

## **Paper 4 Q2 Language and the Self**

You will develop skills and techniques in reading and demonstrating critical understanding of unseen texts relating to 'Language and the self', **selecting and analyzing pertinent ideas and examples from the texts and relating these ideas and examples to theories, theorists and studies from your wider study of the topic**

When studying Language and the self you will explore:

- how language might be innate, learned, or both - **behaviorism, innatism, nativism and empiricism**. *Theorists: Skinner, Chomsky, John Locke, David Hume*
- the ways in which **language and thought** are both connected and separate from each other - linguistic relativity and determinism, universalism, language of thought hypothesis. *Theories: Sperber and Wilson (Relevance Theory), LOTH (Language Of Thought Hypothesis), Sapir-Whorf (Linguistic Relativity).*

### *sociolinguistics*

- how we use language to communicate our sense of self to others - the relationship between **language and social identity** • speech communities, prestige, idiolect, dialect, sociolect, genderlect, variation of standard and non-standard features, inclusion and exclusion, speech sounds and accents. *Theorists Milroy, Kuvshinov, E. Goffman, Brown and Levinson and Grice's Maxims*
- how we use language, both consciously and unconsciously, to construct and maintain our identity.

Learner Guide Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language 9093 7 Content section Assessment Topics included

- standard and nonstandard features
- inclusion and exclusion
- speech sounds and accents

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MLE, Singlish, Internet (net speak), social media. You will be asked to comment how language is used to shape and reflect social identity.

**Possible Introduction in an essay:** Language helps you generate your own self identity and maintain belonging in society ...

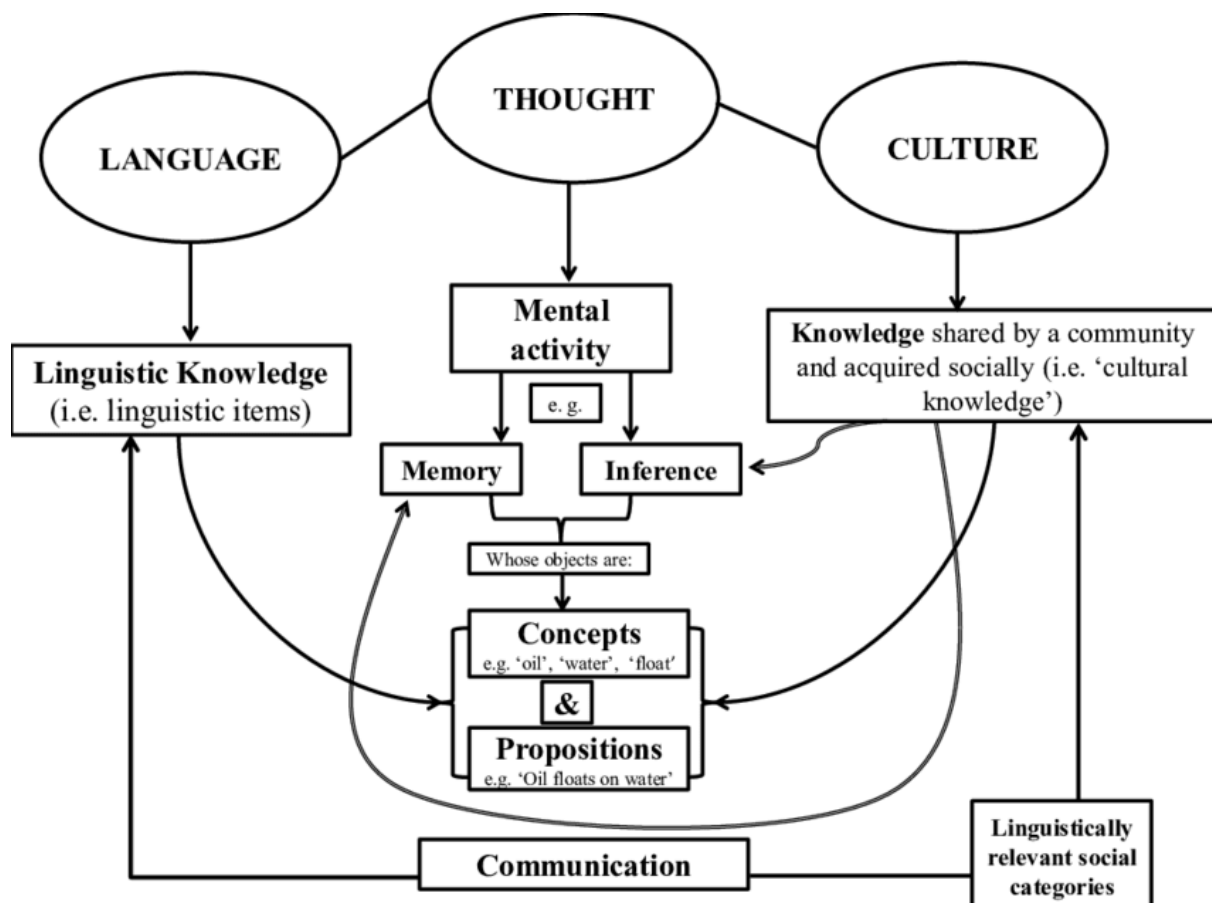
**Some key terms:**

**Sociolect** - a dialect of a particular social group . Language has an important social function by generating and maintaining identification of oneself and one's place within a certain social group and feeling of belongingness.

**Dialect** - Englishes in a particular region (based on geography)

Note: Sociolects transcends geography and is directed by age, gender, interest groups. A Sociolect conveys a group's culture, values and norms.

**Idiolect** - How I use language - i.e. it reflects my identity (age, socio status, gender)



## Theorists

### Milroy's social network theory:

- Milroy's social network theory is a sociolinguistic theory that suggests that language use is influenced by social networks.
- According to the theory, people who are part of tight-knit social networks, such as families or small communities, are more likely to use local, non-standard dialects.
- On the other hand, people who are part of larger, more diverse social networks are more likely to use standard, "prestige" dialects.
- Milroy argues that social networks are important because they create social pressure to conform to local norms of language use.
- In addition, social networks provide opportunities for language learning and practice, which can further reinforce local dialects.
- Strong tie theory:

**Strong tie theory** is a concept related to Milroy's social network theory that suggests that language use is influenced by the strength of social ties between individuals.

- According to the theory, people who have strong social ties, such as close friends or family members, are more likely to use non-standard dialects, because they have a greater degree of social influence over each other.
- For example, two siblings who grow up together may develop similar non-standard dialects, because they spend a lot of time together and have a strong influence on each other's language use.
- Weak tie theory:

**Weak tie theory** is another concept related to Milroy's social network theory that suggests that language use is influenced by the strength of social ties between individuals.

- However, in this case, weak ties, such as acquaintances or colleagues, are thought to be more influential than strong ties.
- According to the theory, people who have weak social ties with individuals who use standard, "prestige" dialects are more likely to adopt those dialects themselves.
- For example, someone who starts a new job and has colleagues who use a standard dialect may start to adopt that dialect in order to fit in with the social norms of their workplace.

Examples:

- In a small town in the American South, members of a tight-knit community may use non-standard dialects that are specific to that region. For example, they may use the word "y'all" instead of "you all," or they may pronounce words like "pen" and "pin" the same way.
- In a large city like New York, people from diverse backgrounds may use different dialects depending on their social networks. For example, someone who is part of a wealthy, educated social network may use a more standard, "prestige" dialect, while someone who is part of a working-class social network may use a more local, non-standard dialect.

