

EDUC 172 Part 1-08

Okay well, here we are now moving on to the orality versus literacy part of our language in the curriculum course. The differences are obvious in many ways and here let's have a little example of exactly what we mean by that.

So we're just going to take a quick walk outside here and enjoy the outdoors. As you can tell, context is always present in oral communication. It's the context that we have to add when we're writing.

In oral communication, the world is ever-present and it's all around us. In literacy and in print communications, it's dominated by the visual and we can clear a space if we can get enough head space to do so to read even in noisy environments.

It's often much harder to hear in loud or complex sound environments.

You note there's a bus stopping and a road nearby and what we see around us is the world and it has context. That kind of context is what writing has to add when we pointed out with mortar words all those prepositional phrases

Here I am in the backyard or front yard of the house and looking around you get a sense that this is what's going on. As I'm speaking to you, I'm adapting to the sounds and the environment in which I'm in.

So I have all kinds of different spontaneous challenges to the way I express my ideas.

This is important because any kind of mood or change in the kind of feeling of a person affects the way they speak and so often when asked to defend our ideas in oral exam people find it more difficult to find the words they need because they're reacting to spontaneous input and trying to adapt what they're saying as they're talking.

We often have interruption too, and these are different kinds of ways that other people engage in conversation or that we ourselves lose the thread of what we're saying.

Our goal as speakers is often to sustain conversation or to sustain what we are saying to try and complete a message.

There are lots of different expressions that give us a sense of that, "um.., ah..." all that kind of thing which you hear me doing constantly as well, all different ways that we can sustain attention of the listener while speaking and collecting our thoughts.

These words are sometimes pillars but they're full of emotional content which is another one of the things that literacy has to convey through words but is usually conveyed immediately in an oral environment.

So when we're in these environments, these context laden, real environments orality draws from and uses that environment to fill in the words that literacy must write.

This is why it is much more complex write ideas out than to simply state them, because very little can be taken for granted.

There we go on a little tour outdoors to have a sense. Now if the outdoors provided you with any questions you might want to pose of me that wouldn't surprise me.

A part of oral language is that it's open to questions and interrogations and the ability to exchange ideas and move fluidly back and forth between speaker and listener roles.

Again, this is a key difference that print texts bring to our experience of language in that we can ask questions of authors and should and to be a good close reader, as we will see in part 2 of this course, is to be someone who asks questions of authors as we would ask questions of one another.

The idea of oral language is that it's a very powerful tool for communicating all kinds of information and for connecting closely with students and building positive learning and teaching relationships.

However, what we are often trying to do as secondary teachers is improve students' capacity to work with written language and literacy, which provides them a broader and more global context for information acquisition and for the development of their knowledge in our subject area.

What are the differences, we might ask ourselves, with written language? Written language tends to be more deliberate. It is typically more formal, it has all kinds of proper language built into it.

In fact some languages develop, like classical Arabic, into very set forms that are quite different from the version used when people are speaking with one another in the social present domain of language.

We've already discussed that there is a cultural domain in classical Arabic is one that is wholly and totally within that cultural domain since the language of the living present and social interaction and communication is happening with modern Arabic.

The capacity to review and edit our work is also something that came by way of print technologies and the ability to write ideas down and to change them once written.

Once spoken, words simply dissipate into the air and the vibrations cease. We can remember them but we can only remember them approximately.

It's difficult to retain everything that we've heard if we've only heard it once. We can and, of course, are very good at being able to remember words when we repeat them often enough.

And we'll see that within oral language repetition is much more prized as a mode of communication than it is in written language.

We also tend to have complete sentences. We structure language according to more precise grammars, grammars that are less controlled by the immediate environment and more controlled by the discourse environment in which we are writing.

We are also of course able to make all kinds of intertextual references that we can't make otherwise through different kinds of forms of expression; and you saw one in the previous part which had a citation.

The other aspect of written language is that it's more open to interpretation. It's not that the speaker has any less intention or any more intention than the writer, but in this case language has many different possible meanings. As we've seen words have different meanings depending on context and writers can play with those contexts.

Readers will put it together with the knowledge they have and bring to a text, and as we will see in the reading section, there is a joint transaction of meaning between the writer, the reader, with the text between them as the point of their transaction.

The complete lack in written language of the person - and they say that the body and presence communicate about 70 percent of meaning in normal face to face communications - the fact that that is gone, all the verbal gestural and contextual clues that give a greater specificity to our understanding of the context that the speaking is happening are not there with the writing.

And so of course we must provide that. We must provide clear orientation for the readers so that they understand perspectives.

It's very easy to write something and have it mean two things, one the unintended and one the intended thing unless we follow quite closely with contextual language.

And of course as the final point about print literacy in its difference from orality. Writing tends to respond to conventions such as genres and what-have-you that are outside of the immediate setting in context, that is it tends to transcend a little bit more social function right in the moment.

It's sets up the context of communication that transcends time. As we've discussed it draws on cultural patterns that are inherited and developed over generations of populations.

So thinking on these different thoughts. We need to then understand how we can bring people who are fluent speakers up to pace with academic writing so that they can excel in their exams and in sharing ideas and new inventions with the world of arts and sciences that surrounds them.