoped that the fledgling communicator obtains from this unit a fairly clear understanding of the meaning, types, modes and qualities of effective communication in any field (particularly business) in which he/she finds himself/herself operating.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1:
(a) Yes. (b) Yes. (c) Yes. (d) Yes. (e) Yes.

Question 2:
(a) Oral. (b) Written.

Question 3:
To mould their character or develop their personality make-up or disposition. That is the *affective* domain of education.

Question 4: Clarity. Without clarity, there is really no communication. To put it in another way, a purportedly conveyed piece of information cannot be effective without clarity. This quality is itself entirely within the control of the communicator. In any case, a piece of so-called communication which lacks any of the other qualities cannot really be said to be fully effective. In a sense, clarity can be said to embrace all other qualities. In other words, all qualities of communication help to achieve the quality of that kind of clarity which makes a piece of communication not only understood but impossible to be misunderstood. We might utter or write the sentence: "We had a bulb on a *tree which* we could operate with a switch". A hearer or reader of this sentence will generally get its meaning, but the position of this Relative Pronoun *which* introduces an ambiguity into the meaning of the sentence. (I hope you do perceive the ambiguity – try and rephrase the sentence to remove the ambiguity). So, although the sentence has a reasonable amount of the quality of clarity, it is possible for some hearers or readers to misunderstand it. So, it is not a clear piece of communication because, although it can be understood, it is not impossible to be misunderstood.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain as precisely as you can, giving real-life examples, what you understand by the concept of communication.
2. In the employment function which you perform at the present time (if you are not in employment, imagine yourself to be in one), name or describe two situations in which you would engage in communication with a colleague or some colleagues, senior or junior to you, and write out in the form of a dialogue the communication which you would carry out with him/her/them on one of these occasions.
3. Describe the common forms of practical communication (i.e., platforms of practical communication) which an employee encounters in a business establishment.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Breth, Robert D. (1969). *Dynamic Management Communications.* Reading (Massachusetts): Addison Wesley Publishing Co. Ltd.

Evans, Desmond W. (1984). *People and Communication*, (2nd ed.). London: Pitman Publishing.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Work and Study (A Handbook for Corporate Organisations and Educational Institutions).* Vol. 1: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Co. Ltd. (Chapter One).

UNIT 2 COMMUNICATION AND ITS INFLUENCING FACTORS: ANCILLARY ACTIVITIES IN WRITTEN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND GUIDES TO EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As the title of this Module One ("An Introductory Overview) and Unit 1 indicate and, indeed, as the remaining Units 3, 4 and 5 of the Module will show, this Unit 2 is devoted to discussing another set of factors which influence communication. These are principles which, although they are not actual acts of communicating, define conditions for making a success of communication. These principles that will be discussed here are:-

1. Ancillary activities in written communication, and
2. Guides to effectiveness of communication.

We imply here that, according to the No. 1 item, certain activities support (are supportive of) written communication. So, this item No. 2 recommends principles which should be observed if we are to make a success of our attempt at communicating, whether orally or in writing.

The unit is evidently what you might call an "omnibus" or "octopus" unit. So, much as it is important that you should know something about the topics discussed, we shall be very brief in our discussion of them in order not to overload your work. Indeed, we shall essentially *list* the principles involved as (besides the need to avoid overloading your text) you are, from your other English Language courses, probably already familiar with the ideas being referred to. (If you need fuller explanations of the ideas, please, see Okenimkpe, 2004, Chapters Six and Twelve of Volume I).

It is my hope that you will appreciate the importance to effectiveness of communication of the principles which we are highlighting in the unit.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. Be sure to understand every point that it makes. You can prove to yourself how well you have understood the unit by doing the Self-assessment Exercises (SAEs) efficiently. You must also diligently answer the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMA) in a thorough manner and send your answers, as directed, to the university for your tutor's evaluation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

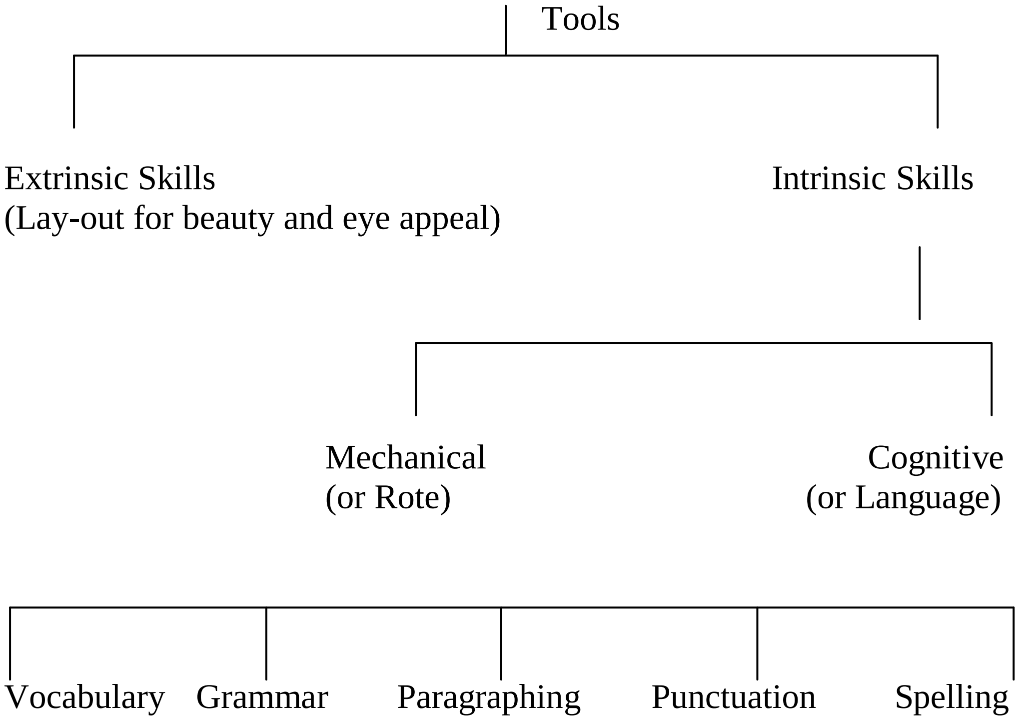
At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of ancillary (supportive) activities to written communication and list and explain the activities involved
- differentiate the "ten commandments" from the "fundamentals" of effective communication and list and explain the salient components of each.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Ancillary Activities in Written Business Communication

Our Fig. 1.3.1 (Unit 3 of this Module One) on "Elements of Communication" (or the "Communication Package") presents certain tools or skills of writing as *Extrinsic* and *Intrinsic* tools or skills. These tools or skills essentially represent what we are referring to here as ancillary (supportive) activities in written business communication (indeed in any written communication). The Intrinsic tools or skills themselves are divisible into two categories, namely *Mechanical* (or *Rote*) and *Cognitive* (or *Language*) tools or skills. These skills are derived from (or linked to) two characteristics or qualities ascribed to all types of written communication. These are the extrinsic (i.e., lay-out) qualities of written matter and the intrinsic (i.e., content) qualities of written matter. So, Intrinsic Skills are for imparting into written matter their intrinsic qualities, while the Extrinsic Skills are for imparting the extrinsic qualities into written matter. We can again reproduce for closer focus that part of Figure 1.3.1 on the tools or skills for constructing written matter.



(Language in Continuous Mechanics Writing and Syntax)

Figure 1.2.1. *Skills for Producing Written Matter*

3.1.1 Extrinsic Skills

Extrinsic Skills aim at neat appearance and tasteful arrangement of written matter for the purpose of achieving eye appeal. They are essential elements for imparting ”sellability” into all forms of written communication. Some of the skills involved in achieving the quality of “sellability” or attractiveness of presentation include the following:-

(i) ***Wide Margins*** (on all sides of the paper: right, left, top and bottom). New computer technology in graphic communication, such as the word-processor and the desktop printer, is extending the frontiers of graphic presentation to almost infinite limits.

(ii) ***Appropriate Line-spacing*****:** Besides the general attractiveness which suitable line-spacing and these other extrinsic traits give to written matter, suitable spacing also makes for easy reading.

Also, the new technologies in graphic production have wide possibilities for use of varied sizes of line-spacing.

(iii) ***Use of Conventional Formats in Written Matter:*** In general terms, we refer here to such established formats as those of the letter and the internal memorandum which, of course, may have minor variations from firm to firm. Also, firms have their own prescribed formats for such routine (Control or Periodic) reports as on regional sales, income and expenditure, bonus and over-time liabilities, and so on. Observing these conventions is a crucial necessity. There is abundant room for innovation and creativity in reports and similar kinds of continuous writing, but such initiatives should not be exercised with regard to the use of established formats. Changes in such formats can only cause irritation and waste of time.

The three elements which we have been discussing (margins, line-spacing and formats), taken together prevent a crowded, ungainly presentation of written matter, such as reports and also prevent what is referred to as "print fright" – the threat, repulsion or aversion which a typed or printed page may exercise on a potential or target reader on account of the ugliness of the page.

3.1.2 Intrinsic Skills

As our chart shows, these are divided into two, i.e., Mechanical (or Rote) Skills and Cognitive (or Language) Skills.

3.1.2.1 Mechanical (or Rote) Skills

Essentially, these are techniques which require, for their use by a writer, not intelligence or knowledge, but the memory. So, practically every writer can use these techniques if he/she will *remember* to use them or is temperamentally disposed to using them. When applied, they distinctly enhance the quality of a piece of writing but, unhappily, many writers either constantly forget to use them or are temperamentally averse to using them. These skills include the following:-

1. Re-writing as a Habit

Re-writing gives pieces of reports the quality of polish (and that other quality of clarity discussed in Unit 1) by which a piece of writing is not only understood, but impossible to be misunderstood. Personnel handling the written communication function in organisations should, from the onset, be aware of the fact that even the most accomplished masters of language and communication techniques can hardly achieve first-rate pieces of writing by a “dash-off” effort. A writer should take a piece through at least three stages (*draft*, *final* and *proof*) before it is released.

2. Paragraphing for Attractiveness

You already know a great deal about the skills for building the paragraph. Here, we are concerned with three inter-related purposes concerning the paragraph, viz: (1) drawing attention to its value as an attribute which enhances the physical quality of a piece of business writing; (2) awakening the business writer’s consciousness of the need to strive for effective paragraphing, and (3) encouraging the business writer to become accustomed to inspecting each individual page of a sheet for paragraphing effectiveness.

The paragraph is one of those writing qualities which prevent print-fright, provide bridging breaks in continuous writing, and offer the reader manageable units of thought or material upon which to focus his attention at any one time and, so, provide him with a valuable aid to memory.

3. Consistent and Intelligent Itemising

Items, sub-heading and, sometimes, paragraphs in written pieces are often numbered – that is what we mean by itemizing. The system used for the numbering may be the somewhat older one of combining many symbols (such as A, B, etc., I, II, etc., 1, 2, etc., a, b, etc., and i. ii, etc.) or the relatively newer system of sole use of Arabic figures (such as 1.0, 1.1, etc., 2.0, 2.1, etc., 3.0, 3.1., etc, and so on). In, say, a long annual report on an organisation, either of the two systems might be applied in the following fashion:

A PERSONNEL	*1.0. PERSONNEL*
I. Administrative	1.1. Administrative
1. Top-level	1.1.1. Top-level
(Senior or Managerial)	(Senior or Managerial)
2. Intermediate	1.1.2. Intermediate
(Medium-level)	(Medium-level)
3. Junior	1.1.3. Junior
II. Engineering	2.0. Engineering

It should be clear that each of the items in the above lists could be subjected to further breaking down, e.g., No. 1 in the left hand column could be further broken down into:

Top-level

(a) Managerial;
(b) Technical;
(c) Accounting, etc.

The crucial need here is clarity and consistency. We need not pursue the matter into greater details.

4. Use of "Bullets"

This is related to itemization; indeed, it is another method of itemizing. Bullets refer to any symbols (large dots, the dash, swords, zeros, etc.) used for indicating different items on any one topic. (The asterisk is not used much for this purpose apparently because of its conventional use in modern grammar for indicating – giving advance warning about – wrong language constructions). The "bullet" is used for making lists in situations in which, although listing is required and necessary, no ordering of any kind (such as of importance, priority, chronology, etc.) is required.

5. Use of Sub-titles

Sub-titles are used for dividing a long piece of writing or report on a topic into the many different units or elements which make up that topic. Supposing that one was reporting on an enterprise in a certain period of business, one might have such topics to report upon as the following:-

1.0. *Business Outlook*
2.0. *Investment:*
    2.1. The Components of Working Capital.
    2.2. Capital Expenditure.
    2.3. Progress on New Projects.
3.0. *Production*
    3.1. Production Difficulties.
    3.2. Production Costs.
    3.3. Overhead and General Expenses.
4.0. *Sales*
    4.1. Sales
    4.2. Market Developments.
    4.3. New Orders.
    4.4. Backlog of Orders.
    4.5. Profits.
5.0. *Yields from New Materials.*
6.0. *Maintenance and Repair.*

Of course, the value of sub-titling is self-evident. It helps the reader to organize his thoughts and, so, assists his memory and stimulates his interest because it prevents fright at unbroken lengths of writing.

6. Use of Tabulation

Without doubt, tables are very handy for presenting large quantities of data in which certain relationships are to be shown, e.g., statistics on various subjects (such as a firm's sales figures in different regions for the same or different periods; accounting summaries, analytical figures, budget statements, textual details and references, etc.). Tabulation makes for brevity and assists the reader's comprehension. We are familiar with the use of Frequency Tables for presenting, and Contingency Tables for analyzing, research data, but tables are equally valuable in routine reports and similar other forms of writing. Consider, for example, how awkward and laborious it would be for a report writer to be presenting sales figures on a commodity in different regions and for a number of consecutive months in a style such as the following:
In January, 2002, sale of our new "Shine" brand of detergent amounted to N230,000 in Lagos State; 225,000.00 in Ogun State, N200,000 in Delta State, N100,000.00 in Enugu State, N125,000.00 in Kano State and N130,000.00 in Benue State. In February, the sales were … (continuing in that way for six months in the six states).

On the other hand, such enormous data could be very concisely presented in a table, such as the following:

Table I: *Sales of "Shine" in Six States from January to June, 2002 (in* N*000).*

State	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Totals
Lagos	250	255	260	230	220	210	1,423
Ogun	225	230	235	240	245	250	1,425
Delta	200	210	220	230	240	245	1,345
Enugu	100	125	130	135	140	145	775
Kano	125	115	112	110	108	106	676
Benue	130	230	215	210	205	190	1,130
Totals	1,030	1,165	1,172	1,155	1,158	1,146	6,820

Source: *Sales Returns from States.*

The brevity and precision of the presentation and the versatility of use to which the table can be put are evident. We can tell at a glance the totals from each state and easily make comparisons among them. Any particular figure required for any special purpose can be easily extracted. On the basis of the trend conspicuously displayed by the whole table and for each region, management action for sustaining or improving performance – or even for suspending or discontinuing operations – can be easily taken. If we consider that operational costs (including staff wages) could be shown on another table or integrated into the same table, we can see how utilitarian tables can be for management decisions. Every area of organisational activity amenable to statistical quantification can be subjected to tabulation.

7. Use of Illustrations

This refers to the use in writing (for illustrative purposes) of pictures, sketches, drawings, photographs, and so on, and, in speech, music, films, tapes, models, gestures, projectors and similar objects. Some people include these illustrations and, indeed, the next item which we shall consider (i.e., charts or graphs) and even tabulation (which we have just discussed) among what are referred to as *aids* (audio, visual and audio-visual) to communication. The idea of *aid* is good because it supports the notion that use of these skills which we have been discussing is essentially invoked from the memory, rather than from the intellect or from acquired knowledge. So, they essentially aid (help) the intellect and acquired knowledge in producing the fullest impact in written matter.

A picture or sketch of a plantation, an extension to a factory or of people sampling a new product would be very germane to a report on a related subject. Illustrations invoke images, bring out the human element of situations and, so, make for vividness of impact. A well-known Chinese dictum says that “a picture is worth 10,000 words”. Illustrations are very useful in house journals.

8. Use of Charts (Graphs) and Sketch Maps

We shall try not to flog this item but make it as simply as possible. Points to note about graphs are the following:-

(i) There are many kinds of them.
(ii) They are usually constructed from quantitative data, such as contained in the table which we have already given.
(iii) Their greatest value lies in showing a *trend* or movement in the subject which they depict. So, while the table gives precise information but may not give an immediate graphic *visual* picture of a situation or trend, a graph gives that immediate visual picture of a situation and trend.
(iv) Graphs are usually drawn (at least, by the lay person or non-statistician) on grid paper – paper divided into equal squares of known dimension, so that vertical and horizontal sides of each square can be given definite values. Dyer (1964:48-51) and Evans (1984:163-166) describe a number of kinds of graphs.

(v) Related to point (iv) is the fact that graphs are constructed from exact data, either already presented on a table or available from research findings and, perhaps, given in an Appendix. This point should remind us that when it is necessary to show the exact values represented by a point on a graph, such a value should be written into the graph.

This concludes our discussion of the *Rote* (or *Mechanical*) elements of the skills of continuous writing. The great value of these skills for enhancing the quality (both of visual appeal and physical layout and of clarity and explicitness of meaning) should be readily evident. These features also raise the status of a piece of writing and the attention which it can win because the features attract positive and favourable attention to the knowledgeableness of a writer. Every writer should give serious attention to using them.

3.1.2.2 Cognitive (or Language) Skills

The second division of the tools of reporting is what we called cognitive (or language) skills in Chart 1.2.1. As explained earlier, these are skills which have to be carefully learnt and acquired with great diligent effort. Their two most important elements are *Vocabulary* and *Syntax* (sentence construction): Two accompanying elements (which we sometimes describe as oscillating uncertainty between Rote and Cognitive skills – but leaning more heavily towards the Cognitive) are *Punctuation* and *Spelling*.

These four skills lie at the heart of meaningful writing. It is largely in their mastery and control that the business executive must demonstrate the superior abilities for creativity, judgement, leadership and knowledge for which he is deemed to merit his privileged position and high pay. His overall aims here are charm and pleasantness of style, precision of meaning and conciseness of presentation. In the use of vocabulary and sentence-making, the business writer must strive for variety, avoiding monotony of sentence lengths and types and repetition of words.

As will already have been noted, these four elements are not being discussed in this course because they are considered to have been covered in your other English Language courses. If necessary, see Okenimkpe (2004), Chapters Two, Three and Four of Vol. 1.

3.2 Guides to Effectiveness of Communication

3.2.1 The "Ten Commandments" of Effective Business Communication

This concept of the "The Ten Commandments of Effective Communication" – propounded by the American Management Association, Inc., offers one of the best conceptualizations and formulations of the principles of effective communication. (Space constraints will not allow us to discuss these. If necessary, see Okenimkpe, 2004, pages 6-9).

Some communication experts see the "Ten Commandments" in terms of "Communication Fundamentals". These fall into two categories, i.e., those which highlight certain characteristics of communication, communicators and communicants and those which refer to the use in communication of gestures and postures, the latter, of the whole body and relevant parts of the body. Again, lack of space will not allow us to discuss these. If necessary, see Okenimkpe (2004), pages 9-15. Let us merely write down the basic principles:-

1. *Words do not have meanings in themselves.*
2. *Words mean different things to different people.*
3. *Perception of reality differs.*
4. *Emotion affects understanding.*
5. *Facts should be distinguished from opinions.*
6. *Build a feedback mechanism into every piece of communication.*
7. *Allow free access to persons who have the right information.*
8. *Face-to-face communication is best.*

3.2.2 Communication Fundamentals in Oral Verbal Interaction

1. Be aware of, and employ when appropriate, such non-verbal forms of communication as the following:

(i) ***Tactile:*** Bodily touch is very varied, carries very varied meanings and occurs mainly in personal, intimate and emotional relationships. However, its official occurrence in handshakes, patting on the shoulder (as appropriate) can be used to advantage when the right opportunity offers itself.

(ii) ***Proximity:*** Nearness conveys intimacy and promotes such other facilitators to effective communication as eye contact, smiling and laughing. Again, proximity is very much restricted to the personal and intimate domain of communication, but the executive should not miss those opportunities when leaving his executive desk to sit on a sofa facing his communicant will oil his negotiation to his advantage.

(iii) ***Posture***: There are many postures which one can assume while either giving or receiving communication: sitting (legs crossed or apart, slumped, etc.), standing (at attention, relaxed, arms folded or hanging down, etc.); kneeling, etc. All these, the particular form of each adopted, and accompanying postures of other parts of the body reflect how one perceives one's status in relation to the partner in communication, what attitude one has towards the partner (disbelief, aggression, trust, cringing, sycophancy, etc.) and what one expects as an outcome from the communication. So, one needs to keep a watch on the posture which one adopts at a communication event.

(iv) ***Physical Appearance:*** Physical appearance is portrayed by physique, clothes, face, hair, hands and (in men) beards and moustaches. Physical appearance reflects self-image, social status and emotional state. The need for overall tidiness within the norms of a culture should be appreciated.

(v) ***Facial Expressions and Gestural Movements:*** The face and the hands are the organs employed most in making these movements. The face shows the emotional state of interactors (although they often try to hide that); provides a continuous feedback on whether the communicant understands, is puzzled, agrees or disagrees with what is being said, etc.; reinforces speech in verbal communication, and indicates attitudes to others.

The hands, on the other hand, illustrate speech and augment it when verbal skills are inadequate; can (with gestures) replace speech, such as in deaf-and-dumb (Braille) language in which, sometimes, the gestures are given arbitrary meanings (just as words also carry arbitrary meanings in speech and writing) and often (with their movements) reflect emotional state (though unintentionally). The nervous interviewee is often betrayed by the movements which he/she makes with his/her hands.

(vi) ***Direction of Gaze:*** The direction of gaze and expression in the eyes carry a great deal of meaning in inter-personal communication. A mutual gaze establishes an eye-contact and builds a form of affiliation. A mutual gaze at an object of mutual interest means attentiveness to the subject of discussion. Of course, a different meaning emerges from an eye contact when the facial expression is friendly, hostile or indifferent. Avoiding eye contact or being the first to withdraw from it may suggest fear, submission, a dependent relationship, respect, shyness, hostility or timidity.

(vii) ***Be mindful of the non-verbal aspects of speech.*** These include the timing of speech, the emotional tone of speech, speech errors and accent.

(a) ***Emotion*** is a very delicate thing to handle in a speech. It is easily over-done or under-done. An audience can easily be embarrassed and put off by both exaggerated emotion and an unfeeling stance.

(b) ***Accentuation*** is a very difficult matter for most second-language users of English. False and artificial accentuation (such as one often hears from inexperienced electronic media announcers) can often be more offensive than the natural (though faulty) accentuation to which one is accustomed from the majority of second-language speakers of the language. So, it is best to be natural even when accentuation is incorrect in some details.

(c) ***Speech errors*** (concerned largely with pronunciation) can be deflating for a speaker. However, while a natural pose will generally be quite acceptable, it is important to rehearse a speech in order to master the pronunciation of some very special words, such as foreign words (*tête-à-tête; façade);* names of towns (*Copenhagen, Keynes, Tottenham)* and others.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

(a) What do you understand by the concepts of “Extrinsic” and “Intrinsic Skills” of communication?
(b) List as many activities as are known to you in the “Intrinsic Skills” group and *two* of the Communication Fundamentals.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Clearly, certain principles guide efficient communication in organisations. The best and most stimulating and inspiring kinds of writing are not simply “knocked off the cuff”. Certain principles have to be observed. These principles are what we have dissected in this Unit. It is well worth your while to give them all the attention that you can afford and to try to apply them in your own written communication. You will find them invaluable for producing the best kinds of writing within your own ability.

5.0 SUMMARY

The unit has discussed ancillary (or supportive) activities to written communication and referred to guides (general – the "Ten Commandments", – and the "Fundamentals") to effective communication. The ancillary activities are divided into "Extrinsic Skills" (or "Tools") and "Intrinsic Skills", the former of which demand the "memory" (and not "knowledge" or "intellect") and that certain appurtenances or frills be added to written communication to assist it in achieving effectiveness.

The "guides" to effective communication (which are not discussed but merely referred to) are divided into what we have called the "Ten Commandments" and the "Fundamentals" of effective communication. The "commandments" denote the principles that should be observed in actual acts of oral or written communication, while the "fundamentals" refer to the behaviour that should be manifested while giving or receiving information, i.e., while performing a role in communication – that of the communicator or the communicant.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

(a) See Section 3.1 (embracing 3.1, 3.1.1., 3.1.2, 3.1.2.1., and 3.1.3.).

(b) Make a selection from those discussed in Section 3.1.2., embracing all those sub-sections listed in question (1a) above.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Describe the roles which the following skills or tools play in the achievement of effectiveness of written communication:

(a) Appropriate line spacing;
(b) re-writing;
(c) tabulation.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Adair, John (1973). *Training for Communication.* Westmead: Gower Press.

Evans, Desmond W. (1984). *People and Communication,* (2nd ed.). London: Pitman Publishing.

Gallagher, William W. (1969). *Report Writing for Management*. Reading (Massachusetts). Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

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UNIT 3 FACTORS, SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As the title of this Module One ("An Introductory Overview") and Units 1 and 2 indicate and, indeed, as the remaining Units 4 and 5 of the Module will show, this Unit 3 is devoted to discussing another set of factors which influence communication. These are *Factors, Systems* and *Methods* of business communication. These are principles (as in the case of the *concepts* in Units 1 and 2) which, although they are not actual acts of communicating, also define conditions for making a success of communication. The factors that will be discussed in the Unit are:-

1. Factors of communication;
2. Systems of communication, and
3. Methods of communication.

The concepts point to the fact that certain factors control the effectiveness of both oral and written communication and that certain approaches (systems and methods) are adopted in communicating in organisations.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. Ensure that you thoroughly understand every point that it makes. If you do the Self Assessment Exercise efficiently, you will be able to convince yourself that you have fully understood the Unit. You should also answer the

Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMAQs) and send your work as directed to the university for your tutor's evaluation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:-

- explain what factors, systems and methods of communication mean
- draw and label diagrams (where applicable), which illustrate them
- compare and contrast "systems" and "methods" of organisational communication
- list and describe different systems and methods of organisational communication, giving their meanings, uses, merits and demerits.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Factors, Systems and Methods of Business Communication

These three elements of communication within organisations are being taken together because they all postulate guides for making communication within organisations effective. Of course, by organisational communication, we mean communication between and among units and personnel in an organisation. The chief executive needs to reach all segments and staff of his/her establishment, sometimes in groups of varying composition and, sometimes, individually or unit by unit. Other managers and functionaries of varying ranks and domains of authority need also to reach all members and all units under their control. Of course, information must also flow back to all these managers and functionaries. With regard to communication, we have to conceive of an organisation as a webbed organism in which the stimulus-response phenomenon operates continuously in order to keep the organism alive. This concept could be illustrated diagrammatically as in Figure 1.2.2 below.

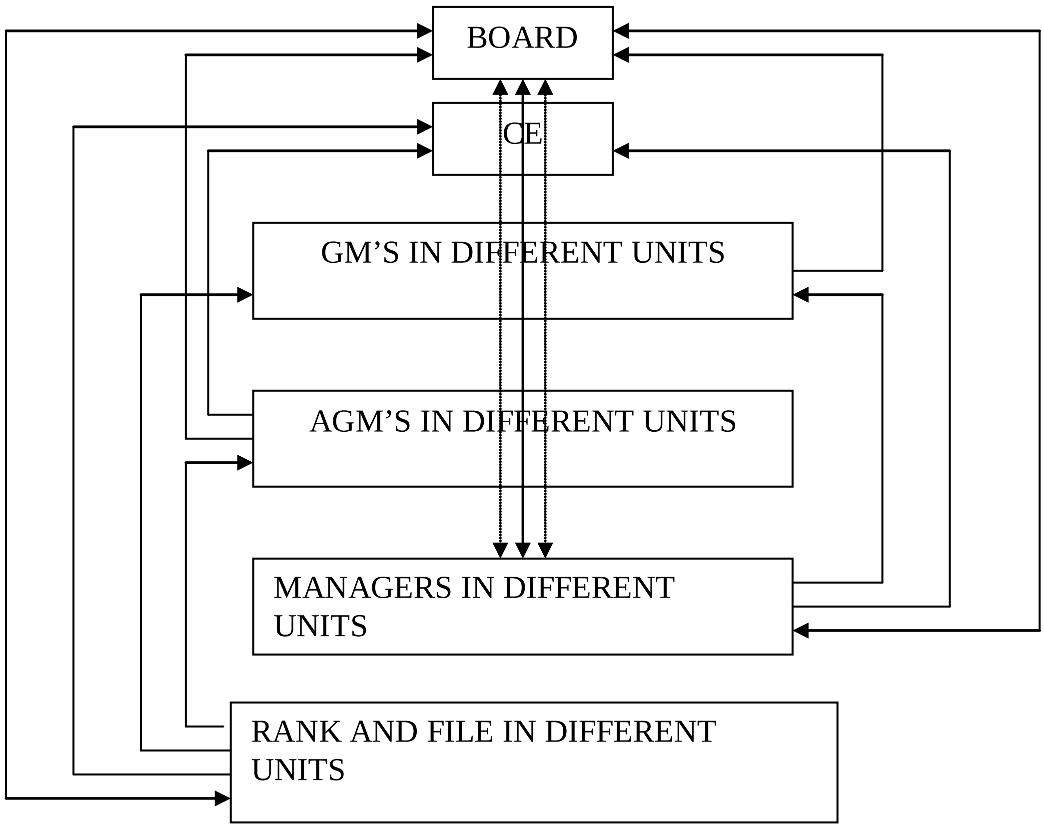


Figure 1.2.2. *Stimulus-response Flow of Communication in an Organisation*

3.1.1 Factors of Communication

Meaning

They are the constituents of a piece of communication which must be individually adequate and appropriate and effectively handled in order for the whole communication event to be effective. A communication event here may be a lecture or talk, a briefing session, a meeting, an interview, and so on. *Factors* tend to relate more particularly to communication with masses of people (such as at a lecture or a foreman's briefing of his workmen at the start of a day's job), but they can also apply in varying degrees to individualized communication in both the oral and written modes.

3.1.1.1 Components

The idea of factors of communication was originally formulated by Adair (1973:24) in his concept of the *Communication Star*.

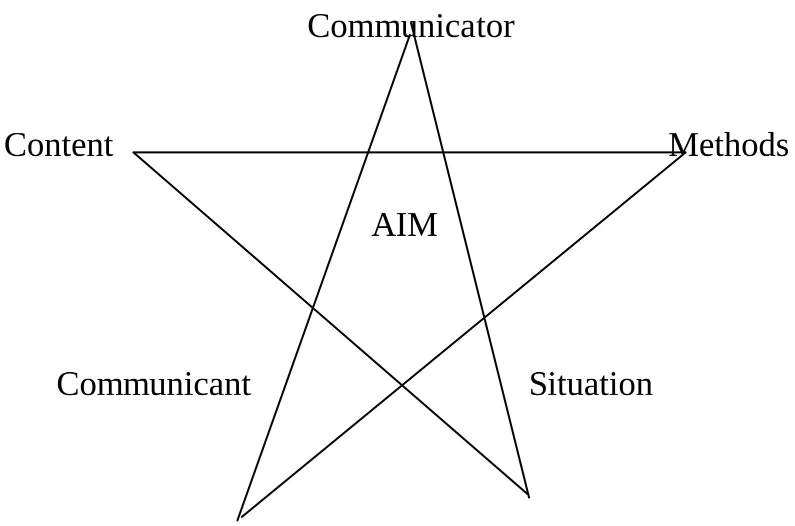


Figure 1.2.3. *The Communication Star (Adair: 1973:24)*

However, it will be recollected that we included the Factors of Communication in our Figure 1.3.1. (Elements of Communication in Module One, Unit 3), and that, in that chart, the factors were extended to include two more factors, i.e., *Reviewer (or Editor)* and *Organisation and Form*, two ideas borrowed from Gallagher (1969). So, a revised *Communication Star* will look as in Figure 1.2.4.

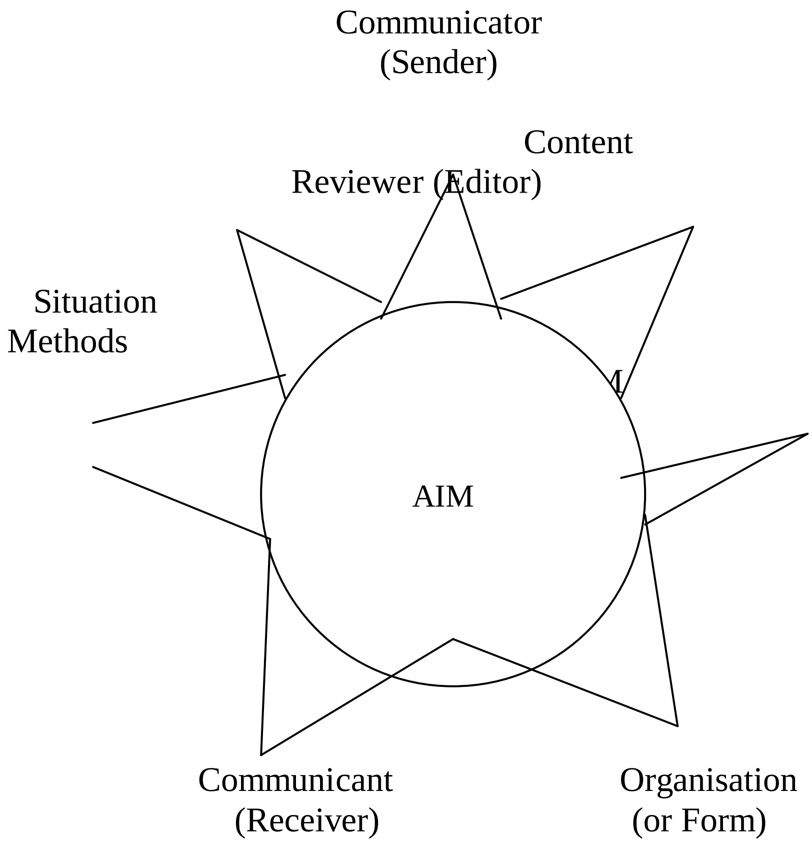


Figure 1.2.4. *Factors of Communication (Adapted From Adair, 1973 and Gallagher, 1969)*

3.1.1.2 The Constituents (i.e., the Factors)

There is really no need to deal with the subject any further because, as we said a while ago, factors are really a concern for communicators at high levels and for those (such as speakers) who deal with groups of people. If necessary see Okenimkpe (2004), Chapter Twelve.

3.1.2 The Systems and Methods of Business Communication

In the next section of this unit, we shall discuss *Methods* of Communication. Perhaps we should point out at this stage that the distinction between *systems* and *methods* is not usually very clear to some people and, indeed, is not recognised by some communicators. However, it is possible to conceive of systems as larger categories which contain or embrace a number of individual methods. So, to anticipate our discussion of both, we might just as well do a classification here to demonstrate the difference between the two.

SYSTEMS	SPECIMEN METHODS
1. Hierarchical	**1. Vertical/Downwards/Upwards** **2. Briefing Groups** **3. Joint Consultations**
2. Lateral/Sideways/Horizontal	**1. Specialised Committees** **2. Surveys** **3. The Grapevine**
3. Diagonal	**1. House Journals** **2. The Grapevine**
4. Open Franchise	**The Grapevine**

We can see here that while we have identified four systems, we have seen seven distinct methods grouped under the systems. As we discuss the systems and methods in succeeding paragraphs, we shall see why some systems encompass more than one method and some methods partake of the natures of more than one system.

3.1.2.1 Communication Systems

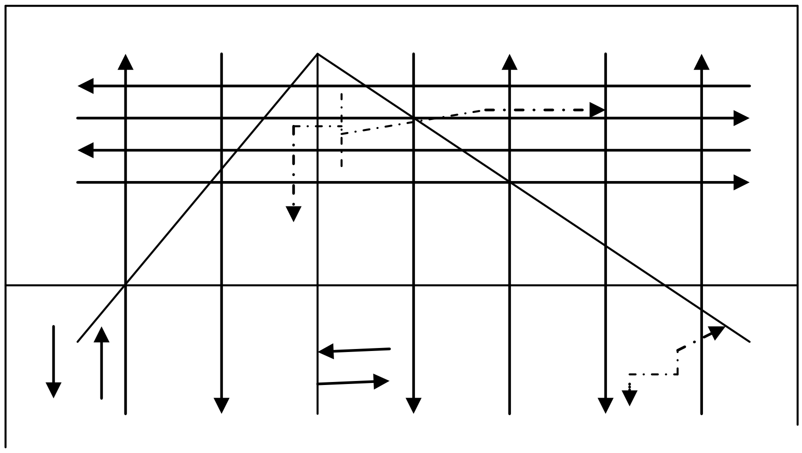
We may define these as a set of general patterns by which organisations conduct their communication function. Here, we are not talking of specific methods, which guide an organisation's choice of specific communication methods, but of general principles and practices, entailing some values or merits, which guide an organisation's choice of specific communication methods. Such a choice is part of the organisation's response to its need to achieve its set purpose of profit maximization and/or efficiency of service and to meet the demands of its organisational environment. Such choices are made either deliberately through a conscious policy or, as is often the case, operated purely as a legacy, perhaps of unknown genesis, inherited from entrenched or established practices in public and/or private organisations in the society or environment in which the organisation exists and operates.