- In rural areas of Scotland, people who are part of tight-knit communities may use Scottish Gaelic as their primary language, while people who are part of larger, more diverse social networks may use English as their primary language. This is because Scottish Gaelic is more likely to be preserved and reinforced in communities where it is used regularly and is part of the local culture.

### **Kerswill's theory on dialect levelling:**

- Kerswill's theory of dialect levelling suggests that over time, regional dialects tend to become less distinct and more similar to each other.
- According to the theory, this process of dialect levelling is driven by social and demographic changes, such as urbanization, migration, and increased mobility.
- Kerswill argues that as people from different regions mix and interact more frequently, their dialects start to converge and become more similar.
- However, Kerswill also notes that not all dialect features are equally affected by dialect levelling, and some features may be more resistant to change than others.

### **Examples:**

- In the United States, there has been a trend towards dialect levelling over the past century. For example, regional accents that were once very distinct, such as the Southern accent or the New York accent, have become less pronounced over time as people from different regions mix and interact more.
- In England, there has been a similar trend towards dialect levelling over the past few decades. For example, the traditional "Cockney" accent of East London, which was once very distinct, has become less common as the population of London has become more diverse and mobile.
- In Scotland, there are still distinct regional dialects, such as the Glasgow accent and the Edinburgh accent. However, even within these regions, there has been some dialect levelling over time, as people from different backgrounds mix and interact more frequently. For example, younger speakers of the Glasgow accent may be more likely to use features of standard English, such as dropping certain dialect-specific pronunciations or grammar structures.

### **Erving Goffman's face theory:**

Erving Goffman's face theory is a sociological theory that suggests that people are constantly managing their social identities and trying to present themselves in a positive light. (we are constantly on a stage)

- According to the theory, people have both a "positive face," which represents their desire for approval and recognition, and a "negative face," which represents their desire for independence and autonomy.
- Goffman argues that people use various strategies to protect and enhance their face, including politeness, flattery, and self-presentation.
- Goffman also notes that face can be lost or threatened in various social situations, such as when someone is criticized or embarrassed in front of others.

Examples:

- In a job interview, someone may try to enhance their positive face by dressing nicely, smiling, and presenting themselves as confident and capable. They may also try to protect their negative face by avoiding anything that could be seen as weakness or vulnerability, such as admitting to a weakness or asking for help.
- In a romantic relationship, partners may try to enhance each other's positive face by giving compliments, showing affection, and supporting each other's goals and aspirations. They may also try to protect each other's negative face by respecting each other's boundaries and avoiding anything that could be seen as controlling or manipulative.
- In a group of friends, members may use humor, teasing, and playfulness to enhance their positive face and build social bonds. However, if someone is criticized or teased too harshly, they may feel that their face is threatened and become defensive or withdrawn

### **Brown and Levinson's Positive and Negative Face Theory:**

- Brown and Levinson's Positive and Negative Face Theory is an extension of Goffman's Face Theory that suggests that people have two basic social needs: the need for positive social relationships (positive face), and the need for autonomy and independence (negative face).
- Positive face is the desire to be liked, appreciated, and accepted by others, while negative face is the desire to be free from imposition, interference, or obligation.
- According to Brown and Levinson, these two needs are always in tension with each other, and people use various strategies to balance them in social interactions.
- Positive politeness strategies involve showing respect, interest, and concern for the other person's positive face, such as using compliments, offering help, and expressing solidarity.
- Negative politeness strategies involve showing respect for the other person's negative face, such as using indirect language, hedging, and apologizing.
- Face-threatening acts (FTA) are actions that threaten someone's face, such as making a request, giving orders, or criticizing someone. Brown and Levinson suggest that FTAs are more likely to be successful if they are accompanied by positive and negative politeness strategies.

Examples:

- A manager asking an employee to work overtime is an example of a face-threatening act. To minimize the threat to the employee's negative face, the manager might use negative politeness strategies, such as saying "I know it's a lot to ask, but would you be able to work a few extra hours tonight?" To enhance the employee's positive face, the manager might use positive politeness strategies, such as acknowledging their hard work and dedication.
- When breaking up with a romantic partner, using positive politeness strategies, such as saying "I really enjoyed our time together, but I think we're better off as friends" can help to maintain the positive face of the other person. Additionally, negative

politeness strategies, such as expressing regret and using indirect language can help to minimize the threat to the other person's negative face.

- When requesting a favor from a friend, using positive politeness strategies, such as expressing gratitude and emphasizing the importance of the favor can help to enhance their positive face. Using negative politeness strategies, such as hedging and expressing doubt can help to minimize the threat to their negative face.

**Grice's Maxims** are a set of **conversational principles** based on the Cooperative Principle, which is the idea that speakers and listeners work together to achieve a common goal of effective communication. The four maxims are:

- **Maxim of Quality:** Speakers should provide true and accurate information.

Example: A doctor tells a patient their diagnosis, rather than lying or withholding information.

- **Maxim of Quantity:** Speakers should provide enough information to achieve the communicative goal, but not too much.

Example: A teacher answers a student's question with enough detail to answer the question, but not so much that the student becomes overwhelmed.

- **Maxim of Relevance:** Speakers should provide information that is relevant to the topic of conversation.

Example: Two friends are talking about the latest movie they watched, and one friend starts talking about their favorite restaurant. This would violate the maxim of relevance.

- **Maxim of Manner:** Speakers should be clear, concise, and orderly in their communication.

Example: A speaker mumbles and uses complex vocabulary during a presentation, making it difficult for the audience to understand. This would violate the maxim of manner.

By following these maxims, speakers can maintain their own "face" (i.e., their own public self-image) and also help maintain the face of their conversational partner. By violating these maxims, speakers risk damaging their own face or the face of their conversational partner, and may undermine the effectiveness of the communication.

## Language and Thought

**Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory** is a framework (taken from Grice's maxims) for understanding how people communicate and interpret meaning (**semantics**) in conversation.

The theory posits that people seek to communicate information that is relevant to the listener's goals and interests, and that interpretation of meaning **is a process of constructing cognitive contexts that maximize relevance**. Here are some key points of the theory, along with examples:

**Communication** is motivated by the desire to convey information that is relevant to the listener.

Example: A friend tells you about a new restaurant that they know you will like, because they know you are a foodie and love trying new places.

**Relevance** is determined by the listener's cognitive context, which includes their beliefs, expectations, and goals.

Example: A person who is interested in basketball will find information about the latest game more relevant than a person who has no interest in sports.

The interpretation of meaning involves constructing a **cognitive context** that maximizes relevance.

Example: When a person hears the sentence "The cat sat on the mat", they construct a context that includes their knowledge of cats, mats, and the likelihood of cats sitting on mats.

The principle of relevance guides both communication and interpretation, such that speakers and listeners seek to **maximize relevance** in the exchange of information.

Example: A job candidate highlights their relevant skills and experiences during an interview, and the interviewer asks questions that are relevant to the job requirements.

Overall, Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory suggests that effective communication involves recognizing and responding to the listener's needs and interests, and that interpretation of meaning is a process of constructing cognitive contexts that maximize relevance.

**The Language of Thought Hypothesis (LOTH)** is a theory that suggests that our thoughts are made up of a mental language, kind of like how we use words to communicate with each other in a spoken or written language. This mental language, according to the LOTH theory, is used to process information in our minds, just like how a computer uses code to process information.

The idea behind the LOTH theory is that we have a kind of "mental code" that allows us to think and reason. Just like how we can use different words and sentences to express different ideas, our mental language allows us to use different mental "codes" to process different kinds of information.

