**ST. CATHERINE HIGH**

**COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

**MODULE 2 – LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY**

**Sample Essay**

**Read the extract below and then answer the questions that follow.**

With great dignity, she slowly mounted the steps of the Housing Office in town. The chief clerk in the office greeted her politely and offered her a chair.

He remembered his boyhood days when he would buy three oranges for a penny from Tantie’s tray in the market.

‘Tantie, I am glad you came in answer to my letter. We have a little matter to settle.’

He stretched out his bare knees and long stockinged legs under the desk. Tantie remained silent. ‘I know how you feel to leave the old place. But never mind, we’ll fix you up snug and nice.’

‘Me old house is good enough for me, thank you. I ain’t going nowhere.’

‘Yes, Tantie, but you won’t be able to stay there when they build the road and all the heavy lorries and taxis start passing along there.’

He pleaded but Tantie remained adamant.

‘All right Tantie. We’ll see what can be done.’

‘Any luck?’ asked his assistant coming in from the adjoining room after she had gone.

‘No use arguing. I think we’ll just have to move the old girl bodily.’

Monica Skeete, The Road,

Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1982, pp. 115 – 116. 2.

In an ESSAY of no more than 500 words, discuss the following:

(a) The different ways in which the clerk and Tantie use language;

(b) The various social factors responsible for the tension in the interaction they have;

(c) How a video presentation would highlight that tension.

**Sample Answer**

In the extract, Tantie visits the Housing Office because there is a plan to build a road through the property and she is being forced to move. The conversation that takes place between herself and the clerk shows how language can be used in different ways to achieve different purposes, including showing the state of mind of the speaker as well as demonstrating the relationship between them.  
Firstly, Tantie and the Clerk use language in different ways. The clerk uses Standard English “I am glad you came in response to my letter...” This is because the clerk is at work and it is a formal setting and he is discussing a matter of great importance. His use of the standard also point to his high level of formal education, borne out by the fact that he is employed in the government service. On the other hand, Tantie tries to use the standard in response to the formality of the situation. One can see this in her response " me old house is good enough for me, thank you.” However, one is aware that the standard might not be Tantie native tongue as we learn in the passage that she is a market vendor.  
In addition, the clerk moderates his tone when speaking to Tantie. This can be read in two different ways. Firstly, he does this out of respect for Tantie, whom he has known for years. He also chooses his vocabulary with care in an effort not to offend her. He calls her visit “a little matter" not to belittle Tantie's concern, but because he is desperately trying to put her at ease, in order to avoid confrontation. Also, he tells her that the government will fix her up “snug and nice" in an attempt to comfort her. Nevertheless, when Tantie is out of earshot he tells his assistant that she will have to be moved bodily, here demonstrating his determination to do his job. This could also be read as demonstrating his true feelings for Tantie, where all his previous pleasantries mask disrespect for someone who is obviously his social inferior. Additionally, Tantie uses her language to show her inflexibility to the suggestion that she moves. This is seen in her "thank you, I am not going anywhere. Her use of thank you also shows that she too is cognizant of the formality of the situation.  
There are several factors responsible for the tension in the interaction, foremost is Tantie’s determination to keep her house in face of the clerk's desire to dispossess her is the main source of tension. Furthermore, there is the relationship that they have with each other. This relationship has undergone a drastic change as there was a time when Tantie was the adult in this relationship and therefore deserving of respect. This has drastically change and now the boy that used to purchase oranges from Tantie, is now in a superior position and has the power to change her life. This too is bound to cause tension.  
A video presentation could highlight this tension in several ways as it would make possible for an audience to read all the non-verbal cues which might be difficult to pick up simply from a reading of the extract. Firstly, this video could show the both the facial expression of Tantie and the clerk, his pleading and smiling trying to placate Tantie and she unsmiling thus showing her determination. One would also be able to see Tantie posture as she stood there erect and unyielding in contrast to the clerk who is smiling and trying his best to lighten the situation. A video presentation could also highlight tension by arranging the setting, putting distance between where Tantie stands and the clerk's desk to again show that they are not on the same side.  
In conclusion, one can see that language with all its facilities including tone, language registers and dialectal variations can be used to send a message in a particular manner. One sees this clearly in the extract where all these things come together to give the reader a clear picture of the action taking place