3.1.2.2 Classification

The communication systems may be classified in two ways. One classification consists of the categories already shown above, while the other consists of:

1. Formal;
2. Informal;
3. Grapevine, and
4. Bypassing.

A diagrammatic illustration of the first classification can be adapted from Evans (1984:12) as in Figure 1.2.5.



Key: Vertical Lateral Diagonal

Figure 1.2.5. *Communication Systems of Organisations (Classification I)*

3.1.2.3 The Systems of Communication

As in the case of the factors, there is no real need to discuss these systems further because they are really involved with advanced communication. Again, if necessary, see Okenimkpe (2004), Chapter Twelve.

3.1.3 The Methods of Business Communication

These are specific approaches or practices which are grouped under or emerge from the Communication Systems. A management consultant or expert expects organisations to choose their communication methods to match their needs.

Therefore, in discussing methods of communication in an organisation, one is concerned with a vital factor which influences the overall work environment of the organisation and plays a primary role in facilitating its effectiveness. We are, indeed, dealing with the important issue of democratization of control and the extent to which this factor is a necessary requirement for success in a business. In highlighting, in the remainder of the discussion, the principal methods of communication, we are inviting you to help your present or future s to choose a combination of methods which you honestly perceive as possessing the capacity of ensuring the effectiveness of the organisation.

1. Downwards (or Vertical) Communication

This is what is referred to as "hierarchical" communication or communication along what is referred to as the "chain of command". As the appellation indicates, communication originates most of the time at the top and flows to the bottom, and the bottom – when not performing the primary role of receiving instructions or directives – participates in communication at the explicit invitation by the top to provide certain missing links in the communication chain. Such civil service clichés or expressions as "send through the right channel" or "send to the appropriate quarters" are offshoot of the downward pattern of communication relationships.

It remains popular in organisations because it is easy and clear-cut and, of course, because of sheer inertia against change, but it has the serious shortcoming that it stifles initiative and commitment and enthrones notions of superiority and subordination which are much subject to misapplication. However, to optimize its usefulness, excessive rigidity in its application is to be avoided, so that inter-personal and inter-group interaction within the larger group can be encouraged to augment hierarchical authority.

2. Briefing Groups (Hierarchical)

Informal briefing constitutes the major mode of commonplace official communication within any organisation. However, when we speak of "Briefing Groups" as a recognised method of communication in an industry; we are talking of a systematised arrangement under which small groups of workers in an organisation are invited to meetings, formally convened at agreed regular intervals, for the purpose of being informed of matters affecting the organisation. Here, the meetings become institutionalized events to which workers look forward for receiving information about matters of concern to them.

3. Joint Consultations (Hierarchical)

"Briefing Groups", like "Hierarchical Communication" of various kinds, are "downwards" communication. In opposition to these, "Joint Consultations" are "upwards" communication. They are a set-up by which management, rather than *inform* the staff of its decisions (as essentially it does in "Hierarchical communication" and "Briefing Groups") goes out to seek the views of the staff on management's plans for introducing changes and, so, to obtain the staff's contributions to such plans before definite decisions are taken. Joint consultations are associated with large organisation s and are, therefore, established on the basis of much higher staff strength than Briefing Groups. Thus, staff strength of one thousand employees is regarded as the unit staff level for one Joint Consultative committee, so that a committee is usually established on a plant, factory or office complex basis. In exceptionally large organisations, it becomes necessary to set up regional, national and international committees, each of which is fed with members from its immediately subordinate group.

There is, however, no reason whatever why smaller organisations should not institute joint consultations on the basis of participation of all staff or representation by one committee member of only a small fraction of staff. One can easily conceive of a retail shop of ten employees being organized into a joint consultative committee on the basis of total participation. In a case of this kind, briefing sessions and joint consultations can, of course, be merged into meetings for management both to inform staff of planned decisions, as well as seek their suggestions on such decisions.

4. Specialised Committees (Lateral/Sideways/Horizontal)

These are panels of specialists on different aspects of the work of an organisation set up to advise management on the running of their specialized fields. Company groupings and multi-line department stores are relevant here: while one committee advises on house furnishings, another could advise on chemicals.

Their value lies in their essential function of bringing about *sideways* or *lateral* communication to augment the vertical communication (*downwards* and *upwards*) of Briefing Groups and Joint Consultations. However, they tend to function routinely except in organisation s with widely separated branches in which it is necessary to convene formal meetings of the specialists. In the latter case, specialized committees have often come under criticism for being time-consuming, over argumentative and insufficiently consensus-oriented, a posture that often leads to the exigency of voting for decision-making, which is a procedure that carries risks for the best interests of profit-oriented organisations.

5. Surveys (Lateral/Sideways/Horizontal)

These are investigations, conducted periodically, either at regular intervals or once a while, to find out areas of an organisation's work on which different sections of the staff require more information.

Usually, an expert within the organisation or hired from outside prepares a questionnaire to invite anonymous and voluntary responses of staff to enquiries related to relevant issues. The questionnaire provides choices of answers and spaces for comments on areas on which precise responses are not possible. On the basis of the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, an information bulletin is prepared for dissemination to the staff in circulars, house journals or at briefing sessions.

6. House Journals (Diagonal)

House journals carry information on the personal circumstances of staff and on the social position of the organisation. It attempts to project the organisation as a set-up which, besides its abstract profit interests, is also an association of human beings subject to personal, family and social needs. Hence, weddings of staff, naming ceremonies, leave experiences, overseas holidays and others of similar personal nature are reported in house journals. One could say that house journals carry information which enhance the human image of the organisation, but which the organisation has no particular obligation to convey. Bulletins, notice-boards and newsletters – written media illustrated with photographs and diagrams, and more recently, films and closed-circuit television – supplement house journals for covering information on the peripheral areas.

7. The Grapevine or Popular Gossip (Diagonal; Lateral; Open/Franchise)

What is popularly referred to as the *grapevine* is an informal system of *lateral* communication carried on in person-to-person conversations on the shop-floor, during coffee or lunch breaks and on similar occasions, as well as in unofficial bulletins, news-sheets and industrial magazines.

Application and Weaknesses

It is distrusted and frowned upon by management because its contents are subject to much distortion, but management should take advantage of its accessibility to disseminate its own less important information. If authentic and reliable information can be received through the grapevine, the tendency to indulge in harmful rumour will be kept to a minimum. Management which is in the habit of “keeping sealed lips” over matters that are really of no serious account – an attitude which many management personnel assume in the false belief that it enhances their importance and gravity of outlook in the eyes of the rank and file – should not blame staff for resorting to injurious rumour for conjecturing the thinking of management.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. "Systems" and "Methods" of organisational communication: is there a difference between them? Illustrate your answer with examples.
2. Draw a well labelled chart to illustrate how the "factors" of communication are related.
3. Draw a well labelled chart to illustrate the three main "systems" of organisational communication.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We should have noted from the unit that communication in an organisation (such as a business enterprise) functions in a kind of web that operates by certain principles. We must be conscious of this web nature of organisational communication and endeavour to fit ourselves into it in any organisation in which we might find ourselves functioning.

5.0 SUMMARY

In the unit, we have discussed the *Factors, Systems* and *Methods* of business communication. The Systems refer to the patterns generally adopted in organisations in internal person-to- person or unit-to-unit communication (i.e., the lines along which communication normally flows). Similarly, the *Methods* of communication refer to the specific approaches within each system which are used in the application of each system. All the three elements define the matrix within which organisational communication takes place. It is important to understand them, so that we can see organisational communication, not as a haphazard affair, but as a well organised undertaking which employees ought to try hard to promote.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Sections 3.1.2. and 3.1.2.1. offer the answer.

2. Fig. 1.2.4. (in Section 3.1.1.1.) constitutes the answer.

3. Fig. 1.2.5. (in Section 3.1.2.2.) constitutes the answer.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Write notes on the following: "methods" of organisational communication, giving the meaning, uses, merits and demerits of each "method" and explaining the "system" to which it belongs:-

(a) Downwards (or Vertical) Communication.
(b) Briefing Groups.
(c) Joint Consultations.
(d) The Grapevine.

2. If you were the Managing Director of a firm, which (a) ***system*** and **(**b) ***method*** would you most encourage your staff to use in your firm?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Adair, John (1973). *Training for Communication.* Westmead: Gower Press.

Evans, Desmond W. (1984). *People and Communication*, (2nd ed.). London: Pitman Publishing.

Ogbulogo, Charles (2004). *Business Communication in Practice.* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study*, Vol. I: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd.

UNIT 4 THE ELEMENTS, VOCABULARY AND REGISTER OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

When we talk about "Elements of Communication" (or the "Communication Package), we refer to the kind of language knowledge (or skills) which a potential communicator ought to have – what he/she should know in the language in which he/she communicates – before he/she aspires to communicate or in order for him/her to communicate effectively. We are suggesting here that if a potential communicator does not have adequate vocabulary (or an adequate stock of words), or he/she cannot efficiently and competently put words into sentences, or cannot spell words, or cannot punctuate his/her writing with confidence, or cannot command ability to use significant skills in other functions of the language, then, he/she cannot communicate effectively.

As you study this unit, you should pay attention to the very many elements or aspects of the English Language which we ought to be able to handle in order that we can communicate efficiently with other people. Of course, the extent to which we need to understand the communication package depends on the degree to which we have to communicate professionally and socially.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. Be sure to do the Self-Assessment Exercises (SAE) and to answer the Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA) diligently and to dispatch your answer papers to your tutor as directed.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:-

- explain why it is necessary to know the elements of communication in order for one to communicate effectively
- identify the language functions which form the package of elements of communication
- explain what the register (or vocabulary) of business communication means
- demonstrate the use of the register in appropriate defined situations.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Elements of Communication

The *Elements of Communication* are the topics, activities, skills or components of knowledge (as may be appropriate in each particular context) which make up communication as a total function in an organisation. They may also be referred to as the *Communication Package*. They are very numerous. Here, we will merely represent them schematically and make brief introductory, explanatory comments on the chart (see Figure 1.3.1.).

Communication
Tools

Extrinsic Skills
(layout for beauty and eye appeal)

Intrinsic Skills

Mechanical (or Rote)

Cognitive (or Language)

Vocabulary Grammar & Syntax Paragraphing Punctuation Spelling
Continuous writing

Methods of Organisational Communication

Hierarchical (Vertical/ Upwards/ Downwards)
Briefing Groups
Joint Consultations
House Journals & Surveys
The Grapevine

All these methods employ, or function in addition to, numerous media, e.g., *personal contact – individual* and *group* – in the Conference such as the Presentation, the Group Meeting; the Speech); *Visual Media* – in Dynamic Visual Media (Random), e.g., Memos; Orders and Forms; Letters; Bulletins; Newsletters; Company Publications (internal and external); *Static Visual Media*, e.g., Handbooks, Manuals, Casual Publications; Information Racks; Posters; Reports; Annual Reports; *Aural Media*, e.g., in Telephones and Intercoms; Speaker Systems, Records and Recordings; *Visual-Aural Media*, e.g., Slide Films; Motion Pictures; Television; Exhibits and Displays; Open-House Programmes; *Measurement Media*, e.g., Opinion and Attitude Surveys (personal); Mail Surveys.

More Familiar Forms of Practical Communication

Work-relationship Reporting Memoranda Letters,
Communiqués
(oral) E-mail ,
Minutes, Fax

Executive Minutes-keeping

Periodic (or Control) Special

Factors of Communication (The Communication Star)

Communicator Reviewer Communicant Content
Methods Situation
(Principal) and/or Editor (Receiver/ (Media)
Recipient AIM Organisation
(or Form)

Figure 1.3.1: *Elements of Communication*

The chart suggests that, to communicate effectively, we need *tools* of communication. These tools (or skills), as said in Unit 2 of this module, are broadly divisible into two categories, namely, *Extrinsic Skills* (which, particularly in written communication, account for the layout or visual presentation of the communication) and *Intrinsic Skills* (which refer more strictly to the presentation inputs into communication that are directly controlled by the communicator). The intrinsic skills are, themselves, divisible into *Mechanical* (or *Rote*) elements and *Cognitive* (or *Language*) elements, i.e., knowledge-based elements. These cognitive elements are made up of *Vocabulary; Grammar and Syntax; Paragraphing in Continuous Writing; Punctuation* and *Spelling.*

The tools link up with *Methods of Organisational Communication.* We are suggesting here that communication personnel in an organisation must be (or must have become) competent in the use of communication tools before they can (or in order for them to be able to) think of, select and implement the organisation's mix of communication methods. These methods revolve (as demonstrated in Unit 3) – in varying degrees of purity, adaptation or adulteration, directness or indirectness, formality or informality and totality or partiality – around systems known as *Hierarchical Communication, Briefing Groups, Joint Consultations, House Journals* and *Surveys* and the *Grapevine* (popular rumour). These systems employ (or are supplemented with) the long list of practices in the diagram (e.g., personal contact, which is the direct mode of application of *Briefing Groups* and *Joint Consultations*).

The chart next outlines the more familiar forms of practical communication, viz., *oral communication* at work scenes; *Reporting; Memoranda* (in their full forms), as well as in their note forms, the latter called *Minutes* (which are popularly used for internal communication in offices), as well as *Communiqués, Letters, E-mail* and the Fax. We are not suggesting here that the methods of organisational communication are first acquired by communication functionaries before the familiar communication forms are developed, or that the methods are first applied by organisations before the familiar forms of communication are applied. Rather, we are simply indicating that the familiar communication practices form part of the total communication package. It should be noted that, like the long list of practices which supplement (or provide channels for use of) the methods of organisational communication, the familiar forms of communication are also channels or media by which the organisational communication methods are put into effect. It should be readily seen that the letter or the report is an obvious medium for the implementation of the hierarchical system of communication.

The *Report* itself is divided into two categories: the *Periodic* or *Control* (used for routine or administrative monitoring of performance at fixed intervals), and *Special* (which are prepared on individual activities, events, projects, undertakings or periods).

The *Factors of Communication* are deliberately placed at the base of the scheme. They are parameters or criteria which create the conditions for effectiveness of communication. So, they are conditions which the communicator must meet – where they apply to him/her – or provide for where they relate to other elements of his communication, such as subject-matter, method or recipients. The factors were originally conceived by Adair (1973:24), who encompassed them in a diagram which he called "The Communication Star". His scheme actually contained six elements: *Communicator; Communicant; Content; Methods; Situation,* and *Aim,* but the scheme is being modified here with the inclusion of two additional factors, namely, *Receiver* and *Organisation*. The factors define the broad environment within which communication can be expected to be effective.

Let me point out here that some of these elements in the just outlined communication package are, as relevant, discussed in greater detail in Unit 3 of this module.

3.2 The Register of Business Communication

The *Penguin Encyclopedia* (Crystal, 2004:1289) defines *register* as "a variety of language defined by the social context in which it is deemed appropriate for use, such as religion, law, science, advertising, journalism or conversation [and, for our purpose here, business]". The encyclopedia adds that "each register can be identified by a range of linguistic features which together distinguish it from other registers in the language".

Similarly, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* (Chalker & Weiner, 1998, 1994:340) defines *register* as "a variety of language used in particular circumstances". Pointing out that the concept may be used in different ways by different linguists, the dictionary offers two of such different ways, the following of which is most appropriate for our purpose here: "a variety of language related to a particular FIELD OF DISCOURSE (emphasis, the authors'), a particular subject or occupation, e.g., advertising language or the language of the law".

Registers are not synonymous with *vocabulary* because, while vocabulary refers to *all* the words of a language, register denotes the *particular* words in a language which carry meanings recognised by professionals in an area or field of operation in a society in which that language is used.

So, we can see that *register* is the term which we use for describing that attribute of English that while certain words are used commonly by all people who speak and write the language, other words are specially associated with particular subject matter, professions, activities, and so on. Thus, we can speak of the *common register* of English (which embraces all the words which we commonly employ in most of the day-to-day business of our lives) and of the *special registers* of the many specialised areas or interests of our lives. We can easily give examples of specialised registers.

Study of languages: accidence; syntax; semantics, accent, morpheme, morphology, phoneme, phonology.
Study of literature**:** theme, plot, style, metaphor, symbol.
Cookery: Simmer, spaculla, icing, fillet, dessert.
Nursing: asphyxia, haemorrhoids, poison, intravenous, migraine.

For our purpose in this unit, we shall merely introduce the idea of registers since knowledge of the complex details is really not necessary for most purposes of effective practical business communication. However, it is important that we note from the onset the following points about registers:-

(i) They are somewhat infinite in the English Language because, within any one subject, there are innumerable divisions. Take the subjects of law, medicine and sports as examples. Each of them divides up into several more specialised sub-areas. In law, for example, there are terms specially associated with the courts, such as the *Clerk of the Court,* the *dock,* the *witness box,* the *plaintiff,* the *respondent,* etc.; in the practice of law itself, you will have heard of the *bar,* the *bench, affidavit, bona fide, corpus habeas,* etc. So also do you have special terms associated with the judges and magistrates who *preside* over court sessions and *adjudicate* over cases, and with the lawyers who may be *prosecutors* representing government in court, or *counsel* representing *plaintiffs, defendants* and *accused* persons. There are several other terms associated with the subject of law. Each of medicine and sports has even more terms of its own than law; also, any other subject you can think of (such as business, technology) and the various sciences similarly have numerous special terms.

(ii) People wonder whether, when we speak of the English register of a subject, we mean the technical terms used in that subject. My answer is, as some people say, “Yes and No”. Consider, for example, the two terms, *operation* and *appendicectomy,* which are associated with a surgeon, that is, a doctor who performs operations in a hospital. Now, while both words belong to the register of medicine as a whole, and to surgery in particular, *operation* is a common word which everybody knows or ought to know, while *appendicectomy* is a technical term which all doctors (and surgeons in particular) use for describing a particular kind of operation. A lay person in medicine would not understand the term unless a medical person, such as a doctor or a nurse, explained it to him or he looked it up in a dictionary, preferably in a medical dictionary. Technical terms have this character that they represent large ideas and actions which would be too cumbersome to convey by a full description every time we want to refer to them in our writing and conversation. So, one can now see why I said "yes" and "no"; "yes" because *appendicectomy* is a technical term, while *operation* is not.

Now, if I asked you whether one would regard such a word as "metaphor" (which we saw before) is a technical term, what would you say? Similarly, I could ask you whether such words associated with the subject of philosophy as "idealism", "existentialism", and "epistemology" are technical terms. Obviously they are because they embody whole large ideas with which a lay person to literature or philosophy would not be familiar.

(iii) The third point which we should note in connection with English Registers is the relationship between Registers and *Varieties* of English, one aspect of the latter being "Status" of words. However, by "varieties", we simply mean the different forms of English which, as may be suitable or necessary, one may speak or write on different occasions. These forms are broadly divisible into *formal* and *informal* English, the latter of which has such other varieties as *informal written English, spoken* or *conversational English, colloquial English, dialect, patois* (such as *pidgin*), *slang,* and so on. All we need to note here meanwhile is simply that registers are merely one kind of formal English. In other words, the special terms used in the discourse of different subjects are used by persons educated in those subjects for conveying their ideas in serious or formal writing and speaking. A book, *A University Grammar of English,* by Randolph Quirk and Sidney Greenboum (1979), gives a list on page 1 of the factors which determine varieties of English. One of these is "varieties according to subject". This, indeed, is what we mean by English registers.

(iv) Finally, let us find out what our business (as people who use English in practical communication) is with registers. First, our primary concern is to increase our vocabulary of the common register, i.e., the vocabulary we need for interacting with all the people who come into our lives in the course of each day in the workplace, in the house, in the market, in the bus, along the road, at school, etc. Secondly, we need to master the vocabulary or register of our special subjects of interest or areas of operation (for our purpose here, business), so that we are able to talk to professional or occupational colleagues in language which carries the most precise meanings for those trained in the subject. Those of us who are, for example, literary critics will need to understand those terms on the subject which we referred to earlier on and many more. So will those in business, law, architecture, medicine or any other subject need to know the terminologies of those fields of interest. Hence we can speak of the language of the lawyer or the economist, and so on. In this course, we are concerned with the case of business.

Thirdly, we need to have a mastering of the common terms of all trades and subjects, such as "operation" in medical vocabulary, so that we can understand specialists reasonably well when they speak to us. If an architect building a house for me tells me that he needs some materials for making the "lintels" and "decking" of my house, will I tell him that I do not understand what he means by "lintels" and "decking"?

Finally, even as specialists in different subjects, we must speak in language which a layman can understand. A specialist who cannot, when necessary, convey his ideas tin language which a layman can understand is either a very dull person or is simply showing off. If a doctor (to change focus a bit from our earlier statement) tells me that I am suffering from *hepatitis* and cannot tell me what this is supposed to mean in terms of the injury being done to my body, I will hardly have confidence in his ability to cure the disease.

3.3 Business English

One of the best sources for learning business communication and for imbibing the outlook which a person should have in a business environment is a book entitled *English for Businessmen,* written by Angela Mack who was a co-director of the International Language Centre at International House, Paris, France, and who also had a wide experience of teaching English to overseas students). It was published in London by Macdonald Futura Publishers Ltd. in association with the BBC as one of the books in the BBC's series of publications on the teaching of English by example.

It is based on a fictional firm (a manufacturing one) to guide the reader through the many aspects of modern business. The author, besides her own knowledge of business, had to use an adviser on business practice in order to highlight all areas of activity in a business firm of the kind presented in the book. Each chapter of the book (chapters are actually designated Units) deals with a different department (24 in all) of the firm and *brings out its characteristic words and phrases* (emphasis mine) in a lively and interesting way. Perhaps quoting part of the blurb on the back cover of the book will give a clearer view of the contents of the book:

What vocabulary do you need when you're negotiating export deals, auditing your accounts or setting up a pension fund? How do you reply to customers' complaints, advertise for new personnel, interpret work study surveys? How do you cope with takeover, request an overdraft, plan any advertising campaign? All these situations in day-to-day business life needs a command of English and an understanding of concepts, nuances and conventions.

Now, if we cite from Unit 1 only of the book (on the topic of "New Markets Are Vital") the kinds of business terms and expressions (business register) which are highlighted in each unit, we will have the following:

From the Introduction: Managing Director; Sales Manager; Production Manager; market; open up a new market.
Terms in the Episode: income per capita; delivery dates; tariff; Department of Trade;
duty; trans-shipped; red tape; import licence; agent; channels of distribution; field survey; probe.
Other Useful Terms: automation; board meeting; budgeting control; catalogue;
Chairman; [to] chair a meeting; Company Secretary; corporate planning; D.C.F. (Discounted Cash Flow: a method of calculating the profitability of a new plant and machinery); dock dues; E.D.P. (Electronic Data Processing: the method of analyzing and recording business information by means of a computer); filing cabinets; itinerary; Ltd. (Limited); O.R. (Operational Research: the application of mathematical techniques to the study of problems in business); P.E.R.T. (Project Evaluation and Review Technique: a system used in planning and controlling a project by making a diagram showing the actions and timing needed to complete the independent parts. It is similar to C.P.A.: Critical Path Analysis: method of planning the execution of a complex project in a logical way by analyzing the project into its component parts and recording them on a diagram, which is then used for planning and controlling the inter-connected activities which carry the project to completion); port rates; retailer; telex; wholesaler.

The register cited above comprises only what the author records as new terms, i.e., terms which may be new to readers who are relatively already conversant with the English Language. In other words, there are several other business terms which, because they are considered to be already familiar to the reader, have not been cited. Remember that these terms come from only one unit out of 24 units and that all the 24 units relate to only one firm. So, while I recommend that you find the book and read it thoroughly, it is worthwhile to realize that the book in a sense upholds the point we made in the introduction to the modules that business communication is essentially a study of the broad principles of business communication which apply to the whole field. The kind of specialized competence which each organisation requires is acquired on the job in in-house training and by orientation in each particular firm.

3.4 Varieties of English (Concomitantly of Business English)

There have always been varieties of English, a feature which identifies words by *status*, suggesting that words in English (and, of course, in other languages) enjoy different levels of respectability in usage. These varieties are traditionally classified into *Standard* and *Non – standard* English. Standard English has the varieties of *Formal* and *Informal* English. While *Formal* Standard English has the varieties of *Written*, *Spoken* and *Jargon* English, *Informal Standard* English is classified into *Spoken* and *Written* forms.

For its own part *Non-standard* English is classified into *Colloquial, Dialect, Slang* and *Cant* categories. (For a full discussion of this topic, see Okenimkpe, 2004, pages 51 - 57). Many books on slang English (and, of course, on other varieties of English) have been written, one of the best known and most relevant to Nigeria being C. N. C. Asomugha's (1981) *Nigerian slangs: A dictionary of slangs and unconventional English used in Nigeria.* The issue of unconventional English has received so much attention from scholars that many high-status books have been written on it. Examples in our environment are *New Englishes: A West African perspective* edited by Ayo Bamgbose, Ayo Banjo and Andrew Thomas (1995) and David Jowitt's (1991) Nigerian *English usage: An introduction.*

Patois, cockney and pidgin versions of languages (such as of English and French), i.e., localised forms of *lingua franca,* have over the centuries existed along with the formal categories, and differences in spelling and pronunciation between British and American English (giving rise to the notion of B.E. and Am. E.) and, of course, differences, particularly in pronunciation among British, American and other versions of English, have all along been recognised. However, there have always existed a kind of discrimination against *Non-standard* English in favour of *Standard* English. In other words, while *Standard* English was regarded as the language of educated people – polished and sophisticated people – *Non-standard* English was perceived as the language of the uneducated and poorly educated people, i.e., people generally of low rank. (Other attitudes exhibited in the use of these two versions of English are discussed fully in the section of Okenimkpe, 2004, to which we have made reference).

In contemporary times, usage in the English Language has received its own share of the influence of the phenomenon of *modernism* in two dimensions. First, the discrimination against *Non-standard English* seems to have become considerably relaxed. *Non-standard* English has come to be viewed in some quarters as the language of the ordinary users of the language – the common people – and, so, the genuine true language. Thus, the common attitude is tending towards turning to seeing the use of either form of the language in terms of *preference*, rather than in terms of *superiority* or *inferiority* to reflect the status of the user. However, one wants to note that one has not yet seen a professor giving an inaugural lecture in pidgin or cockney English or the Secretary of the UNO addressing the General Assembly in patois.

The second influence is that, while considerable modifications are being made to *Standard* English, many additions are being made to *Non-standard* English. Concerning modifications, we might note the considerable relaxation of punctuation (communicators now relying mainly on syntax for achieving clarity), the omitting of some Prepositions in some contexts: (*He threw the water out the window; He arrived Abuja at nine*, etc.) and, the pluralisation of Distributive Pronouns and Singular Nouns qualified by singular Distributive Adjectives: (*Everybody must cast* ***their*** *votes; Each pupil is to submit* ***their*** *exercise book*). In addition to these, we now have acronyms and abbreviations coined by individual users for telephone text and e-mail messages (i.e., in electronic communication), such as *abit; a lot; the shop seems to have bin closed; AFAIK – as far as I know etc.* .There is now the *Wikipedia* (www.wikipedia), an electronic collectively edited encyclopedia, which seems to be synthesizing varieties of English across the globe.

Some people call this complexity of emerging varieties of English *Default American English* and regard it as the language of modern business. In a course of this kind – which is more concerned with *language* than with the *computer* (or electronic systems) – the advice that one can give is that people engaging in business should familiarise themselves with these kinds of usage, so that they can, when necessary, use and/or understand them.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Explain in brief what the notion of *Elements of Communication* entails.
2. Describe in a prose form the components of the *Communication Package.*
3. Use the following terms in sentences that would ordinarily occur in a business environment: (i) market; (ii) tariff; (iii) agent; (iv) D.C.F.; (v) O.R.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Clearly, communicating (whether in the oral or written mode) is an activity which requires the acquisition of certain definite skills. For every level of communicating (whether for routine, day-to-day interacting with people in both modes or as a professional function), we must endeavour to acquire the requisite skills for making that task effective.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined what are called "Elements of Communication" (or the "Communication Package), i.e., the components of a language which we must master (in this case, English) in order to be able to interact with other people effectively. These elements consist, at the first level, of *tools* of communication, divided into *Extrinsic Tools (or Skills)* and *Intrinsic Tools (or Skills)*. The Intrinsic Skills themselves are divisible into *Mechanical* (or *Rote*) *Skills* and *Cognitive Skills*. All these skills are applied with many kinds of aids while one is carrying out the familiar forms of practical communication (such as that concerned with oral interaction among people in an office, concerned with reporting – in its *Executive* and *Minutes-keeping* forms) and concerned with writing memoranda, letters, communiqués, e-mail, etc. At a person's stage of using these elements efficiently, the person is now able to give serious consideration to *Factors of Communication* (or the *Communication Stat*), which consists of those elements listed in our diagram.

We also discussed the register of business communication, explaining that the register consists of the terminology (terms, lexis, words, vocabulary and expressions) which are peculiar or unique to business communication, i.e., words and expressions which carry special meanings for professionals in business. We gave many specimens of the register from one chapter of a book on business English.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: See Section 3.1. The first paragraph of that is quite enough.

Question 2: The remainder of Section 3.1. after the first paragraph provides the answer. (Your answer can be made much shorter than that. Simply draw the chart and make brief explanatory comments on its components).

Question 3:
(i) *Market*: With the increase of motor vehicles on Nigerian roads, the *market* for tyres has been expanding rapidly.
(ii) *tariff:* The hotel's *tariff* shows that a double room costs twice as much as a single room.
(iii) *Agent*: The Foundation's agent for the sale of sports books in Lagos is the University of Lagos Bookshop.
(iv) D.C.F. (Discounted Cash Flow): To determine whether the planned agricultural project will be possible, we intend to apply the technique of *D.C.F.* in measuring probable profitability.
(v) *O.R. (Operational Research): Operational Research* should be used for explaining the problems of a business situation in which greater demand is causing reduced production.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Draw a chart encompassing the *Elements of Communication* and showing how the elements are related to one-another.
2. What do you understand by the term *register?* Illustrate your answers copiously by reference to at least five areas of operation of at least one industry.

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UNIT 5 THE PROCESS OF, AND TECHNOLOGY IN, MODERN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Unit 4 of this Module One in which we are taking a general look in this course on “Communication for Business” examined the “Elements, Vocabulary and Register of Business Communication”. In this Unit 5, we are going to study “Process and Technology in Modern Business Communication”. The two topics are being brought together because they are closely related.

For itself, modern technology makes a tremendous contribution to the effectiveness of the process of communication and considerably eases up the ancillary activities which we studied in Unit 2 of this Module One. The process of communication and technology in communication both function in the modes of oral and written communication.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. As with other units, do the Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs) very carefully and also answer the Tutor-Marked Assignment and send your answers as directed to your tutor.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Process of Communication

The process of communication attempts to conceptualise and define what actually transpires in each of, and between, the communicator and the communicant when they communicate. To make communication effective, communicators (such as supervisors) have a need to understand this process of communication, i.e., what actually happens when a piece of communication takes place, so that they can appreciate the enormity of what could go wrong (the risks of misinformation – the barriers to effectiveness of communication) in any piece of communication.

3.2 The Simple Process of Communication

Commonly, it is illustrated in a very simple way (as in Figure 1.4.1 below).

Sender → Message → Medium → Channel → Receive → Feedback

Figure 1.5.1. *A simple illustration of the process of communication*

The chart shows that a *sender* (or *communicator*) conceives of a *message* (or piece of information) that is to go to a *receiver* (recipient or *communicant*). The sender chooses a suitable *medium* (gestural or verbal, the latter, oral or written) by which to send the message, guided by the need for effectiveness and/or speed. He/she then also decides on a *channel* through which to send the message (inter-personal contact, letter, memo, radio, Internet, e-mail, mass media, etc.). Finally, the receiver receives the message and sends back a *feedback* (response) to the sender, indicating his/her reaction or response to the message (such as whether the message was understood or not, whether accepted or rejected, actions taken, etc).

7.1 Evans and Breth on the Process of Communication
- 3.3.1 Technology in Business Communication
- 3.3.2 Business Communication Equipment
- 3.3.3 Current Practices and Future Trends in Business Communication

3.3 Evans and Breth on the Process of Communication

To explain more fully the process of communication, two writers (Evans, 1984:13 and Breth, 1969:11) have offered explanations of the process of communication. Evans gives an elaborate circular illustration of the process of communication, which consists of six stages, namely: (1) *message conceived;* (b) *message encoded;* (3) *communication medium selected* (4) *message decoded;* (5) *message interpreted,* and (6) *feedback supplied.* What transpires in each of these stages is fully explained and all the constraints that could render the action required in any stage ineffective are also fully described.

For his own part, Breth calls the process of communication *The Sequential Process of Communication*, and also gives an illustration of the process which, in his case, is vertical in shape as opposed to Evans's circular shape. The communication process is perceived to be in two phases: the *Action Phase* (originated and controlled by the communicator) and the *Reaction Phase* (which shows the impact of the Action Phase on the recipient of the communication). The Action Phase is made up of three elements: *Intent* (a desire which the communicator forms and wants to communicate); *Content* (communicator's articulation of his/her desire in words – spoken, written or symbolized in non-verbal forms), and *Media* (communicator's choice of a vehicle for the conveyance of his content (which may be personal, i.e., person-to-person or face-to-face, visual, aural or audio-visual). Intent is abstract (i.e., it cannot be known to others) until it is put into concrete content and media.

Admittedly, it is difficult to distinguish content from media, but they do differ. Content is concerned mainly with verbalization and concretization, whereas Media are concerned with delivery. The notion becomes clearer when we substitute media with channel. To illustrate the whole idea conceptualised in the Action Phase, we may, for example, say that *A* forms an intent to ask *B* to type a letter. Even if *A* and *B* are in the same room, *B* cannot know this intent. To start the process of communicating this intent, *A* forms the statement: "Please type this letter", which he rehearses to ensure that it accurately expresses his intent. He now has to decide whether he is going to pass to *B* a piece of paper carrying the statement, gesticulate by pointing at a draft of the letter, speak to *B* or (if he is not in the same room with *B*), send a messenger to deliver the message.

The Reaction Phase, on the other hand, shows the effect which a piece of communication; produces on the recipient. It is also made up of three elements: The *Impact* (effect on the recipient, which is abstract), the *Opinion* (which the recipient voices about the communication, which is concrete) and the *Behaviour* (exhibited by the recipient, showing whether he/she accepts or rejects the communicator's intent – behaviour is also concrete). If we continue with our illustration, we will note that *B* will receive the request for a letter to be typed, may agree or refuse to type the letter, and will either eventually type the letter or refrain from doing so. However, when we apply the process to larger communication activities like letter writing, we find it easier to conceptualise.

You should endeavour to obtain the Evan's and Breth's books in order to study their ideas about the process of communication more thoroughly.

3.3.1 Technology in Business Communication

3.3.2 Business Communication Equipment

An expression which everyone has become familiar with is *Information Technology* (IT). By this expression we mean that modern electronic technology is now applied in practically all activities in the lives of human beings: in medicine, in engineering, in parliaments, in many aspects of home life (including the preparation and serving of food), in several other activities and, of course, in most aspects of business activities (typing, recording and retrieving of different kinds of material, internal and external communication, and so on). In this discussion, we are placing particular emphasis on the use of modern technology in communication within the business environment.

When we consider what the *computer* is used for in the office of today. We are inclined to think that the use of technology in the office is of recent origin. However, we ourselves do recall the *telegram* and *cable* technology and the *telex* (the technology of which has become absorbed into the working of the *microcompressor* – the essential component of the computer), and we are aware of the distant origins of the *telephone* and the *facsimile* (*fax*), the latter of which is still in use in modern communication.

Besides, Evans (1984:36-37) offers an elaborate (what he calls) *time chart* on the development of information technology, dating from pre-3,500 B.C. when, according to him, "signs and speech were developed (note this broad interpretation of information technology) to the 1980s when developments in information "technology [were proceeding] apace with anticipated inventions in such directions as more powerful microprocessors; area networking for electronic mail, etc.; experimental work on voice input into computers; 'wristwatch TV'; improved 'bubble' memory for microcomputers; fibreoptic transmission of messages; work with electronics at 'faster than light speeds' and widening of information technology education in Great Britain, [and, of course, in other countries] from primary schools upwards". When we recall that Evans published his book in 1984 – 24 years ago – we look around to see whether these predictions of his have been accomplished. When we do this, we realize that, perhaps with the exception of "voice input into computers" (which is not unlikely to have been achieved in some countries, such as Japan), practically all the other projections have been accomplished in the electronically sophisticated office of today, even in our own country.