For example, imagine you are thinking about a cat. According to LOTH, your mind would use a specific mental code to represent the concept of a cat. If you were thinking about a dog instead, your mind would use a different mental code to represent that concept. This mental code is separate from the language that we use to communicate with others.

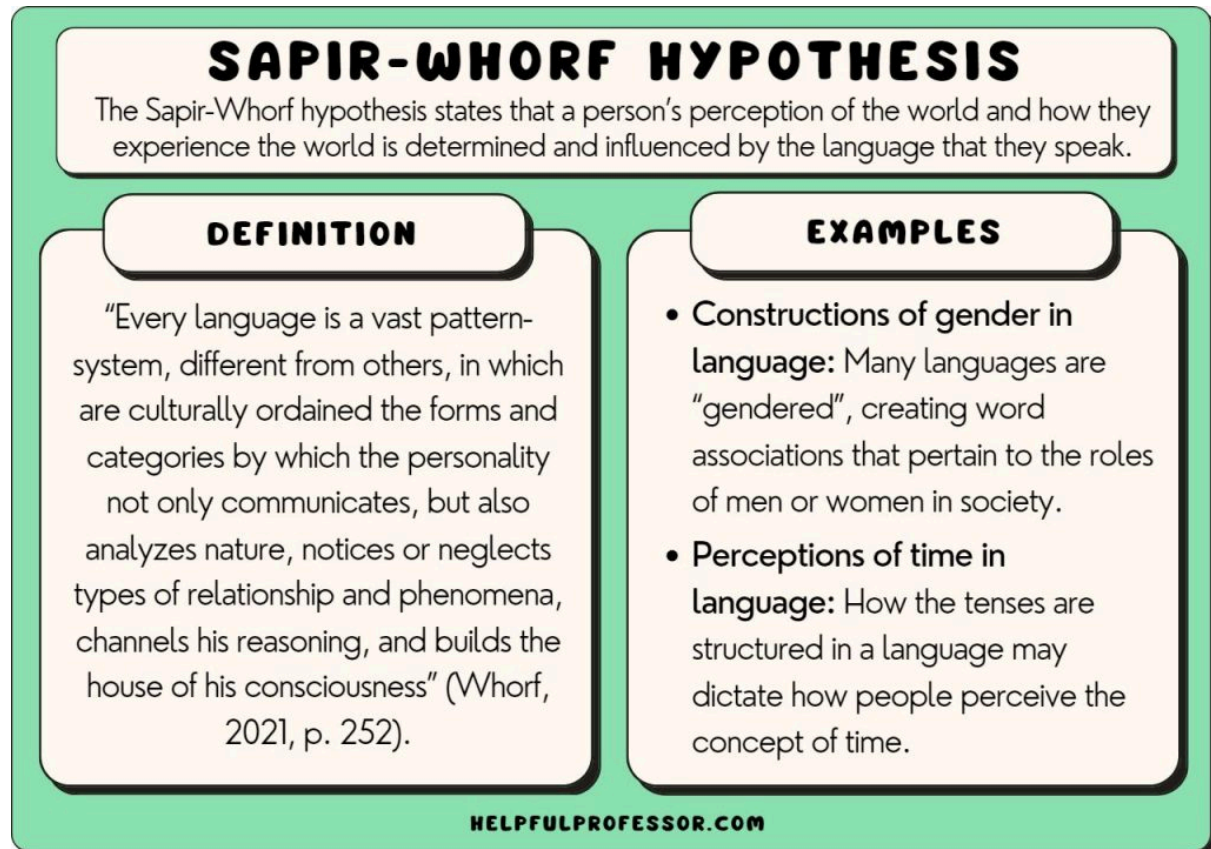
The theorist who came up with the LOTH theory is Jerry Fodor, who was a philosopher and cognitive scientist. Fodor suggested that our mental language is innate, meaning that we are born with the ability to use it to process information in our minds.

Overall, the LOTH theory is one way to explain how we process information and make decisions in our minds. While it is still a subject of debate among philosophers and cognitive scientists, it offers an interesting perspective on the complex relationship between language and thought. LOTH can explain various cognitive phenomena, such as concept learning, problem solving, and decision making and critical and abstract thinking.





**Linguistic Relativism**, also known as the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**, says that the language we speak can affect the way we think and see the world. It is the idea that the structure and vocabulary of a language influences the way that its speakers think and perceive the world. Here are some key points of the theory, along with examples:



There are two version of this Hypothesis

1. Strong version - Linguistic Determinism

I.e. the language you speak dictates how you perceive the world and how you think. If you speak a certain language it means you are unable to have certain thoughts e.g. Greenland the word 'snow' has 30 variations

2. Weak version - Linguistic Relativity

I.e. the language you speak Influences your thoughts. Different languages draws our attention to different things in different ways. E.g. In French, the 2nd person pronoun can be formal (vous) and informal (tu) therefore drawing our attention immediately to social hierarchy structure.

Key Features and examples

- Language influences perception and thought by shaping the categories and concepts that people use to organize their experiences.

Example: In the Inuit language, there are many different words for snow, which reflects the importance of snow in their culture and the way that they perceive and interact with the environment.

- Different languages may have different ways of categorizing and describing the same phenomena, which can lead to differences in perception and understanding.

Example: The Hopi language has no grammatical distinction between past, present, and future tense, which may influence the way that Hopi speakers perceive and think about time.

- Linguistic relativism can apply to various aspects of thought and behavior, including perception, cognition, and social norms.

Example: The use of gendered pronouns in languages such as Spanish or French may reinforce gender stereotypes and influence the way that speakers think about gender roles and identities.

- Linguistic relativism is a controversial theory, with some critics arguing that it overstates the influence of language on thought and underestimates the role of culture, biology, and individual experience.

Example: Some critics argue that the similarities between languages and the universality of certain cognitive processes suggest that language plays a more limited role in shaping thought than linguistic relativism suggests.

Overall, linguistic relativism suggests that language influences the way that people think and perceive the world, but the extent of this influence and the mechanisms involved are still a matter of debate.

**Steven Pinker** is a well-known cognitive scientist and linguist who has written extensively on the relationship between language and thought. One of Pinker's main views is that language and thought are closely intertwined, but not necessarily in the way that some other theories suggest.

Pinker's view is often described as a form of "moderate linguistic determinism". This means that while he acknowledges that language can influence our thinking and perception to some extent, he does not believe that language completely determines our thoughts

Think of it like a tool. Just like how we use a pencil to write or a calculator to do math problems, we use language to help us think and communicate. But just like how we can solve math problems in our head without using a calculator, we can also think and reason without using language all the time.

Pinker believes that language is a big part of how we think and understand the world around us, but it's not the only thing that affects our thoughts. Other things like our **senses** and **memory** also play a role in shaping how we think and understand things. So, while language is important, it's just one piece of a bigger puzzle of how we think and reason

**Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)** is a framework for understanding how people adjust their communication styles to accommodate or align with others.

Divergence - when we want to distance ourselves (don't want to talk like your mum),

Convergence - to establish solidarity with the interlocutor. Here are some key points of the theory, along with examples:

- People adapt their communication style to converge or diverge from others, depending on their goals and motivations.

Example: A person may converge their communication style with a new friend to build rapport and establish a connection, but diverge their communication style with an authority figure to assert their independence and authority.

- Communication accommodation involves both verbal and nonverbal behaviors, including tone of voice, speech rate, and body language.

Example: A person may adjust their tone of voice to match the volume and pitch of their conversation partner, or adopt similar body language to convey interest and engagement.

- Accommodation can have positive or negative effects on communication and social outcomes, depending on the context and the degree of accommodation.

