

C2.1 – MTSL

(Week 12)

INTEGRATING SKILLS

TASK 1: HOLISTIC TEXT INTERPRETATION

Read each of the nine texts included in this task and do the exercises on the accompanying worksheets.



Text 1:

- 1) TWO WORLDVIEWS are in collision. On the one hand, this is the age of psychotherapy and the age of self-improvement. Millions are struggling to change: We diet, we jog, we meditate. We adopt new modes of thought to counteract our depressions. We practice relaxation to **curtail** stress. We exercise to expand our memory and to quadruple our reading speed. We adopt draconian regimes to give up smoking. We raise our little boys and girls to androgyny. We **come out of the closet** or we try to become heterosexual. We seek to lose our taste for alcohol. We seek more meaning in life. We try to extend our life span.
- 2) Sometimes it works. But distressingly often, self-improvement and psychotherapy fail. The cost is enormous. We think we are worthless. We feel guilty and ashamed. We believe we have no willpower and that we are failures. We give up trying to change.

(2a) Trudy, like tens of millions of Americans, is desperate because she believes, quite incorrectly, that she is a failure. She finds herself even worse off after ten years of trying everything to lose weight.

Trudy weighed 175 pounds when she graduated from Brown a decade ago. Four times since, she has slimmed to under 125. Weight Watchers, Nutri-System, six months under the care of a private behavior therapist, and last year, Optifast. With each regime the weight came off quickly, if not painlessly. Each time the fat returned, faster and more of it. Trudy now weighs 195 and has given up.

- 3) In its faith that we can change anything, the self-improvement movement expects Trudy to succeed in her fight against fat, even though she is such an obvious loser in the weight game. On the other hand, there is a view that expects Trudy to fail. For this is not only the age of self-improvement and therapy, this is the age of biological psychiatry. The human genome will be nearly mapped before the millennium is over. The brain systems underlying sex, hearing, memory, left-handedness, and sadness are now known. Psychoactive drugs — external agents — quiet our fears, relieve our blues, bring us bliss, **dampen** our mania, and dissolve our delusions more effectively than we can on our own. Our very personality — our intelligence and musical talent, even our religiousness, our conscience (or its absence), our politics, and our exuberance — turns out to be more the product of our genes than almost anyone would have believed a decade ago. Identical twins reared apart are **uncannily** similar in all these traits, almost as similar as they are for height and weight. The underlying message of the age of biological psychiatry is that our biology frequently makes changing, in spite of all our efforts, impossible.
- 4) But the view that all is genetic and biochemical and therefore cannot change is also very often wrong. Many individuals surpass their IQs, fail to “respond” to drugs, make **sweeping** changes in their lives, live on when their cancer is “terminal” or defy the hormones and brain circuitry that “dictate” lust or femininity or memory loss.
- 5) Clay is one of many who ignored the conventional wisdom that his problem was “biological” and found just the right psychotherapy, which worked quickly and permanently.

*(5a) Out of the blue, about once a week, Clay, a software designer, was having panic attacks. His heart started to pound, he couldn't catch his breath, and he was sure he was going to die. After about an hour of terror, the panic subsided. Clay underwent four years of psychoanalysis, which **gave him insight into** his childhood feelings of*

*abandonment but didn't lessen the panic attacks. Then he was on high doses of Xanax (alprazolam, a tranquilizer) for a year; during that time he only panicked once a month, but he was so sleepy most of the time that he lost his two biggest accounts. So Clay stopped taking Xanax and the panic returned with unabated fury. Two years ago, he had ten sessions of cognitive therapy for panic disorder. He corrected his mistaken belief that the symptoms of anxiety (e.g. heart racing, shortness of breath) are catastrophic; symptoms of **an impending heart attack**. Since then he hasn't had a single attack.*

- 6) As the ideologies of biological psychiatry and self-improvement collide, a resolution is apparent. There are some things about ourselves that can be changed, others that cannot, and some that can be changed only with extreme difficulty...



Worksheet 1:

1. Without consulting a dictionary, suggest alternative words or expressions which might be used in the text in place of the following:

- a) curtail (1:4)_____
- b) come out of the closet (1:6)_____
- c) dampen (3:8)_____
- d) uncannily (3:12)_____
- e) sweeping (4:3)_____
- f) gave him insight into (5a:6)_____
- g) an impending heart attack (5a:16)_____

2. State whether the text is generally expository, argumentative or instructive. If expository, is it descriptive, narrative or conceptual? If argumentative, does it display a through-argumentative or counter-argumentative structure? If instructive, is it binding or non-binding?
3. What is the specific function, within the logical structure of the text as a whole, of each of the two paragraphs printed in italics (2a and 5a) ? If we consider these as subtexts within the main text, what text type and sub-type do they represent?
4. Which of the following rhetorical patterns can you detect in the structure of the text? Briefly explain your answer.
 - a) problem/solution
 - b) comparison/contrast
 - c) definition
5. Comment on the sentence structure of paragraph 1. What reasons might the author have for expressing his thought in this way?
6. Based on its language and content (degree of formality and subject matter) what kind of publication do you believe this text has been extracted from? For what kind of public do you believe it is intended? Refer to details in the text to support your answer.
7. Why has the author enclosed the word “terminal” (4:3) in inverted commas?
8. Suggest a possible title for the text.
9. Write a 150-word summary (restatement) of the main ideas of the text.