Many writers who discuss communication (see, for example, besides Evans, Bel-Molokwu, 2000:22-29) feel obliged to list and describe the machines which form the components of communication technology. So, one finds on such lists such items as the following:

1. *The Facsimile* (*Fax*): This is the machine which sends graphic written material (messages, pictures, diagrams, etc.) electronically by radio, telephone or telegraph to a determined destination, complete with addresses, signatures and any other details on the paper. Added elements can enable such machines to have such other facilities as *automatic line check* (to select the best line or channel for the transfer in order to maintain copy quality); *polling* (by which stored message is transferred when the line is free); *answer back* (by which transmitting and receiving telephone numbers are printed in addition to the message), *local document copying* (a photocopying component), and *restricted access* (limiting access through the use of secret codes).

2. *The Electric Typewriter*: This has largely gone out of use. Because of being electrically controlled, it entailed less physical labour for the typist to operate and it produced clearer, print-like typescripts. It has developed into its modern form of what some people call the "stand-alone" computer which, through the use of a keyboard (with all the devices of a computer and perhaps a visual display screen) can produce, store and reproduce information in a standard printing format.

3. *The Telephone* (with which everyone is familiar), through which voice (vocal or oral) messages are sent far (indeed, worldwide) or near (among persons in an office or building). Installation of a telephone system within an establishment may be by a *private automatic branch exchange* (P.A.B.X.), which allows internal or external calls to be made to the public network without going through a switchboard operator, or by a *private manual branch exchange* (P.M.B.X.) requiring that calls be directed through a switchboard operator. *The cellular (mobile) telephone* is an early diversification of the telephone into a wireless machine using an inter-connection of radio transmitters, each with limited coverage, to reach their destinations. Continuing development of the telephone has led to the invention of the *digital telephone* which now employs microprocessors (a network of digital circuit which is the primary element of the computer) for transmitting messages. The enormous range of functions which telephones can now perform (photographing, music, TV, transmission of photographs, etc.) is largely an outcome of the use of the microprocessor technology.

4. *The Photocopier* and *the Scanner*. We are familiar with these. The photocopier makes a single copy or a few or numerous copies of documents in black and white or in colour, while the scanner rapidly copies documents for re-printing in clear copies without the use of a photocopier. Scanning is an important piece of technology which used to be employed in the telex system and is currently enormously employed in the computer system for use in sending e-mail messages. The relevant scanning machine in each case converts messages into forms in which the digital circuits in relevant systems can convert the message into the machine codes which the system can transmit and re-convert into analog signals for printing.

5. *The Computer*: We all now recognize the computer (which is at present in about five degrees of sophistication – this is what experts refer to as Pentiums 1-5). It now carries out almost unimaginable functions: when data are conveyed into it and a piece of instruction is programmed into it through the keyboard, it does complicated calculations at lightening speed, stores or releases (prints) results, re-orders material and, as everyone can now see, carries out an almost infinite range of activities in more or less every field of human activity. This is why it is increasingly called a "brain". Many writers make a point of listing and describing its components as the following:

(i) *The Visual Display* (*VDU) Unit:* The screen which displays both work in progress and material from the computer's memory – material which may be required for inspection, viewing, study or printing (the last of which is described as "downloading).

(ii) *The Central Processing Unit (CPU)*: The primary component of the computer, which acts as its memory and 'brains', processing material keyed in through the keyboard, reproducing material earlier recorded in various components of the computer or displaying material recorded on a floppy disc or on a diskette, and performing numerous other functions.

(iii) *The Keyboard* (often referred to as the 'Qwerty' keyboard, i.e., having the standard layout on English-language typewriters on which the letters *q*, *w*, *e*, *t* and *y* are the first keys on the top row of the keys). The typing or typesetting work is carried out here.

(iv) *The Functional Keys*: These form the primary difference between computers and some electric typewriters on one hand, and the standard typewriter, on the other hand. It is with these keys that the computer is 'instructed' or 'commanded' to carry out its near-infinite functions: delete, capitalize, italicize, embolden, etc.

(v) *The Printer*: The unit which prints hard (paper) copies of material displayed on the screen from the keyboard or from records.

The question which arises from this identification of the machines which constitute modern information technology is: how much of this does a standard office worker need to know?

Obviously, every worker ought to be able to recognize all these machines, know the functions which they perform and be able to make, at least, basic use of the more common facilities, such as the telephone. On the other hand, we might say that acquiring the ability to use any of them depends on need, but the trend in recent times has been to regard these machines as everyday equipment for social and business life and to expect everyone to understand their use, at least up to a certain level. That is why the expression, 'computer literacy' has become so popular. In developed societies and in some developing ones, most people acquire the typing skill from primary and/or secondary school and the telephone (both in its earlier analogue form and in its current digital form) has been a common companion to life. In many public utilities such as supermarkets in developed and in some developing societies, the facsimile (fax) machine, the photocopier and the computer are displayed for customers to use themselves (paying for the service at the cash counter) without the need for an attendant or an assistant.

We are saying in effect that everyone should be endeavouring to master the operation of the machines which constitute information technology, including being *online* knowledgeable and sensitive and ready whenever necessary to use the computer to obtain required information. Of course, when it comes to more sophisticated applications of these machines (practically all of them), a large amount of technical training is required. The facsimile (fax) machine can form part of the Internet network in an office; the telephone can now be made to perform functions almost beyond human understanding and the photocopier functions in a range of ways requiring study.

When we now talk of the computer, we know that its capabilities are virtually limitless. The electronic doors into banks and similar precious institutions can refuse you entry if, because you are carrying a large bag, metal objects such as keys and a mobile telephone (these could be guns) the doors suspect you of going to carry out a robbery. Old works of art, such as Leonardo da Vinci's "Monalisa", are now made to speak to explain certain characteristics of their outlook (such as why "Monalisa" – primordial model of European women's beauty – has no breasts). In many pieces of writing, one is given a mind-boggling account of how a journalist in, say a plane which has lost contact with its radar, manoeuvres to use his laptop to obtain connection with communities of human beings. "Bugging" telephone messages and tapping information from various institutions and individuals are acts perpetrated with the use of electronic gadgets. Also, hospitals, engineering firms and several other s perform intricate activities with the use of electronic equipment. The list is endless.

These are all elements of communication which may be required in a business environment. So, besides the standard uses of the information technology devices, we have to undergo proper training if we want to understand and, perhaps, apply the more sophisticated capabilities of information technology equipment. In other words, we must all become, as said above, *online* knowledgeable and sensitive and ready to resort to the computer in searching for necessary information, such as locating publications in a library.

3.3.3 Current Practices and Future Trends in Business Communication Technology

The current practice in information technology is to link all the pieces of equipment which we have been describing into an integrated unit of technology. For this purpose, a computer Central Processing Unit (CPU) is established to control the information system. With the use of multiple function terminals, the various pieces of equipment are hooked into the information system through the CPU, so that various users, sitting at their particular computer sets, are able to carry out necessary tasks concerning the different pieces of equipment without having to leave their desks. The whole system is then linked to the national telephone network and to the international telecommunications systems. Connection to the national and/or the international telephone network makes possible the following additional communication operations, which are very much a feature of modern information technology (IT).

(i) *The E-mail* (Electronic Mail)

(a) Meaning and Application: This is the automatic transmitting of letters and other forms of message to persons (recipients, addresses or correspondents) who are stationed at local (within the same office or within the same country) or at overseas locations. For this to be possible, an addressee has to have an e-mail address which, as in the case of telephone line providers, are supplied by firms which collect payments for this service in the same way that the post office collects rents for the hire of telephone boxes and private mail bags (P.M.Bs.). At present, popular providers of e-mail addresses are identified by the terms 'yahoo' and 'org'.

(b) Effectiveness of Application: One may see that three requirements are demanded for effectiveness of the use of the electronic mail (e-mail), namely, (1) having the necessary equipment or facilities; (2) possessing the technical knowledge for sending and receiving (accessing) e-mail messages, and (3) language ability.

1. **Equipment (or Facilities):** Many computers, including, laptops, have the ordinary requirements for handling the e-mail system. (*Mail*, and, therefore, *e-mail*, have no plural forms). The necessary connection for activating the equipment is arranged at a fee with such providers as MTN, STARCOM, etc., or with cyber cafes.

2. **Technical Knowledge:** The concept of computer literacy or computer knowledge includes ability to use the e-mail facility for sending and receiving e-mail messages. The operation resembles the sending and receiving of messages through the cell or mobile telephone. As one clicks or punches the "Internet Explorer" on the computer, a page appears on the screen in due time, containing all the required components of the message, e.g., the place for the e-mail address of the sender and that of the addressee (or intended recipient), the subject of the message, the attachments, the place for typing, etc. When one finishes typing one's message, one is then instructed to click somewhere to send the message. Understanding and mastering this kind of skill come, of course, from hands-on-tool (practical) training rather than from the theoretical kind of training which we offer in this kind of course.

3. **Language Ability:** All that are really required for demonstrating the kind of language competence required for using the e-mail efficiently has been discussed in the whole of Module One, Unit 2 and in item 3.1 ("Other Forms of Business Correspondence") in Unit 4 of Module Two, in terms of "Extrinsic Skills," "Intrinsic Skills" and precision of expression even while aiming for conciseness. These sections can be revised as part of the effort to master the writing of e-mail messages. The abuses of poor constructing of contents – the same abuses which render

telephone text messages ambiguous and meaningless (incongruous constructions and inappropriate abbreviations etc.) should be avoided. Nothing should be allowed to compromise the value of speed of the e-mail

(ii) *The Website* (one or a combination of web pages connected to the Internet): Like a catalogue, the website contains information about a person or which can be accessed through the computer. The "Virtual Library" (which may also be called "Virtual Memory" or "Virtual Storage") is a sort of a very large website making available for accessing through the computer learning material stored in various places.

(iii) *The Internet*: This is the "information highway" running through the entire world, which is really the connecting of one computer network to another. It is through the Internet that the wide range of electronic communication tasks is made possible.

(iv) *Teleconferencing*: This is essentially a TV screen, about a metre square, hung on the wall and used, among other functions, to display office personnel in various locations who are taking part simultaneously in a 'teleconference'. In other words, in teleconference, TV cameras transmit pictures and sound to various locations so that managers can communicate with one another without leaving their seats.

(v) *Networking*: We partly referred to networking when we discussed current practice and future trends in business communication. Networking as a deliberate programme means linking communication facilities for the purpose of removing delay and complications when office personnel in an have to communicate with one another and/or with outside clients and customers through computer terminals, the facsimile (fax) transmitter, the telex, the telephone or other means.

(vi) *Voice Input*: As implied earlier, this is still at the research stage. The intention is that, instead of the laborious action of using the keyboard to make inputs into the computer, it should be possible to use voice utterances to make such inputs, such as is done with audiotapes, videos and the dictaphone.

3.3.4 Barriers to Effective Communication

This can be simplified into the following items:-

(i) *Communication gaps or communication breakdown:* The receiver receives a different message from what the sender intended. This often results from the sender's poor framing of his message either because of his deficiency in language use or because of wrong assumptions about the intended receiver's knowledge of the subject matter in question or about the receiver's language ability. There are many other causes of communication gaps.

(ii) *Largeness of the size of an :* This makes direct communication with all strata of personnel difficult. Application of the different systems of communication is made very hard.

(iii) *A "weak link" in the process of communication:* Any fault, weakness or deficiency in any of the phases of the process of communication will cause a barrier (block, hump) in communication. (See in our answer to No. 2 of the Tutor-Marked Assignment – TMA – the details of the attributes of the components of the process of communication).

(iv) *Dissonance or conflict between the sender and the receiver:* This factor summarizes many causes of communication barriers: hatred, jealousy, malice, ill-will, suspicion. Resentment – any kind of negative feeling between sender and receiver – can cause a message to be misunderstood or misconstrued.

Causes of communication barriers are many; so, we need to be careful to "leave no stone unturned" in ensuring that we so code our communication that it is impossible to be misunderstood – one of the qualities of effective communication which we identified in Unit 1 of this Module One. As receivers, we should also make every effort to decode messages correctly.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

(i) Name the components of the process of communication.
(ii) Explain the importance of *feedback* in the process of communication.
(iii) Write "Channel" or "Medium" as appropriate in front of each of the following statements to explain what the word/expressions in Italics denote:-
(a) Jide *spoke* to Ngozi about the match: ……………………..
(b) The M.D. *pasted* a memo on the wall: ……………………
(c) Dauda *frowned* to show his disapproval: ………………….
(d) The general salaries increments *were broadcast* on radio: …………………
(e) His *mode of dress* spoke volumes about his character: ………………………

4.0 CONCLUSION

The conclusion to the points which we have made in this Unit is evidently that, for one to communicate effectively in either the oral or written mode, one must understand the process through which communication passes. Similarly, one must be able to recognize and apply at least some, if not all, of the facilities which make up communication (information) technology.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the concept of the "Process of Communication". The "process" is a sort of analysis or x-ray of the abstract event of the conducting of a piece of *communication*. It consists of a *sender* (*communicator*), a *message*, a *medium*, a *channel*, a *receiver*, and the *feedback*. In other words, when a piece of communication is to take place, a person (communicator) conceives his message (a piece of information to convey to another person or other people); he/she chooses a medium by which to convey the information, then selects a channel through which to research the prospective receiver of his piece of information (communicant), who then sends a feedback (a reaction to the message which tells the sender that the message has reached its target). All of these components must function efficiently in order for the piece of communication to be effective.

We have also, in this our overview module on business communication, described communication (information) technology in some detail, identifying briefly describing and/or explaining the functions of the facilities which constitute communication technology: the facsimile (fax) machine; the electric and electronic typewriter; the telephone in its different types; the photocopier and the computer. We said that the computer is now central to the information technology complex and that it therefore plays a focal role in the networking of all or some of the facilities into a centralized or integrated communication system. We have pointed out that the computer is providing the facilitation for such current practices and future prospects in communication technology as the e-mail, the website, the Internet, teleconferencing, networking and voice input. We also summarized the barriers to communication.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: See Section 3.2.

Question 2: See, also, Section 3.2. It is only when a communicant (receiver of a piece of communication) gives a *feedback* (response) to the communicator (the sender) that the sender will know (i) whether the communicant has received the message; (ii) whether he/she understood it, and (iii) what he/she will do about the message – accept it, reject it, take some practical action, etc. So, *feedback* is very important for the completeness and effectiveness of a piece of communication.
Question 3:
(a) Medium. (b) Channel. (c) Medium. (d) Channel. (e) Medium.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Draw a diagram to show the components of the process of communication in a chart and briefly explain the components.
2. What is the value of the process of communication to a communicator?
3. List and briefly explain the functions of the facilities which make up the modern business office.
4. Give the meaning and describe the role and status of the computer in modern business communication.

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MODULE 2 BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE AND ORAL COMMUNICATION

UNIT 1 THE BUSINESS LETTER: GENERAL FEATURES (I)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit 1 of Module Two ("The Business Letter: General Features (I)", we are dealing with the physical appearance (the practical presentation or format of the letter). This refers to the features which every business letter (indeed, every formal letter) usually has or should have. Obviously, however aptly the content of a letter may be conceived and expressed, if its physical presentation is unwieldy, unpleasant or unappealing (perhaps because it is missing certain necessary parts, has essential components placed in incorrect places or is poorly typed), its reception at its destination will not be very good and, so, its purpose may not be achieved. Also, such an ungainly presentation of a letter will give an unfavourable impression about ourselves as writers to our correspondents (the people to whom we have written). This is why it is important that we master the formatting of letters.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. Be sure to understand every point made in it carefully by, besides other personal exercises, doing the Self-assessment Exercise diligently. You must also answer the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions with care and send your answers as directed to the university for evaluation. Have a pleasant time studying the unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:-

- name, describe and explain the uses of the different parts of a business letter
- design a modern format of the business letter
- explain and illustrate what courtesy in letters means.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Format (or Structure) and Component Parts of a Letter

Perhaps the best way to start discussing the letter proper is to cite an actual letter.

APEX TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED
25 COMMERCIAL ROAD
APAPA, LAGOS

June 9, 2004

Our Ref: ATM/4/6

The Sales Manager,
Cotton Industries Limited,
10 Audu Street,
Sabon-Gari,
Kano.

Your Ref: ………………

Dear Sir,

We have seen your advertisement of your “Superbo” cotton yarn in the *Daily Star* of yesterday, 8th June, 2004. We are very much interested in the qualities of durability, brightness and resistance to stain which you claim for the product. We shall appreciate it, therefore, if you will send us for inspection a sample of the yarn and, if possible, also a sample of cloth woven with the yarn.

If we are satisfied with the material, we shall very quickly place a solid initial order for one thousand bales and we shall be requiring about the same quantity per month for the next one year. As you can see, our requirements are very considerable and, so, we are requesting that, rather than the 10% discount which, according to your advertisement, you grant on cash orders, you grant us 12½%.

We look forward to hearing from you soon and very much hope that an exciting and mutually beneficial business relationship will soon become established between us.

Yours truly,
Olu Makinde
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Direction of the Letter:

The Sales Manager, Cotton Industries Ltd., 10, Audu Street, Sabon-Gari KANO.

Notes on the Letter

3.1.1 Letter-heads

Our specimen letter is written on a letter-head (or letter-headed stationery or on letter-headed paper). Most firms and other organisations now have letter-heads or letter-headed paper. It has become perhaps a matter both of enhancing the prestige and raising the status of an organisation, as well as, to some extent, of giving authenticity to documents supposed to be emanating from the organisation.

In our specimen, the only punctuation marks in the letter-head are the *commas* after 25 and Apapa. In most letter-heads, even the comma after 25 would not be inserted. So, one finds that punctuations are generally disappearing in letter-heads except, perhaps, after the abbreviations, *Ltd.* and *Co.* Even these are also often left out.
However, a lot of judgement is required in making a choice about punctuation in a letter-head. Often, a letter-head is designed, especially for large organisations, by an artist whose language sensitivity might not be very profound. For example, if the letter-head in our specimen letter had been written continuously, instead of on separate lines (see below), punctuations would certainly have been necessary.

APEX TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED, 25, COMMERCIAL ROAD, APAPA, LAGOS.

So, a great deal of linguistic and aesthetic insight is required in deciding whether or not, and where, to have punctuations in a letter-head. With punctuations, one may be *unfashionable*, but hardly ever *wrong*, in terms of language use and avoidance of confusion.

3.1.2 Format

What we have in our specimen letter is what is called a fully *blocked* format, structure or arrangement. This is to say that, with the exception of a letter-head (which is in the centre of the paper), all constituent parts of the letter (the two *references*, the *address of the correspondent,* the *salutation*, the *title* or heading of the letter, the *paragraphs* and the *conclusion*) begin from the left margin. When the address of the writer of a letter is not in the letter-head, it also begins from the left margin as in the following re-arrangement of the letter-head and writer's address in our specimen letter.

APEX TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED

25, Commercial Road,
Apapa,
Lagos.

(Followed by all the other elements, all beginning from the left margin).

Perhaps we should point out that, in some letter-heads, even the letter-head itself begins from the left margin. However, such an arrangement emerges from the somewhat unique tastes of some organisations.

3.1.3 "Flushing" of Constituent Parts

As already said, blocking means beginning all constituent parts of the letter from the left margin. Now, a feature of full blocking is to use what is called the *flush* arrangement in all those constituent parts, i.e., beginning all lines in any one component part at an imaginary straight line along the left margin from the first line of the part in question to the last line. This is most evident in the two addresses, i.e., that of the writer (where it is written separately, as indicated earlier, from the letter-head) and that of the correspondent (the person or organisation to whom/which the letter is being written) and in the paragraphs. Thus, apart from *flushing* all constituent parts of the letter (to repeat, the address of the writer where it is not part of the letter-head, the date, the writer's reference, and the correspondent's address and reference), the different lines in any of the constituent parts having more than one line (notably the two addresses) are also begun from the margin.

In flushing, different paragraphs are indicated by having between paragraphs a space which is double in width of the space being used between lines in individual paragraphs. So, where (as is the common practice in the typing of letters) single spacing is being used, a double space is placed between paragraphs, and where, for any special reason, a double space is being used between lines in an individual paragraph, four spaces are left between separate paragraphs. This means that, where blocking and flushing are used in long pieces of writing, such as essays and reports (which are usually typed double-space), four spaces must be used between separate paragraphs.

Merits and Limitations of Blocking and Flushing

Perhaps the strongest recommendation of these practices is that they are modern and, therefore, fashionable. They appear to be a peculiar outcome of the computer technology of contemporary times. It is also claimed that they are easier for the typist to manipulate than the traditional practices. Personally, I do not see blocking and flushed paragraphing as having any advantage over traditional indentation. With blocking, there is obvious waste of paper as a great deal of the top right part of the paper is left blank, and there is an obvious loss in the aesthetic beauty of the balance in the traditional arrangement of the letter.

Worst of all, regarding blocking and flushing, is that many typists still cannot use flushed paragraphing accurately. When the last line of a paragraph is not completely used up, many typists count such a line as part of the double paragraph space required, then proceed to leave only one more line and thus end up leaving no paragraph space at all. The outcome is complete confusion about the ends of paragraphs, a fault which portrays the writer as inept in perceptive use of paragraphs. Reading typeset work of students, I find myself constantly asking them: "Is this a new paragraph (with an arrow pointing to a line)?" Concerning the choice which one should make between the blocked and flushed format and the traditional format, more is said below.

3.1.4 Partially Blocked Formats

This arrangement usually means that, where the address of the writer is not part of the letter-head, that address and the date are written in the top right corner of the paper below the letter-head. Where the address of the writer is part of the letter-head, only the date is written in the top right corner of the paper below the letter-head. Examples:

APEX TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED
25, COMMERCIAL ROAD
APAPA, LAGOS.

June 9, 2004.

APEX TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED

25, Commercial Road,
Apapa,
Lagos.

June 9, 2004.

3.1.5 The Traditional Letter Format

We produce here below our specimen letter in the traditional format.

APEX TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED

25, Commercial Road,
Apapa,
Lagos.

June 9, 2004.

Our Ref.: ATM/4/6.

The Sales Manager,
Cotton Industries Limited,
10, Audu Street,
Sabon-Gari,
Kano.

Your Ref.: ……………………….

Dear Sir,

ENQUIRY ABOUT YOUR "SUPERBO" COTTON YARN

We have seen your advertisement of your "Superbo" cotton yarn in the *Daily Star* of yesterday, 8th June, 2004. We are very much interested in the qualities of durability, brightness and resistance to stain which you claim for the product. We shall appreciate it, therefore, if you will send us for inspection a sample of the yarn and, if possible, also a sample of cloth woven with the yarn.

If we are satisfied with the material, we shall very quickly place a solid initial order for one thousand bales and we shall be requiring about the same quantity per month for the next one year. As you can see, our requirements are very considerable and, so, we are requesting that, rather than the 10% discount which, according to your advertisement, you grant on cash orders, you grant us 12½%.

We look forward to hearing from you soon and very much hope that an exciting and mutually beneficial business relationship will soon become established between us.

Yours truly,

Olu Makinde
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Direction of the Letter

This is the same as for the earlier blocked letter.

3.1.5.1 Notice the Following Points about this Traditional Format

1. It also has a *letter-head*, a feature that is now very popular with companies and other organisations. If it didn't have, the name of the company would have been written in the top right-hand corner along with the address and the date.
2. As just mentioned, the *address* of the writer and the *date* are in the right-hand corner of the letter. Notice that the date is separated from the address with a double space.
3. "*Our Ref*" (our reference), the *correspondent* (the person or organisation to whom/which the letter is being sent), "*Your Ref*" (reference of the *correspondent*) and the *salutation*, all begin from the left margin.
4. The *heading* is in the centre of the letter.
5. The content has *traditional paragraphing*, i.e., paragraphs are shown by indentation.
6. The *conclusion*, the *writer's name* and *designation* are in the bottom right-hand corner of the letter, a sufficient space being left for the writer's signature.

A simple way to describe this format is to say that it is not *blocked*, contrasting with the modern format in Section 3.1.

3.1.6 The Different Formats Compared

Evidently, the traditional letter format is losing popularity. So, all one can say is that typists and secretaries should learn well how to use the blocked and flushed format competently. Of course, persons who draft letters should equally understand the system since, unless the superior officer cares about the lay-out of his writing, he will receive shoddy final copies from his assistants.

To some people, the fully blocked letter (especially when the writer's address is also written against the left margin) must look somewhat ungainly. I believe that it is to counter this inelegance in lay-out that the partially blocked arrangement is often adopted, indeed by many organisations, particularly public organisations. So, you should feel no embarrassment about using the partially blocked format if it appeals to you. As a point of fact, the blocked format has not really received universal acceptance; so, no undue scruples need be entertained if you prefer the pure traditional structure. Particularly in hand-written letters, I actually recommend use of the traditional format. This is because the matter of double spaces between paragraphs in the blocked structure is a mechanical issue and is, therefore, difficult to accomplish in manual writing. Ordinarily, applications for employment (which are often required to be written in hand) should be written on plain (unruled) paper. On paper of this kind, it is very difficult to meet the requirements of blocking and flushing. Similarly, the excessive space required in manual writing for accommodating, in blocked formats, the top constituent parts of the letter gives the letter a really awkward and unattractive appearance.

Therefore, no unnecessary worry or sense of lack of currency should be entertained if one candidly feels that the right format to use is the traditional one. The way in which a format emerges in a firm is that either the firm makes its own deliberate choice of a format or that typists and secretaries (through attending courses and observing styles elsewhere and in letters arriving at their offices) introduce and consolidate a system and impose the system on somewhat indifferent superior officials. Again, where letters are dictated by Dictaphone or orally, the whole responsibility for formatting falls on the secretary. By and large, then, format, except in personal letters may become in any firm a matter of an official style (what might be called a *house style*) with which all concerned must abide.

3.1.7 Indentation in Letters

This is the slanting to the right of the different lines in the address of the writer where the address is not part of the letter-head or where the letter is being written on stationery without a letter-head. It is illustrated below.

APEX TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED

25, Commercial Road,
Apapa,
Lagos.

June 9, 2004.

The Sales Manager,
Cotton Industries Limited,
10, Audu Street,
Sabon-Gari,
Kano.

Dear Sir,

Where stationery without a letter-head is used, the address would appear as follows:

Apex Textile Mills Limited
25, Commercial Road,
Apapa,
Lagos.

Indenting in letters has quite clearly become an outmoded practice that has gone completely out of use. It was associated with the traditional format. Indeed, it can be regarded as an early feature of the traditional format of letters. It was in vogue in this writer's time in school some 21 to 25 years ago. McCrimmon (1963:369) mentions that indentation could be used in block formats. This would be a matter of giving paragraphs the most emphatic, most distinct differentiation, but I must confess that I have never seen this arrangement. Blocking is clearly a recent practice, particularly in our part of the world, and indentation had quite completely disappeared before blocking set in. So, it should be completely avoided whether one is using the blocked or the traditional format. Other outmoded practices in letters will be pointed out when we discuss the elements to which they are related.

To conclude the discussion of formats, let us make a few more observations about letter-heads and addresses.

(i) As already pointed out, the word *Limited*, may be written in full or may be abbreviated as *Ltd*, with the dot (*Ltd.*) or without it *(Ltd)*, this latter practice being permitted because the full word ends with a /d/.

(ii) Instead of Limited, Americans generally use *Inc*. (*Incorporated*), the abbreviated form of which should ordinarily take a dot since the full word does not end with a /c/. However, it is to be noted that, as part of the general contemporary tendency to down-play punctuations, especially in American English, *Inc* does come often without the dot.

(iii) Co. (for *Company*) generally takes a dot since the full word does not end with an /o/.

(iv) Perhaps we should use this opportunity also of pointing out that, instead of *Chairman,* Americans often use the term, *President.*

(v) We noted that punctuations are now hardly used in letter-heads except, perhaps, a dot after the abbreviations, *Co.* and *Ltd.* Also, punctuations are disappearing from type-written addresses (and, incidentally, also from *dates*, the general presentation of which we shall discuss below) although this practice (omission of punctuations from typewritten addresses) is yet to receive general acceptance. (Notice the full punctuation in all the specimens given). In a matter like this, one does what one feels comfortable with but understands what has happened when others do a different thing.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1(a) Write out the format of a standard business letter to show the positioning of its different elements.

(b) Comment incisively on the use (purpose, position, and lettering) of letter-heads by firms.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this Unit, we have described in part the format of the modern business letter, i.e., its physical display and the component parts of the letter. It is important for all communicators to understand and master the application of these components because they make a crucial contribution to the success of a business letter.

5.0 SUMMARY

The unit has tried to carry out a discussion in part of the business letter, highlighting choice and design of its format and its constituent parts. In format, as you must have noted, currency is important, but you should bear in mind that competent use of a traditional format is preferable to a sloppy outcome of a fumbling attempt to use a modern format.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: (a) The format in Section 3.1 without the content provides an adequate answer.
(b) Section 3.1.1 provides the answer.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Describe the differences between the formatting of the traditional and modern business letter.
2. Discuss as incisively as you can (i) flushing in letters; (ii) indentation in letters.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Ogbulogo, Charles (2000). *Business Communication in Practice.* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications (Chapter 10).

Okenimkpe, M. N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study*, Vol. I: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd. (Chapter Nine).

UNIT 2 THE BUSINESS LETTER: GENERAL FEATURES (II)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit 2 of Module Two forms an integrated whole with Unit 1. Both are dealing with the general features of business letters. It is essentially because the topic is too large to discuss in one unit that we have formed two units to accommodate it. I am sure you will agree that the topic of the general features of business letters is very important. We shall give a lot of attention to the formulation and expression of the contents of business letters later in this unit. Evidently, if the general features are poorly presented, the contents, however well-written, cannot have a chance of being suitably received and of producing the required impact. That the two units and Unit 3, making three units altogether are being devoted to the business letter shows that the business letter is very important among the instruments of communication in a business set-up.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. Be sure to follow every point made in it carefully and to attempt the Self Assessment Exercise carefully. Also, you must endeavour to answer the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMAQs) diligently and send your answers to the university for your tutor's evaluation. It is my earnest hope that you will find the unit interesting.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain how the following features of the business letter are written: the *date;* the *salutation* (or *greeting*); the *heading*; the *conclusion* (or *subscription*); the *name, signature* and *designation* of the writer, and the *direction* of the letter
- explain and exemplify the language requirements for appropriate wording of letters
- explain and exemplify the requirements for achieving courtesy in business letters.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Taking our sample letter in Unit 1 of this module as our reference material, we simply continue with the comments on the features of the letter which we started in that Unit 1.

3.1 The Date

The first thing to notice about the date is the sequencing of its elements (June 9, 2004), i.e., month, day of the month and year. This is a style which originated in the USA but has now practically spread throughout the world and come universally into vogue. However, I must confess myself that I can see no advantage which this style has over the older style (which, in our case, would be 9 June, 2004), i.e., sequenced day of month, month and year. For me and, I imagine, for many people who have the power of judgement, the new style has only vogue appeal. Indeed, it has become the computer style which, of course, computer typists can alter if they wish to do so. It should already be appreciated that the punctuation in the new style of writing the date (i.e., the comma after the month) is absolutely necessary in order to separate the figure or figures of the day from those of the year, i.e., to ensure that the two sets of figures do not merge or flow into each other. In an age in which punctuation is becoming increasingly de-emphasised (especially, in fact, in American writing) and in which many people, either out of ignorance, negligence or carelessness, omit necessary punctuation, it is difficult to see what advantage the style, June 9, 2004, can have over 9 June, 2004. So, one should feel at liberty to choose the style which satisfies one's taste and judgement.

In the body of the letter, Americans, following their practice which we have just been discussing, can mention dates in the style, 6.9.2004 (or 6/9/2004 or 06.09.2004 or 06/09/2004), meaning June 9, 2004, i.e., as already noted, writing the elements in the order of the month, the day of the month and the year. Perhaps in this style is most apparent the weakness attaching to this style of writing the date. When the day is anywhere from one to twelve, it is easy to take that day as the month (as in our example) and only confusion can result unless one is solidly grounded in the tradition in which the style is used. I believe that it is to avoid this perplexity that it is more common to write the date in the body of a letter in the style, 9.6.2004 (or 9/6/2004 or 09.06.2004 or 09/06/2004), i.e., the day of the month, the month and the year, or 9th June, 2004. As a point of fact, in formal or official letters, which are our concern here, the last style (9th June, 2004) is what I strongly recommend. The forms *inst. (instant* for this month) *ult. (ultimo* for last month) and *prox.* (*proximo* for next month) were used in the past for referring to dates in the body of a letter, but they have now become largely old-fashioned. We are presently going to comment on the use of the notation, *th*, in that date.

It is to be noted that the notations (1st., 2nd., 3rd. and 4th.) have completely disappeared from the main date of a letter. That is why we have been writing 9 June, 2004. Indeed, first to disappear was the hanging of the notation on the figure, i.e., writing it above the line on which the figure is written, such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th. It is extremely strange that computers have not only brought back the attaching of the notations to dates, but actually hang them on the figures. Typists can, of course, completely remove the notation, but it sometimes requires persistent insisting by a superior officer before a habit of removing the notation can become established. On the contrary, the notation should be used in the body of the letter (such as in our example, 9th. June, 2004). This is presumably because it is assumed that a date in the body of the letter is read silently or aloud (as the situation demands) along with the rest of the contents of the letter.

3.2 The Salutation (or Greeting)

The first point to make about the salutation (Dear …) is that it is started at the margin and marked off with a comma. *Gentlemen* (which we have included below in our first category of salutations) is often used by Americans instead of *Dear Sirs* (which they, however, sometimes use also). After *Gentlemen* or *Dear Sirs*, they often use a colon (:) rather than a comma. It is wrong to start the salutation, as many people do, at some point away from the margin (see our specimen letter). Perhaps a point of incidental interest is to point out that the use of a capital or a small letter in beginning the word that comes after *Dear* is determined by conventional grammatical rules. Thus, *Sir*, is usually started with a capital letter (although it is not uncommon to see it started with a small letter) because, as a word, it is ordinarily usually started with a capital letter. (I have constantly seen it started with a small letter; Dear *sir*, but as a word of address – a noun in the dative case – I think that it is inappropriate to do that). Where, for example, *Dear* is followed by a title and somebody's name, both the title and the name are written with initial capital letters because that is the ordinary grammatical practice, e.g., Dear *Mr.* Jibunor. As a point of illustration, we might just mention (though that is outside the area of our focus here) that where the word following *Dear* is *sister, brother,* or a similar word, it is started with a small letter: Dear *brother*, etc. Obeying the same grammatical rule, when the salutation begins with another word, such as *My*, that initial word starts with a capital letter, while *dear* itself now starts with a small letter, e.g., *My dear* Mr. Nwuzu.

However, the point of the greatest importance regarding the salutation is to note the great variety of expressions which are used in it. The following is a comprehensive list of expressions roughly arranged in order of decreasing formality, i.e., as one goes down the list of the salutations, the situations in which one uses the salutations become less and less formal. One makes a choice of a salutation on the basis of one's perception of the degree of formality which rules one's relationship with one's correspondent.

1. *Sir; Sirs; Reverend Sir; Madam; Gentlemen* (Americans); *Mesdames.*
2. *Dear Sir; Dear Sirs; Reverend and dear Sir; Dear Madam; Dear Mesdames.*
3. *My dear Sir; My dear Sirs; Reverend and my dear Sir; My dear Madam; My dear Mesdames.*

4. Dear Mr.)
Mrs.)
Miss) Ojo,
Ms)
Etc.)

5. My dear Mr.)
Mrs.)
Miss) Ojo,
Ms)
Etc.)

6. Your Honour; Your Grace; Your Excellency, etc.

Notes

(i) Obviously, the greetings in (1) are the most formal. They are curt and dry and concede no familiarity at all. They are to be expected in the letters of lawyers writing to their colleagues or their clients' opponents on some point of litigation. *Gentlemen* is popular in the USA and *Mesdames* is the plural of *Madam*.

(ii) *My* in salutations conveys affection. So, it is ordinarily used by a person who perceives himself/herself as being superior in some sense (age, rank, position, etc.) to his correspondent, such as a retired notable Permanent Secretary writing to (or replying to a letter from) an incumbent Permanent Secretary on some point concerning payment of the former's pension.

(iii) The greetings in (iv) and (v) remain formal or official, but they are used either to express a familiarity which already exists between the correspondents, or is being claimed or conceded by the writer or a familiarity which the writer, for a good reason, wants to establish with the correspondent.

(iv) The greetings in (vi) are essentially ceremonial, used for example, when inviting a Governor to come and commission a project, a Bishop to dedicate a church, a Head of State to attend a banquet, etc.

(v) The title, *Messrs.* (for *Messiurs*), which may appear in the address of a correspondent (Messrs. Akerele and Okoye, Solicitors, followed by the address) or in the salutation (Dear Messrs. Akerele and Okoye) is appropriate only for addressing partnerships, i.e., partnership firms or organisations, the names of which are in family names, e.g. (as we have just seen), *Messrs. Akerele and Okoye, Solicitors.* It is inappropriate to use it for limited companies, especially when the company is not registered in family names.

(vi) A very important point that must be made is that the usual greeting in an official letter is *Dear Sir* (or *Dear Madam*). One cannot go wrong with these. So, unless one is really certain of the use of the other greetings, one should stick to this standard one.