Example: Accommodation that is perceived as sincere and respectful can build trust and rapport, while accommodation that is perceived as insincere or patronizing can harm the relationship.

- Accommodation is influenced by social identity factors, including age, gender, ethnicity, and social class, which can lead to different patterns of accommodation and power dynamics in communication.

Example: A younger person may accommodate their communication style to an older person to show respect and deference, while an older person may accommodate to a younger person to show openness and flexibility.

- CAT can be applied to various domains of communication, including intercultural communication, organizational communication, and interpersonal communication.

Example: A person who works in a multicultural team may accommodate their communication style to align with the cultural norms and expectations of their colleagues, in order to foster collaboration and respect.

Overall, Communication Accommodation Theory suggests that people adapt their communication style to accommodate or align with others, and that this process is influenced by a range of social, psychological, and contextual factors.

## Learner Guide Questions with Essays

### At a high level view

According to **nativism**, humans are born with an innate ability to acquire language, and that there are specific brain structures dedicated to language acquisition. For example, Noam Chomsky proposed that humans have a "language acquisition device" that enables us to learn language.

**Innatism**, which is a broader theory than nativism, suggests that humans are born with innate knowledge and abilities beyond language acquisition. For example, some innatists might argue that humans have an innate sense of morality or an innate understanding of certain mathematical concepts.

**Empiricism**, on the other hand, would argue that language acquisition is entirely a result of environmental experiences. According to this theory, children learn language through exposure to language input from caregivers and other language models in their environment. Empiricists would argue that the ability to learn language is not innate but rather a result of environmental factors.

**Behaviorism**, which is a subset of empiricism, would suggest that language is acquired through a process of reinforcement and punishment. Children are rewarded when they produce language that is comprehensible to others and punished when they do not. Over time, they learn to produce language that is more and more similar to the language of those around them.

**LG: Identify and write about innateness and learning, including behaviourism, innatism, nativism and empiricism, reference all relevant theorists and give examples**

In the study of language acquisition, the debate between innateness and learning has been a long-standing issue. Innateness refers to the idea that humans have an inherent ability to learn language, while learning emphasizes the importance of experience and environmental factors in language development. The debate has been shaped by several theories, including behaviourism, innatism, nativism, and empiricism.

**Empiricism** is a theory that emphasizes the importance of experience and environmental factors in language acquisition. Empiricists argue that language is learned through exposure to language in the environment, and that the brain is not specifically designed for language acquisition. Jean Piaget, a famous empiricist, believed that language is acquired through cognitive development, and that children learn language by constructing their own understanding of the world through experience.

**Behaviourism** is a subset of Empericism, and emphasizes the role of environmental factors in language acquisition. Behaviourists believe that language is acquired through reinforcement and imitation. B.F. Skinner, one of the most prominent behaviourists, believed that language is learned through a process of operant conditioning, where children learn to associate certain sounds with specific meanings through trial and error. According to Skinner, language is not innate, but is learned through experience.

- The language that you use is reinforced by your society
- When we get feedback on what we are saying our language is influenced and we can change it depending if we want divergence or convergence e.g. if we want to fit in and feel a sense of belonging we will change our language to suit the situation. E.g. Iris you can't go around greeting people with a "Hello, you little wee cunt you".
  - In the case of **convergence** (inclusion) we adopt language features to fit in. we abide by conventions (rules/norms e.g. lexis, tone, formal, informal). This is all done quite subconsciously
  - We code-switch between different sociolects when with friends in classroom and when the teacher walks in adn you switch your register.
  - In the case of **Divergence** (exclusion) There are a few reasons how/why this can happen:
    - Linguistic divide (due to race, ethnic divide - you literally don't speak the language or dialect so you cannot connect
    - Being marginalised - e.g. big institutions try to enforce a dominant language of their own choosing and those that don't comply become marginalised
    - Digital divide - e.g. older people don't know the language they cannot understand concepts of how the Internet works
    - Generation Gap - teens tend to want this gap and come up with neologisms. These words can become ephemeral (short lived) if they become mainstream and no longer 'trendy' e.g. if the parent starts using these new words the teen will quickly drop it and come up with replacement neologisms.
    - e.g. historical examples Maori/NZ; Catholic church wanted bible to remain in Latin circa 14th century.

- People who are excluded often converge with each other and form 'resistance' movement and use language as a form of convergence. E.g. Jamaican migrants to England classified as outsiders, spoke Jamaican creole (mix of English and West African languages). This developed into MLE (Multicultural London English). Here the 'outsiders' converged and created their own creole/sociolect.

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**Innatism** is a theory that emphasizes the role of innate factors in language acquisition.

Proponents of innatism argue that humans are born with a natural ability to acquire language, and that this ability is genetically programmed into our brains. Noam Chomsky is one of the most famous proponents of innatism. He argues that humans have an innate ability to understand and produce language, and that this ability is based on a universal grammar that is hardwired into the brain.

**Nativism** is a subset of innatism, and places a greater emphasis on the role of genetic factors in language acquisition. Nativists argue that humans have an innate ability to acquire language, but that this ability is genetically determined. Steven Pinker is a prominent nativist who has argued that the human brain is specifically designed for language acquisition.

Overall, the debate between innateness and learning has been shaped by these various theories, each emphasizing different factors in language acquisition. While behaviourism and empiricism emphasize the role of environmental factors, innatism and nativism place a greater emphasis on innate factors. The debate continues to be an important area of research in linguistics, as researchers seek to better understand the complex process of language acquisition.

**LG: Identify and discuss the relationship between language and thought, including linguistic relativity and determinism, universalism and the language of thought hypothesis, reference relevant theorists**

The relationship between language and thought has been the subject of much debate in linguistics and cognitive psychology. Two main schools of thought have emerged in this debate: linguistic relativity and determinism, and universalism.

Linguistic relativity and determinism propose that language shapes our thoughts and perceptions of the world. This theory suggests that the structure of language determines the categories and concepts that we use to understand the world, and that language shapes the way we think about the world. This theory is often referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, named after the linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf.

The linguistic relativity and determinism hypothesis can be broken down into two main components: strong and weak versions. The strong version suggests that language completely determines our thoughts and perceptions, while the weak version suggests that language influences our thoughts and perceptions, but does not completely determine them. This theory has been supported by several studies, including the famous study by Whorf on the Hopi language and its impact on perception of time.

On the other hand, universalism proposes that there are certain aspects of language that are universal across all languages, and that these universals reflect innate properties of the human mind. This theory suggests that there are certain concepts and categories that are common to all languages, and that these commonalities reflect a universal cognitive structure. This theory is often associated with Noam Chomsky's language acquisition theory, which suggests that the structure of language is innate and universal.

Another related theory is the language of thought hypothesis, which proposes that thought itself is structured in a language-like format. This hypothesis suggests that the structure of thought mirrors the structure of language, and that the two are interconnected. This theory is associated with Jerry Fodor, who argues that the mind is made up of a language of thought, or mentalese, that is used to represent and process information.

Overall, the relationship between language and thought remains a topic of debate in linguistics and cognitive psychology. While linguistic relativity and determinism propose that language shapes our thoughts, universalism and the language of thought hypothesis suggest that there are innate structures that underlie all languages and thought processes. The study of language and thought is an ongoing area of research, with researchers continuing to explore the complex interplay between language and cognition.

**LG An analytical essay on the relationship between language and social identity, including speech communities, prestige, idiolect, dialect, sociolect, genderlect, variation, standard and nonstandard features, inclusion and exclusion, speech sounds and accents. Make reference to relevant theorists and models, including but not limited to, Tannen, Fishman, Coates, Pilkington throughout the essay**

Language and social identity are closely intertwined, as language use is a crucial aspect of how individuals identify and are perceived within society. Various linguistic features, including speech communities, prestige, idiolect, dialect, sociolect, genderlect, variation, standard and nonstandard features, speech sounds, and accents, all play a role in shaping an individual's social identity.

Speech communities refer to groups of people who share a common language and communicative practices. According to Fishman's model, speech communities are not only defined by language use but also by the degree of multilingualism, language attitudes, and institutional support for the language. Language use within speech communities can also vary depending on factors such as age, ethnicity, and social class.

Prestige is another important factor in shaping an individual's social identity. According to Tannen, prestige is the degree of respect or admiration given to a particular language or variety of language. Language varieties that are associated with power, wealth, or high social status are typically viewed as prestigious, while those associated with low status or marginalized groups are often stigmatized.

Idiolect refers to an individual's unique way of speaking, which includes their vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax. While idiolects can vary greatly between individuals, they are often influenced by social factors such as age, gender, and social class.

Dialects are regional or social varieties of a language, which differ in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. According to Pilkington's model, dialects can be classified based on factors such as geographical region, social class, and ethnicity.



Sociolects are language varieties that are associated with particular social groups or communities, such as jargon used by lawyers or medical professionals. Sociolects can be characterized by specialized vocabulary and grammar, as well as nonverbal communication and other social practices.

Genderlects are language varieties that are associated with particular genders or sexes. According to Tannen, genderlects differ in terms of conversational style, use of language for interpersonal purposes, and topic selection.

Language variation is a natural aspect of language use, as no two individuals speak exactly alike. However, some language varieties are considered standard or nonstandard, depending on their level of prestige or acceptance within society. Standard varieties are typically associated with high social status, while nonstandard varieties are often stigmatized or associated with low status or marginalized groups.

Speech sounds and accents are also important aspects of language use that can shape an individual's social identity. Accent refers to the pronunciation patterns of a particular individual or group, while speech sounds refer to the individual sounds that make up language. Both accents and speech sounds can be influenced by factors such as geographical region, social class, and ethnicity.

Inclusion and exclusion are also important aspects of language and social identity. Language use can be used to include or exclude individuals from particular social groups or communities. For example, using specialized jargon or technical language can signal membership in a particular professional or academic community, while stigmatizing nonstandard varieties can exclude individuals from opportunities or social status.

In conclusion, language and social identity are closely intertwined, with language use playing a crucial role in how individuals identify and are perceived within society. Various linguistic features, including speech communities, prestige, idiolect, dialect, sociolect, genderlect, variation, standard and nonstandard features, speech sounds, and accents, all play a role in shaping an individual's social identity. Understanding these linguistic features and their social implications is crucial for promoting linguistic diversity and inclusion within society.

## Sample Essays

### Censorship and Language

Censorship can have a significant impact on language use and expression, both in terms of limiting free speech and in shaping the language that is allowed to be used. Some examples of how censorship affects language include:

**Limits on free speech:** Censorship can limit the ability of individuals and groups to express their opinions and ideas freely. This can stifle innovation and creativity, and limit the diversity of voices in public discourse.

**Changes in language use:** Censorship can shape the language that is allowed to be used by restricting certain words, expressions, or topics. This can lead to the creation of new language or the adoption of euphemisms or coded language to express taboo or controversial ideas.

**Social control:** Censorship can be used as a tool of social control, where certain groups or individuals are targeted for censorship based on their political views, religious beliefs, or social identity. This can lead to the suppression of dissent and the reinforcement of existing power structures.

Some key theorists and examples of censorship and language include:

**George Orwell** - 1984: In this novel, Orwell explores the idea of "Newspeak," a language created by the ruling party to control thought and limit freedom of expression. The language is designed to eliminate words that could be used to express dissent or rebellion, and to limit the ability of individuals to think independently.

**Herbert Marcuse** - Repressive Tolerance: Marcuse argues that censorship can be used as a form of repressive tolerance, where certain views or opinions are suppressed in order to maintain the status quo. This can limit the ability of marginalized groups to express themselves and challenge existing power structures.

**Steven Pinker** - The Language Instinct: Pinker argues that censorship can limit the ability of individuals to express themselves and stifle creativity and innovation. He notes that language evolves through experimentation and trial-and-error, and that censorship can prevent this process from happening.

**Noam Chomsky** - Manufacturing Consent: Chomsky argues that censorship can be used to manipulate public opinion and control the narrative in media and politics. He suggests that the media is often complicit in this process by promoting certain viewpoints and suppressing others.

Examples of censorship affecting language use include the Chinese government's ban on certain words and expressions, such as "Tiananmen Square," "democracy," and "human

rights," as well as the use of euphemisms and coded language in countries where certain topics are taboo or controversial

**Explain how we use language to communicate our sense of self to others with regard to the relationship between language and social identity • speech communities, prestige, idiolect, dialect, sociolect, genderlect, variation of standard and non-standard features, inclusion and exclusion, speech sounds and accents. include examples and theorists throughout the text Milroy, Kevswill, E. Goffman, Brown and Levinson and Grice's Maxims**

Language is a fundamental aspect of how we communicate our sense of self to others and is closely tied to our social identity. Our use of language reflects not only our individual characteristics but also our membership in various speech communities and social groups. In this context, language can be seen as a tool of social interaction, with speakers using linguistic features to signal their social identity and affiliations.

**Speech communities** are groups of people who share a common language and culture and use language in similar ways. These communities can be defined by a range of factors, such as geography, ethnicity, age, or social class. Within speech communities, certain linguistic features may be associated with higher status or prestige. For example, in some communities, the use of certain grammatical structures or pronunciations may be considered more prestigious than others. Sociolinguists such as Milroy and Kerswill have studied how linguistic variation reflects social and geographic factors, and how these variations can contribute to the formation of social networks and identity.

**Idiolect** refers to an individual's unique way of using language, shaped by factors such as upbringing, education, and personal experiences. While idiolects can vary widely among individuals, there are often shared linguistic features that are characteristic of certain regions or social groups. These features can include vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. For example, someone from the South of the United States may say "y'all" instead of "you all", reflecting a regional dialectal variation.

**Dialects** are regional or social variations of a language that are characterized by distinct vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. These variations can reflect social and cultural differences, as well as historical factors. Speakers of different dialects may be perceived as belonging to different social groups, and may use their dialect to signal their identity and affiliations. For example, the use of a Southern drawl in the United States may be associated with a particular region and social group.

**Sociolects** refer to the language used by members of a particular social group, such as a profession or age group. These groups may develop their own linguistic norms and conventions, which can reflect their shared experiences and values. For example, members of the medical profession may use specialized medical terminology and abbreviations that are not familiar to the general public.

**Genderlects** are linguistic variations that are associated with gender, reflecting the different ways that men and women use language. For example, women may be more likely to use "hedges" or tentative language, while men may be more likely to interrupt or use direct commands. Linguistic theorists such as Deborah Tannen have studied how these gender differences in language use can affect social interactions and relationships.

The use of **non-standard** language features can also be a way for speakers to signal their social identity and affiliations. These non-standard features may include slang, dialectal variations, or even grammatical errors. In some cases, these features may be stigmatized or associated with lower status, while in other contexts they may be celebrated or used to signal a particular identity. Sociolinguists such as E. Goffman have studied how speakers use language to manage social interactions and preserve their social status, including the use of linguistic features that signal membership in certain groups.