We have already noted that, while in the blocked format of the letter, the heading begins from the margin, in the traditional format, it is written, like all other elements, in the middle. Another point to note about the heading is that, while it is almost always to be found in public service letters, it is quite often left out in private sector letters. It is good practice to use it always. It encapsulates, like all headings and sub-headings in continuous writing, the subject of a piece of writing, thus helping to focus attention on the subject and to make it easier to remember. What it requires is some sort of pleasant and emphatic presentation. Thus, in hand-written drafts, it is written entirely in capital letters and underlined. In ordinary typewriting, it is also typed entirely in capital letters and underlined, while, in computer typesetting, it is produced in some degree of boldface printing and either also completely typed in capital letters or at least has the principal words started with capital letters. Some authors recommend that even computer boldface headings (even when they are written completely in capitals) be also underlined. I think that this is unnecessary because it contravenes the rule of boldface typesetting in other forms of continuous writing. A writer who understands the function of the heading will always seek a way of ensuring that it plays that role effectively.

3.4 The Conclusion (or Subscription)

This is the part of the letter which reads *Yours* … The word chosen after *Yours* is matched with the salutation used. Thus, *faithfully* and all the salutations in numbers (i) to (iii) in our earlier list (i.e., *Sir,* etc., *Dear Sir,* etc., and *My dear Sir,* etc.) go together and, so, *faithfully* is the standard form in the civil service. It is also appropriate in the private sector but *truly* is also very often used, written *Yours truly* or *Truly yours,* the latter being the preferred expression in the USA. It should be noted that, while the first of the two words is started with a capital letter, the second is started with a small letter.

Occasionally, especially in America, the sentence: *I am* or *We are* appears either at the end of the last sentence or in a separate paragraph, in both cases marked off with a comma, before the conclusion proper. If it is to be used at all, I personally prefer it as a separate paragraph. Indeed, sometimes, it comes as a part of the conclusion, e.g.:

I am,
Yours faithfully,
Olu Makinde
PRODUCTION MANAGER.

It will have been noted in our specimen letter that in the blocked format, the conclusion is one of those parts of the letter which are placed against the left margin. In the traditional format, the conclusion is written in the extreme right-hand end corner of the letter. It is written from an imaginary straight line running from the beginnings of the lines of the writer’s address and/or the date (see our specimen traditional format). Also, in the traditional format, the conclusion was one of those elements in which the lines were slanted. That practice too has become obsolete and has disappeared completely.

3.5 The Name, Signature and Designation (of the Writer)

In the blocked format, the name and designation of the writer are written from the left margin, the designation often entirely in capital letters although it is quite correct to start only the principal words in the designation with capital letters: ***Production Manager*** or ***Chief of Personnel Management***. In the traditional format, both elements are written from the same starting point as the conclusion. Sometimes, one finds expressions of the following kind immediately below the last line of the conclusion and before the name of the writer of the letter:

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF APEX TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED

Again, in the blocked format, this is started from the left margin, while, in the traditional format, it is started from the same starting point as the line of the conclusion even if the statement has to take more than one line. In reality, however, the expression is utterly unnecessary and may be omitted without any loss to the strength of the letter. This is provided that it is not part of the house style of a firm.

With regard to the signature, people have different unique habits concerning the inserting of the signature in the space provided for it. Sometimes, these peculiarities (which are related to the signature's distance from the margin, its exact location in the space provided, and similar features) may, in certain circumstances, be taken into account in verifying the authenticity of a signature. So, one cannot lay down any particular rules with regard to the locating of a signature in the space provided for it in a letter. Personal habits and preferences prevail here, but consistency should be maintained.

3.6 The Direction of the Letter

This refers to the addressing of the envelope. The practice here should be self-evident. It is exactly the same as the designation and address of the correspondent in the letter. For a fuller exemplification of the variety in which both features could appear, here is a short list:

Mr. or Mrs. or Miss or Ms, etc.
The Rev. Mr. (Dr., etc) T. Y. Ojo, O.F.R., etc.
The Rt. Hon.
The Hon.
T. Y. Ojo Esq., Ph.D., etc.

The Manager,
The Director,
The General Manager,

Etc.
His Excellency the Governor of Oyo State, etc.

Perhaps it is the use of titles after the name which one should be careful of. One could not, for example, write:

Dr. T. Y. Ojo, Ph.D.
Or
Professor T. Y. Ojo, Professor of Physics,

both of which would amount to unnecessary repetitions, suggesting obsequiousness.

3.7 The Content (or Body) of the Letter

Regarding form, we have already seen that, in blocked layouts, paragraphs are separated with spaces which are double of the width of the space being ordinarily placed between lines in the whole letter. On the other hand, in traditional layouts, paragraphs are marked by indentation of the first line of each paragraph, i.e., a starting of the line a few typing paces from the marginal starting points of the other lines. (Readers may recapitulate the principles of paragraphing learnt in other courses).

Concerning content, the need here is to state what the letter intends to state with succinct precision, requisite conciseness and adequate courtesy. Precision (or clarity), as noted in Unit 1 of Module One, is essentially a function of mastery of language (choice of words and concepts and structuring of sentences). There is simply no way in which a person whose language is feeble can achieve precision in communication, whether oral or written. Such a person mumbles, fumbles, prevaricates and wobbles in circumlocution and rigmarole, leaving his readers and those listening to him in utter confusion. Conciseness is also a language function because it is only a right choice of words that can bring about the right length of a statement, and no more and no less. So, it may be said that achievement of precision and conciseness in letters (and in other forms of communication) requires thorough training in language use.

However, conciseness is also affected by a person’s general attitudes to communication (and, perhaps, to other affairs of life). Some people, from a long period of indulging in a bad habit of prevaricating in any issue in which they are involved, ultimately can no longer go straight to a point in any matter. Some people appear to enjoy befuddling their audience into a maze of dizzying and obfuscating obtuseness just for the purpose of both making the issue at hand look more important than it really is and of making their own importance greater than it really is. With this kind of disposition, only verbosity (excessive length) can result in a letter.

Similarly, courtesy or politeness in letters (as well as in other forms of communication) is a function both of knowledge of language and of personality attitudes, disposition and tendencies. Choice of certain words and a certain manner of putting the words together in sentences will bring about politeness. However, the very thought and consciousness of building politeness into a letter is itself an outcome of basic personality disposition. Some people are, by nature, arrogant, peevish, haughty, overbearing, curt, self-elated, domineering and so on or obsequious, sycophantic, cowering, diffident and given to exaggerated deference. Again, the extent to which these tendencies or characteristics are tolerated or abhorred in a society is culture-related, i.e., it is determined by whether or not the ways of relating socially among the people in a society accept, appreciate, encourage, esteem, expect or frown on those acts. So, the need is to understand the culture of one's society and measure one's personal tendencies against the values of that culture. However, it must always be firmly borne in mind that, within the context of any particular culture, sycophancy is as offensive and/or upsetting as discourtesy.

As it is impossible to conjecture the contents and contexts of all official letters, perhaps only the following general hints on certain general expressions frequently used in letters can be given here on *polite wording of letters*:

(a) *Introductory Statements*

- I have pleasure in *informing* you …
- I have *the pleasure to inform you …*
- I shall (be grateful)

(be obliged)
(appreciate it)
(esteem it a great favour)
if you will (have the goodness)
(have the kindness)
(be good enough)
(be kind enough)
to …

Perhaps the only point in these expressions requiring comment is the use of *shall* and *will.* The rule that guides usage here is what is called *predictive futurity*, i.e., the rule that requires that, in stating what is expected to happen as a matter of routine in future, that is, happen without anyone exercising any will or effort to bring that event about, *shall* is used with the *First Person Pronoun* (singular and plural, i.e., *I* and *we*), while *will* is used with the *Second* and *Third Person Pronouns* (singular and plural, i.e., *you* – same for singular and plural – *he, she, it* and *they*). So, we commonly say:

- I *shall* come to the meeting.
- We *shall* come to the meeting.
- You (both singular and plural) *will* come to the meeting.
- He *will* come to the meeting.
- She *will* come to the meeting.
- It (if possible) *will* come to the meeting. Better: It (the dog) *will* eat the meat.
- They *will* come to the meeting.
- They (the dogs) *will* eat the meat.

It is common to see people write erroneously: I *should* be grateful if you …, placing in this blank space one of the words, *should, would, will* or *shall.* This is perhaps in compliance with oral usage among native speakers of English. However, in my view, this is really not very correct in grammar. I *should* means I *ought to,* which is incorrect in the context. *Would* in the blank space (i.e., I *would* be grateful if you *would* …) becomes correct when, as in this example, *would* has first been used with I. However, the only context in which this usage is correct is when the service sought is deemed by the writer to be a great favour to which the writer has no real claim and of which he is, therefore, not certain, for example:

I *would* be grateful if you would send the merchandise by air.

The obvious implication here is that goods are normally sent by other (probably slower and less expensive) routes than by air. Therefore, the request for the merchandise to be sent this time by air is a special favour to which the writer cannot lay any real claim by the terms of his contractual agreement with his correspondent and the granting of which, therefore, he cannot be certain. The usage here is said to be more deferential than ordinarily necessary. It is like when a boss says to a secretary:

We would appreciate more coffee.
OR
We would appreciate it if you would send us more coffee.
OR
Could you send us more coffee, please?

In all these, the past tense portrays greater politeness. The grammatical rule being applied is that of Reported Speech in which both *shall* and *will*, used with the First Person Pronoun (singular and plural) change to *would*.

> Kanuro said, "I *shall* come tomorrow".
> Kanuro said that he *would* come the next day.
> Baba said, "We will leave no stone unturned" (Subjective Volition).
> Baba said that they *would* leave no stone unturned.

The reason why *shall* does not ordinarily change to its normal past tense, *should*, in Reported Speech is that *should* conveys a higher denotation of obligation – approaching that of *must* – than *shall* does in the present tense. Sometimes, *should* carries the meaning of urging oneself or other people to carry out a certain action.

$$\left.\begin{array}{l}\text{I}\\\text{We}\\\text{You}\\\text{He}\\\text{She}\\\text{They}\end{array}\right\}\ \textit{should}\text{ really settle that matter soonest.}$$

(b) *Examples of Polite and Impolite Expressions in Letters*

A writer whose identity I can no longer trace has given these excellent examples of courteous and discourteous expressions in letters:

Discourteous		**Courteous**
(i)	It is foolish to think that we tried to deprive you of something that was rightly yours.	Let us assure you of our desire to be completely fair and honest with you.
(ii)	You claim you didn't receive the refund we sent you.	We are sorry to learn from your letter that you did not receive the refund we sent you.
(iii)	If you know what is good for you, you'll see that we get that merchandise immediately.	We are certain that consideration of your own interests will prompt you to ship these goods to us immediately.
(iv)	We request that you send us …	Please, send us …
(v)	We are sorry if you were	We are sorry that you were

inconvenienced …	inconvenienced …
(vi) We have received your cheque.	Thank you for your cheque.
(vii) You failed to send …	We have not received …
(viii) You must have been ignorant of …	Evidently you did not know that …

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Comment fully on the use of the *date*; the *conclusion*; the *name, signature* and *designation* of the writer and the *direction* of a business letter.
2. Letter captions (or headings) are not used by business firms. Comment. If you had to advise a firm about their use, explain what you would tell them.
3. Describe the function and use of the *salutation* in a business letter.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This is really the final conclusion to Units 1 and 2 of Module Two. Business letters (just like all other kinds of letters, especially formal or official ones) have certain long-established features. It is really these features which give the letter its very high status among the means of communication in business. You can, of course, use the telephone, the fax and the e-mail to communicate with people in business. (In the past, you could use the telegram, the cable and the telex – the last of which has, to a large extent, subscribed its technology to the fax and the e-mail of contemporary times). These, however, do not, and did not have the status of the letter which, as we said at the beginning of Unit 1 of this Module Two, is an adequate instrument for any kind of business arrangement or contract, including those involving financial dealings and commitments. The fax – even though it can have all the features of a letter, including the signature of the writer or sender – still has to be confirmed between the writer and recipient to have contractual authority before it can be accredited with such authority. It is very important, therefore, that you learn to insert correctly the features with which the business letter is traditionally associated.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have carefully studied in this unit how the features of the business letter listed in the *Objectives* (i.e., besides the format studied in Unit 1) are written. You have learnt that there are specific techniques to be observed with regard to choice of wording, positioning of elements in the letter and choice of initial letters (high or low case/capital or small) in inserting those features. Familiar as these features may have become to you, you must endeavour to use the guidelines given you in the unit for using them correctly.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: See Sections 3.1., 3.4. and 3.5. for the answer.

Question 2: See Section 3.3. for the answer.

Question 3: Section 3.2. provides the answer.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. The use of the terms, *will* and *would; shall* and *should*, and *may* and *might* in business letters can be quite problematic. Explain, with examples, how you can use them correctly.
2. Injecting politeness into letters can be quite tasking. Explain, with examples, the personality dispositions and language use techniques that help to accomplish this objective.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Ogbulogo, Charles (2004). *Business Communication in Practice.* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications, Chapter 10, pp. 111-116.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study,* Vol. I: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd., pp. 259-269.

UNIT 3 KINDS OF BUSINESS LETTERS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A good way to start this unit is to quote a statement by McCrimmon (1963:367) about business correspondence in which the letter features very prominently: "The conventions of business correspondence should be understood and followed, but it should also be understood that *a good business letter is primarily a good composition*" (emphasis, mine). *What* you say in a letter (the content of your letter), as opposed to *how* you say it (the style of your letter or how you present your content) is essentially a function of the culture (or more narrowly, the business culture) of the society and community in which you live and of your own personality make-up or disposition. Some communities and societies display much abstractness or impersonality of outlook and some persons are peevish, arrogant and discourteous by nature.

On the other hand, in some communities and societies, politeness rules inter-personal relationships and scoffing, snubbing, haughty, aloof, uncaring and rude people are seen as an abnormality or a misnomer. Style is essentially a means of bringing into play an inner disposition in a person or an orientation in a community or society. Language cannot reverse this fact. Language which attempts to do that as we often encounter in politics, in war or in some other kind of conflict or in some kinds of literature or in advertisements is what is called *propaganda*, i.e., presenting falsehood to sound like truth.

Some people who do not know enough about communication place exaggerated emphasis on the notion that certain styles of speaking or writing on certain subjects or occasions have to be studiously learnt, such as for writing an advertisement or a newspaper article, addressing a chief, speaking at an interview, handling a fastidious or difficult customer or client, etc. Yes, such styles have to be learnt, but people who can learn them successfully are only those whose language is already proficient. Until one's language is firm, any attempt to communicate (speak or write) in a special style is a piece of artificiality, which always surfaces.

It is to be hoped that examining bodies and all teachers of language understand this, so that when they require students to communicate in certain special styles, they also ensure that the students know their language well. Teachers who put so much emphasis on teaching "reading" to their students should be aware of the fact that, until their students' general language control is sound, they cannot learn reading successfully.

Many teachers display near ritualistic attitudes in their belief that there are unique ways of teaching composition in what is recognised as its four categories: *descriptive, narrative, expository* and *argumentative.* Such teachers hardly realize that no student can write any of these forms of composition successfully unless his/her language control is firm. On the other hand, those students whose language control is sound and who have the right attitude readily learn from their culture how to handle these kinds of essays.

So, while we shall, in this unit, identify some forms of business letters and exemplify them, my advice is that students master their language use well and cultivate their personality outlook appropriately, so that, with regard to both content and style, they can produce the kinds of letters which we shall be highlighting here and, indeed, in other letters.

You will need about three hours for studying this unit. You should grasp every point made in it thoroughly by making a point of doing the Self Assessment Exercise carefully. You should also make an effort to consult the publications recommended in "Further Reading" at the end of the unit. Remember that you must answer the Tutor-marked Assessment and send your answers as directed to the university for your teacher's assessment.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:-

- recognise the main point of any business letter that you receive and size it up as effectively or poorly written
- ascertain the main point of a business letter which you want to write and so decide on a correct style for the letter
- write business letters effectively.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Kinds of Business Letters

Ogbulogo (2004:107-111), to whom we have made a lot of reference in this course, rather than categorize business letters into *kinds* as such, writes about the *occasions* on which business letters are written. So, he writes about letters used to *inform, advise, request, insist, acknowledge* and *advertise* (italics, his). However, he collapses these into four classes, namely, *information, goodwill, sales* and *problem* letters (italics, his), and goes on to describe each type.

We know, of course, that it is practically impossible to identify all the needs for which business letters are written and, therefore, really impossible to classify business letters as such. The book to which we earlier made a reference, *English for Businessmen*, by Angela Mack (1979) has 24 chapters (which the book calls *units*), each dealing with one business issue. The chapter describes a situation which has arisen, offers a dialogue (conversation or discussion) on the issue between or among the personnel of the firm involved with the issue (including sometimes a telephone conversation) and lists and explains the new business terms on both the description and the dialogue. The chapter then ends with a type of business correspondence (mostly a letter, but, sometimes, a memorandum – memo, a fax, a cable, a telex or telegram message, a press release, a communiqué, an advertisement – advert, etc. As we said in our earlier reference to the book, it is clearly one of the best sources for studying the nitty-gritty of business communication.

It can be seen from the large number of letters that we have referred to that it would be utterly impossible to classify the letters into categories. So, what we have done in this unit is cite some letters and make relevant comments on them.

3.1.1 Specimens of Various Kinds of Business Letters

Some of the specimens given below are adapted from a source the identity of which I am no longer able to trace, while some are taken from Mack (1979) whose copyright terms have not been infringed.

(i) A "First" Enquiry (from a firm of Construction Engineers)

THE AMAECHI CONSTRUCTION CO. LTD.
ABA, ABIA STATE
NIGERIA

25 June, 2004.

Our Ref.: ORD/23/17.

The Aluminum Alloy Co. Ltd.,
10 Mamfe Street,
Lagos.

Your Ref.: ……………..

Dear Sirs,

ALUMINIUM SCREWS AND FITTINGS

We have seen your advertisement in *The Metal Worker* and are interested in aluminium screws and fittings of all kinds.
Please quote us for the supply of the items listed on the enclosed enquiry forms, giving your prices, including transportation to Aba. Will you please also state your earliest delivery date, your terms of payment and discounts for regular purchases.
As our annual requirements in metal fittings of all kinds are considerable, perhaps you would also send us your catalogue and details of your specifications.

Yours faithfully,
THE AMAECHI CONSTRUCTION CO. LTD.

Chika Ogoegbunam (Mrs)
Buyer

Encl: Enquiry Form No. XX.

Notes

(a) The original letter contained the expression, *c.i.f. Mombasa,* which means *cost, insurance and freight to Mombasa.*

(b) This letter – an enquiry – makes its point as simply and directly as possible. A prospective buyer does not need to search painfully for words to catch the seller's eye, or to be over-polite.

(ii) Reply to the Enquiry Letter (above)

THE ALUMINIUM ALLOY CO. LTD.
10, MAMFE STREET
LAGOS

June 30, 2004.

Our Ref.: CUS/90/143.

The Amaechi Construction Co. Ltd.,
Aba, Abia State.

Your Ref.: ORD/12/17.

Dear Sirs,

ALUMINIUM SCREWS AND FITTINGS

We thank you for your enquiry of June 25th and are pleased to hear that you saw our advertisement in *The Metal Worker*. No doubt, you also read the report, on page 22 of that journal, of tests carried out on our aluminum screws, plates and brackets. As you will see, the tests prove our claim that “ALUMOY” fittings are as touch as iron and yet only a fraction of the weight.

To save time, we enclose a pro-forma invoice for the items listed in your enquiry as all of these are in stock at all times. Thus, should you wish to place a firm order, all you need do is arrange for settlement of the invoice by draft through your bank and advise us at the same time. We guarantee delivery at Aba within four weeks of receiving your instructions.

We should be happy to arrange account terms for you on receipt of the usual references. These terms are:

> Settlement quarterly by Banker’s Draft or by Bill of
> Exchange for net amount of quarterly statement.

Full details of quarterly discounts will be found in the enclosed Terms of Business and a catalogue of our specifications and the Nigerian Standards Organisation’s (NSO’s) specifications are being sent to you with our general catalogue.

You may be interested in knowing that we are opening a depot and agency at Onitsha early next year for the greater convenience of our Eastern Nigerian customers. Meanwhile, we shall give your orders our immediate attention.

Yours faithfully,
THE ALUMINIUM ALLOY CO. LTD.

Jide Kadiri
Marketing Manager

Note: This letter – a seller's reply to a prospective buyer's enquiry – is a "salesman" – live, winning. You want to induce the buyer to buy. Your letter must carry the force of a good salesman's talk, which must arouse enthusiasm by its freshness and originality.

(iii) A Request for a Special Discount

Dear Sirs,

Many thanks for your letter of July 15th, in which you ask us for an extra discount of 2½% over and above the usual trade discounts in consideration of your order for 30,000 No. 2 Apex envelopes.

While appreciating your order, we feel that we must point out that our prices have already been cut to the minimum possible, and that envelopes are unobtainable elsewhere at our rates.

We should, however, be pleased to allow you the requested 2½% if you care to raise your order to 50,000. We await your confirmation before putting the matter in hand.

With our sincere thanks.

Yours faithfully,

Take note of the very polite refusal, backed with a reason, of the request in the letter to which letter (iii) is a reply. Note also the shrewdness in the effort by the writer to advance his business by stating a condition on which the request made by his correspondent would be granted.

(iv) An Offer of Goods (or Services)

Dear Sirs,

Messrs. Daudu & Co. Ltd., of 10, Sokoto Road, Kano, with whom we have done business for many years, have advised us that you will probably be replenishing your stocks of white wines in the near future.

You will be interested in knowing that we had an extremely fine season in 2007 as a result of which we were able to produce wines of very high quality in that year. Recent tests have confirmed that the flavour of these wines is something the connoisseur will appreciate.

We are now shipping this 2007 vintage, and should be very glad to welcome you as a customer. Our full export price list is enclosed, but we should like to draw your attention to our:-

White Santana .. .. N6,400.00 per gross bottles.
Honey Suckle .. .. N7,200.00 per gross bottles.

These wines have always had a large sale in Nigeria, and the price quoted above for bulk purchases will enable you to sell at competitive prices, while obtaining a good margin of profit.

We shall be pleased to supply you with a first order, against settlement within 30 days of date of invoice and with 2½% discount. Immediate dispatch from Lagos is guaranteed.

With compliments.

Yours faithfully,

This is an obvious seller's advertising letter.

(v) A Counter Offer of Goods at a Higher Price

Dear Sirs,

Very many thanks for your letter of August 5th, enclosing your order for 1,000 metres of "Ebony" Pattern silk cloth.
In turning to us for a supply of this famous line, you evidently realize that if such an article is to be had at all, we are the people to supply it. We appreciate your interest, and should have liked to be able to supply your order from stock as we did years ago.
However, times and tastes change. The "Ebony" Pattern is now out of fashion, and in common with other manufacturers, we have so little demand for it that we have ceased to produce it.
We think, however, that your customers would like our new "Ankara Fantastica" material, a sample of which we have pleasure in sending you with this letter. This material has all the good qualities of the old "Ebony" Pattern and is very much smarter in appearance without being so vivid in colour as many modern silks and rayons.
The price is N1,000.00 per metre or N49,000.00 per 50-metre piece, including cost of delivery. Prices for all silk fabrics have increased considerably in the past year and it is no longer possible to supply a really good material at the figure you name. As you know, we supply only first-class and guaranteed fabrics.
A full selection of our silk patterns is also being sent to you by parcel post. All of these are selling well in your part of the country and we can safely recommend them to you.
We can dispatch your order within a week of hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

………………………

Notes

(a) The original contained the expression, *f.o.b. Liverpool,* which means *free on board to Liverpool* (i.e., the goods are transported to the ship and loaded without the buyer having to pay extra for these services).

(b) Letters Nos. (iii) (a request for a special discount), (iv) (an offer of goods or services), and (v) (a counter offer of goods at a higher price) obviously demand a great deal of thought in their composition.

(vi) A Polite Complaint About Inferior Quality

Dear Sirs,

It is with great regret that we have to inform you that your last delivery is not up to your usual standard. The material seems to be too loosely woven and is inclined to pull out of shape. By separate mail we have sent you a cutting from this material, also one from cloth of an earlier consignment, so that you can compare the two and see the difference in texture.

We have always been able to rely on the high quality of the materials you send us and we are all the more disappointed in this case because we supplied the cloth to new customers. As we shall have to take it back, we must ask you to let us know, without delay, what you can do to help us in getting over this difficulty.

Yours faithfully,

…………………………..

(vii) Reply to No. vi Letter above (polite apology)

Dear Sirs,

We have received your letter of 14th October and thank you for sending us the two samples of cloth for examination.
We passed these on to the factory for comment and we quote the following from their reply:

It was found that some short-staple yarn had, by mischance, been woven into the material, and this cloth was put on one side for disposal in a suitable market. Evidently through an oversight some of the cloth was packed in your consignment. The factory manager was very grateful for the samples, as it is possible that other buyers may have received these imperfect goods, and enquiries are being made accordingly.

We told the manufacturers how greatly concerned we were over your disappointment in the quality, and the fact that you had supplied the cloth to new customers. They expressed their very great regret, and we have arranged with them for the immediate dispatch of replacements,

franco domicile, duty paid. Furthermore, they guarantee the quality of the cloth now sent.
If you care to dispose of the inferior cloth at the best price obtainable for it, we will send you a Credit Note for the difference as soon as we hear from you.
We apologise sincerely for the trouble caused to you, and will take all possible steps to ensure that such a mistake is not made again.

Yours faithfully,

…………………………..

Note: *franco domicile* means post-free to your home.

(viii) Replying to a Complaint

Here is John Martin's letter, replying to Mr. Brown's complaint about damaged desks.

Harper and Grant Limited
Great West Road
London W25.

16th November 2007

Dear Mr. Brown,

We regret to hear that the twelve desks you ordered from us have been badly scratched.
We have checked our records here and find that the components left our factory in good condition and were, as usual, carefully packed. We then asked our representative to try and find out whether the desks had been damaged in transit or on arrival. He subsequently discovered that the goods had been unloaded by using hooks, although the packages were clearly marked with a warning against using hooks. We therefore do not feel in any way responsible for the damage.
We appreciate, however, that you do not want to use these damaged desks as they are. If you will return them to us we will have them resprayed at our expense. We can assure you that the scratches will not show and that the desks will, in fact, appear just as good as new.

Yours sincerely,

John Martin
Sales Manager

HARPER & GRANT LTD.

George Brown, Esq.,
The Bruddersfield Building Society
117 Buyan Avenue
Bruddersfield, Yorks.

(ix) **A Circular About a Faulty Set of Staplers**

Here is the circular letter which was written to all the customers of Harper & Grant's who had bought this new model stapler.

Harper and Grant Limited
Great West Road
London W25.

19th July, 2007.

Dear Sirs,

We have been informed that a batch of our new Mark 6B staplers, of which you have recently taken a delivery, have caused you some trouble. On investigation we find that a number of staplers were faultily assembled, the anvil being slightly out of alignment. If you do have any trouble, we are confident that the enclosed diagram will make it clear how the error can be corrected.

We apologise for any inconvenience you may have been caused.

Yours faithfully,

John Martin
Sales Manager
HARPER & GRANT LTD.

(x) **A complaint letter from one of the angry customers who bought the faulty stapler.**

July 21, 2007

John Martin, Esq.
Sales Manager
Harper & Grant Ltd.
Great West Road
London, W.25.

Dear Sir,

Exactly ten days ago, I returned a dozen staplers to you because they did not work. I fully expected to be sent replacement, an apology, or even my money back. Instead I received this morning a diagram instructing me how to repair the staplers myself. I should be glad to know how I can do this when I no longer have the staplers.

Kindly send me, by return, twelve staplers which work efficiently.

With thanks.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Goswind

Note the mix-up between letters (ix) and (x). Harper and Grant Limited discovers a fault in staplers which the firm had already dispatched to its customers. It sends a "circular" letter to all the customers to whom the faulty staplers had been dispatched. Before one of these customers receives the circular letter, he writes to the manufacturers to complain, returning his staplers to them for replacement. So, he is thrown into utter confusion when he receives the manufactures' letter, instructing him on how to rectify the fault in the stapler. Can you see the reason for the obvious, but politely suppressed and expressed anger in letter (x)? Write a letter from Harper and Grant Ltd. to deal with the matter.

(xi) Reserving Accommodation for Executives (a typical Secretary's letter).

Dear Sir,

The Chairman and the Managing Director of this company will be visiting Abuja in September for the World Trade Fair, and will require a suite with two bedrooms. A single room, on the same floor if possible, will also be needed for their secretary, and a room for their chauffeur.

Please let me know whether you can reserve this accommodation from 10th to 15th September inclusive. I shall be glad to have a reply by return, with details of your charges.

Yours faithfully,
THE SUCCESS CARPET MILLS LTD.

SECRETARY

Note:
While letters Nos. vi (a complaint about inferior quality) and xi (reserving accommodation) show that, in all situations, politeness must remain the key word of business correspondence, No. vii exemplifies the extreme care required for re-assuring a disappointed buyer.

(xii) Reply to No. viii Letter (above)

The Secretary
The Success Carpet Mills Ltd.
2 Kano Street
Maiduguri
Borno State.

Dear Sir,

A suite on the first floor has been booked for your Chairman and Managing Director, as you request, with a nearby single room for the private secretary and a room for the chauffeur, as from September 10th.

I am grateful for this early notice, as bookings are very heavy now for September on account of the World Trade Fair to be held here.

I shall be happy to welcome Chief Tunde Ganiyu and Mr. Emeka Okafor.

Yours faithfully,

……………………………….
Manager

This letter reiterates the constant need of the seller to remain winning to his buyers and clients.

(xiii) **A Specimen of a "Bad" Business Letter.** (Compare it with letter No. v).

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your letter of 31st ult. We regret being unable to execute your order for Ebony Pattern silk cloth as per pattern sent and which we return herewith.

This silk has gone right out of fashion and we have not had an enquiry for it for years. It is now impossible to supply it as it is no longer manufactured. Enclosed please find a sample of silk which is very similar in appearance, and unless you are compelled to have the exact thing, we can confidently recommend this as a good substitute. It is beautiful in design and colour, and you would find it wears well.

The price is N96.00 per metre less usual discounts, which is a recommendation itself. We hope you will let us send you this silk in place of the one required, which you will have the greatest difficulty in obtaining.

It is impossible to supply anything so cheap as the price you mention in your letter.

Yours faithfully,

January 9, 2007

The Personnel Manager
Harper & Grant Ltd.
Great West Road
London.

Dear Sirs,

CONFIDENTIAL

We have received an application for the post of assistant director of our Research and Development Department from Mr. James Glover who, we understand, left your firm two months ago. He has given us your name as a reference and we should be grateful if you would give us some information about him.

We should like to know how long Mr. Glover worked for you; whether you were satisfied with his work; the reasons for the termination of his employment with you, and, above all, whether he is trustworthy. We have had some trouble in the past with some of our research secrets being sold to rival firms; so Mr. Glover's character is, naturally, of the utmost importance to us.

Any other information you can give us about Mr. Glover would be very gratefully received.

With thanks.

Yours faithfully,

George Hassock
Personnel Manager

(xv) **Letter of Reference (reply to letter No. xiv)**

HARPER AND GRANT LIMITED

January 11, 2007

George Hassock, Esq.
Personnel Manager
Fabmod Furnishing Co. Ltd.
Birmingham.

Dear Mr. Hassock,

CONFIDENTIAL

In reply to your letter of 9th January, Mr. James Glover worked for us for two and a half years in our Research Department and proved a very valuable, inventive and co-operative member of the firm. It was with considerable regret that we learnt of his wish to leave us and go to Birmingham, a decision which, we understand, was forced on him for family reasons.

I would like to add that before we knew his reasons for leaving, we offered him the post of deputy head of our own Research Department which will be vacant this year.

We were entirely satisfied with Mr. Glover during the period that he worked here. Speaking personally, I consider him to be honest, serious-minded and enthusiastic. He was popular with his colleagues and should prove very capable in a position of authority.

To sum up, we were very sorry indeed to lose him.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Hampden
Personnel Manager
HARPER & GRANT LTD.

(xvi)(a) **Demands for Payment**

Harper and Grant Limited

December 15, 2007

Crosby & Turner Ltd.
114 Hedge Lane
Willowhampton.

Dear Sirs,

We enclose a statement of account up to 30th November, from which you will see that you owe us N247,000.00 for goods delivered in October. As you will know, our conditions of sale stipulate payment in net thirty days.

An early settlement would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Williamson
for Chief Accountant
HARPER & GRANT LTD.

(xvi)(b)

January 9, 2008

Crosby & Turner Ltd.
114 Hedge Lane
Willowhampton.

Dear Sirs,

We have had no reply from you concerning the statement of account sent on 15th December, and conclude that our letter of that date must have gone astray. We enclose a duplicate of our letter and statement to which we ask you to give your earliest attention.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Williamson
for Chief Accountant
HARPER & GRANT LTD.

(xvi)(c)

3rd February 2008

Crosby & Turner Ltd.
114 Hedge Lane
Willowhampton.

Dear Sirs,

We have not yet received payment of your outstanding balance of N247,000.00, neither have we received a written acknowledgement of our letters of 15th December and 9th January. On 20th January, your Chief Buyer, Mr. J. Hamilton, gave a verbal assurance to our salesman, Mr. B. K. Higgins, that a cheque would be posted to us that day.

We should like to draw your attention to the fact that you have considerably exceeded the term of credit usually allowed. We must therefore, insist on receiving payment by 10th February. Failing this, we shall have no alternative but to refer the matter to our solicitors.

Yours faithfully,

William Buckhurst
Company Secretary
HARPER & GRANT LTD.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Draft, in correct formats, specimens of the following business letters:-

(a) a letter inviting a named company to display goods at a trade fair which your company is going to organize, and
(b) a letter in which you, as a Co-ordinator of a course which your training firm is going to mount, are inviting a named company to send participants to the course or to ask for the course to run for his/her company as an in-house programme.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The letter is a pre-eminent means of communication in business. All relevant personnel in a firm must be able to use this means of communication for advancing the interest of the organisation.

5.0 SUMMARY

The unit has attempted to carry out an exhaustive discussion of the business letter, highlighting its different kinds and the writing of their contents. In content, precision in statement of the message of the letter through the right choice of words, appropriate sentence structuring and politeness in conveying the message are the key needs.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSIGNMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: (a)

UDOKA ADVERTISERS LIMITED

Our Ref.: OB/TF/00/12

45, Igueben Road, Enugu,
Enugu State.
June 10, 2008.

The Sales Manager,
Agricultural Implements Limited,
5, Sabon-Gari Layout,
Kano,
Kano State.

Your Ref.:……………..

Dear Sir,

INVITATION TO EXHIBIT AT A TRADE FAIR

My company is organizing a large international trade fair which will take place at the Dauda Jawara Playground, Kano, from October 5 to 9, 2008. It is with great pleasure that I am inviting your great company to exhibit at the trade fair.

As you very well know, agriculture has been receiving a boost from the very positive actions which our parliaments and governments throughout the nation have, in the last couple of months, been taking on agriculture. Micro-finance banks are being opened in many towns and various governments, from the local to the federal, are promising separate aids to farmers in all areas of operation – animal husbandry, fishery, snailery, crops, and so on. We know that fertilizers will be readily available to farmers and that they will need farming tools, equipment and machinery of different grades. A kind of revolution in agriculture is taking place in our time!

When it comes to purchasing farming equipment for all fields of operation, to which firm is a farmer likely to turn? Surely you are a firm of first choice. You not only have the largest range of farm equipment, but you also have the most attractive prices and methods of delivery. However, farmers and other concerned people must *know* – must get acquainted with – these pieces of equipment. This is where the trade fair comes in.

You surely cannot afford to miss this opportunity of "showing off", as it were, displaying your very rich stock of equipment. Our full terms of participation for exhibitors is contained in the enclosed brochure, but, if you should need further information or should wish to make any further enquiry about the trade fair, do not hesitate to get in touch with me by any of the means indicated in the brochure.

I look forward to receiving your firm's answer to this invitation in the nearest future.

I am,
Yours truly,
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF UDOKA ADVERTISERS LTD.

Jonathan Isichei,
TRADE FAIR CO-ORDINATOR.

(b) With so many formats available to you from the text of the unit and from the above letter, I am sure that you should be able to answer this question.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What do you need more to write good business letters: knowledge of appropriate letter formats or a sound command of the English Language? Give ample illustrations of your answer from the elements of a business letter.
2. Write a letter to a named bank, asking them to re-schedule the payment of a loan advanced to your company.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Mack, Angela (1979). *English for Businessmen.* London: Futura and BBC.

McCrimmon, James M. (1963). *Writing for a Purpose.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Ogbulogo, Charles (2004). *Business Communication in Practice.* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications (Chapter 10, pp. 107-122).

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study,* Vol. I. Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd. (Chapter Nine, pp. 249-290).