**Inclusion and exclusion** are also important aspects of how language is used to signal social identity. Speakers may use language to signal inclusion in a particular group, or to exclude others who do not share their linguistic norms and conventions. For example, the use of slang or jargon within a particular profession may signal membership in that profession and exclude those who are not familiar with the specialized language. Sociolinguists such as Brown and Levinson have studied how speakers use language to manage social relationships and maintain social harmony, including the use of politeness strategies and indirect language.

Speech **sounds and accents** can also be important markers of social identity. Regional accents or dialects can be a way for speakers to signal their geographic origins, while foreign accents can signal the speaker's cultural background or national origin. Accent can also be associated with social status or prestige, with some accents being perceived as more prestigious than others. For example, in some English-speaking countries, Received Pronunciation (RP) is considered the most prestigious accent, while in other contexts, a local accent or dialect may be valued more highly.

**Grice's maxims** of conversation provide a framework for understanding how speakers use language to convey meaning and build social relationships. The maxims include principles such as being truthful, being relevant, and being clear. Speakers may also use implicature or indirect language to convey meaning in a more nuanced way. For example, a speaker might use a sarcastic tone or understatement to signal that they mean the opposite of what they are saying.

In conclusion, language plays a crucial role in how we communicate our sense of self to others and is closely tied to our social identity. Through our use of language, we signal our membership in speech communities, our social affiliations, and our personal characteristics. Linguistic features such as idiolect, dialect, sociolect, genderlect, variation of standard and non-standard features, inclusion and exclusion, speech sounds, and accents are all tools that we use to construct and convey our social identity. Theoretical frameworks such as those developed by Milroy, Kerswill, E. Goffman, Brown and Levinson, and Grice provide insight into how language is used to manage social relationships and signal social identity.

# Paper 4 - Language Theories

According to linguist Shân **Wareing**, there are three main types of power:

- **Political power** - power held by people with authority, such as politicians and the police.
- **Personal power** - power based on an individual's occupation or role in society. For example, a headteacher would likely hold more power than a teaching assistant
- **Social group power** - power held by a group of people due to certain social factors, such as class, ethnicity, gender, or age.

**Wareing** further suggested that these three types of power can be divided into instrumental power and influential power. People, or organisations, can hold instrumental power, influential power, or all 3 at once.

## Instrumental power

Instrumental power is seen as authoritative power. Typically speaking, someone who has instrumental power has power simply because of who they are.

These people do not have to convince anyone of their power or persuade anyone to listen to them; others must listen to them simply because of the authority they have.

People or organisations with instrumental power use language to maintain or enforce their authority. Examples include headteachers, government officials, and the police are figures who have instrumental power.

Features of instrumental power language include:

- **Formal register**
- **Imperative sentences** - giving requests, demands, or advice
- **Modal verbs** - e.g., 'you should'; 'you must'
- **Mitigation** - using language to reduce the seriousness of what is being said
- **Conditional sentences** - e.g., 'if you don't respond soon, further action will be taken.'
- **Declarative statements** - e.g., 'in today's class we will look at declarative statements.'
- **Latinate words** - words derived from or imitating Latin

## Influential power

Influential power refers to when a person (or group of people) does not have any authority but is trying to gain power and influence over others. Those who wish to gain influential power may use language to persuade others to believe in them or support them. This type of power is often found in **politics**, the **media**, and **marketing**.

Features of influential power language include:

- **Assertions** - presenting opinions as facts, e.g., 'we all know that England is the greatest country in the world'
- **Metaphors** - the use of established metaphors can reassure the audience and evoke the power of memory, establishing a bond between the speaker and the listener.
- **Loaded language** - language that can evoke strong emotions and/or exploit feelings
- **Embedded assumptions** - e.g., assuming the listener is really interested in what the speaker has to say

In some spheres of society, such as in politics, both aspects of power are present. Politicians have authority over us, as they impose the laws we must follow; however, they must also try to persuade us to continue voting for them and their policies.

## Language and Power Theories

### Fairclough

- Argued that the language we use reflects the structures of society (conversations and reading advertisements alike.)
- States that we should analyse language to recognise when it is being used by the powerful to persuade or influence us, named this analytical practice '**critical discourse analysis**', which can be separated into 2 parts
- Power **in** discourse - the lexicon, strategies, and language structures used to create power
- Power **behind** discourse - The sociological and ideological reasons behind who is asserting power over others and why.
- Work was inspired by **Foucault**

### Foucault (who was more focused on politics)

- A structuralist who believed that discourse is created by those in power for specific reasons and is often used as a form of social control.
- Identified 4 different kinds of power, but the most interesting ones are :
- **Disciplinary power** - the power we exert over ourselves to fit the norm, self-regulating
- **Pastoral power** - power exerted under the guise of ensuring safety, i.e police
- He came up with '**discourse analysis**', which can be used to identify instances where language could be being used to influence the conclusions we arrive at
- Using Foucault's Discourse Analysis while analysing a piece of text we should ask ourselves :
- Is this information being presented as a fact without question?
- How is the discourse constructed? Who is being included or excluded? Why?
- Who has been normalised in this discussion, and who has been abnormalised?
- Who benefits from this discourse?

### Brown and Levinson

- Created their **Politeness Theory** based on **Goffman's Face Work theory**
- Face Work refers to the act of preserving one's 'face' and appealing to or preserving another's 'face'.
- Brown and Levinson stated that the levels of politeness we use with others are often dependent on power relations - **the more powerful they are, the more polite we are.**
- There are '**face-saving acts**' (preventing others from feeling publicly embarrassed) and '**face-threatening acts**' (behaviour that may embarrass others).
- Those in less powerful positions are more likely to perform face-saving acts for those with more power.

### Sinclair and Coulthard

- Introduced the **Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)** model.
- Used to highlight the power imbalance between students and teachers in classrooms
- Teacher asks a question, student provides a response, and teacher gives feedback

### Grice

- Introduced his **four conversational maxims**. These maxims are based on Grice's observation that anyone who wishes to engage in meaningful conversation usually attempts to be truthful, informative, relevant, and clear. Also apply to advertisements. They are:
- Maxim of **Quantity**: speakers should provide enough information to be informative, but not too much as to be overwhelming.
- Maxim of **Quality**: speakers should be truthful and provide accurate information.
- Maxim of **Relevance**: speakers should make their contributions relevant to the topic of the conversation.
- Maxim of **Manner**: speakers should be clear, concise, and avoid being ambiguous or obscure.
- These conversational maxims are not always followed by everyone and are often violated or flouted - lying, pretending to mishear someone or using vocab you know someone won't get
- Grice suggested that those with more power, or those wishing to create the illusion of having more power, are more likely to flout Grice's maxims during conversations.

## Theories about Cultural Differences and Thought

### Boroditsky

- Proposed that **each language has its way of processing cognitive abilities.**
- Each language uses different ways to make sense of various things, such as time, verbs, space and metaphors.
- An example would be that in French, the word used in a sentence depends on whether the object described is masculine or feminine. Personifying a thing does not make sense in the English language.