UNIT 4 OTHER FORMS OF BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding Unit 3 of this Module Two, we examined the business letter in detail. The letter is the most outstanding form of correspondence (written messages to people at short or long distances) in a business set-up and, indeed, in any form of organisation. There, however, are other forms of correspondence, and these may be listed as follows:-

1. The Telegram and Cable (which are hardly in use in the present-day world, but the technology of which has contributed to the development of the technology of contemporary non-letter correspondence;
2. The Telex (which, again, is hardly in direct use nowadays, but which has considerably lent its technology to the modern e-mail form of correspondence;
3. The Facsimile (Fax);
4. The e-mail (electronic mail), and
5. The Memorandum.

We shall discuss each of these in this unit.

Besides these types of correspondence and the letter, there are also kinds of business communication which, like letters and these other forms of communication, are addressed to people. These consist of:

1. the communiqué;
2. the advertisement (popularly called advert) and Press Release, and
3. what is called the “sales cycle”.

We shall also discuss these in this unit. You will need about three hours for studying the unit. As always, ensure that you understand every point made in it. When you are not clear about any point, re-read more carefully the paragraphs written on that point. Do not skip the Self Assessment Exercise; rather do it carefully. Make a point also of answering the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMAs) and sending your answers as directed to the university for your tutor's appraised. Happy reading.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. identify the other forms of correspondence than the letter in a business set-up
2. demonstrate ability to use these forms of correspondence by (1) showing ability to read and understand any of them; (2) showing ability to write any of them, and (3) by showing general familiarity with them and ability to work with them in your position in a business set-up
3. explain a communiqué, an advert and a "sales cycle" write-up and draft specimens of them.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Other Forms of Business Correspondence

We mentioned the non-letter forms of correspondence listed in the Introduction in item 3.2.2.2. of Module One and briefly discussed the electronic ones in Unit 5 of the same Module One. The cable and telegram, while no longer in use, have obviously provided the origins for the modern communication technology. The telex, also outmoded, has given its technology to the modern e-mail. The fax and e-mail are in firm use at the present time. So, the e-mail, a product of the great advance in communication technology in the modern age, has practically knocked all the other systems out of existence, with the exception of the fax. The essential characteristic of these modes of correspondence (which is their main advantage over the letter) is their speed. However, speed itself means, in some cases, greater cost than the letter incurs, and cost itself necessitates brevity.

The fax is charged by page (and not by number of words as used to be the case in cables and telegrams) and the telex and the e-mail are similarly charged by prescribed length rather than by number of words. So, they allow for fuller expression of content. None the less, on account of high unit costs, it is still very necessary to be as concise as possible.

Like for reports, letters and other forms of communication, the salient factor of efficiency is competence in language control. So, the ultimate challenge is language mastery, with which, what remains for one to use these correspondence systems efficiently is to obtain a requisite minimum understanding of their technology and format.

3.2 The Memorandum

Memoranda (plural of memorandum) are the common means of carrying on written communication within an organisation or in an office. It is used for ensuring that there is, in an office, a documented record of communication, which can often entail weighty instructions concerning, for example, expenditure of money or use of material, disciplining or promoting of staff, and so on. It is very popular in the civil service because of the great importance which the civil service places on the need for a person to have the right authority to carry out any action.

In content, it is really a letter and it should actually be characterized by the same kind of courtesy in tone as we have advocated for business letters in general. However, because of the familiarity between senders and recipients, there is usually no need for undue scrupulousness over courtesy once normal social civility and decorum have been observed.

It is in format that the memorandum differs from the letter. For example, on a letter-headed paper, it would look as follows:

From: Managing Director (or M.D.) To: General Manager (or G.M.)
Date: ………………………………

ANNUAL APPRAISAL OF STAFF

……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………..

(Signature)
K. J. Kosoko

A Memo About Safety Precautions (a sample from Mack, 1979, page 78).

"As a result of an accident, a Managing Director feels that the safety precautions should be re-examined and, if necessary, tightened up and enforced more strictly. He does not think it necessary to appoint a full-time Safety Manager, but he wants the opinion of his Personnel Manager as to how the safety regulations can be improved.
"He also wants all the staff members to be made more aware of possible dangers. Here is his memo".

From: The Managing Director
Date: 23rd September, 2007

Subject: SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

To: The Personnel Manager

As a result of the accident which occurred in the fitters' shop, we are going to have a drive to improve our safety precautions throughout the Works. We want, first of all, to eliminate the sources of accidents: in other words, we want to see where the possible danger points are and remove them. Secondly, we want to make all employees more aware of danger to themselves if they do not follow instructions.

1. Would you please prepare a report for us on what you consider the danger points to be and how our safety rules can be improved. Any suggestions from members of staff will be most helpful and will be very carefully considered.

2. Would you inform all employees, in the strongest terms, of the risks they run if they do not follow the safety regulations.

(Signed)
Hector Grant

It will be noticed that the memos have no salutation and no conclusion. Eliminating these elements helps to achieve economy in a form of communication which must necessarily be used very frequently.

3.3 The Communiqué

The communiqué is usually an official or a formal statement on the business of, or deliberations and decisions at, a meeting. It a statement intended to inform the general public or a section of it of the position which the meeting (group or committee of people who held the meeting) has taken on the matter that was discussed. It is a very important document. So, at the very beginning of the meeting (which may be short or long – extending to a number of days), a communiqué committee and its Chairman are elected or appointed. A secretary for the committee may also be appointed or the committee may be left to appoint its own secretary. It is most common with trade union, political and international organisation groups, but it can also occur among business groups, such as when a company wants to make its position clear with regard to a dispute with the government or another company.

After appointment, the committee takes very careful note of the deliberations at the meeting, discusses these at its own meetings and, at the end of the meeting, issues a statement, summarizing the deliberations at the meeting, the decisions arrived at and the position taken. The issuing of communiqués is such a long standing practice that it has acquired an established form, such as:-

POSITION OF OSENI QUARRIES REGARDING
OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND AT UDALA TOWN

A meeting of the Board of Directors of Oseni Quarries, under the chairmanship of the Chairman of the Board, Dr. Olatunde Oseni, was held at the company's headquarters at Udala, on May 23rd 2008, to discuss the issue of the dispute with the Udala Local Government over the ownership of the 50 hectares piece of land on the road from Udala town to Amakuku.

The meeting noted that:-

1. Oseni Quarries has carried on business at Udala for the past twenty years;
2. at the beginning of its business activities at Udala twenty years ago, it purchased the piece of land in question from the Udala Local Government in power at that time;
3. the receipt for the purchase of the land and the deed of transfer of the land are still intact in the files of the company, and
4. no dispute had ever arisen over Oseni Quarries' ownership of the land.

So, the meeting took the following decisions (which have been approved by the Board of Directors of the company):

i) The company will retain and defend by all legal means its ownership of the land.
ii) The company will not enter into any kind of fresh negotiations with the current Udala Local Government or with anyone else over the ownership of the land.

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF OSENI QUARRIES

Olusegun Aboyale Olufemi Akanbi
Secretary Managing
Director

Such a communiqué is usually published in a newspaper and/or in a popular magazine. There is, of course, no reason why it could not be displayed on TV or in a website although I have not seen one in either of these places.

3.4 Advertisements (Adverts) and Press Releases

You are all familiar with these two types of communication, perhaps more familiar with the advert than with the press release. Both in the print (newspapers, magazines, etc.) and electronic (TV, radio, Internet) media, you encounter adverts everyday. These adverts endeavour to capture the interest of the buying public in the products being advertised: wines, spirits, beverage drinks, motor vehicles, GSM telephones, etc., etc. You should at once recognize the fact that the kinds of text and display which you see in these adverts are the products of gifted and specially trained artists who work for companies known as communications companies. It is the function of these communications businesses to help other companies to promote sale or patronage of their goods and services.

You notice all kinds of oddities in these adverts: proper nouns started with small (low-case) letters; displays of hardly possible feats of human strength and endurance; display of objects that have hardly any relevance to the product being advertised, and so on. Indeed, some of these adverts carry hardly any meaning for the ordinary person and, indeed, some are never understood by the ordinary reader or viewer. As already stated, these adverts are produced by trained experts. Training to produce them is beyond the scope of this course.

However, a firm, for reasons of modesty, economy or limited resources, may choose to announce its goods (or modifications and new packaging of their) goods and services by *press releases*. Press releases resemble communiqués (although press releases are somehow plainer and more straightforward). Here is an example taken from the book to which we have made many references, Angela Mack's *English for Business* (1979:136):

NEW DESK DEVELOPMENT

Harper & Grant Ltd. are delighted to be able to introduce a revolutionary family of office desks, THE 'STANDFIRM' DESK RANGE. Each desk has been most carefully designed to suit every user from the Managing Director to the office boy. All the desk units can be grouped together if required for office work stations.

Designed in our own workshops, these attractive and imposing-looking desks are made of an entirely new material which is stain-resistant and absolutely scratch-proof. Prices start modestly, rising to the elegant and luxurious executive-type desk complete with filing drawer and tape recorder. These desks will be on display at the International Office Equipment Exhibition opening at Olympia next week. Come and visit the stand and see the desks for yourself.

For further information, please contact Joanna Harvey, Advertising Manager.

As you can see, a business press release is a kind of short descriptive essay in which a company articulates the attractive features of a service or commodity to which it wants to draw the attention of the patronizing and purchasing public. Writing such press releases should certainly come within the reach of a university graduate employee, provided he/she has the technical knowledge or information for describing the service or product in question.

Of course, individuals and other organisations than businesses do also make press releases (i.e., release press statements) to explain a position and express a point of view on an issue. It is common for politicians and political parties, trade unions and factions of trade unions, traditional chieftaincy families and clans, etc. to issue press releases. Usually, these organisations and business establishments call a *press conference* (meeting of journalists) to present and speak to their releases. Of course, they may also send their release to the media without calling a press conference. The media then make the releases public in print in newspapers or magazines or on radio, TV or the Internet. A company may also choose to distribute what are called handbills, leaflets or fliers to announce its goods or services. Posters and large road billboards may also be used as outlets for press releases.

3.5 The "Sales Cycle"

The "sales cycle" is a part of *salesmanship*. While communication itself forms a considerable part of salesmanship, communication is not the sole function of a salesman. So, there is no real need to discuss the sales cycle. In my view, it is too technical an aspect of communication for one to expect a person at the undergraduate level to understand it. (Again, if necessary, see Okenimkpe, 2004, pages 317-329).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Explain briefly the roles which the fax and the e-mail play in modern business communication.
2. Explain the differences between (i) the letter and the communiqué, and (ii) the letter and the advert.
3. Draft an advert for the sale of new exercise books produced by the School Textbooks Company Limited.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The fax and the e-mail are here to stay and they are advancing. It is essential that anyone going into business or working or planning to work in business organisations must learn the essential characteristics of these facilities and be able to make efficient use of them. Those involved or going to be involved in business communication must master the functioning of these systems very well.

The communiqué, the advert, and the "sales cycle" also feature prominently in business. A graduate employee in a related office may be asked to handle either of the first two or to draft the last for a commodity or service of his firm. So, it is important that you understand how to handle them.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit 4 of Module Two, we have dealt with other forms of business correspondence and other forms of business communication than the letter which are addressed to people, i.e., the communiqué and the advert. You have seen that while the cable, telegram and telex have largely gone out of use, the fax and the e-mail are very much in vogue. The last two have, however, developed from essential elements of the technology of the earlier practices and, indeed, the telex has directly lent its technology to the fax and the e-mail.

We have also studied the communiqué, the advertisement (advert) and referred to the "sales cycle". We have seen that the communiqué emerges from meetings of groups of people, that the advert highlights the attractive features of goods or services for sale and that, while the "sales cycle" is essentially a salesman's function (i.e., a subject of study in Management), it has communication aspects of which the student of business communication ought to be aware and to understand. All three are relevant to our business communication topic.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1:
The Fax: The fax (facsimile) is, as it were, a true copy of a document. If the document being transmitted is a letter, an agreement, etc. – documents bearing signatures – the signatures will be transmitted with the main content of the document. So, if by agreement between those involved in business transaction, *copies* of documents are acceptable, the fax can affirm or cement a business agreement. So, the fax is valuable for both speed in reaching every area of the world and for its adequacy for conveying all parts of documents.

The e-mail: The e-mail is valuable essentially for speed in reaching every area of the world. It is, however, open to abuse. Even though security codes for gaining access to an e-mail addresses (passwords) are used in order to prevent violation of confidentiality, fraudsters do still find a way of stealing e-mail information. So, every care must be taken to protect e-mail messages from fraudsters. Users of the system also need to get into the habit of constantly searching their e-mail addresses.

Question 2:
We treated the letter in detail in the last unit (Unit 3) and we have discussed the communiqué in this Unit 4 (see Section 3.3). From that Unit 3 and the Section 3.3. of this Unit 3, you should be able to deduce the differences between the two:-

(a) The communiqué does not need (and, so, does not have) the format of the letter.
(b) The letter is usually addressed to a person or some persons, but the communiqué is not.
(c) The communiqué is a much more formal statement which, much as it is not expected to be rude or abusive, does not usually require the gentleness expected of the contents of the letter.
(d) The communiqué usually emerges from the deliberations (meeting) of a group of people. Much as a letter may be conveying to a person or some persons the views of a group of people, that background of a meeting or some deliberations does not always precede the writing of a letter.

Can you think of some other differences?

Question 3:

SCHOOL NOTEBOOKS CO. LTD.

HAPPYDAYS NOTEBOOKS.

Our company has just come out with five sets of HAPPYDAYS NOTEBOOKS in 20 sheets, 40 sheets, 60 sheets, 80 sheets and 100 sheets sheaves. They are a real bonanza to primary school pupils, college and university students and teachers and lecturers at all levels.

The covers of each set have different bright colours. The first set – the 20 sheets set – is ruled in blue and red colours like the 2D exercise books to guide young pupils' handwriting, while the others are ruled in glittering blue lines like the standard 2A notebooks. All have 2.5 cm spaces at the left margin, ½ cm spaces at the right margin, 1.5 cm spaces at the top and ½ cm spaces at the bottom. Perhaps the quality of these notebooks that will attract prospective users most is that their covers and edges are waterproof. Also, the surfaces of the sheets accept every kind of pen – not like some paper surfaces that will not accept some kinds of pen.

The different sizes of the notebooks are designed to suit all prospective users – from the young primary school pupil to the college and university students and their teachers and lecturers. Even community associations, all other kinds of associations and different organisations will find the notebooks invaluable for writing minutes of meetings and for keeping other records.

For further enquiries, call Aduke on Tel ……………… or e-mail her on ……………..

Osita Nkemdi
Company Secretary

NOTE: As you can see from the piece above, an advert is essentially a piece of *descriptive* writing in enticing language. Try to write some others for yourself.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Draft a communiqué emanating from a meeting of line managers of a firm which discussed industrial relations with its trade union.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Mack, Angela (1979). *English for Business.* London: Futura (in association with BBC.

Davis, Kenneth R. & Webster, Frederick E., Jr. (1968). *Sales Force Management.* New York: The Ronald Press Co.

Engel, James F., Wales, Hugh & Warshaw, R. (1971). *Promotional Strategy,* rev. ed. Homewood (Illinois): Richard D. Irvin, Inc.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study,* Vol. I: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd. (Chapter Twelve, pp. 352-374).

UNIT 5 ROUTINE BUSINESS OFFICE INTERACTIONS AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We shall begin the unit with a discussion of routine conversations in the office. (For oral discussions about serious business matters, the best source for the study of that is, again, the book to which we have made many references so far, i.e., Angela Macks *English for Business,* 1979). Here, we are concerned with the exchange of greetings and felicitations in the office. There is clearly a style of polite and decent conversation in an office which every employee should endeavour to adopt. We shall, however, look at some general matters about oral communication as a whole.

Concerning public speaking, there are some occasions (such as an *Open Day*) on which customers and clients of a business and, perhaps, the general public are invited to the premises of a business organisation. Such an invitation may be for the launching of a new product or for a promotion (promo-exercise), the opening of a new factory, the announcement of an important change or of sweeping changes in the affairs of a company, or for the Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) of the shareholders of a company, etc. On such an occasion, somebody in the business, usually a senior person (such as the Managing Director –

M.D. – or Chief Executive Officer – C.E.O., a General Manager – G.M., the Chairman or a member of the Board of Directors, etc.), makes a speech. Such a speech is called a public speech (in our case here, a public business speech).

Many people are afraid of making such public speeches because they do not trust themselves to be able to speak competently in public to a relatively large audience. So, for a public speech to be successful, there is a definite procedure to follow in preparing the speech, in preparing to give it, in rehearsing it as part of the two kinds of preparation and in giving the speech. Often, the senior person to give the speech asks a subordinate official to prepare the speech in whole or in part. This is why, even at the level of an undergraduate, you must start to learn how to prepare public business speeches.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. You should pay close attention to all the points made and make sure that you understand them by doing the Self Assessment Exercise with care. Remember here, as in other units, to answer the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMAQs) and to send your answers as directed to the university for your tutor's evaluation. Bear in mind always that your answers to your Tutor-marked Assessment Questions contribute to the final grading which you will get at the end of your course.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:-

- show capability in participating meaningfully in routine business office communication
- demonstrate understanding of the requirements for controlling nervousness, for making a preparation for a public speech, for preparing to give it and for making a good delivery of the speech;
- prepare the outline of a public business speech
- write out a full public business speech on a topic of your own choice,
- make a mock delivery of a public business speech to your own selected group of associates or colleagues or into an audio-tape (or, preferably, a video-tape) for play-back to a person or audience of your own choice for his/her/their criticism and evaluation.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Principles of Effective Oral Communication

To anticipate the principles of effective oral communication, which we shall discuss in greater detail in this unit, one might, in the mean time, give the following summary of such principles (see our discussion of the Communication Star in item 3.1.1. of Module One, Unit 3):-

(i) ***Be prepared:*** in both overall knowledge and personality development, as well as in immediate gathering and organizing of material for an engagement.

(ii) ***Be clear:*** in substance and in medium of presentation.

(iii) ***Be simple*:** speak simply, not simplistically, about difficult subjects.

(iv) ***Be vivid:*** in order to be interesting, arresting and captivating – in order to come alive (*vivere:* to live); be vigorous, active, enthusiastic, energetic, strong, warm, fresh, bright, brilliant and lively. Even when a subject is simple and clear, a speaker still has to make it come alive.

(v) ***Be natural:*** not artificial, pedantic, affectatious, pretentious or ostentatious.

3.2 Platforms (Contexts or Situations) of Oral Communication

The platforms (or contexts or situations of oral communication) refer to the operations or activities in the work of an organisation in which oral communication is applied. These platforms are much varied and may include the following:-

1. interactions in offices;
2. encounters in corridors;
3. conversations over lunch in staff restaurants;
4. discussions in large, open offices;
5. taking part in meetings and interviews;
6. speaking to groups of staff, customers or patronizers;
7. person-to-person (or face-to-face) presentations of commodities or services for sale or for patronizing;
8. speaking in the "sales cycle";
9. making public speeches on "Open Days" and on other important occasions;
10. selling commodities or services (across the counter or person-to-person in the general public);
11. explaining on the factory floor;

12. speaking to, or at, large gatherings (such as conferences, briefing groups, etc.), and
13. questioning or responding to questions at interviews, etc.

Many of these topics (meetings; selling; public speaking or speaking to groups and conducting or attending interviews) are large areas of study in themselves. In this unit, we shall consider the general characteristics, principles and guides which apply to inter-personal communication as a whole, as well as also discuss some of these specific forms of oral communication.

3.3 The Value of Oral Business Communication

This is self-evident. Evans (1983:147) calls face-to-face communication the "oxygen" in the life-blood of business and public service organisations. New telecommunications inventions – valuable as they are – cannot be a substitute for the warmth and efficacy of people's talking and reacting in close, direct contact.

We may note its other more specific advantages:

1. This medium best provides interactors with "a total impression" in a way that written communication or a telephone conversation cannot. This impression emanates from both what is being said and the whole manner of a person's delivery, including non-verbal communication factors.
2. The medium permits instant feedback because it provides the means and opportunities for asking snap questions for clarification of points and, sometimes, for obtaining prompt answers.
3. In face-to-face communication, many "tools" of communication work in concert: intonation of the voice; facial expression; gesture; posture; movement, etc., all of which help to provide a fuller and more accurate indication of the import of a message.

3.4 Characteristics of Oral Communication

The characteristics of oral communication refer to levels of formality (itself determined by many factors) with which a piece of communication is carried out. Those factors which determine the level of formality of oral communication include the following:-

- degrees of familiarity between/among those involved;
- nature of the subject;
- the occasion or context of the communication;
- type of relationship between the interactors (business, social, etc.);etc.

The degree of formality itself determines the type of language that is employed, i.e., the level of formality or informality of language to be employed. (Custom and common practice should guide behaviour here). We need not go into the details of informal language which, I believe, students should have learnt in their other language courses. (If necessary, see Okenimkpe, 2004, Chapter Ten).

3.5 Guides to Effective Inter-personal Communication

1. ***Articulation (Pronunciation):*** Variations in pronunciation are many, arising either from personal habits or from localization of English forms. Avoiding artificialisation and "snobbish" dogmatism, one's need is for one's speech to be understood, not just by a close circle of friends and family members, but by people from geographically distant national regions and even from other countries.
2. ***Accentuation:*** Accent strictly refers to the raising of the voice in speech at a syllable or whole word to indicate a natural stress or a deliberate one to mark emphasis (todáy; ascénd; mánifêst; mánĭfest). However, it is also often used generally to refer to modulation or tone of voice or modes of utterance characteristic of a region, social class or an individual. Accentuation indicates "polish" in use of English, but artificialisation is more offending than a natural (even though a poorly accentuated) speech pattern.
3. ***Projection:*** This refers to making oneself heard, especially in a large gathering, but even in a close conversation, it is important to avoid torturing the ears of your listeners.

Evans (1984:148-149) offers additional guides for effective inter-personal communication. It will be well worth your while to check these (or see Okenimkpe, 2004, pages 298-300).

3.6 Routine Oral Communication (e.g., in Offices, Shops and Similar "Mingling" Places)

Routine and communication in offices and similar places refers to the use of the social greetings (*goodmorning, goodafternoon*, etc.), use of deferential words (*Sir*, etc.), receiving people in offices, referring to people in their presence, and making requests and giving instructions. We cannot discuss these here because, again, I hope that students have learnt something about these in their other English Language courses. (For necessary help, again, see Okenimkpe, 2004, Chapter Ten).

3.7 Public Speaking: Definition

Presentations include public speaking of all kinds (such as speaking at political rallies, at trade union meetings, in parliaments, addressing different groups of people on varied occasions, or undertaking similar speaking engagements), as well as presentation of commodities and services by salesmen and service providers to potential customers and clientele at sales promotion gatherings. The topics on which people can speak are so varied that, in a general treatment of the kind which we are offering here, only the broad principles guiding public speaking as a whole can be covered.

A writer whose identity I can no longer trace has treated this topic very extensively, and I am, with gratitude, borrowing very considerably from him/her. The topic can be adequately covered under the different sub-headings used below.

3.8 Major Requirements for Successful Public Speaking

The key to effective speaking consists of the following actions:-

(i) controlling nervousness; (ii) thorough preparation, and (iii) good delivery.

3.8.1 Controlling Nervousness

It is to be noted that a reasonable amount of nervousness (which really means worry about, and concern for, success) produces a positive effect, but excessive nervousness is harmful and can jeopardize success and, therefore, must be controlled. A number of specific actions should be taken to control nervousness:-

(i) One should practise speaking in public, taking advantage of every opportunity to do so and inviting objective criticism of one's performance. One can also speak into audiotapes and record oneself on videotapes in order to monitor one's elocution and carriage and, so, gain courage.

(ii) One must know and master one's subject thoroughly. All the facts and examples and illustrations required for putting one's point of view across must be conscientiously collected.

(iii) One must, if possible, know one's audience – obtain information about the persons expected in the audience and about what they expect to hear from one.

(iv) One must be clear about one's objective. We have pointed out elsewhere in this course that, while aims are broad statements of intent in any undertaking, objectives are specific, measurable and ascertainable results expected from an undertaking. One must be sure of such an objective or objectives. One should ensure that everyone leaving the scene goes away with a feeling of satisfaction that he/she has received from the speech a piece or some pieces of information that can contribute to his/her becoming a better performer in a given task, a more knowledgeable person or a better personality as a whole.

(v) As already said, one must prepare. Acquiring general knowledge about a subject is different from making a specific preparation for a speaking engagement. Preparing means selecting relevant points from one's general knowledge and building such points into a coherent and logical piece for presentation.

(vi) Finally, one must rehearse the anticipated presentation. Even the best of speakers still need to visualize actually putting across their points while facing the audience, anticipating their reaction and maintaining one's posture confidently.

3.8.2 Preparation

An essential factor in efficient preparation is to leave oneself enough time at *two stages* to prepare for a presentation. One of the two stages is what our unnamed writer calls "low pressure" time, i.e., a long enough time from the time of the presentation in which one can think in a relaxed manner without much anxiety about the subject in more or less every place. Then, one must leave oneself enough time for the second stage of the preparation, i.e., the specific preparation of the presentation.

For this second stage, some writers have identified eight stages, namely:-

(I) *Accepting the invitation to talk:* Because one has ideas on the subject or, at least, can generate or gather such ideas from accessible sources.

(II) *Informing oneself on the subject:* By collecting facts and arguments from all available sources for one's talk from many sources and writing such points down as they occur without undue concern about organizing the points at this stage.

(III) *Determining the substance of one's presentation:* By one's defining of one's objectives: is it to inform, persuade, interest or inspire?

(IV) *Structuring the talk*: The classic method of structuring a talk is recognised to be:- (i) tell them what you are *going* to say; (ii) say it, and (iii) tell them what you said.

That means that one should give an introduction or overview of what one is going to cover in a presentation, then, make the presentation and review, revise or summarize what one has said.

The rule taught in school that an essay should have a beginning, a middle and an end should also apply to a talk. The handling of these different parts should proceed as follows:-

(i) Tackle the middle of the talk first, adopting the following procedure:-

1. Write the main messages on separate postcards, an approach which will prevent you from displaying slavish dependence on your text.
2. List against each main message the points to be made on it.
3. Illustrate the points with facts, evidence, example, introducing local colour into the presentation.
4. Arrange the cards in the appropriate sequence for achieving impact and a logical flow of ideas.

(ii) Now, one turns to the opening of the presentation. The objectives in the opening are to win attention, arouse interest and inspire confidence. The following procedure should be adopted:-

1. Give the audience, so to speak, "a trailer" to what one is going to say.
2. Underline the main objective of your presentation, i.e., the main message being passed on.

(iii) Finally, one thinks about the end of the presentation, remembering that first and last impressions are very important. Therefore, one should end on a high note.

(iv) In general, with regard to structuring the presentation, one should think carefully about length, reinforcement and continuity. Therefore the following considerations should guide one:

1. Never talk for more than forty minutes at a time. Indeed, twenty or thirty minutes is better. Few speakers can keep people's attention for too long. An audience is usually keen at the beginning (unless one muddles up the beginning), but its interest wanes steadily until they realize that the speaker is approaching the end and they pick up interest again. This is why the conclusion is very important.

2. To hold their attention throughout, one should give interim summaries, which reinforce one's speech and, very important, hammer home what one is saying.
3. Continuity is equally important. The talk should be built progressively to arrive at a positive overwhelming conclusion. One should provide signposts, interim summaries and bridging sections, which lead the audience smoothly and naturally from one point to the next.

(v) Preparing the notes

(a) The notes are best prepared on the postcards. Each card should cover one section of the talk and the points to be made in that section should be clearly arranged under the sub-headings relevant to that section. One should avoid using too many words because they will confuse one and force one to read one's talk or to tarry too long in progressing from one sub-heading to another, thus causing unnatural and vexing breaks in one's presentation. Smoothness of progression from one point to another conveys an impression of subject mastery and enhances the prestige of the speaker in the eyes of the audience.
(b) As can easily be inferred from (a) above, the cards can be easily referred to and put away as necessary and, indeed, can be quickly reshuffled, if need be, in the course of the talk.
(c) It is, however, quite a good idea to write out in full one's opening and closing remarks and memorise these, so that one can ensure a confident start and a positive end to the talk.

(vi) Preparing visual aids

As noted earlier, an audience is likely to absorb no more than one-third of a presentation. To ensure that they will absorb even up to that one-third and perhaps more, it is important to reinforce one's talk with visual aids, so that one can appeal to more than one sense of information or signals reception (*sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste*) at one time. Flipcharts, projectors of different kinds, slides, the familiar writing board, the flannel board, pictures, charts and other visual aids – all as appropriate – provide a strong back-up for a talk.

However, all aids must be kept simple and their use must not be overdone. Too many visuals can cause distraction and too elaborate a package of visuals will confuse, bore, distract and, in fact, irritate an audience.

(vii) *Rehearsing the presentation*

(a) Rehearsal is crucial because it helps a speaker to get his/her timing right, enables him/her to polish his/her opening and closing remarks and to co-ordinate his/her talk.

(b) One should rehearse one's intended talk to oneself several times and note the time which each section takes to deliver and make adjustments as necessary. One should get used to expanding one's notes without fumbling. As already pointed out, one should never write one's whole speech in full and read it either in the rehearsal or in the actual presentation. That practice will always lead to a stilted and lifeless presentation.

(c) One should practise presenting aloud and in the posture (sitting or standing) in which one is going to give the speech. One can tape-record oneself or get someone to listen to and criticize one.

(d) Finally, if it is possible, one should rehearse in the very room or hall in which the actual presentation will be made, using the actual visual aids intended for use, with some-one listening at the back to ensure that one is audible.

(viii) Checking and preparing arrangements on site:

(a) The visibility of the intended visual aids should be checked. One should also ensure that one knows how to operate them or apply them and how to synchronise them with one's talk. The overhead, slide and other projectors should be tested for functionality and focused in advance. The film projector operator – if both are to be used – should be instructed to run through the material to ensure that there are no hitches.

(b) If slides are to be used in a carousel (pre-arranged slides in a holder), the presenter should go through all of them to ensure that they are in the right sequence and that none are upside down.

(c) One must anticipate that something might go wrong with one or another of one's pieces of equipment and decide in advance on a contingency action, such as not having to use it or to bring in an alternative piece of equipment.

(d) Before the talk is started, one should check that one's notes and visual aids are in the right order and readily accessible.

3.8.3 Delivering the Speech

With thorough preparation, one cannot fail or break down. However, delivery affects impact; it is one thing to pull through a speech and quite another to make a positive impact on the audience. Effective delivery depends on the two factors of *technique* and *manner.*

(a) Technique

(i) The speaker's voice should reach the people at the back very clearly. If one is not sure whether one is being heard clearly, it is perfectly normal to ask. It is distracting to make a listener shout "Speak up". One should vary the pace, pitch and emphasis of one's delivery. Give a telling but short pause before and after making a key point in order, first, to highlight it and, afterwards, to allow it to sink in. A natural, conversational voice is illimitably preferable to a rigid, stilted and overly formal delivery. This is why it is inadvisable to read one's speech. Maintaining a natural pose will win the empathy of the audience and bring them to stay on one's side.

(ii) *Light relief* (through a joke, an anecdote, a relevant digression, an illustration, or similar acts) is valuable for audience relaxation if invoking such relief comes to a speaker naturally. People get bored at being lectured to or talked down at.

(iii) A speaker's words and sentences should be meaningfully simple and short. Of course, variety in word and sentence types injects vigour and freshness into a speech. An artificially conscious effort to avoid technical terminology in a field for the purpose of sounding simple may be viewed by an audience as condescending. Rather, a speaker should find a way of integrating into the speech explanations of necessary unfamiliar terms. Similarly, while over-use of short sentences may give the same impression of condescension, indulgence in long sentences will create an impression of pedantry. Judging well and being natural are the essential guides here.

(iv) A speaker's eyes are an important instrument for catching and retaining the audience's attention and establishing rapport with them. A speaker should use his/her eyes to measure the audience's reaction, so that he/she can adjust to such reactions.

(v) The hands should be used for gestures which meaningfully corroborate and reinforce verbal utterances. Of course, exaggerated gesticulating (a bad habit of many people) should be avoided. Similarly, fidgeting should be avoided. Putting one's hands in one's pockets is an arrogant pose which a speaker should never assume.

(vi) The speaker should stand naturally and upright. He/she should not stand casually because that can be insulting to the audience. He/she should be and look like some-one in command – a person who has something meaningful to say – something that the audience desires to hear; so, he/she should not allow himself/herself to be intimidated. He/she should not perambulate (pace up and down) because that could distract the audience and because it could place the speaker in danger of tripping over some equipment or falling off the platform.

(b) Manner

(i) A speaker should be relaxed and show that he/she is relaxed. He/she must convey an air of quiet confidence. Relaxation and confidence come from that thorough preparation and rehearsal which engender self-assurance.
(ii) The speaker is not to preach down at, or pontificate to, his/her audience or exhibit ostentation in any way. Audiences usually commonly resent such manners and turn against the speaker.
(iii) Sincerity and conviction in a speaker is very winning for an audience. Conspicuous sincerity, belief in one's message, transparent conviction and committed enthusiasm in putting across one's message are more winning than any technique which a speaker may apply. Hypocrisy and propaganda cannot be concealed and they can be very offensive to an audience.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. List three steps in controlling the nervousness that tends to attend on public speeches. Discuss one of the steps in detail.
2. List the eight steps in preparing a public speech. Describe fully the actions involved in preparing the notes for the speech as one of the eight steps.
3. Discuss five essential guides to successful oral communication.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Interacting orally in business offices and making public speeches in business are inevitable. So, for those who work in offices and have to make these speeches and those who have to give help in the preparation of these speeches, it is essential that they understand that there are styles to be adopted in routine office interactions. There are also procedures for preparing a talk and preparing to make the speech. So, prospective speakers should strive assiduously to understand and follow the styles and procedures discussed in this unit.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt about a number of ways of controlling the nervousness which generally attends on public speaking: recognizing its causes; realizing that other speakers also feel nervous and taking the definite recommended steps for controlling nervousness. You also learnt about the steps and nitty-gritty of preparing the speech: accepting

the invitation to speak; educating yourself on the topic; determining the substance of your presentation; structuring your talk; preparing the notes; preparing the visual aids (if required); rehearsing the presentation, and checking and preparing arrangements on site. You also learnt about the techniques of effective delivery: using an audible voice; bringing in light relief (jokes, if you are good at doing so efficiently); using simple (but not simplistic) language; making eye contact with your audience, making use of a moderate (not a profuse) amount of meaningful (but not obtrusive) gestures; standing naturally upright, and exhibiting good manners in your attitude towards the audience. With all these, you are assured of a successful public business presentation.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: Section 3.8.1. provides the answer. For the first part of your answer, list the steps that are described in your text as *first*, *second* and *third.* For the second part of the answer, describe *any* of the actions explained in the *first*, *second* or *third* steps.

Question 2: Section 3.8.2. provides the answer. Again, do your listing from this section and, for the second part of your answer, explain the actions involved in No. (v – a-c) of Section 3.8.2.

Question 3: Choose your *five* guides from the ten discussed in Section 3.6.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Compare and contrast oral and written communication in business, explaining what each mode entails, citing actual examples of each, and identifying their merits and demerits.
2. Write the draft of a public business speech which you would give in a named enterprise, on a named occasion and on a named topic.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Mack, Angela (1979). *English for Business*. London: Futura and B.B.C.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study,* Vol. I: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd. (Chapter Ten, pp. 291-330, more particularly, pp. 307-317).

MODULE 3 THE BUSINESS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

In Unit 4 of Module 1, *reporting* is indicated on our chart on *Elements of Communication* (*the Communication Package*) as one of those elements. Clearly, reporting is a very powerful instrument or tool of management control in business, as well as in other organisations. So, Module Three is being devoted to discussing reports of all kinds in business, so that if or when you are employed in a business establishment in future, you will, from the onset, be able to handle the reporting tasks that will unavoidably besiege your office or desk. Of course, if you are already in employment and already handling some kinds of reports, the module will make you all the more capable and efficient in the handling of that function or task.

UNIT 1 REPORTING FOR MANAGEMENT DECISIONS: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit 1 of Module Three, we shall deal with all matters which generally apply to all kinds of reports: definitions; purposes; kinds (executive – special or control – and minutes-keeping); qualities; attitude to report writing, and preparation for writing reports. These general matters help you to see reports as a unique (and not a casual) instrument in management's control of business affairs.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. You should pay close attention to all points made in the unit and ascertain that you understand all of them by answering correctly all the questions in the Self Assessment Exercise. You should also do the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMAQs) and send your answers as instructed to the university for assessment.

Wishing you enjoyable study of the unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define reports and identify the different kinds of reports
- demonstrate a positive attitude to report writing
- describe the preliminary actions necessary for correctly undertaking an assignment for writing a report in business.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definitions, Purposes and Kinds of Reports

3.1.1 Definitions

Thomas J. McGinnis (1953:55) defines reports as "management's means of measuring the effectiveness of all its other means of control and of doing something about the future". Directly supporting the implied purpose of reports contained in this definition is what Desmond W. Evans (1984:87) says about reports that "the more important decisions become, whether about people, finance or production, the more it is likely that specialist reports will be required by decision-makers to ensure that the process of decision-making is informed, impartial and considered".