**Case Study** : Boroditsky investigated how native English and Mandarin speakers thought about time differently.

- Most countries think of time as **horizontal**. Think of a timeline; the present is where we sit on the timeline now, the past is behind us, and the future is ahead of us.
- In China, time is understood **vertically**, indicating time is continuous. Researchers have highlighted that this is because, in Chinese culture, humans are believed to reincarnate after death
- Time is described as 'up', which means earlier or 'down' refers to later.
- His study involved using priming, which is a technique used to influence others to think in a certain way to think of time as horizontally or vertically.
- English speakers responded quicker to questions when primed horizontally, Mandarin speakers responded quicker when primed vertically
- So according to Boroditsky, **language is culturally dependent and affects our thoughts and how we understand things.**

### The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

- Main idea is that our native language affects how we think about the world.
- According to this view, we **can only hold mental representations of the concepts we can name.** (can be linked to 1984)
- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis supports the idea of **linguistic determinism**
- Which is the idea that the language we use determines and constrains how we think about the world
- The weaker version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been termed **linguistic relativity**, this idea proposes that while language may not completely determine our thoughts it can influence them to some extent.
- Whorf supported his claims with research on native American cultures - he proposed that differences in language can change how a culture understands the **concept of time** or how it perceives **natural phenomena.**
- For example, he argued that the **Native American Hopi culture** lacks an understanding of the concept of time.
- He attributed this to the **lack of terminology** they had regarding time.
- According to his theory, the lack of linguistic expression of time changed the way this culture thought of and understood time.
- He also pointed to the fact that the Inuit language has a lot more words for snow than the English language, suggesting that the Inuit culture **perceives snow differently** from Europeans and is able to **distinguish** between different types of snow.
- The original examples in support of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis have been refuted
- However, later research has found some evidence of difference in memory and perception across different languages, supporting linguistic relativism.

### Fausey and Broditsky : Memory Differences between English and Spanish

- Investigated the memory of intentional and accidental events in English and Spanish speakers.
- Both groups remembered the person responsible for intentional actions equally well.
- However, English speakers had a much better memory of the **agent** behind the accidental action compared to Spanish speakers.
- The **difference in memory found in the study was attributed to linguistic differences** between English and Spanish.



- In Spanish accidents are typically described with non-agentive language. For example, Spanish speakers would use the expression "A pen broke" instead of "A man broke the pen" to describe a pen accidentally breaking.

### Winawer et al. : Recognising Colour Differences in English and Russian

- Investigated the ability of English and Russian speakers to discriminate between different shades of blue.
- **The different shades have distinct names in the Russian language**, but not in the English language.
- Russian speakers were much better at discriminating between the colours. This effect was attributed to how the Russian language categorises the shades of blue.

## Other Thought and Language Theories

### Piaget

- Studied the acquisition of language in children
- Argued that how well a child develops depends on **schemas** rather than language, but language is essential.
- Schemas are **mental frameworks** that consist of organised materials that we use to understand the world.
- His theory suggests that **thought precedes language**, and language is not always dependent on thought;
- For example children imitating sounds does not usually involve thought.
- However, when a child is trying to voice their demands, such as when they are hungry, there is some thought before the communication.

### Chomsky

- Proposed that language acquisition is an innate ability. Children are already born with the ability to acquire the rules that govern languages.
- Grammatical rules are common to all languages even though they might differ across

### Vygotsky

- The theory suggests that people initially have both **pre-linguistic thoughts**, recognising something without language, and **pre-intellectual language**, speech used w/o thought

## Language and Politics

Politics and power (both instrumental and influential power) go hand in hand. Politicians use political rhetoric in their speeches to persuade others to give them power.

- **Rhetoric**: the art of using language effectively and persuasively; therefore, political rhetoric refers to the strategies used to effectively create persuasive arguments.

Features of political rhetoric	Examples
Alliteration	Veni, Vidi, Vici' - Julius Caesar

<b>Allusion</b> (referring to something without explicitly mentioning it)	'Ask not just what our government can do for us, but what we can do for ourselves' - Barack Obama (Alludes to J. F. Kennedy's inaugural address)
<b>Rhetorical questions</b> with suggested answers	'Where are the 9 million more jobs that President Obama promised his stimulus would have created by now? They are in China, Mexico, and Canada [...]' - M. Romney
<b>Lists of three</b>	'Education, education, education' - Tony Blair
<b>Metaphors and extended metaphors</b>	Common metaphors in politics include comparing :Politics to war, the economy to a building, nations to people
<b>Repetition</b>	'We will make America strong again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again. And we will make America great again.' - Donald Trump
<b>Imperatives</b>	'Get Brexit done' - British Conservative Party
<b>Flattery</b>	'And might I say you're all looking rather lovely this evening...' - Boris Johnson
<b>Emotive language</b>	'Do not the British people deserve a Prime Minister they can trust, not a Government who are mired in sleaze, cronyism and scandal?' - Kier Starmer
<b>Hyperbole</b>	'So first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.' - Franklin Delano Roosevelt
<b>Tautology</b> (Saying the same thing twice)	'It is what it is' - Donald Trump
<b>Prevarication</b> (avoiding the question)	'I'm not interested in that. I'll tell you what I am interested in...'

**Other language devices politicians use to influence include :**

- **Phatic tokens**; these are socio-pragmatic parts of speech used to build social bonds and solidarity. "Nice weather today.. Etc." Many political speeches begin with these
- **Personal pronouns** - such as I, we, they, and you as a way of building rapport and a sense of familiarity with the listeners.
- **Synthetic personalisation - Fairclough** introduced this to explain how people in positions of power, such as politicians, address mass audiences as if they were individuals through inclusive language. By using personal pronouns and directly addressing the listener, politicians are able to create a sense of friendship between themselves and the masses and build trust.

- **Political spin** - used to describe a type of propaganda politicians use to present their desired interpretation of a fact/situation rather than explicitly stating the truth. Like conversations between journalists and politicians would be a political spin. This consists of the politician avoiding questions (prevarication), misrepresenting facts, using misleading information or withholding it, saying same thing with diff words (tautology)

### Language and politics - George Orwell

Listed 5 examples of what he considered to be poor political writing, including :

- **Lack of precision** - The meaning of what is being said hasn't been successfully communicated. Either the speaker failed to express themselves properly or were speaking for the sake of speaking and didn't really care about the meaning.
- **Dying metaphors** - These are metaphors that have been used so many times they have lost their original meaning and impact. Orwell suggests lazy writers use dying metaphors, such as 'no axe to grind', without care for their actual meaning.
- **Verbal false limbs** - When long, extended, and vague phrases are used in place of concise language.
- **Pretentious diction** - The use of complex or Latinate words (words deriving from Latin, e.g. ameliorate) to make opinions sound more authoritative.
- **Meaningless words** - Orwell suggested that many words used in politics get 'thrown around' so often they have lost their meaning. He cites examples such as fascism and human.

Can use **Foucault's Discourse Analysis** when looking at political speech :

- Is this information being presented as a fact without question?
- How is the discourse constructed? Who is being included or excluded? Why?
- Who has been normalised in this discussion, and who has been abnormalised?
- Who benefits from this discourse?

### Language and Technology

#### Tagg

- Language use in digital communication allows people to maintain their social relationships and identities through **microcoordination**.
- Digital communication can shape our understanding of ourselves and our relationships with others, such as through the use of emoticons and emojis to create a sense of emotional closeness.
- Users often perform a "**polymorphic self**" on social media, presenting different aspects of themselves to different audiences ( act differently on instagram and snapchat)
- Digital communication can challenge traditional norms and power structures in language use, such as through online **harassment and trolling**.
- Digital communication has ethical and political implications for issues such as privacy, free speech, and social justice.

### Impact of Technology on Language

- **Abbreviations** and **acronyms** have become much more commonplace in both written and verbal communication.
- **New terminology** has erupted into our vocabularies based on new technological functions added to social media (for example, to 'unfriend' someone).
- Many English **words have been appropriated to mean something completely different** online (the word 'troll' can now mean to make fun of someone on the internet.)
- **WRITING SOMETHING IN ALL CAPS** can be interpreted as shouting, whereas lowercase letters represent a normal speaking volume and tone.
- Technology has led to a rise in **multimodality** across communication: communicating via different technological applications has given us the ability to combine several modes of communication, .