Of course, reporting takes place continuously in the lives of organisations and, indeed, of individuals. However, when we discuss reporting as a tool of management in organisations, we are concerned with the more formally organised and carefully set out kinds of exposition and scrutiny (whether done orally or in writing) of the ways in which certain events and issues have affected the affairs of an organisation. True enough, even here, reports vary in levels of formality and in length and importance from one to the other among the following kinds:-

- a Personal Assistant reporting orally to a superior (or principal) on the outcome of a meeting;
- the same Personal Assistant reporting in writing to his principal on the outcome of the meeting or on some other specifically assigned task, such as investigating the causes of a steady fall in sales in a territory;
- the many check-list or questionnaire reports in which figures or symbols are inserted into boxes or blank spaces in response to ready-made questions or items for the purpose of simplifying routine reports and, of course,
- there are the reports made by commissions of enquiry working over extended periods on large issues and on similarly carefully investigated issues, such as market research, on which large amounts of data are systematically sought, assembled and analysed.

These kinds of reports are differently commissioned (requested or demanded) as we shall see later in this unit, and their formats and contents do vary quite considerably.

3.1.2 Purposes of Reporting

Concerning the purpose of reports, we know now that they are invaluable to management for appraising and monitoring performance in an organisation, for measuring shortfalls between targets and results and for generating data upon which remedial action and plans for growth can be based. Reporting has nowadays become so well accepted in organisations as so necessary an instrument of management control that considerable expenditure is often incurred in order to have elaborate reporting systems built into the entire framework of the organisation. In McGinnis's definition of reporting cited earlier, we should take particular note of the word *other*, which clearly identifies reporting as a *means* (or as a method) of control of the activities of an organisation. That word labels reporting as one out of many means of control but reporting enjoys that higher status among these other means of control that it is the particular means that is used for measuring the effectiveness of those other means of control.

In other words, an organisation may draw up annual budgets, develop investment policies and plans, carry out market research, organise sales promotion, design a code of conduct for staff, and undertake several similar actions. These are all means (or methods) of control. However, if there is no reporting on the functioning of these actions, how can the organisation know whether it is achieving the purposes for which the controls were designed?

3.1.3 Kinds of Reports

Regarding the kinds of reports, our chart in Unit 4 of Module One on elements of communication offers two, namely, *Executive* and *Minutes-keeping* (the latter being also called reports of proceedings of meetings). The former, i.e., Executive Reports, are further divided into two, viz., *Special* and *Control* (the latter being also called *Periodic* Reports). We can extract and reproduce for easier reference that segment on reporting in the chart.

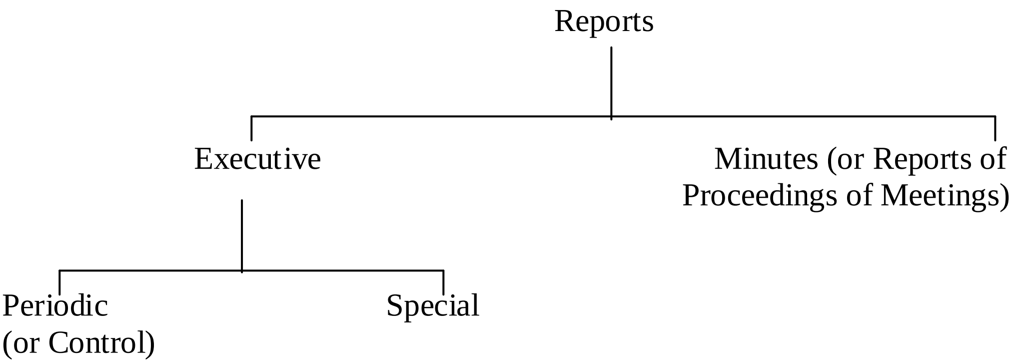

Figure 3.1.1.: *Types of Reports*

3.1.4 Executive Reports

These are expository and analytical statements (usually in writing) on events and operational conditions in an organisation over a period, or on individual undertakings, activities or functions. The reports are drawn up for the purpose that they should provide data on the operations of the organisation upon which management decisions can be based.

This definition encompasses the two kinds of Executive Reports indicated in our chart, i.e., the *Periodic* (or *Control*) and the *Special*. The Periodic or Control Reports are the timed reports: daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, annually, bi-annually (or biennially), triennially, and so on. They assemble and interpret at such regular intervals as already mentioned the salient developments in an organisation for the purpose of continuously monitoring the behaviour of the organisation in changing operational conditions. Staff turnover and punctuality and regularity at work over a period; performance of the organisation for information of Annual General Meetings (AGM's); staff morale (in, perhaps, a period of labour or socio-political unrest); check-list data and statistics on various subjects; production turnover; progress; sales; balance sheets,; cash-flow; training activities: these and numerous others are affairs of an organisation on which Control Reports are usually and routinely required and written for the purpose of close monitoring of the health of the organisation and the timely taking of remedial action when there is a need to take such a remedial action.

Special reports, on the other hand, are appraisals of individual undertakings or affairs, such as sales promotions, profiles of candidates for an interview, systems re-organisation, business trips, market research and so on. These receive the lion's share of attention whenever Executive Reports (indeed, whenever reports in general) are spoken about. That goes to show their status and importance in the operations of any organisation. Reports provide something like the soul of an organisation because, without this incisive peering into the diverse affairs and interests of an organisation, it may become derailed in its goals, purposes and aspirations. (For a fuller discussion of Executive Reports, see Okenimkpe, 2004, Chapter Seven).

3.1.5 Minutes (or Reports of Proceedings) of Meetings

Minutes are permanent records for reference of deliberations carried out, and decisions and recommendations made, by a group of people talking together in a formally convened and systematically conducted gathering. Meetings and the minutes on them are discussed fully in Module Three, Unit 4.

3.2 Qualities of Reports

Those attributes of effective communication which we considered in Module One, Unit 1 are the same qualities which reports ought to have in order for them to serve their purpose. (If necessary, refer to that unit again).

As will be recalled, those qualities are those of *accuracy, completeness, clarity, conciseness, readability, quickness* (or *timeliness*), *utility, sellability* (or attractiveness of style and presentation) and the need to receive a *response*. We need not repeat here the points we made in that unit about these qualities of effective communication. We already know that reporting is a very important communication activity or function in a business or in any other organisation. What we shall do in the remainder of this unit is give some attention to the skills by or ways in which these qualities are injected into, or accomplished in, communication, as exemplified by reports. These skills are indicated in our Figure 1.4.1 in Module One, Unit 4 on "Elements of Communication", implying that these skills are applied in all forms of (particularly written) communication. However, these skills are being discussed in detail in this unit on reporting because they are considered to be most particularly relevant to reporting.

3.3 Kinds of Reports

3.3.1 Control (or Periodic) Reports

3.3.1.1 Definition

Control (or *Periodic*) *Reports* were defined as those timed routine accounts by which officials and units explain how they have fared in a related period. The reports may deal with financial matters (income and expenditure, etc.), production output, personnel behaviour (labour turnover, absenteeism, morale, late-coming, etc.) and other matters.

Regarding the nature and writing of Control Reports, not much explaining is required. Writing them is largely a routine function in a job, which is generally readily picked up in the process of induction into the job. Many of these reports are written on ready-made forms or check-lists, which permit inserting of figures or other marks of different kinds for the recording and conveying of messages concerning the state of affairs in an organisation. We think at once of the primary and secondary school teacher who fills his *diary* on a daily, weekly and termly basis and fills his pupils' results reports. We also think of the bank cashier and cashiers in other establishments who, at the end of each day's activities, must make a *return* (report) on their transactions (receipts and payments of money) for the day before they go home.

The kinds of information demanded in each establishment and the kinds of forms used vary very widely. After initial training in the filling of such forms, all that a functionary would require is care in putting categories of information or data into the requisite blank spaces or boxes on particular forms.

3.3.1.2 Special Periodic (or Control) Reports

There are, however, some Control Reports which lie somewhat between Executive Reports of the (as we shall see) internal category and Control Reports proper. They are *control* because they are required regularly by regulation. On the other hand, they are written in continuous prose (and not by the filling of figures into blank spaces on ready-made forms) – a characteristic which makes them resemble Special Executive Reports. However, because the information used in writing them emerges from the routine activity of the writer, and not from the special investigation often preceding Special Reports, they adopt a procedure different from that used in Special Reports proper. Consider the following report:

3.3.1.3 A Specimen of a Special Periodic (or Control) Report

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS
INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

Ref. No.: CEC/S/130
From: Resident Tutor, CEC., Epe LGA — *To:* Director, CEC
Date: 01 November, 2002.

==

MONTHLY REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES OF ZONAL OFFICES
EPE LGA OFFICE: OCTOBER, 2002

1.0. SUMMARY

During the month, four training courses – with a total of 54 participants and a revenue of N33,200.00 (thirty three thousand, two hundred naira) were run. The Resident Tutor undertook a tour of all out-station training centres.

2.0. TRAINING COURSES

2.1. Summary

The table below gives information on training courses run during the month:

S/No.	Programme No.	Title	Dates	No. of Participants	Revenue
1	94/001	The Effective Secretary	03-07	25	N14,400.00
2	94/002	Written Communication and Use of English	10-14	14	N7,800.00
3.	94/003	How Adults Learn: Trainers and Their Adult Students	17-21	9	N5,400.00
4.	94/004	Trade Unions Management	28-31	6	N6,000.00
Total				54	N33,200.00

2.2. **Comments**

2.2.1. **Participants:** For "The Effective Secretary" course, 15 participants (all ladies) came from and were sponsored by, the Epe Local Government, nine (six ladies and three men) came from private firms in Epe town, while one participant (a lady) was our own Secretary. For the "Written Communication and Use of English" course, nine (four ladies and five men) came from the Epe Local Government, four (all men) came from local schools and private firms and one (a man) was our own clerk. All the participants were clerks in their different places of work. For "How Adults Learn: Trainers and Their Adult Students", all the participants (who were all men) were sponsored by the Epe Local Government. They all held the post of Instructors in the LG's different Adult Education programmes. The "Trade Union Management" course was a tailor-made course run entirely for the Epe LG branch of the Local Government Workers' Union of Nigeria (LGWUN). Participants (all men) were officials of the union.

2.2.2. **Fees:** Fees were charged at our advertised rate of N600.00 (six hundred naira) per participant for a five-day programme, except, of course, for the Trade Union course for which the minimum tailor-made course fee of N6,000.00 (six thousand naira) had to be paid. Our own two staff who participated in the courses did not, of course, pay any fees.

Evaluation: The opinion expressed in the evaluation instruments on the courses by the participants were very positive.

3.0. **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Using the week-ends, the Resident Tutor carried out inspection tours of all centres in the LGA during the month. He found all part-time lecturers to be working very hard and their courses to be making good progress. He distributed learning material to the lecturers.

James Akpan

RESIDENT TUTOR

In this kind of *Control Report,* a subordinate person is reporting on his activities to his superior officer. All the material he uses emerges from his routine work and, so, he does not need to make a tasking search for his data. This kind of report is, however, very common – it is the type which most people write; therefore, its importance and the need for mastering the skills for writing it should not be under-estimated. As will be seen when we deal with the *Special Executive Report,* the Control Report does not need and, so, does not have such elements as *Procedure, Findings, Conclusions* and *Recommendations.*

3.4 Special Reports

3.4.1 Definition and Scope

The Special Report is an account of an activity undertaken alone by the person who is to write a report on it or undertaken with others. Examples of such activities are the organizing and outcome of a trade fair or exhibition, the launching of a staff morale-boosting programme, and so on. It is my hope that the example of a Control Report which we have seen and the other purely statistical or data-based kinds to which we have referred helped to sharpen our understanding of reports in general.

Now, when we recognise Special Reports as accounts of individual activities, we see its scope as somewhat unlimited. The reports (sometimes running into many volumes) written by Secretaries of Commissions of Inquiry; the tertiary student's project report, dissertation or thesis; the reports on conferences of varying amplitude are all Special Executive Reports. In addition to these, however, the Personnel Director may ask the Personnel Manager to enquire into, and report to him on, causes of falling staff morale; the Managing Director may want to know from the Production and Sales Managers, respectively, the causes of, and possible remedies to, declining production and sales; the Works Manager may ask the Foreman to try out, and report to him on the quality of, a set of a new brand of brake linings. Much as the broad principles for writing these reports of differing scale are basically the same, it is only a few people who ever become involved in the writing of these types of larger-scale types of reports. Although we will be concentrating on the producing of the smaller-scale types of reports, it is important to see from the scope of the Special Report that we have just indicated how pervasively the writing of reports permeates most job schedules in an organisation.

3.4.2 Attitude to Report Writing

We need not belabour this subject. Writing a Special Report is a very demanding task. Putting pen to paper is, in general, something which requires discipline and commitment. One is tempted to do anything else (read; telephone; send someone to deliver a message; collect data, and to on) but write. So, as a necessary prerequisite for successful report writing, we need to recognise report writing as an undertaking that will demand much energy, time and discernment from everyone who writes reports and, so, one must form a positive attitude towards this work. We must acknowledge that good reports cannot be *knocked off* in a lunch hour or while we are sharing a chat with friends.

3.4.3 Writing Special Reports: Understanding the Demands of a Report

Understanding what a report demands, i.e., identifying the problem which a report is seeking to solve, is the first need of a reporter. That task means grasping the problem in all its elements and forming the broad purpose of a report and its special objectives. This stage of the work embraces the following actions:

(i) Understanding the language of a demand for a report:

Quite often, an official may discover an issue requiring that a report be made to higher authorities, then carries out an investigation of the matter, writes the report and sends it to the higher authorities. A case of this kind could be the discovery of a burglary break-in at a shop or an office. In a case of this kind, of course, no question of misunderstanding the language of the demand for the report arises.

However, most often, reports are initiated by a request made, or an instruction given, by a superior official to a subordinate official to look into an issue. Here, it is most necessary that the person to write the report understands the language of the request or instruction very thoroughly in all its ramifications in terms of overt, direct or denotative meanings, indirect, implied, covert or connotative meanings, as well as in terms of technical meanings.

Let us suppose that the Sales Director says to the Sales Manager: “Mike, sales returns from the north-east zone on our new bathing soap suggest that we are doing well in the zone on this product. But I want to know quite definitely the point at which we are *breaking even* and what our *profit margin* (if there is any) is. If we now consider the kinds of language in which instructions can be made in the pure scientific professions (such as medicine, engineering, computer technology, physics and mathematics and the application of scientific language in the world of space exploration), we will understand just how challenging or daunting the task of understanding the language of a request for a report can be. In all cases, the need is to understand the instruction in all its dimensions in terms of all the elements already mentioned. Now, the causes of linguistic difficulties are many. I am sure that you have learnt these from your other English Language courses. If necessary, see Okenimkpe, 2004, pages 149-152).

(ii) Asking questions:

Another occasion when a report writer must ask questions is when he/she senses that something is out of alignment; it does not mesh with the rest of his knowledge of the situation. In other words, if any aspect of an assignment to write a report is not clear to the prospective writer, he must ask the person giving the assignment and all other relevant persons to help him to clear up any shortcoming in his understanding of the problem. Such shortcomings often relate to defining the scope of the report, i.e., to what are called the "terms of reference", or to the aspects of an issue to be investigated or the criteria to be taken into account in reaching conclusions and making recommendations. It is only in asking questions that the valid answers to a question can be obtained. There is even room here for the use of literature search for obtaining information on a subject that is unfamiliar to a prospective report writer. However, the use of literature search is discussed more fully later under "Data Collection".

Supposing the Treasurer of the Ministry of Finance of a country instructs a Sub-Treasurer: "Go to Birnin Kebbi and find out whether we should establish a sub-treasury there", on what criteria would the Sub-Treasurer be able to recommend or refrain from recommending Bernin Kebbi for the establishment of a sub-treasury? Those criteria are what asking questions will unearth. Such criteria are the limiting factors which will define the boundaries and fix the scope of the report.

(iii) Ascertaining the elements of the problem ("terms of reference") for the report:

This is the third task or step in understanding the problem. The elements set the boundaries of the report; they are the parameters of a topic which are to be considered relevant to a report. Often, these elements of a research project or an investigation (terms of reference) are given in the instruction or directive for a report. When they are so given, their full implications should be ascertained through questioning. Where they are not given, they should be obtained also through questioning. These parameters determine the scope of the report. By the time steps (i) and (ii), described above, have been gone through, the outlines of the scope of the report should have taken shape in the head of the writer. This step (iii) requires that the outline be consolidated into specific items for investigation. This consolidating into specific items is guided by the broad purpose and specific objectives of the report, the formulation of which is part of the defining of the problem. For example, the Birnin Kebbi assignment might now be broken down into the following specific items:-

(a) There should be enough government establishments which need to make use of a sub-treasury.
The locality should be able to supply 30 clerical staff and office assistants, 10 non-professional account officers and four professional accountants.
(b) The locality should be able to supply 30 clerical staff and office assistants, 20 non-professional accounting officers and four professional accountants.
(c) It should offer good housing and schools for the personnel to be deployed there.
(d) A university offering courses in Accounting should be available within 120 km of the town.
(e) A building that can be used for temporary offices should be available and it should be possible to acquire a piece of land of at least five hectares in size in a good site and close to the centre of the town for building a permanent office.
(f) Labour costs should not be higher than at the headquarters.
(g) Security for staff and office and private property should be guaranteed.
(h) Public transportation should be adequate and efficient.
(i) Infrastructure, such as good roads, health service, water and electricity supply, telephone and other communications facilities and fuel of various kinds should be readily available.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Explain what you understand by reports in business and draw a chart to show the different kinds of reports. Explain each kind briefly.
2. Identify and describe the qualities which reports should have if they are to serve their purpose in business. Explain each quality clearly and illustrate it.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It should be obvious from this unit that we should avoid any one of the following attitudes towards report writing:-

(a) that reports are a sort of exotic ritual (far-fetched difficult activities) which only a few people can understand, or
(b) that they are merely casual undertakings which anyone can knock off in a lunch hour without any special effort.

Rather, we should see the report as an essential activity in any undertaking (for our interest here, business undertakings) which every responsible employee should endeavour to carry out at least up to a certain degree. Lack of reports throws a firm or any other kind of corporate entity into a state of anomie (abnormality) which will kill the company because that state of anomie will cast the company into a state of total ignorance of whether it is operating profitably or unprofitably.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that reports are the means by which the management of a business monitors and measures the effectiveness of all its other means of control and of making necessary changes or reinforcing practice. Its kinds were identified as executive (special or control) and minutes-keeping. Its qualities are those of accuracy, completeness, clarity, conciseness, readability, quickness (or timeliness utility) and sellability (or attractiveness of style and presentation).

You also learnt that it is important to regard the writing of reports as a task that demands intelligence, seriousness and planning and learnt that certain definite actions must be taken to understand clearly what a report writing assignment entails: understanding the language in which the assignment is given; asking questions where necessary and ascertaining the elements of the problem ("terms of reference") for the report.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSIGNMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: Section 3.1.1., Fig. 3.1.1. and Section 3.1.4. provide the answers.
Question 2: Section 3.2. provides the answer. (As you can see, this section makes a reference to the qualities of communication discussed in Unit 1 of Module One. Elaborate your answers from the points made in that Unit 1 of Module One).

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. With reference to many organisations, describe the importance of reports.
2. Describe the actions which you would take to ensure that you understand an assignment given to you to write a report on the topic: “Accommodating Customers in Our Bank”.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Evans, Desmond W. (1984). *People and Communication,* (2nd ed.). London: Pitman Publishing.

McGinnis, Thomas J. (1953). *Reports to Top Management for Effective Planning and Control.* New York: American Management Association.

Ogbulogo, Charles (2004). *Business Communication in Practice.* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications (Chapter 11).

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study,* Vol. I: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd.

(Chapter Six, pp. 118-123 & Chapter Seven, pp. 144-156).

UNIT 2 PLANNING, DESIGNING AND RESEARCHING FOR BUSINESS REPORTS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The second major step, i.e., the step which we discussed in the preceding unit after *Understanding the Demands of the Report* in the procedure for writing a report is planning, designing and researching for a report.

The *working plan* is the final digest or outcome of the prospective report writer's enquiries about, and efforts at understanding, his report topic or assignment. In it, he anticipates the actual eventual writing of the report. It is a written document in which the report writer spells out concretely in a logical order the considerations that will guide his report and the specific actions that will be taken in order for the report to be accomplished.

Of course, reports vary in magnitude among such types, as identified by Evans (1984:88-89), as the following:-

(i) the extended formal report (sectionalized with schematic organisation and referencing), which is used for high-level extensive reports by central or local governments and large firms;

(ii) the short formal report, used mainly internally within organisations in situations in which lower-level personnel report to higher-level personnel;
(iii) the short informal report often used within departments when subordinate staff report to departmental heads on relatively simple matters;
(iv) the memorandum (memo) report, in which the memorandum format is employed in reports, again within departments, in which subordinate staff give accounts of matters of departmental interest, and
(v) the letter report, in which the letter format is employed, usually within organisations, for reporting on issues of internal organisational interest.

Among "extended formal reports" can, of course, be included the reports of varying amplitude produced in higher-level educational institutions by both students and staff on research undertakings. Those by students go under the titles of *project reports*, *dissertations*, *theses*, *the term paper*, *the research paper*, *the long paper* or *the long essay*.

We shall see the specific formats of these reports at a later stage. However, because of workload limitations, we shall be able to deal with only a skeleton of the activities that go into planning, designing and researching for a report.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. You should endeavour to learn its points carefully and you must be sure that you understand them by doing the Self Assessment Exercise with seriousness. This is a unit in which you will notice that, at many points, you are being called upon to try out your hand in carrying out the task being prescribed. Try and carry out that kind of practical exercise. You should also answer the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMAQs) earnestly and send your answers as instructed to the university for your tutor's scoring.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify and explain the various parts that a business report ought to have
- describe the activities involved in collecting the material for writing a report
- explain how to organise and interpret the information (data) collected for the report
- describe formats of business reports and explain how to choose a format for a particular report.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Components of Report Working Plans

The elements which make up the Working Plan of a corporate organisation (as opposed to an academic) report will usually consist of the following ones:

(a) Title.
(b) Introduction (the occasion for, and terms of reference of, the report or study).
(c) Background to (or context of) the report (or study).
(d) Methodology (or procedure) for gathering and analysing data.
(e) Budget and time schedule.
(f) Findings.
(g) Recommendations.
(h) References.
(i) Appendices.

In most organisations, it is usually required that a report writer's projections under each of the elements in the above list be presented to higher-level management for approval before they are used in the field.

We shall attempt sketchily to exemplify projections under these items in respect of the topic "Opening a New Depot for Sale of Tyres at Birnin Kebbi".

3.1.1 Introduction (to a Report)

The introduction to a report explains the circumstances leading up to the report and gives its terms of reference if terms of reference are applicable. For example, a firm that manufactures and sells tyres may realize that large settlements of human beings are taking place in a certain part of the country. So, the firm feels that a new area of profitable business is opening up in that part of the country. For this reason, it appoints a committee, headed by its Sales Manager, to look into the matter and write a report on their findings to the General Manager of the firm. The instruction to the committee, carried in a letter or memo., may contain the following terms of reference:-

1. Check the extent of industrialization in the area (as that would be one of the factors determining the volume of vehicular traffic operating in the area).
2. Evaluate the level of the presence of government personnel in the area.
3. Assess the condition of the roads.

4. Measure the number of vehicles on the road.
5. Advise on the feasibility of opening a depot in the area.

However, in some cases, these terms of reference may not be spelt out, whether the directive for the report was given to an individual or to a committee, and the individual or committee may be left to determine and formulate his/her/its own terms of reference.

3.1.2 Procedure

With regard to the more common types of organisational reports (to which category our subject of "Opening of a New Depot for Sale of Tyres at Birnin Kebbi" belongs), we are interested in such matters as the following:-

(i) ***Meetings held*** (where the assignment was given to a panel or a committee): Here, the number, places and dates of meetings held and business carried out at each meeting are described. (It may be necessary eventually to attach minutes of the meetings as an appendix to the final report).

(ii) ***Documents Consulted*****:** A detailed description of the documents consulted and of how they were obtained is given. A panel would usually have discussed this matter at its first meeting or early meetings and made assignments about obtaining the documents to its members. A sole investigator would usually have generated them by preliminary enquiries and possibly by a literature search. Memoranda invited from the general public and/or from relevant officials and personnel can also be described in this section. Short questionnaires and interview questions and letters sent to significant officials, requesting some specific information, material or data, are also described here.

(iii) ***Interviews*****:** Persons interviewed are identified here, and relevant details about where and how the interviews were conducted are described in this section.

(iv) ***Practical Field Visits for Observation*****:** Where applicable, field visits for practical observation of relevant phenomena are described under this item.

(v) ***Empirical Research*****:** Sometimes it may be necessary to obtain what is called *primary* data (first-hand information obtained through enquiry administered in various ways), as apposed to *secondary* data (extant information obtained from existing documents, experience, etc.) as parts of the *procedure* in the carrying out of a report assignment. In our particular case here, the committee may send a member or a team with a data collecting *instrument* (a form for asking and recording answers to various questions from people) to administer in Birnin Kebbi

> (Students should, of course, have learnt or are learning the terminology and application of various operations in empirical research).

Of course, each report has its own unique needs in terms of necessary investigation. All of them are encompassed under the "Procedure" item in the "Design and Working Plan" division of the operations involved in producing a report.

3.2 Collecting the Material

The collecting of material is specifically involved with item (d) in our earlier list of the issues which make up the Working Plan, i.e., "Procedure". We are concerned here, therefore, with exactly the activities which the report writer carries out in order to collect (or in pursuit of) all the material, data or information which he needs for writing his report.

We have, at various points, referred to the kinds of organisational reports which emerge either from the activities of some functionaries or from the carrying out by a panel or committee of an investigation and a reporting function. In the case of the individual functionary presenting a periodic or control executive report, no formal search for material is involved. He/she essentially organises the data accruing from his routine activities into a logical sequence that will lucidly convey the purpose of his report. For the committee, the material will emerge largely from the deliberations of the members. Of course, part of the work of the committee may involve, as said at an earlier stage, inviting documents of various kinds and memoranda from relevant sources and persons and seeking oral testimonies. Where individual members of the panel are assigned with the duty of conducting some literature search or interviewing some persons, the procedures are essentially the same as for carrying out these functions in formal research.

After collecting the data, they have to be *organised* and *interpreted.* Another activity attaching to data is *reaching conclusions* from them, an operation which applies a number of principles. For space reasons, we cannot discuss these in detail. (If need be, see Okenimkpe, 2004, pages 162-173).

3.3 Designing the Format and Structure of the Report

3.3.1 Formats

We referred earlier on in the unit to the matter of formats for presenting reports. Formats refer to the physical arrangement or outlay for the presentation of reports. It is part of what are referred to as one of the mechanical or rote elements of communication, which are aimed at beauty or pleasantness of presentation and eye appeal.

Choosing a format is not to be turned into a tedious or excruciating affair. It is essentially a matter of general convention or of specific policy or routine in an organisation. Often, the *Control Report* is written in the memorandum (memo) format. That suggests that the common mode of internal communication in the organisation concerned is the memorandum. If the common mode of written communication in the organisation is the letter, written on letter-headed paper, obviously the letter format is used for writing reports. However, if the subject of a report is more special or serious and, perhaps, the report is specially requested, demanded or commissioned, the more formal report format is more appropriate. Reports commissioned or contracted to specialists outside an organisation generally take this more formal format. Similarly, enquiries commissioned by public bodies usually use these more formal formats in reporting their proceedings and findings. Let us see how the three report formats referred to might appear with a report on a subject like "Extending the Market for Super Brake Oil".

(i) Memorandum (Memo)

APEX MOTOR SPARES LIMITED

MEMORANDUM

Ref.: S/V/80

From: S. F. Oni,
Sales Manager

To: Mr. T. K. Saidu,
Sales Director

Date: 16 April, 2002

EXTENDING THE MARKET FOR SUPPER BRAKE OIL

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sub-headed sectionalised
body of the report
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S. F. Oni

(ii) **Letter**

APEX MOTOR SPARES LIMITED (KANO DEPOT)
10 SAPELE STREET
P. O. BOX 150, KANO

Our Ref.: S/V/80 16 April, 2002
Tel. (01)820448
Telegram/Cable: AMOSPAL
Telex ……………. Fax …………….
E-mail ……………………….
Your ref.: ……………………

Mr. T. K. Saidu
Sales Director
Motor Spares Ltd.
5 Nupe Street
P. O. Box 120
Jos.

Dear Mr. Saidu,

EXTENDING THE MARKET FOR SUPER BRAKE OIL

………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………
Sub-headed sectionalised body of the report
………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………

Yours sincerely
(Signed)

S. F. Oni
Sales Manager

(iii) **Semi-formal**
EXTENDING THE MARKET FOR SUPER BRAKE OIL
(Report by Mr. S. F. Oni, Sales Manager)

(iv) **Formal**

PRECISION MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS
25 SOKOTO STREET
P. O. BOX 19, LAGOS

16 April, 2004

Our Ref.: L/19/x/4
Tel (01) 82044
Telegram/Cable: PREMAN CONSULT
Telex ………………… Fax …………….
E-mail ………………………………….
Your ref.:……………………………… ……

EXTENDING THE MARKET FOR SUPER BRAKE OIL

Sub-headed sectionalised body of the report

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....
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....
....

(signed)

J. Tete Ekpeyong
Managing Consultant

3.4 Features of the Reports

It will have been readily noted that perhaps the features common to the four kinds of reports are the identity (name) of the writer of the report, his address and other details of his location, the subject of the report (as indicated in the titles), the sub-headed, sectionalised body of the report, the signature of the writer and the date of the report. On the other hand, some features are conventionally unique to the format used for a report. (I am sure that, from what you have so far learnt on this course, you can identify the intended recipient of the report as follows: "EXTENDING THE MARKET FOR SUPER BRAKE OIL: A REPORT TO THE SALES DIRECTOR". This would particularly be the case where a report, though internal (i.e., written by a staff member or an internal reporting panel or committee in an organisation and being sent to an executive or Department within the same organisation) adopts the formal report format on account of the seriousness or the nature of commissioning of the report.

3.5 Structure

The structure has to do with the content or substance of the information to be conveyed in a report. Part of the general art of reporting (indeed, of communicating as a whole) is identifying the division or classification into which the content of a report or another piece of communication falls, identifying the element or substance which makes up each division and arranging or ordering the divisions in a certain sequence. So, we become accustomed from the secondary school to talking about the *Introduction* to an essay, the *Body* and the *Conclusion*. Structure is pertinent to every piece of communication – oral or written – and structure is much more uniform to reports than formats. When, earlier in the unit, we listed nine items from "Title" to "Appendices", we were essentially outlining the structure of reports. That list refers to the structure of the more familiar kinds of reports in business organisations.

However, before we identify and describe the elements of appropriate structure for business reports, we shall first briefly examine a few general principles and ideas guiding, and related to, reports.

3.5.1 Structures of Reports: The Standard (or the Psychological) Structure

In general, it has been found by communication experts that most business reports will fit well into the following structure:

INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY
Purpose
Scope
Conclusion(s)
Recommendation(s)

INTRODUCTION
BODY
SUMMARY
CONCLUSIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS
APPENDIX (APPENDICES)

This structure is called (as already indicated) the "psychological structure". This is because it suits the psyche of most readers, particularly business executives. This is to say that this structure is logical, which is to say that it embodies or bears out the logic of rational thinking.

This arrangement leaves the reader the option to read as much of the report as his needs demand and his time permits. He wants to obtain as quickly as possible (and with as little strain as possible) the information he needs for taking a decision. This is why the report should logically begin with a summary, which quickly gives a brief account of the investigation and a resume of its findings and the recommendations ensuing from the findings.

3.5.2 The Components of the Standard Structure

1. ***The Introductory Summary*****:** The Introductory Summary (which some people call the Executive Summary) – even though it comes first in the entire report – is written last. It explains the circumstances occasioning the report. It goes on to spell out clearly what the purpose of the report is, what aspects of the issue in question are covered (i.e., the scope and limitations of the report), and the methods of investigation employed or activities carried out. Then, it presents the findings or conclusions arrived at and outlines the recommendations for accomplishing the projected purpose of the investigation on which the report is written.

2. ***Introduction:*** Intelligent exercise of good sense is required for determining the content of the *Introduction* and the orienting of its presentation. Its primary purpose is to establish rapport with the reader in order to enhance receptivity of the report to him, i.e., his initial positive attitude towards the report, especially where the reader is known or suspected to be apathetic towards the subject or biased towards the writer's views. Here, the writer attempts, in the *Introduction*, to dispel misconception, erase prejudice and win confidence.

Of course, there are several other content elements of the *Introduction*. Background material – nearly always the element pre-eminently emphasized – is usually required. For example, the background of an existing conflict between management and labour; the origins and growth of a personnel policy that has brought about lopsided staffing in terms of skills, responsibilities and remunerations; political antecedents to industrial policy, etc.: these are necessary backgrounds that must be given in a report.

As already pointed out, discretion and good judgement are necessary for determining what should go into the *Introduction* of a report. It should not repeat – even by elaboration – the table of contents nor should it reproduce introductory or background material already given in the *Introductory* (or *Executive*) *Summary.*

3. ***The Body:*** Where the *Introductory Summary* can be described as the skeleton of the report, the *Body* can be labeled the flesh – the core – of the report. It is the longest part of the report. In it, all the details for which the *Introduction* prepares the mind and from which the *Findings, Conclusions* and *Recommendations* are drawn are discussed in detail.

Again, the mode of presentation of the *Body* is, to a large extent, dependent on the magnitude and length and the level of formality of the report. The long formal report should adopt sub-headings for presenting the different aspects of the *Body*, while the short report (probably presented in the form of a memorandum) may simply use different paragraphs for presenting the information on the different aspects of the investigation.

Whichever of these structures that is appropriate and adopted, one expects it to be logically organised. The sub-headings or paragraphs should follow the sequence in which their contents have been presented in the *Introductory Summary,* so that a reader interested in a particular aspect of the report can easily locate its elaboration and supporting facts and data in the *Body* of the report.

4. ***The Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations:*** Not all experts on report writing agree that, after the initial (i.e., *Introductory) Summary*, these end or terminal elements are any longer necessary in a report. In reality, however, the fact that the position of the *Introductory Summary* looks odd (at least to the newcomer to report writing) – since one should hardly be summarizing what one has not yet discussed – points to the necessity for a *logical* concluding of a report with these elements. In other words, the *Introductory Summary* is an expedient necessity, aimed at helping the reader, especially the busy executive, to decide whether the report is of interest to him in terms of helping him to reach a decision on an issue and, therefore, of saving his time.

Each of these elements should certainly be more detailed than its presentation in the *Introductory Summary.* Where the *Introductory Summary* is an anticipation awaiting validation in the *Body*, the terminal *Summary*, *Conclusions* and *Recommendations* are an arrival. The *Summary* creatively puts the substance of the report into sharp focus for the reader, spotlighting its salient points. It also details the findings. The *Conclusions* make an all-embracing inference, which is a distillation of the outcome of the report. The *Recommendations,* for their own part, detail the recommended actions for achieving the objective of the investigation, each recommendation being usually directly derived from a related finding.

One of the ways in which these terminal features can differ from the *Introductory Summary* is that where (as circumstances specifically dictate) the points in the *Introductory Summary* may be presented in continuous prose, the terminal *Summary*, *Conclusions* and *Recommendations* are, as relevant and appropriate, itemized. Itemization compels the writer carefully to re-scrutinise his report and ensure that all its elements are brought to the fore of the reader's mind as he completes reading the report. This stamps in his final impressions and makes them firmer and longer-lasting and inspires urgency of response.

5. ***The Appendix (Appendices):*** This is the place for material that is helpful, but not essential, for the understanding of a report, such as working memoranda, detailed statistics, supplementary tables, maps, photographs and drawings, experimental details and raw data. Material in the Appendix is to be perceived as being addressed to readers who, perhaps because of their own special areas of interest, want further to investigate the basis of some points in the report and the data from which some conclusions have been arrived at.

3.6 Outlining

The outline is part of the structure. Language teachers in the primary and secondary schools attempt to stress its importance in the essay-writing subject and to teach the techniques of handling it.

It should be obvious to anyone who has ever made an honest effort at developing a good outline that the exercise itself induces the discipline of thinking before putting pen to paper instead of proceeding precariously on the false assurance of the strength of the memory for producing a good report. A good outline is, to say the least, half the job of writing a report done. For all reports, and most particularly for the long report, an outline is an absolute necessity.

Three types of outline may be identified, namely, the *topic* outline, the *broad* outline, and the *expanded* outline. I believe that you have learnt these from your other language courses. (Again, if need be, see Okenimkpe, 2004, pages 187-192).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. List and explain briefly the usual components (parts) of a business report.
2. Describe the activities which go into your actual collecting of material for writing your report.
3. What do you understand by the idea of a format for a business report? Name four types that may be used and describe the use of *one* of them fully.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Write reports in business, we must! So, it is necessary that we master the steps that lead up to producing a report. You must not take the attitude that when the need arises, you will be able to write a report. You will not be able to produce a meaningful and usable report if you have not carefully learnt how to plan to write a good report.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have seen in this unit that the question of planning a business report depends on the kind of report that is required: is it the memorandum type, the letter type, the semi-formal kind or the strictly formal kind? On the basis of the kind of report required, a plan is made for obtaining the information (data) required for writing the report. The information may already be available in the files of the enterprise, in the proposed writer's memory of his daily experience of events in the business, or a formal instrument may be drawn up for collecting the material. There may be a need to interview people, carry out field visits and other kinds of field activities or carry out experiments. When collected, the information is then audited (checked) for correctness on the basis of the various criteria given and, then, the report writer is ready to embark on his report writing.

To reduce length, I have had to eliminate relevant material drastically from this Unit. So, it is absolutely essential to see Okenimkpe (2004), Chapter Seven, for fuller treatment of the topic.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: Sections 3.1., 3.1.1. and 3.1.2. contain the answer.

Question 2: The answer is in Section 3.2. Elaborate from Section 3.1.2. each of the points made in that Section 3.2.

Question 3: The answer is clear in Section 3.3.1.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What do you understand by the s*tructure* of a report? Describe what is usually referred to as a *standard* or *psychological* structure.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Gallagher, William J. (1969). *Report Writing for Management.* Reading (Massachusetts): Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Work and Study*, Vol. I: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd (Chapter Seven).

UNIT 3 WRITING BUSINESS REPORTS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Units 1 and 2 of this Module Three on the business report, we looked at the general matters relating to business reports and at the planning, designing and researching for the writing of business reports. In this Unit 3, we are going to study the process and actual techniques of writing business reports – the hands-on-tool skills and the how-to-do-it approaches to writing business reports.

You will have already realized that devoting three units to the business report means that this subject is very important. As we said in Unit 1 of this module, much of the official (even informal) oral interaction within an establishment is concerned with reporting on some activity or the other of the establishment. So, it is very important that when you are becoming employed in an enterprise, you should know at least the rudiments of making reports of varying amplitude and kinds.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. Be sure to understand its every point well and to do the Self Assessment Exercise punctiliously. You should also answer the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMAQs) as correctly as made possible by this unit and send your answers as directed to the university for your tutor's attention. It is in meeting these two obligations that you can truly see yourself as studying by the distance education method.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- write the first draft of a report
- edit or revise the first draft accurately
- write a polished final (or proof) copy of the report.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Writing the Report

3.1.1 The First Draft

We have already indicated that after a good outline has been prepared, the writing of the full report no longer presents a great difficulty. It should still be useful, however, to outline as reinforcement, for the purpose of making that exercise most fruitful, some guides that should be observed in writing the first draft.

(a) ***Content and Style in the First Draft:*** One of the skills (that of re-writing as a habit) which we identified in Module One, Unit 2, clearly fits in here. The title of this section itself suggests that the first full-length report should be regarded as essentially the first draft. We recommended in that Module One, Unit 2, that there should be at least two additional versions of the report, i.e., the *final* and the *proof* copies.

The essential purpose of the first draft is to capture as many ideas as possible. To search agonizingly at this stage for the impeccably accurate word and the flawless and most elegant sentence, revise as one writes, polish a preceding expression, attempt to correct errors, chase fugitive thoughts, detour to check a reference or confirm a statistical detail, or engage in any other such distractions is to invite frustration and demoralization through lack of progress after much expenditure of time and energy. Thoughts are associative, each one generating another. So, the writer should not, in the first draft, disrupt his stream of thought in search of finesse. Rather, he should write rapidly, allowing the ideas to flow freely, arresting all valuable thoughts that strike his mind.
For dealing with intransigent ideas, vocabulary and expressions, writers have different approaches. I myself leave blank spaces or write down a notion or word related to the escaping desired one and place a question mark in red pen in the margin. When the flow of thought has subsided, it is then time to consult a dictionary, a thesaurus or any of the aids or any other relevant source to resolve the problem.

(b) ***Writing Sequence in the First Draft:*** We discussed *outlining* in some detail earlier in this module (Unit 2). Now, when a writer has drawn up a really incisive outline, it does not really matter if he does not write the sections as laid out in the outline from the first to the last in what is called the “fixed sequence” approach (Gallagher, 1969:70). Rather, each writer should adopt a sequence which is most convenient and will be most productive for him. For most writers, such sections are the ones which will present the writer with the least difficulties and for which he has the greatest flare and in which he is most interested. The rapid progress which he makes in writing such sections and the elation and excitement which he derives from that achievement will produce the stimulus and ferment which will engender the energy for tackling the difficult sections, i.e., the sections which, on account of inadequate data, lack of technical expertise for handling such sections or lack of natural interest, the writer cannot dispose of with spontaneity. To attempt to write such tasking sections first, just because they come earlier in a fixed-sequence progression, will lead to that lack of tangible progress and achievement after much expenditure of time and energy which will invite that allergy that will stall the rest of the work.

(c) ***The Writing Environment:*** There is no need to make rigid rules about environments for writing reports, indeed, for any task demanding a mental effort and concentration. The office, esoteric places (such as beaches, parks, hotel or motel rooms, plantations, etc.) or homes, are possible places for writing reports. The important thing is for each person to discover the environment which is best for him/her and (barring other demands on his/her time and personal presence) use such a place.

(d) ***Technique of Recording Adopted:*** Even at the beginning of the 21st century, most people in the Third World still use mainly hand drafting for writing reports and producing other forms of writing. Even when the computer has replaced the typewriter in drafting in the advanced world, the typewriter has not even become commonplace in the developing world. Similarly, dictating, either to a Secretary or into a machine (the dictaphone) has really never become established in the developing world. These limitations have something to do with the vagaries of using the metropolitan European languages in routine communication. So, most people find that hand drafting allows them the longer time that enables them to mould their thoughts more clearly and to make better choices of words and sentence structures. Thank God that many people are at present mastering the techniques of composing and drafting with the computer.

However, the need is for one to choose the mode of recording which functions most effectively for one. It is said that dictating has the advantages that it frees the reporter from polishing and re-polishing and re-polishing as he proceeds with his report and that most people (in the developing world, the younger generations) tend to speak more fluently than they can write lucidly. If, however, speaking is difficult for one, the choice for such a person is obviously manual drafting.

(e) ***Quality of the First Draft:*** We have said that striving for perfection or polish should not be the goal in the first draft. On the other hand, a jumble of confused notes on the topics in the outline – possessing no logic of argument or coherence in structural links between sentences – will serve little useful purpose at the revision stage. The aim should be to achieve the highest level of clarity (note the tests of clarity discussed in Module One, Unit 1) in the sentences used in articulating the writer's intentions and in ideas on each topic. The sentences themselves should be built into coherent paragraphs. When a reasonable level of clarity is achieved in the first draft, revising for perfection and polish in the final copy is not a difficult task.

(f) ***Overall Status of the First Draft:*** One might wonder how much material or substance to put into the first draft. The straightforward answer is that one should put in as much material as one can spontaneously marshal without going into that kind of strain which can cause a disruption in the flow of ideas. You should make notes in the margin of your drafting paper about ideas, words and sentences elusively hibernating in the periphery of your conscious memory, carry on with the task of recording the main stream of ideas and return later to deal with the fugitive elements.

In concluding this section on the writing of the first draft, one must advise again that every reporter should cultivate the humble habit of re-writing. If you recognize from the start that your first draft is not likely to achieve a desired level of excellence, and that a number of revisions will be necessary in order for you to achieve that excellence, you will put into your work all the effort required to produce a report which will not only be unequivocal in meaning, but will also be sharp in focus and will compulsively command the attention of those to whom it is addressed.

3.1.2 Revising, Editing (or Proof-reading) the Draft to Produce the Final Copy

In Module One, Unit 2, re-writing as a habit was described as one of the skills of, or attitudes towards, effectively handling written communication, an important example of which is reporting, which is the subject of this unit. *Revising* (which may also be termed *reviewing* or *editing*) is directed at ensuring that a piece of communication (such as a report) has all those qualities identified in Module One, Unit 1, for effectiveness: *accuracy; completeness; clarity; conciseness; readability; quickness; the need to receive a response* (if relevant to a particular piece of communication); *utility,* and *"sellability"* (or attractiveness of style and presentation). The requirements for achieving these qualities regarding content and presentation in general (embracing lay-out, format, structure or organisation and language ingredients) were also quite elaborately highlight in Module One, Unit 1, in the discussion of the qualities. We do not need to repeat that discussion here. You can refer back to that unit when the need arises. For the remainder of this unit, we shall look at more general aspects of revising. These more general aspects of revising relate to the questions of whether we should revise at all (*the need for revising*); when to revise (*timing of revision*), how to revise and how much to revise (*method and extent of revision*).

3.1.3 The Need for Revision

The point which we first made in Module One, Unit 2, and have referred to again and again in this unit that re-writing as a habit is a necessary disposition for producing effective written communication, remains valid here. We should all be aware of the fact that the brilliantly lucid pieces of writing which we come across from time to time – whether they are written by gifted artists or by the ordinary writer – rarely simply come off the cuff. Only a minute percentage of people have the knack and flare for capturing apt ideas instantly and articulating them in unambiguous words and expressions. Surely, articulating them must be searched for with determination. When a writer allows his eyes to roll somewhat idly over a page of a draft of a report or another piece of writing while trying intensely to capture an elusive idea, he will invariably catch himself out cancelling a word here and altering a sentence there in a piece which he had considered to be already perfected. The same thing happens when a writer is flipping through a piece of a progressing draft for the purpose of referring to something already said – the writer finds himself making a number of changes even though revision was not the purpose of going through the writing. Therefore, there is an absolute need for revising the draft of a report, indeed, any piece of writing. Often, the difference between a beautiful report and a slovenly one is the outcome of whether any revision was carried out in one or of the amount of revision carried out in each.

3.1.4 The Timing of Revision

The points at which a writer revises his draft is generally perceived to be: (1) at the same time as he is writing; (2) immediately after completing the drafting, and (3) sometime after completing the writing. Experts acknowledge that any of these times could be used (since a choice is largely a matter of personal preference), but they do identify the disadvantages attaching to the first two points of revising, i.e., simultaneously with the writing and immediately after the writing. Simultaneous revising interferes with the stream and flow of thought and, so, may both delay the progress of the writing and introduce illogicalities, inconsistencies and ambiguities into it. it should be noted that while drafting is a *creative* activity, employing mental alertness, vibrancy, dynamism and momentum, revising is a *critical* activity, applying scrutiny, measuring and appraising. Therefore, alternating these two roles, i.e., that of the surging writer and of the appraising editor or reviewer, is usually mutually obstructing and does not produce the best result for either process.

On the other hand, revising immediately after drafting can have the effect that the reviewer still retains the same mindset with which he did the drafting. In other words, he will read into the draft the same ideas which he had in mind while writing the drat even though such ideas may not, in fact, be there at all and or may not have been expressed on paper with the degree of vividness with which the writer had conceived them. We are all aware of how often a writer-reviewer misses even ordinary typographical errors in his piece of writing and oversights omissions and similar errors. In other words, he is merely reading into his written piece what is in his head, and not what is actually on the paper.

Concerning allowing some time to elapse between completion of drafting and reviewing, i.e., allowing the draft to go through what may be called a maturing, cooling off or gestation period, all agree that this has the greatest potential for converting the creative writer into the critical reviewer and permitting the detection of all inadequacies of thought and expression in the report. However, even to this best option attaches the shortcoming of time deadlines for submitting reports, deadlines which, in government and industry, can often be very short and stringent and, therefore, threatening.

In real practice, however, it is difficult to recommend one timing to the total exclusion of the other two. In the evaluation of learning effectiveness in educational programmes, we speak of *formative* and *summative* evaluation. I think that these ideas should also apply to the writing and revising of reports and production of other kinds of writing. I have already referred to how one often makes minor changes in a text while merely idly passing one's eyes over the piece or searching for some statement made in the draft. I have also found by experience that, at the end of any particular session of drafting, it is beneficial to read over what was written on that particular occasion. When I have failed to carry out this exercise, I have often later noticed an omission for which I was not able easily to recall the word that was supposed to be in the place.

Therefore, depending on what time can permit, some amount of simultaneous revising as one drafts – carried out in various ways as already indicated – combined with immediate revision after drafting and another revision at some later time after this second revising (say from one day to a week) will probably produce the very best result attainable by a particular writer, depending on the circumstances in which he has written his/her report.

3.1.5 Method and Extent of Revising

As already stated, revising is a critical, self-evaluating exercise. It is a slow-reading process in which we not only check all language mechanics and features (*vocabulary* or *choice of words, spelling, punctuation, sentences and paragraphs*), but also ascertain the impressions and meanings which our statements will convey to our readers. Nothing should be glossed over. We stated in Module One, Unit 1, that one of the four tests of clarity is that a statement should not only be understood, but impossible to be misunderstood. When we run into stressful challenges concerning clarity, the tendency is to take refuge in the hope that the reader will somehow get our meaning. This self-deluding exigency should never be resorted to. Using all the aids in relevant units for finding the right words, eliminating ambiguity in sentences, punctuating for syntactical smoothness, checking spelling errors and paragraphing incisively, we should aim for that degree of clarity which even a casual reader can recognize at once.

For its own part, the extent of revision should be determined from the standpoint of the purpose which the writer or his principal (his superior officer who has assigned the writing of the report) wishes to achieve with the report. If a technical manager wishes to press in a report for the acquisition of a major piece of equipment, passionately believing that the equipment will transform the operations of his section of the firm and those of the firm as a whole, he will, as the saying goes, "leave no stone unturned" in that report to ensure that he convinces the management of the importance of the proposed equipment. I once saw a letter written by an electrical engineer to the electricity board controlling supply of electricity in the engineer's place of residence to complain that electricity to his area over a long period had been very erratic and grossly inadequate. He accompanied the letter with a chart in which he painted black every hour, day and night, of a 31-day month in which there was no electricity and white every hour in which there was electric power. The effect produced in the chart was far more dramatic than the text could ever convey.

So, when we talk about extent of revision, we mean whether, in every respect, a report has all the attributes of an effective piece of communication discussed in Module One, Unit 1, and whether all the skills of writing – extrinsic and intrinsic (the latter in its two dimensions of *rote* or *mechanical* and *language* or *cognitive* skills) – have been correctly used. In other words, as Gallagher (1969:77) puts it:

- Does the report tell the complete story?
- Are the conclusions substantiated?
- Is the proper emphasis given to each topic?
- Is all the information pertinent?
- Is the information accurate?
- Is the content presented logically and clearly?
- Are all special terms clearly defined?
- Would a table, graph, schema or photograph eliminate the need for a lengthy textual discussion anywhere?
- Does any material in the body of the report interfere with orderly presentation and easy assimilation of key ideas and, therefore, perhaps should more appropriately be put in an appendix?
- Is the report easy to read?

We envisage here a totality of revision which leaves no sloppy expression, inaccurate word or ambiguous notion or idea uncorrected?

3.2 Specimens of Reports

The two specimens given below, one of the simple (or memo-type) report, and one of the full-scale (or formal) report are both, for reasons of space, quite short and simple. You are reminded that the lengthy and epoch-making reports, backed by elaborate researches carried out by select committees of celebrities, all come within the rubric of reports. Such reports have brought about at various levels in the entire world major and revolutionary changes or innovations in political, social, economic and human relationship policies and practices. Within industry and government, reports of varying amplitude are issued by the day. Big and important as these reports and the policy decisions which they occasion are, they all submit to the same principles and techniques which we have been highlighting in this unit.

3.2.1 The Simple (Memo-type) Report

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS
CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTRE (CEC)

Dr. M. N. Nduka,
Library Adviser.

To: Acting Director.
28th June, 2008
REPORT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

1.0. **Summary**

Following the CEC's occupying of the office block at the front of the Guest Houses complex and thereby acquiring a large library room, it became pertinent to seek means of setting up a library. This committee was, therefore, set up at the CEC's senior staff meeting held on 14th June 2008.

The Committee formulated a reference system, drew up rules for use of the library and identified modalities for, and priorities in, acquisition of library material.

2.0. **Introduction**
The CEC moved offices to the front office block of the Guest Houses complex in the middle of May, 2008. Part of this office block was the large library room on the first floor of the block. Having this library room was like a dream fulfilled for the Centre because, necessary as it had been for a long time for the Centre to develop a good library, the lack of space for stocking appropriate library material had been frustrating the desire to set up the library. So, the Centre's reading material had been stocked in all sorts of unsuitable and inaccessible places, such as table drawers and table tops, in cupboards, on floor spaces and in similar places.
In order to reverse this situation, put the library space in the new office into appropriate use and meet a long-standing goal, a meeting of the Centre's senior staff, held on 14th June, 2008, set up an *ad hoc* committee, comprising the following persons:-

1. Dr. M. N. Nduka, Senior Lecturer (Convener).

2. Dr. D. F. Akinrinade.
3. Mr. Felix Okoli.
4. Mrs. Aduke Olaifa, Pers. Sec. II (Secretary).

2.2. The terms of reference of the committee were as follows:
1. To identify means of, and priorities in, acquisition of library material.
2. To formulate a reference system.
3. To draw up rules for use of the library.
4. To make all other recommendations considered germane for operating a good library.

3.0. **Reference System**

3.1. The committee gave approval to the following simple categorization and reference formulas for the books that are in the library at present, and will be acquired in future, subject to revision as the need may arise.

1. Business Management (B);
2. Education (ED);
3. General Reading (GR);
4. Humanities (H);
5. Physical Sciences (PHS);
6. Social Sciences (SS).

Note: Reference works (to be marked, "Not to be removed from the Library"), and miscellaneous material will be stacked according to their subject areas; also, there will be four auxiliary sections which will stack material on (1) book and film catalogues; (2) archives on the University and Centre; (3) microfiche and microfilm material, and (4) Internet material (Website).

3.2. A catalogue number will show the subject area, author and serial number of a book, e.g., a book on Business Management by a Mr. Ogunsheye will be catalogued as follows: B/0/1 ('B' for Business Management, 'O' for the initial letter of the author's surname, and 1 for the number of the book among those of the subject by authors of identical initial letters of surname). This system has the advantage that, while it is simple, it will help to keep books on one subject together and in the alphabetical order of authors' names.

3.3. The shelves containing these books will be labeled boldly with subject headings and codes, and will be arranged in an alphabetical order from a certain point in the library.

3.4. As soon as the Acting Director supplies the labeling tapes which have been on request for sometime now, the books should be labeled and the catalogue built up.

4.0. **Rules for Use of the Library**

4.1. ***Hours of Opening:***
For the present time when use of the library is still on a small scale, it should be open during the normal office hours of 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., with a one-hour break (preferably 1.00 – 2.00 p.m. during which the library should be closed) for the Library Assistant to go out for lunch or for some other need. To allow the Library Adviser to have easy access to the rest of the department in the hour when the library is closed, he should keep a key of the main, and not that of the rear, door of the library.
4.2. ***Eligible Users:***
4.2.1. All academic staff of the CEC, who can borrow books for two weeks, subject to renewal, unless a prior request for the book has been made by another academic staff.
4.2.2. All other staff of the CEC, who can only consult books in the library, and may not remove books from the library unless they have the permission of the officer-in-charge of the library, for whom the title of "Library Adviser" has been agreed on.
4.2.3. F.E.D.U. students, who can only consult books in the library, and may borrow books only with the express permission of the Library Adviser.
4.2.4. Any other persons who have the permission of the F.E.D.U. Head of Department.

4.3. ***Penalties:*** Failure to return books on due dates will carry a fine of N5.00 (five naira) per day for the period for which the book is overdue.

Note: If a borrower refuses to pay a fine incurred on an overdue book, the Library Assistant shall accept the books from him, but will make a report to the Library Adviser of the borrower's refusal to pay the fine. The Library Adviser will, himself, report the matter to a meeting of F.E.D.U., which shall take official notice of such misdemeanour.

5.0. **Book Acquisition**

5.1. The following recommendations are made:-

5.1.1. that books and periodicals acquired for the library should be geared towards meeting the Centre's teaching commitments;

5.1.2. that first orders for books should immediately be made, and subscriptions for periodicals immediately taken out, and that both actions be carried out on a continuous basis;

5.1.3. that, in order to meet the goal of (2) above, all staff should immediately submit lists of relevant and important books and periodicals (author, publication details and price) to the Library Adviser, who will submit them to the Acting Director;

5.1.4. that course co-coordinators should endeavour in future to obtain from course lecturers lists of relevant publications on the courses which the co-coordinators supervise;

5.1.5. that course co-coordinators should endeavour in future to gather out of every course a complete collection of all teaching material on the course and submit this to the Library Adviser;
5.1.6. that staff should deposit with the Library Adviser seminar and research papers and similar material which they develop;
5.1.7. that staff should deposit with the Library Adviser organisational and information material on the courses which they organise (especially brochures) for the purpose of building up the Centre's Archives, and
5.1.8. that the Library Assistant should take over the function of reading the newspapers and cutting out publications relevant to the Centre. Normally, he should keep a newspaper for one week before extracting an article from it, and thereafter do away with it. Newspapers without any relevant publications should also be kept for one week and similarly be done away with. As the newspapers are kept in the Main Library, and they take too much space, there appears to be no real need for keeping back numbers for longer than one week.
5.1.9. Also, copies of University publications, such as bulletins, calendars, news-releases, etc., should be acquired and kept in the library.

Note: A list of books and periodicals already submitted to the Library Adviser are attached to this report as an Appendix.

M. N. Nduka
Committee Convener
(for all members).

3.2.2 The Formal Report

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON OPENING OF A DEPOT FOR SALE OF TYRES AT BIRNIN KEBBI

1.O. **Summary**

In the last five years, the Apex Motor Parts Limited has been planning to establish depots in suitable State capitals. The criteria for selecting a town for a depot are availability of all cadres of personnel, building space, social amenities and sizeable numbers of potential customers.

Birnin Kebbi has been found to be a suitable place for a depot for the following reasons:-

(i) Adequate staff of all categories can be easily recruited.
(ii) Temporary depot and office accommodation can be easily acquired and land for a permanent building can be obtained at a reasonable price without much difficulty.

(iii) Social amenities (residential accommodation for staff, roads, electricity, water and others) are relatively adequate.

2.0. **Introduction**

In the last five years, the need has been deeply felt by the Apex Motor Parts Ltd. for a depot for sale of tyres to be opened in suitable State capitals in the country. The reasons for this need have been fairly obvious:-

(i) The town, having become a State capital, has expanded very rapidly, building up a large population now numbering four million.

(ii) With a State capital status and a large population has arisen a great expansion of industrial and commercial activities and a large increase in the presence of government personnel.
(iii) The above two factors have created a great rise in the need for and use of vehicular transportation.
(iv) Vehicles must use tyres; so, making tyres readily available in the town and its environs is a trade challenge and a profitable venture which distributors like Apex Motor Parts Ltd. must undertake and meet.

At a meeting of the Heads of Department, held on 5th December 2006, a committee of three persons was set up to carry out a serious study of the issue of opening tyre sale depots in the State capitals of the country. The committee was composed as follows:-

(i) Mallam Jibril Audu, Principal Accountant (Chairman);
(ii) Mr. Sebastian Okeke, Senior Accountant, and
(iii) Miss Folake Onasanya, Training Officer (Secretary).

The terms of reference of the committee were to examine the rationality, feasibility and profitability of opening such depots on the basis of the following factors:-

(i) ready availability of all cadres of staff that can be recruited at competitive salaries;
(ii) possibility of obtaining depot and office accommodation (temporary and permanent) at reasonable cost;
(iii) availability of social amenities (such as residential accommodation for staff, schools for staff children, motorable roads, electricity and water supply, telecommunication and Internet facilities, and others), and
(iv) evidence of likely adequate purchase of tyres.

3.0. **Activities of the Committee**

Altogether, the committee held five meetings. At its first meeting, it was decided that its mode of operation would consist of the following activities-

1. a call for memoranda from persons who had the potential to make useful contributions to the tackling of the subject;
2. study visits to all State capitals, and
3. invitation for oral testimony of persons who had useful information on the subject.

After its first meeting, the committee set out on its study visits and visited all the State capitals. In its four subsequent meetings held after returning from its study visits, it analysed and studied a large quantity of information gathered on the trips through interviews of various people in both the public and private sectors and the general public, through administration of a data-gathering questionnaire and through inspection visits to various facilities and locations.

It also interviewed sixty people at its Head Office Committee Room and studied a total of twenty memoranda received from various people.

4.0. **Findings**

(1) The committee found that the need for State tyre sales depots was certainly very great. Tyres would obviously become more readily available to the potential numerous users and the need would, indeed, become increased as time went on.

(ii) Of all the State capitals (all of which, as already stated, were visited), one, i.e., Birnin Kebbi, was found to be most suitable for the setting up of a tyre sales depot for the following reasons:-

(a) ***Availability of Potential Staff:*** The town has a federal university, a state polytechnic and a College of Education, five secondary schools, and several primary schools. From the graduates of these institutions and from serving personnel in other public and private organisations, staff required for the depot can be readily recruited.

(b) ***Depot and Office Accommodation***: Several completed buildings which could provide temporary office accommodation were identified and inspected.

A suitable plot for a permanent depot and office could be found at reasonable cost from the Local Government, the State Government or from private vendors.

(c) ***Social Amenities***: The town is very well served with all categories of social amenities: residential accommodation for staff; schools for staff children; markets; provision and medicine stores; electricity; water; telecommunication and Internet facilities, and others.

5.0 **Conclusion**
It is evident that it would be an economically and socially prudent action to establish the company's depots in State capitals of the federation. The benefits that can be derived by individuals, corporate bodies and the company itself would be tremendous.

6.0. **Recommendation**
(i) It is strongly recommended that a policy decision be taken that tyre sales
depots be established as they become feasible.
(ii) The first of these depots should be established at Birnin Kebbi.
(iii) We urge that the depot be established at Birnin Kebbi as soon as possible in order
that advantage be taken of the enormously favourable environment for such a depot
at the present time.

7.0. **Signatures of the Members**

(1) Mallam Jibril Audu (Chairman): …………………………………

(2) Sebastian Okeke:…………………………………………………

(3) Folake Onasanya (Miss, Secretary): ……………………………..

8.0. **References …**

9.0. **Appendices …**

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Give the meaning of a first-draft of a business report, explain its intent or purpose and describe the procedure involved in producing it.
2. What do you understand by the idea of revising a draft report? List and briefly describe the factors to be taken into account in revising a draft report.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Evidently, reporting is an important operation in an industry or office or in any other kind of business. Unless it is carried out with adequate efficiency (professional or, at least, sound from a lay person's point of view), its purpose may be defeated and much injury may be done to the interests and goals of the business.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have seen that, to produce a good report, you should see it as an important task and produce a first draft of it, bearing in mind that you are going to need the art and discipline of re-writing in order to produce a really good final report. Recognizing that your first draft is essentially to capture the important ideas that the report is aiming at articulating, you will write that first draft well enough in advance of the due date for its demand in order for it to *mature*, as it were, in your head, using all available occasions, opportunities and means for bringing the report up to date – modifying expressions as necessary and bringing in new ideas and deleting irrelevant ones.

Finally, you write the final copy (or proof copy for your reviewer or editor, if there is going to be one), ensuring that it has all the qualities of an effective piece of continuous writing which we saw in Module One, Unit 1, i.e., *accuracy, completeness, clarity, conciseness, readability, quickness* (or *timeliness*), *possession of an in-built feedback mechanism, utility* and *sellability.*

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: The answer is in Section 3.1.1. Select essential points in the section.

Question 2: The answer is in Sections 3.1.2., 3.1.3., 3.1.4 and 3.1.5. Select essential points from those sections.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

(a) Write a draft report on the topic: "Opening a New Depot at Ibadan for Distributing Secondary School Textbooks".
(b) Explain what you would do to the draft in (a) above to turn it into a final (or proof) copy of your report.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Gallagher, William J. (1969). *Report Writing for Management.* Reading (Massachusetts):

Ogbulogo, Charles (2004). *Business Communication in Practice.* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications, pp. 128-130.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study*, Vol. I, *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd., pp. 192-208.

UNIT 4 WRITING THE MINUTES OF BUSINESS MEETINGS: OVERVIEW

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We can define minutes of meetings as permanent records for reference of deliberations carried out, and decisions and recommendations arrived at, by a group of people talking together in a formally convened and conducted gathering. Meetings constitute one of the activities which consume a large part of executive management time and they are a common experience, an important undertaking and stock-in-trade activities of an organisation. Meetings vary in formality and amplitude from the family meeting and meetings of friends through community and staff meetings to company Board and Annual General Meetings (AGMs), parliamentary sessions and meetings of international organisations. They are a vital tool of management control in organisations.

For meetings to play their proper role of helping to mould and implement policies and maintain order and discipline for the purpose of achieving and sustaining high productivity, they must be properly conducted and the decisions taken in them must also be accurately recorded. The conducting of meetings is not properly a part of this course, which is concerned with effective business communication. It is the writing of the minutes which clearly belongs to the course. However, it is considered that no harm will be done by the discussing of the conducting of meetings as an introduction to the treatment of minutes-writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain what minutes of meetings mean
- give reasons for their importance in the records of organisations (in our case, business firms)
- identify the characteristics which make them good and reliable records.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Conducting of Meetings

A Secretary or reporter at a meeting records the proceedings and decisions of the meeting. He/she is not the Chairman who performs the function of conducting the meeting. So, it is not really strictly necessary that the Secretary know the rules of conducting meetings. Therefore, it may be said that conduct of meetings is strictly not a part of minutes-keeping. However, it should be obvious that a reporter's knowledge of the procedures of conducting meetings will greatly enhance his/her understanding of the deliberations carried out and the decisions taken and, concomitantly, the accuracy with which he/she can record those proceedings and decisions.

It is for this reason, as pointed out in the introduction, that the conduct of meetings is being discussed here. The discussion will attempt to cover meetings in general rather than the meetings of any particular groups.

As Adair (1973) states, it is part of the lot of leaders in any situation to be constantly in the "hot seat" as Chairmen or initiators of a wide range of meetings: briefing groups, consultations, committees and conferences. This is part of the function of managing exchange of information, which is part of leadership in contemporary society. In this function, the leader is attempting to seek and direct a true union of minds, wills and actions.

Careful attention to day-to-day business (which may be referred to as *routine work*) is vital for success in a leadership position in any organisation. Meetings form part of that routine. They should receive the same care and attention as a meeting with a Head of State or an interview on television. The cumulative result of basic routine in an organisation is usually greater in the long run than such isolated, though spectacular activities as a meeting with a Head of State or an interview on television. Meetings are part of the foundation of effective work.

That a thing is routine does not necessarily mean that it is unimportant. To be routine is to be repetitive, but it does not have to be boring on that account. We need to overcome – through effective handling – the temptation to feel that meetings are unimportant and tedious simply because they are routine events.

The conducting of meetings does offer a particular challenge to the exercise of some particular leadership functions, such as concerning the use of the skills of clarifying, summarizing and testing for consensus. Of course, the leader (Chairman) does not have (and should not claim) a monopoly of leadership capabilities, but he must constantly see it as his/her special responsibility to provide such leadership in order to leave the rest of the members free to concentrate on the business in hand.

3.1.1 Planning (or Preparation)

3.1.1.1 Planning

This refers to the allocation of resources (in the face of the constraints of time and space) to achieve an aim or objective. Thus, it is a way of structuring the meeting, so that it tackles the work in hand with order. It involves decisions about a framework or structure for the meeting. In plain terms, this is the drawing up of the agenda. One of the most important qualities of a plan is flexibility.

3.1.1.2 Allocation of Sub-tasks, e.g., Note-Taking and Minutes-Writing

Sometimes, established procedures in an organisation allocate these tasks on a routine basis, but the Chairman must still ensure that there are people to perform them at each meeting. Also, there may be *ad hoc* tasks, which he must remember to allocate. Regarding the task of notes-taking and minutes-writing, we might raise for discussion the question: who is the most appropriate person to perform this task in a group?

Deciding on procedure rules is part of planning. Are all remarks to be addressed to the Chairman? Are speakers not to be interrupted? Are speakers to be limited to certain lengths of speech? These rules may be based on convention (or rules of debates), on bye-laws or standing orders of a particular organisation, or on general compilations in many publications.

Required infrastructure should be provided, e.g., lighting, seating arrangement, refreshment, etc. (Note that the type of seating arrangement can impose its own – often unwelcome – pattern on the pattern of exchange of information).

Planning is not a mechanical function. It involves the valuing, analyzing and synthesizing abilities of the mind. It should grade tasks into priorities: what must be done; what should be done, and what might be done. (Note that priorities can change as situations demand, and that over-planning is as damaging as under-planning).

3.2 First Step: The Calling or Convening of a Meeting

A written note (which varies in degrees of formality, as appropriate) is sent to remind members of a date, venue and time agreed to at a previous meeting, or to convene the meeting afresh, in both cases the note being accompanied with the minutes of the previous meeting. A reasonable period should be allowed: not so long as to cause forgetting by members, but long enough to allow for a slow postal service to function. (This is a function of the Secretary on the directive of the Chairman).

3.3 Holding the Meeting

3.3.1 Commencement or Initiation of the Meeting

The Chairman should establish whether a quorum has been formed according to an already established rule of the group. (Note the great variations in the quorum. One-third is popular with large groups and half with small groups, but any group is free to decide its own quorum).

Question: Should a meeting discontinue if a commencing quorum decreases below an officially approved quorum? That is not the convention, but a group may decide otherwise if that best meets its particular purpose.

Note:

(i) Some time (usually 30 minutes) from the scheduled time of beginning may be allowed for a quorum to be formed.

(ii) In groups in which rules require that a meeting be abandoned if a quorum is lost in the course of the meeting, some people suggest that the *Standing Orders* should be suspended to allow the meeting to continue, but this is absolutely illegal because there is no quorum to permit any decision to be taken, including the decision to suspend the Standing Orders.

(iii) The ease and timeliness with which a quorum can be achieved depend very largely on the reputation which the officials are able to achieve for the meetings of a group.

(iv) Meetings should be started on time or as soon afterwards as possible for two reasons:-

- If meetings never start on time, members will even stop trying to come early.
- If late comers are made to feel the embarrassment of disrupting a meeting already in progress, they will try harder to be punctual.

When a quorum is formed, the Chairman *rises* (depending on degree of formality of the group) to start the meeting. His standing makes him visible to all members and reminds the meeting that all business must be conducted through him. In his opening remarks – speaking rigorously briefly and to the point – the Chairman states or re-states the purpose of the meeting: *what* it is for and *why* it is necessary, valuable or desirable.

***Note*:**

(i) Some members who do not understand the Chairman's statement may not say so at this initial stage. So, the Chairman should seek feedback gesturally or by some acceptable form of articulation from the very onset. A succinct re-formulating of the statement or an enticement of another member to put the statement in another phrasing will solve the problem.

(ii) Brevity on the Chairman's part will teach other members the good manners of brevity.

Controlling: This consists of the pattern of words and actions which keep the discussion on course. The following points about controlling should be noted:-

(i) An effective group will not need much spurring on or whipping: a slight pressure, a subtle hint or even a look will be enough to re-unite the group at any one point with the objective of the meeting.

(ii) When emotional members ignore these gentle methods, then, the controlling function must be applied. However, a touch of humour is valuable here to reduce the effect of sharp words. Any appearance of autocracy or insensitivity must be avoided. A Chairman's general reputation aids him greatly in maintaining order.

(iii) Sarcasm, facetiousness, slighting remarks, hectoring or bullying are inappropriate methods of controlling group discussions; they thwart achievement of group objectives, team maintenance and individual needs. They inflict grievous wounds. Rather, use should be made of the quiet reminder about time constraints; a firm tone of voice or a re-statement of the problem or decision still lying on the table can also be used. To stop long-winded speakers, the Chairman can say: "Are you objecting? You are not?" Right. Next business".

(iv) Summarizing at intervals of a meeting will help to make remaining matters stand out clearly. The summary must be accurate, simple, clear and vivid, so that all members will immediately accept it as a true statement of the business already done.

(v) Interpreting one form of expression (e.g., a complex economic or financial statement) into a simpler statement is also very valuable for the progress of a meeting.

(vi) Chairman's participation in discussions: Generally, he speaks only as Chairman, clarifying, informing, urging, encouraging, distributing permissions, ruling, etc. One of the times when he freely participates in discussions for a prolonged period is when he has very valuable information or knowledge on a subject under discussion. In such a case – depending on degree of formality – he may announce that he is speaking in his personal capacity (or, indeed, on serious matters, hand over chairmanship of the meeting to the Vice-Chairman).

(vii) How are discussions brought to an end?

(a) At any time during a debate, any member *who has not spoken* may move: "That the question be now put". This must be supported by another member *who also has not spoken*. No further debate is allowed. The Chairman puts the issue to the vote with the statement: "The question before the meeting is …" If a voting then yields a decision, it ends the discussion.

(b) A member who wants no decision taken on an issue for all kinds of reasons may move: "I move the previous question" or "that the meeting proceed with the next business". Such motions are appropriately supported and taken and, if successful, that ends debate on the issue. If unsuccessful, a vote is taken on the substantive issue and, either way, the discussion ends. The latter motion is moved and supported only by members who have not spoken.

(viii) *The Chairman's Vote*

- In elections, he has only one vote like any other member.
- In general issues, he usually does not vote (although he is quite free to do so) unless there is a tie, in which case he exercises the *casting vote* (which he must wield with great responsibility) to decide the issue on one side. (Note: There are several other technical terms).

Giving Support to Speakers: Support is needed in a meeting at various points:-

(i) The silent individual: The Chairman can verbally or by use of a quizzing look find out whether the silent individual wants to contribute to a debate. Of course, not everyone wants to speak in a meeting. There are many ways of sharing and contributing without speaking, but the Chairman should create an atmosphere in which everyone feels that he can speak if he wishes and that, if necessary, he will be protected against group or individual member's hostility.

(ii) During and after a speech, a member may need a sustaining atmosphere of interest and encouragement.

(iii) In moments of general despondency, despair, doubt and tension, the Chairman's calmness and confidence in the fundamental goodness of the group can sustain the group in its trials. So also does the leader receive refreshment from the group's resources of faith and hope which a meeting of similar minds usually releases.

(iv) Every member must also participate in creating and sustaining a positive philosophy and a set of values and in maintaining a cohesive but easy unity of relationships and purpose. A leader's example of good listening will encourage the same attribute in the participants.

Information: The Chairman is the natural channel (indeed, even filter) of information into, or out of, a meeting before, during and after a meeting. *In briefing groups* (in which he transmits information down – directives, policies, facts, rules, etc.) and in *joint consultations* (in which he is receiving information for upwards and sideways transmission), he must be able to interpret information in a form suitable for the intended audience without any loss of central meaning, insertion of unintended overtones or addition of unintended glosses or flavours.

3.3.5 Evaluating

(i) It means testing the worth or value of something. It may be quantitative (where some measure or yardstick is applied) or qualitative (a judgement based on a set of individually imperfect criteria).

(ii) It may be achieved in various ways:-

- Assessing results against the purpose of the meeting: if it was to take a decision, has a decision been taken? If it was to decide on implementation of an earlier decision, will implementation be done after the meeting?
- Assessing decisions against established values and standards: have these values or standards been maintained?
- Assessing decisions against measures of commitment or levels of consensus (which does not mean unanimity but expectation – the possible best in a situation). Note that determining consensus is a very delicate matter. Deception through such signs as smiles

from a few members, nods of the head, etc. is an ever-present danger.

3.3.6 Ending

(i) The meeting should not just peter out or have a ragged end.
(ii) A feeling of satisfaction over a good and fruitful meeting and a feeling that all items have been given sufficient time should emerge at this point.
(iii) If some items have to be deferred, there should be no undue acrimony among members or against the Chairman over that.
(iv) The Chairman makes closing remarks, thanking all members for their attendance and contributions, highlighting the achievements of the meeting and, if necessary, reminding members of the venue, date and time for the next meeting.

3.3.7 Conclusion to the Discussion of the Conduct of Meetings

(i) Meetings of groups of ordinary people (such as rank and file of labour unions) should not be regarded or treated as unimportant. They should be conducted to carry the conviction that the lives of these people are important and that these meetings are as important to ordinary people as Board meetings are to company Directors.
(ii) We should bear in mind that chairmanship is closely interwoven with leadership style. Psychologists' and sociologists' classification of leadership styles into *Authoritarian, Autocratic, Bureaucratic, Democratic, Charismatic,* etc. is simply inadequate. Leadership style is a very unique attribute. It is always deeply at work in our conduct of meetings.

3.4 The Purpose of Minutes-Writing

Obviously, the most important reason for writing minutes is to keep records of deliberations and decisions at meetings (in order, first, to aid the memory and prevent the forgetting of those deliberations and decisions), secondly, to facilitate implementation of decisions and, thirdly, to provide a foundation upon which future discussions and decisions can be based. Such foundations prevent repetition of earlier discussions and decisions and the delay, time-wasting and retrogression attendant on such repetitions, and make for steady progress in the business of an organisation.

One of the evident negative effects of literacy is decline in the power of the memory. Any person of an advanced age who lived among rural folk cannot have failed to be impressed by the enormous power of memory of those non-literate rural people. Events dating to several years and social transactions and dealings of great amplitude and complexity were all kept in the mind. With literacy (the ability to read and write, i.e., to inscribe information onto, and glean information from paper), the mind is relieved of the need to retain information and much forgetting sets in. This is why it becomes important to write the minutes of meetings, as well as to keep written records of affairs in several other spheres of human life and activities. Of course, in modern times, information keeping and retrieving have attained all-time sophistication with the invention of the high-level technology now involved in the handling of information.

The second (and less evident, though not less important) purpose of minutes-writing is to meet legal requirements that may attach to meetings. Where, for example, parties contesting certain interests go into conflict over a decision supposed to have been taken at a meeting, proof must be provided about a number of matters regarding the meeting in order for the claims or position of the concerned side to be sustained, such as:-

1. whether the meeting actually took place;
2. whether a quorum was formed before the meeting began, and
3. whether the persons who attended the meeting had the right to attend it.

In most routine meetings in offices, among community members, religious groups, etc., these contentious issues may not arise, but when one considers trade union and political meetings and company Annual General Meetings (AGMs), one cannot fail to appreciate the need to keep accurate records of all proceedings and events at a meeting and of all aspects of the meeting. It is not uncommon to hear contestants to an issue claiming such things as that a meeting at which certain decisions were supposed to have been taken were not properly convened or that the persons who attended the meeting were not eligible to attend it, and so on. As we later comment on the different components of the minutes of a meeting, it will be seen how these elements have evolved as parts of minutes for the purpose of meeting different social, legal or record-keeping needs.

A third (indeed, an incidental) purpose of writing minutes, the purpose of which most people would be unaware (and the value of which only rarely comes to light) is that of providing an *alibi* for the persons attending the meeting. It is only occasionally that the need arises for a person to provide evidence of his whereabouts at a particular time. However, when such a need arises, presence at a meeting can be a perfect, almost irrefutable *alibi* since both others present at the meeting and the minutes themselves can testify to the *alibi*.

The above are the reasons why minutes-keeping is important and must, therefore, be handled with great care.

3.5 The Skills for the Writing of Minutes

Many secretaries (reporters or rapporteurs) who write the minutes of meetings are not always aware of the fact that a very strong foundation for their activity is provided by one particular language function, i.e., Reported Speech (or Direct and Indirect Speech). Because many of these reporters never mastered or have forgotten the rules of Reported Speech, the minutes they write are usually deficient in many respects. One writer has remarked that many adults write badly for the reason that, while being taught the rules of language use in school they had so little to write about that they paid no attention. On the other hand, when, as adults, they have a lot to write about, they have forgotten the rules which they were taught in school. I do not want, however, to bore you with a revision of the rules of Direct and Indirect (Reported) Speech. I want to believe that all of you have learnt these rules on both your primary and secondary schools programmes. However, Okenimkpe (2004:219-224) has analysed these rules into six categories. It will do you some good to read that discussion because it will greatly enhance your ability to write the minutes of meetings competently.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Describe the activities that you would undertake if you were planning a meeting of the senior staff of a Sales Department in a tyre distributing firm.
2. Describe under clear headings the functions of the Chairman of a meeting.
3. Justify the writing and keeping of the minutes of meetings in a firm.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Unit has clearly shown that minutes-writing in business enterprises (indeed, in any group undertaking) is an activity which demands specific skills. The Unit also demonstrates that minutes are an essential instrument for preserving and safeguarding the records of the activities of a firm and, therefore, for ensuring that continuing actions for progress are based on past actions, i.e., are taken on the need for enhancement of successful or avoidance of unsuccessful actions of the past. So, it is very important that adequate relevant knowledge be obtained about the writing of minutes of meetings.

5.0 SUMMARY

We can summarise the subject of this chapter as follows:-

1. ***The Conduct of Meetings*:** Although the procedure for the conducting of meetings is not exactly a part of minutes-writing, knowledge of this procedure does assist the Secretary or record-keeper in writing minutes accurately and competently.
2. ***Purpose of Writing Minutes of Meetings*:** To create and keep records of activities in an organisation, provide legal authentication for certain actions and decisions and, when necessary, provide a convincing *alibi* for persons participating in the meeting.
3. ***The Skills for the Writing of Minutes*:** Skilful minutes-writing is firmly founded on knowledge of the rules of Reported Speech (or Indirect Speech) and on observance of practices which prevent verbose reporting. Such practices include clear understanding of the debate and decisions being reported, avoidance of unnecessary crediting of speakers with points of debate, use of patterns of sentences which help in making statements concise, and so on.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: The answer is in Sections 3.1.1.1. and 3.2. I am sure you can relate the points made in these sections to a meeting of the senior staff of a Sales Department in a tyre distributing firm.
Question 2: The answer is clearly in Section 3.3. Make your points concise to avoid excessive length.
Question 3: Section 3.4. provides the answer.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Describe the functions which meetings play in the affairs of a business.
2. If you are the Foreman of the workshop in your firm which sells motor vehicles, whom would you choose as the Secretary or reporter (or rapporteur) of a meeting of all your staff to discuss the equipping of your workshop? Give ample reasons for your choice.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Adair, John (1973). *Training for Communication.* Westmead: Gower Press.

Ogbulogo, Charles (2004). *Business Communication in Practice.* Lagos: Sam Isoanusi, pp. 125-130.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study*, Vol. I: *Theory, Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing, pp. 210-224.

UNIT 5 THE WRITING OF THE MINUTES OF BUSINESS MEETINGS, LETTERS CONVENING MEETINGS, COMMUNIQUÉS AND GOODS/SERVICES ADVERTISEMENTS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 4 of this Module Three, we discussed the preliminary and ancillary activities in the writing of minutes of minutes. In this Unit 5, we shall examine the actual writing of minutes. You have to start off with recognition of the fact that minutes-writing – whether at social or official meetings of various organisations (business, of course, included) – is one of those very familiar but very poorly performed tasks. One of the reasons for this poor handling of this task is that many of the people who carry out the task are unsuited for the job because their control of language use is weak and because they are not at all trained in the art of minutes-writing.

So, it is important that, for many reasons, you understand thoroughly how to write the minutes of meetings. If the minutes are poorly written, permanent damage would have been done to the records of the firm and, so, to the achievement of its aims and objectives. We shall also examine letters convening meetings.

You will need about three hours for studying the unit. As usual, you should strive to digest its every point, accomplishment of which you will be sure of by the ease and correctness with which you do the Self Assessment Exercise. Also, you should conscientiously answer the Tutor-marked Assessment Questions (TMQs) and return your answers to the University for your Tutor's screening. Always bear in mind that your scores in the TMAQs form part of your overall grading on the course.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the components of a set of minutes, explain how each is written and justify your point of view
- write the full minutes of a meeting
- write letters convening meetings.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Hints on the Technique of Reporting Minutes

These are summarized here below.

1. Ensure complete understanding of matter (memoranda, discussions, decisions) to be reported by having a mental grasp of it. If in doubt, ask for clarification; if that is not possible, take verbatim notes and verify afterwards.
2. Decide on the essential points of the discussion. Not everything uttered at a meeting is worthy of being recorded. Over-writing makes minutes verbose and unwieldy and intimidating to members to read.
3. Using, as far as possible, your own words (retaining only essential expressions in the original discussion), write the important points in a logical sequence, irrespective (in a specific item) of the order in which the points occurred in the original memo or discussion.
4. Except for the Chairman, avoid (wherever possible) referring to discussants by name. Rather, use the express "a member", except where a member has spoken by special authority or knowledge, such as a Managing Director giving a piece of instruction or a doctor reporting on a medical examination.
5. Omit all such subsidiary matter as flourishes or subterfuge of speech, jokes, illustrations (or examples), quotations, exclamations, rhetorical questions, proverbs or figures of speech, digressions, etc., unless they are integral to the matter.
6. Write in the Third Person and turn Direct Speech into Indirect Speech.
7. Avoid repeating yourself.
8. Do not introduce into the report any comments, remarks, opinions, criticisms or appraisals of your own; your business is

solely to report the substance of discussion, decisions and memoranda.

9. Note that complex sentences (which make ample use of Participial Phrases) are very helpful for condensing matter.
10. The minutes of a meeting ordinarily begin with a heading, which identifies the organisation or group holding the meeting and the place and date (in that order) of the meeting. It is common practice also for many reporters to state in the heading the time of the commencement of the meeting, but this is not a very good thing to do because most reporters who do this do not always remember to ascertain the exact time at which the meeting actually began. So, they tend to record the time for which the meeting was convened to begin even though meetings rarely begin at their scheduled time. For the legal purpose of establishing the veracity of a meeting and an *alibi* for all persons participating in the meeting, it is vital to record the exact time at which a meeting opens and closes (adjourns). A way of making the heading clear is, first of all, to write down, all in capital (upper case) letters, the name of the major organisation to which the members belong and follow that with the designation of the group that is meeting (see the specimens of minutes given).

3.2 Specimens of Minutes

A specimen of the minutes of a meeting is given below for the purpose of illustrating the technique of writing minutes. It is a correct version of the actual minutes of an actual meeting as written by a reporter present at the meeting, who was a professional secretary and stenographer. However, the name of the institution involved and the names of the participants at the meeting have been changed to fictitious names for the purpose of concealing the identity of the organisation and the group.

APEX INDUSTRIES LIMITED

Minutes of a Meeting of the Senior Staff of the Personnel and Production Departments, held in the Production Dept. Common Room on 4th January, 2008.

79.0. **Attendance**
79.1. **Present:**
Dr. S. T. Mafika - Chairman]
The Rev. Canon John Oluyele
Dr. A. P. Oshuntokun
Dr. G. S. Akerele
Dr. (Mrs.) F. M. Soko
Mr. Q. T. Ajayi - Secretary
79.2. **Apology:** Mr. O. Nana
Mr. F. O. Alibaba
80.0. **Opening:**
80.1. The meeting OPENED at 9.00 a.m. with the Chairman's wishing of a happy new year to the members.
80.2. The meeting NOTED the Chairman's information that Mrs. N. K. Akpan and Miss F. Bolanle had been transferred away from the Departments. He WELCOMED Mrs. J. Ojo and Mr. S. N. Dauda, respectively replacing the transferred staff in the Personnel and Production Departments.
81.0 **Adoption of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting:**
81.1 The meeting ADOPTED the minutes of the meeting held on 30th November, 2007, with the following amendments:
81.1.1. **Minute 71.0:**
1. "Rev. Canon J. Oluyele" should read "The Rev. Canon John Oluyele".
2. "Dr. (Mrs) F. M. Soko" should read "Dr. (Mrs) J. M. Soko".
3. Include Mr. T. N. Barback on the list of members present.
81.1.2. Minute 73 should read 74 and the numbers after it should be changed accordingly.
81.1.3. **Minute 75:**
1. "Pole" (page 4, line 4 from the bottom) should read "Poles".
2. Delete one of the repeated "of the staff" (page 5, line 6).
81.1.4. **Minutes 76:**
1. Change "given" (page 9, line 2) to "giving").
2. Change "caotic" (page 9, line 23) to "chaotic".
81.2. The meeting DECIDED that the names of members absent from meetings in future should be listed under
"Absent".
82.0. **Matters Arising:**

82.1. **Minute 72:** The meeting NOTED the Chairman's information that Dr. P. Osinulu had resigned his recent appointment to the Personnel Department to take up a new post at the University of Benin.

82.2.0. **Minute 74** (Paragraphs 1 and 2):

82.2.1. The meeting NOTED the Chairman's information that the Staff Seminars proposed for the 5th of January had been postponed.

82.2.2. The meeting was REMINDED of the questionnaire circulated to collect members' research and seminar topics and URGED to return the questionnaire promptly to the Research Committee.

82.2.3. Arising from a complaint about late delivery of the questionnaire, the meeting DECIDED (a) that mail pigeon-holes, individually allotted to the staff, would be provided in each unit, (b) that, pending construction of the pigeon-holes, mail for each unit would be delivered to the respective secretaries for onward distribution.

82.2.4. The meeting AGREED that seminar papers should be presented to the coordinator and discussants a week before due dates of the seminars.

82.2.5. Having regard to the fact that the college would be closed during the FESTAC anniversary, the meeting DECIDED to postpone seminars till after the festival, and thereafter, to hold seminars weekly to make up for the short-fall caused by the interruption.

82.2.6. The meeting DECIDED that each Dept. should carry out a group research project.

82.3.0. **Paragraph 3 of Minute 74**

82.3.1. The meeting NOTED the Chairman's information that the Personnel Dept. would soon move to its new building and vacate room LGE 07 for use of the Production Dept.

82.3.2. Following the Chairman's answer in the negative to a questioner, it was POINTED OUT that senior staff members' rooms should be carpeted so that a good image of the Depts. would be projected before the outsiders who formed the majority of their clientele. The meeting SUGGESTED, therefore, that a special request be made to the G.M. for the carpets.

82.4. **End-of-Year-Party:** The Chairman thanked members for their support for the party.

83.0. **Report from the Sales Promotion Committee**

The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the amended paper, particularly for the details provided on page 4, but led the meeting to discover that the prices recommended exceeded the prescribed maximum for the rest of the company. The meeting AGREED that the committee should meet again to review the prices.

84.1. The meeting RECEIVED the information from the Head of the Production Dept. that the Unit had been processing employment applications and had forwarded them to the G.M. for final decision; also, that the G.M. had given approval for the next employment list to be released on Friday, 18th February, at which the Asst. G. M. would deputise for the G.M., the latter being away.

84.2. Answering a questioner who wished to know whether the Departments' senior staff could be granted exemption from the G.M.'s recent ruling that senior staff should take their leave only during the Christmas vacation – bearing in mind that senior staff of other departments enjoyed a work-free three-month period while these departments' staff were working without a break during the year – the Chairman asserted that the system might soon be unified to restrict senior staff to only earned leave.

85.0. **Adjournment:** After the next meeting was fixed to take place in the new Personnel Dept. building on Tuesday 22nd February, 2008, the meeting adjourned at 10.00 a.m on a motion moved by Dr. Akerele and seconded by Mr. Kiukwu.

R. O. Ajayi
S. T. Mafika
Secretary
Chairman

Date………….
Date …………

3.2.1 Notes on the Minutes

1. **The Heading:** The heading in the original version was a breath-taking, clangorous type because it uses too many qualifying words before the main subject, "Staff Meeting". To break that over-loading, it is a good practice first to write down in bold letters the name of the umbrella or parent organisation of which the section holding the meeting is a part.
2. **The Commencing Time of the Meeting:** It should be noted that the commencing time of the meeting (which was part of the heading in the original version) has been taken away from the heading and placed in the *Opening*. When the opening time is stated in the heading, the tendency, as stated earlier, is for the reporter to state the time indicated in the convening notice. It is rare that a meeting actually begins at its convened time. For the purpose of accurate recording of the time of a meeting, it is better to place that statement in the *Opening* because that requirement compels the recorder to check the exact time of the commencement of the meeting.
3. **Numbering:** There are basically two systems of numbering, i.e., the decimalized system employing only *Arabic* figures and the multi-element system employing several symbols. Obviously, the decimalized system has become more popular and, indeed,

has many advantages over the other system. Care has been taken in the specimen to ensure that no number exceeds three elements (components) as the system becomes clumsy and confusing when numbers exceed three elements (components).

However, a point to note in the numbering in the specimen is the beginning of the numbers from 79. This means that the establishment involved was using a system of continuous numbering from previous years, dating, perhaps, to the very founding of the organisation. There are a number of systems which, depending on preference, may be adopted by an establishment, such as:-

(i) ***Continuous numbering from the very founding of an establishment, which goes on for an indefinite period*:** Many large organs of some institutions (such as senates of universities) and many high-status organisations (such as parliaments and international bodies) use this system.

(ii) ***Continuous numbering for individual calendar years*:** In some cases of the use of this continuous system, the year in question is, in whole or part, prefixed to each number, e.g., 77/79.0. (or 1977/79.0). It has the advantage that the year of the meeting is easily identified and its minutes are more easily located if they are needed for reference.

(iii) ***Individual numbering of each meeting*:** Here, the number of each meeting's minutes begins from 1.0. So, the date of a meeting is identified solely from the date indicated in the heading of the minutes.

Whatever system one applies, the vital need is to use that system correctly and consistently.

4. Recording Attendance

Differences in the recording of attendance in minutes should be noted. Some begin from *Present*, while some begin from *Attendance*. Either practice is acceptable provided the components are correctly numbered. It should be noted, however, that *Apology* or *Apologies* should be used as appropriate, i.e., depending on whether one person or more persons than one sent apologies. It should be noted also that it is not necessary to state in *Apologies* the reason given by a person for not being present. Listing the name is enough, while the reason given is kept in the file or as privileged information to the Secretary and/or the Chairman. Sometimes, such reasons can be quite personal and private.

In all of *Present*, *Apologies* and *Absent*, a member must be listed by his/her full name (or, at least, surname and initials) and his/her title or titles. Only these give the person his/her full identity. Anything short of that can be denied by the person involved or by other persons as identifying the person concerned. A small point to mention is the convention that when the clerical title *Reverend* (*Rev*.) is used, the article "The" and the full personal names of the cleric are also used, e.g., "The Rev. Mr. John Oluyele". This also applies in the body of the minutes.

A very important point concerns the listing of absent members under the title, *Absent*. It is not an ordinary, or routine or necessary requirement in the recording of attendance. Secretaries should be aware that it is a form of rebuke or sanction, mild as it may be deemed, for a person to be listed as being absent. The duty of the Secretary is to record attendance for the purpose of attesting to the authenticity of the meeting, not to administer a rebuke on anybody, many of whom are usually superior to him/her in rank and from whom, therefore, he may earn punitive antagonism. Therefore, a Secretary must have an authorizing instrument for recording absences at a meeting before he/she can do such recording. Such an instrument comes in the form of a decision at a meeting of the group concerned.

If the Chairman or members of a group become worried about poor attendance at meetings of their group, one of them may raise the matter at a meeting and lead the meeting to adopt a resolution that absent members be listed in the minutes. When such a resolution is taken, the Secretary must record it carefully (see the points made below about *resolutions*), so that the resolution will become his authority for carrying on the listing of absent members. Not even an instruction or a directive from the Chairman or another superior official in an organisation is sufficient authority for a Secretary to record absences. Where a Secretary finds himself/herself in the worrying ambiguous position of uncertainty about recording or not recording absences, he can himself/herself cleverly and subtly raise the issue at a meeting or get someone else to do so, with a view to obtaining a resolution on the matter and recording the resolution and establishing an instrument under which he/she can carry out that action.

5. The Opening

This is a straightforward, concise recording of the remarks with which the Chairman opens the meeting. The remarks themselves are not usually of great import and, so, their recording should not be belaboured. Sometimes a prayer may be said by the Chairman or by someone else appointed by him, in which case, we might have a statement like: "The meeting opened at (exact time) with a prayer said by … As already noted and just implied in the sentence above, the exact time of the beginning of the meeting is recorded in this section of the minutes.

6. The Adopting of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The first point to note here is that the meeting preceding the present one is referred to as the *previous* meeting, not the last meeting. When minutes are written in notebooks, they are read out aloud to the members for them to point out errors of language or of substance and to propose amendments or corrections to the errors for general or majority approval by the meeting. When the minutes are circulated earlier to members, the Chairman takes the members through the minutes item by item, sometimes after allowing them some minutes to read or re-familiarise themselves with the minutes, in order for them again to point out, and propose amendments to, mistakes. When all errors have been corrected (or no errors observed), a member moves a motion for adoption of the minutes as a correct record of the proceedings of the meeting concerned. The motion is supported by another member and the minutes become adopted as a correct record.

As the specimen shows, the recording of adoption is a simple uncomplicated statement. "On a motion for adoption moved by Mr. … and seconded (supported) by Mr. …, the minutes were adopted as a correct record of the meeting of … (date)", and where there were amendments, the statement, "with the following amendments" is added. The specimen again shows the straightforward way in which the amendments are recorded.

7. Matters Arising

This refers to issues related to discussions and decisions made at the previous meeting. It is a good practice (which saves time, promotes smoothness of discussions and ensures full coverage of all matters) for the Secretary to write down (for the Chairman to use for conducting this part of the current meeting) all matters arising in the order of their appearance in the minutes of the previous meeting. The business here usually entails reporting by the Chairman or another person of the actions that had been taken about each matter under discussion. To save time, high-level groups usually record in writing for distribution to meeting members the situation regarding each matter of continuing interest or relevance to the meeting. The recording here always refers to the number of the item in the minutes under discussion (see the specimen).

8. The Business of the Day

These are fresh matters for discussion at a meeting. They are usually listed in the notice convening the meeting as the **Agenda** for the meeting.

In the specimen minutes, the business of the day consists of only Item 83. As can be seen in those minutes, immediately after the *Matters Arising* have been recorded, the substantive business of the day is recorded without any subterfuge. However, it is perfectly permissible for a Secretary to designate an item as **Business of the Day** and give it a number. In this case, all matters discussed under that item become sub-items under the main item (Business of the Day) and its number. For example, if we had used the title "Business of the Day", we would have had the following numbers and sub-titles:-

8.3.0 Business of the Day:
8.3.1 Report from the Sales Promotion Committee:
If there had been any other fresh business, it would have become item 8.3.2, and so on. As I have said, however, there is no real need for use of that title (Business of the Day). Fresh items of discussion can be simply numbered after *Matters Arising* and recorded.

9. Any Other Business (AOB)

These are relevant or related unlisted issues which the Chairman or any other member may raise for discussion. They are given a main number and sub-numbers for the different items under the main number and title (see the specimen minutes). An important matter to note here – which is actually more relevant to the conducting of meetings than to the writing of minutes – is that important or serious matters are not raised in AOB. The reason for this should be obvious. A member may decide to put off other commitments and attend a meeting on account of an item of interest to him/her listed on the agenda in the notice of the meeting. So, if an important matter not listed on the agenda is taken up in the AOB of a meeting, a number of members may be denied the opportunity of contributing to the discussion of the matter.

10. Closing

Like the opening, it usually consists of the Chairman's closing remarks (and perhaps a closing prayer). It is sometimes given the title of *Adjournment*. Like the opening, it is recorded in a straightforward way without unnecessary embellishments.

11. Signatures

It is important for the Secretary and the Chairman to sign one copy of the minutes and put that copy in the minutes file as the official copy. In any serious issue relating to the minutes, it is this signed copy that will be referred to, cited, submitted, produced or demanded by an interested party or by an authority. Where minutes are recorded in a book, the signing by the Secretary and Chairman is an easy matter.

12. Verb Tenses

The specimen minutes have completely eliminated the very many errors of tenses of verbs in the original minutes, applying strictly the relevant rules in the general rules of Reported Speech. That relevant rule is that all tenses in Direct Speech (in this case, the tense of the discussions at the meeting) must move one step to the past in Reported Speech (in this case, the report in the minutes). As should be noted in the rules, the exception to this particular rule is that if the Direct Speech (or the discussion) was made in the Past Participle tense, the verb of the Direct Speech (or discussion) is retained in Reported Speech (or minutes) because it cannot move any further into the past, e.g., a member might say at a meeting: "The Managing Director (MD) *had thought of* raising salaries before he *received* the Trade Union's petition on the matter". The report would go like this: The Managing Director *had thought* (no change) of … *had received* (change to the next tense, although in most cases, *received* would still be acceptable). …

13. Use of Names of Discussants

Over-use of names of discussants at a meeting is to be avoided. Use of names is one of the ways in which minutes are made unnecessarily long and, therefore, boring for members to read. Obviously, if the reporter states that Okoye said so and so, Akpan, Oriede, Daudu and others who made any remarks at a meeting will also insist that the reporter should equally name them in the minutes even where they themselves cannot even remember what they said at the previous meeting. Out of respect for the Chairman, he is the member constantly credited under the title of Chairman for anything he said. Other persons who may be referred to by name and/or title are those who make points on account of either their special expertise, assignment carried out, position or authority. For example, a doctor or lawyer making a statement from a strictly medical or legal position should be credited by name and/or title (as appropriate) with the statement because only he/she could possibly make such a statement. A person reporting on an assignment should be credited with the statement which he makes. A Managing Director or Personnel Manager speaking strictly on a policy matter should be credited with his statement. However, other members should be reported in such words as: “A member said, remarked, noted, etc.”, or, in the Passive Voice”: It was observed, said, noted that … etc.”

Indeed, there is even a legal or security reason for avoiding the use of people’s names in reporting the events at a meeting. If , for example, a person proposed at a meeting than the workers go on strike over some grievances with the management, or that a community embark upon a resistance action against the government, obviously it would be placing such a person at risk to report what he/she said or proposed under his/her name. So, apart from enhancing conciseness, avoidance of use of names of discussants as appropriate can also bring about the protection of the members from harassment by interested groups.

14. Recording Motions, Proposals and Resolutions

Motions and *proposals* mean the same thing. They mean the decisions resulting from discussion of motions. Such decisions constitute *resolutions.* Now, every formal motion must be recorded with the full name of the *mover* or *proposer* and the full name of the *supporter* or *seconder*. In other words, we write in the minutes: Mr. T. N. Ebomiele moved a motion that monthly dues be increased to N50.00 (fifty naira only) and the motion was seconded by Miss I. S. Kegwehi. Of course, if the names of the mover and the seconder are already in the attendance list, the initials may be omitted. Unless these names are recorded, the motions and any resolutions arising from them are not valid. A proposal for the adoption of the minutes of a previous meeting or the adjournment of a meeting are formal *motions* and, so, must be recorded with the names of the proposer and the seconder. Hence we write: on a motion for adjournment moved by Dr. F. S. Ohikena and seconded by Mrs. I. S. Borha, the meeting adjourned at 2.30 p.m.

15. The Use of Full Capitalisation in the Writing of Words in the Specimen Minutes

It will have been observed that the words, *opened, noted, welcomed,* and many others are written in the specimen minutes completely in capital (upper case) letters. This is not a technical or a formal requirement in the writing of minutes. However, aiming at writing in upper case letters such major actions or decisions taken in the debate on an issue compels the recorder to try and grasp the essence of decisions and, therefore, to record them with precision and conciseness, avoiding rigmarole, circumlocution and ambiguity. It is a habit worth cultivating by minutes-writers.

In concluding this discussion of the actual process of minutes-writing, let us reiterate the point made several times already that minutes-writing should be seen as a serious matter and handled with every care.

3.3 Letters Convening Meetings

Letters in general are discussed in Modeule Two, Units 1-3. However, the letters with which meetings are convened (each of which is usually entitled **Notice of Meeting**) are closely related to the writing of the minutes of meetings. For example, these letters usually contain the *agenda* of the meeting, on which deliberations and, concomitantly, the minutes are based. Because of this close affinity between letters convening meetings and the writing of minutes, these letters are being discussed here.

We shall simply give three specimens of these letters with the purpose of illustrating the differing levels of formality which characterize the letters. With some groups, such as social clubs (in which members know one another personally), committees or societies in places of religious worship, community associations and similar groups, these letters can be very informal. However, for convening such strictly formal meetings as Annual General Meetings (AGMs) of business firms or meetings of such large and/or high-status bodies as parliaments, Boards of Directors, governing bodies of large public establishments, international organisations, and so on, the letters can look and sound so formal as to appear to be addressed to "whom it may concern".
Specimen A (addressed individually to each member of the committee)

Ilorin Badminton Club
5 Taiwo Crescent
Ilorin. 23 February, 2004

Mr. W. Gbadamosi.

Dear Mr. Gbadamosi,

A meeting of Committee will be held in the Clubhouse on Saturday, 2 March, at 5 p.m.

Agenda:

1. Minutes of Committee Meeting on 10 February, 2004.
2. Matters arising.
3. Membership.
4. Sub-Committee reports.

5. To authorize payment of staff pension to S. Ayida, Head Barman, in his retirement.
6. Letter from Mr. C. F. Aliyu about five-day membership.
7. AOB.

Yours sincerely,

N. Sofola
Secretary

Specimen B

The Enugu Chamber of Commerce
Tel: 532688
45 Governor's Drive
Telex: 3542Enugu.
E-mail: commerce@chamber.com

1 May, 2004.

Ethics Committee

To all members
The Annual General Meeting of the Ethics Committee will be held at 45 Governor's Drive, Enugu, on
Thursday, 23 May at 2.30 p.m. Please, let me know on the enclosed reply card whether you will be
able to attend.

T. S. Ekwutosi
(Secretary)

Enc.

Agenda
1. Minutes
2. Matters arising
3. Correspondence
4. Chairman's Report
5. Finance
6. Election of Office Bearers
7. Investigations Committee:
   Inspection visits
   Queries raised
   Responses to queries
8. Next meeting

9. Any other business

Enc.

Specimen C (Notice the great formality).

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the 50th Annual General Meeting of the Apex Textile Company Limited will be held at Textile House, Kano, on Wednesday, 5th May, 2004 at 11.30 a.m. for the following purposes:

1. To receive and consider the Company's Accounts and the Reports of the Directors and of the Auditors for the year ended 31st December, 2003.
2. To declare a dividend.
3. To elect Directors.
4. To authorize the Board to fix the remunerations of the Auditors for 2004.
5. To transact any other ordinary business.

By Order of the Board.

A. Gwandu, Secretary
Textile House
Kano.

4 April, 2004.

Even a more casual, informal or familiar tone in the commonplace memo. format, such as in the specimen below, could also be used.

From: Secretary
Management Committee
Executive Management
Accountancy (EMA) Course
(2004)

To: All Members

2 June, 2004

NOTICE OF MEETING
Please let us (or the Chairman directs/requests that we) have a meeting in his office, Room D4, Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, on Friday, 9th June, 2004, at 12.00 noon, to discuss the following matters:-

1. Minutes of meeting of 31/10/2003.
2. Matters arising.

3. Commencement of 2004 course. (Coordinator reports).
4. Current situation of course. (Coordinator reports).
5. Supplementary admissions.
6. Budget.
7. Any other business.

Please, attend punctually.
Lunch will be served.

Femi Dawodu
Secretary

There is a great need for a Secretary of a group or whoever else (such as the Chairman) that sends out the notice of a meeting to assess perceptively the degree of personal familiarity among the members of the group and, therefore, to determine appropriately the level of formality with which the affairs of the group should be conducted. in this way, he/she can attune his notices of meetings and other pieces of communication to that fact. It is as embarrassing to be over-familiar as it is to be over-formal. Above all, clarity at the highest level must be achieved in the message conveyed in a notice of a meeting, just as clarity must be aimed at in all pieces of communication.

3.4 Technical Terms in Reports of Proceedings of Meetings

We need not strain over the technical terms used in the reporting of minutes of meetings (see Marvor, 1980:148-149 and Okenimkpe, 2004: 244-247). It is useful to become familiar with them, but, in reality, they are more applicable to the meetings of high-level organisations, such as parliaments, trade unions, international bodies, and so on.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. List and explain briefly the parts which normally form the minutes of meetings written in business organisations.
2. Explain and illustrate the use of verb tenses in the writing of minutes.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Meetings are held in business establishments very frequently and minutes are written on them. These minutes are constantly demanded by management for checking on past performance and events to provide them with the basis for taking decisions for forward movement for the future. It is of the utmost importance that these minutes be proficiently written, so that they can reliably provide the backbone to management decisions which they are meant to provide. Business must aim at sourcing efficient hands to handle these writing tasks, and if you are employed to handle them, you should be able to acquit yourself satisfactorily.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have presented the minutes (records) of meetings in business as important documents in firms. These documents require high-level skills in language use and in techniques of composition. The components of minutes consist of the *heading*, the *commencing time of the meeting*, the *recording of attendance*, *apologies and absence*, the *numbering of items*, the *recording of attendance*, the *opening of the meeting*, the *adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising*, the *business of the day, any other business (A.O.B.), adjournment* (closing) and *signatures*. We also examined the use of verb tenses, the writing down of the names of participants, and the recording of motions, proposals and resolutions. Similarly, we examined the simplicity and straightforward nature of letters convening meetings and also referred to technical terms used in minutes.
These are all practices with which you are already familiar and which, therefore, should give you no undue difficulty in grasping.

ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Question 1: Items 1-11 (excluding 3) of Section 3.2.1. constitute the answer. As the question instructs you, make your explanations brief.

Question 2: Item 12 of Section 3.2.1 provides the answer. Illustrate your answer with examples of sentences that demonstrate the use of different tenses of the verb.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Assume that you were the Secretary (or Reporter) at a meeting of the managers of a large bank to discuss the issue of “customer behaviour and bank’s response”. Write the minutes of the meeting.
2. Comment briefly on (i) use of speakers’ names in the minutes of meetings; (ii) recording of apology (apologies); recording of resolutions at meetings.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Marvor, M. Ferrier (1980). *English for Business,* (2nd ed.). London: Pitman.

Ogbulogo, Charles (2004). *Business Communication in practice*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publishing, Chapter 12, pp. 145-154.

Okenimkpe, Michael N. (2004). *Practical Communication for Business and Study*, Vol. I: *Theory*, *Principles and Methods.* Lagos: Management Science Publishing Ltd., Chapter Eight.