### Language and Media

#### Hyperreality : Baudrillard (sociologist)

- Described hyperreality as: '**a realm without origin or reality**'.
- In other words, hyperreality deals with the idea that reality is merged with fiction, so there is **no clear distinction between the two**. This affects the ways we view media, as we may not be able to differentiate between what is represented by the media and the actual reality. For example :
- A photo of a model in a magazine may be photoshopped/airbrushed. This is often not a realistic representation, but is done to aesthetically appeal to an audience and set an unrealistic standard of beauty that people can aspire to.

#### Binary opposition : Levi-Strauss

- This concept focuses on the use of narratives in media. Strauss proposed that most media narratives contain **opposites** (a contrast between pairs). For example: on/off, left/right, good/bad.
- Binary opposites are often used for **propaganda purposes** in the media. In the news, left and right-wing politicians are presented as binary opposites due to their contrasting political views. This creates a biased view and **persuades the audience to pick a side!**
- In literature or film, there are often opposing characters; the protagonist (viewed as 'good') and the antagonist (viewed as 'bad').

#### Intertextuality : Kristeva

- Refers to the idea that no text is purely original. Instead, the meaning of media texts is influenced by other texts.

- This helps us understand how texts have inspired one another and how they combine to create different works with interrelated meanings.
- All media texts take inspiration from other texts, so they can all be considered **intertextual**. Intertextuality can either be direct or indirect.
- **Direct intertextuality** - refers to making purposely clear that one text is referencing another. It allows the audience to make a direct association between texts. (remake of a film, etc.)
- **Indirect intertextuality** - refers to when one text subtly alludes to another - it is not as obvious. It acknowledges the idea that everyone who creates a text will be inspired by other texts.

### Language and Stereotypes (in the media)

- Stereotypical language refers to language that is used to make preconceived judgements or assumptions about a person or group of people.
- We use stereotypes to make generalised assumptions about groups of people to **simplify the world around us**. Make things less complex, maybe, even less scary.
- Different types of stereotypes include: cultural, social, ethnic, gender, and religion.
- The use of stereotypes in the media is an effective way to present a simplified view of a person/group of people which is easy for the audience to understand.
- Stereotypes in the media could be problematic because they show a **lack of individuality**, negative representation and bias, and are not always true.

### Accommodation Theory : Giles

- Aims to understand how and **why we change our speech based on who we are talking to**.
- Suggests that, during social interactions, we use accommodation to bring us closer together or further apart from each other.
- There are two main types of accommodation; **convergence** and **divergence**. (also maintenance.)

#### Convergence

- When individuals change their speech to sound more like their interlocutor (accent, lexis, pronunciation, etc.)
- Can happen on a conscious and subconscious level.
- Several reasons why people converge. Here are a few;
  - To seek approval and respect from others
  - To show respect to others
  - Increase social reward

- Improve communication
  - Reduce uncertainty and anxiety
- For example, when students talk to a teacher they like, they will likely use less slang and match their speech to the teacher.
- Typically speaking, converging speakers are viewed more positively than diverging speakers and are deemed better communicators. Think about it; convergence suggests that the speaker respects you!
- However, convergence can also lead to a **loss of personal identity**. Additionally, if speech change is deemed too much, individuals could be ostracized by their peers.

### Divergence

- The act of changing communication style to emphasise and accentuate a difference or distinctiveness from an interlocutor.
- For example, someone from a working-class background might emphasise their accent when talking to someone from a more upper-class background to draw attention to their different social status and vice-versa.
- Here are some potential motives behind divergence;
  - To emphasise difference and distinctiveness from others
  - To shape others' feelings, e.g. making others feel left out
  - To show belonging to a specific group - speaking with a stronger native accent
  - To influence others' speech, e.g. talking quietly in hopes others will too

### Maintenance

- When a speaker refuses to change their communication style in any way

### Accommodation Theory and Social Status

- There are two ways we can converge and diverge related to socioeconomic status; upwards and downwards.
- **Upwards convergence** would see a person trying to match their interlocutor by making their speech sound more upper-class.
- **Downward convergence** would see them adjusting their communication to downplay their social status. (**Estuary English** - Tony Blair used to sound more relatable.)
- **Upwards divergence** involves an individual accentuating their social status (i.e. speaking a little more posh) to distance themselves from others. Upwards divergence can be used to assert dominance and superiority over others
- **Downward divergence** is the opposite of this (i.e. an individual accentuating a working-class accent/dialect).
- There are often societal expectations regarding who should converge to whom. For example, there is a general consensus that someone with a lower social status should upwards converge.

### Accommodation Theory and Multilingualism

- Research found that people were **more likely to converge toward the person speaking the most prestigious language** in that context.
- For example, in Montreal, Canada, English has historically been deemed more prestigious than French; therefore, people were more likely to switch to English during a conversation.
- In contrast, people may diverge away from a prestigious language if it is deemed a threat to their identity.
- For example, speakers in Tunisia are more likely to diverge from French as it is their ex-colonisers language.

### Example of Accommodation Theory : Labov's New York Department Store Study

- Labov examined the linguistic differences between different social classes in New York City by studying the way people pronounced words in different contexts.
- He found that people tended to modify their speech depending on the context, with speakers from lower socioeconomic classes often modifying their speech to sound more like speakers from higher classes. (upwards convergence)
- Labov specifically looked at the way people pronounced the **post-vocalic /r/ sound** in words like "fourth" and found that speakers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were less likely to pronounce the /r/ sound in certain contexts.
- He found that the pronunciation of the /r/ sound was linked to social status, with speakers from higher socioeconomic classes generally pronouncing the sound often.
- Labov concluded that **language is not a fixed entity** but is instead **shaped by social factors** such as **socioeconomic class** and social context.

### Language and Gender

- Gendered language refers to language that carries a bias towards a specific sex or gender - can lead to gender inequality
- Examples of gendered language include :
  - **Mr and Mrs** - Mr is used to address any man regardless of marital status. The use of Miss or Mrs depending on whether a woman is married portrays the idea that the lives of women are defined only by the relationships they have with men. These different titles are bc a woman's role in society has historically been closely linked to her marital status
  - **Gender biased job titles** - women historically stuck with the role of caretaker, so many job titles started out as **policeman**, **fireman**, **chairman**... Nowadays more gender neutral titles like police officer.
  - **Gendered greetings** - ladies and gentleman do not include non-binary people

It has been argued that men and women use language in different ways, which reflects how they view themselves in society and how others perceive them. There are four main broad theories that go over and try to explain these differences.

### (1) Difference Theory

- The difference approach suggests that men and women learn different ways of communicating in childhood which then influences them in adult life. (are socialised into speaking differently.)
- Theory simply aims to prove that men and women do speak in different ways. But, this does not mean that one way is better than the other
- Supporter of this theory was **Tannen**, who found differences between men and women such as:
  - Men see communication as a competition to gain status, women communicate to gain support
  - Men are more direct, women are more indirect and give suggestions
  - Men more likely to give opinions and argue against others, women avoid conflict

## (2) Dominance Theory

- The dominance theory is the idea that the language men use is superior and holds more dominance in society, whereas the language women use is seen as inferior.
- This theory could be seen as problematic as it suggests that men have more authority over women, and women should be submissive.
- **Lakoff's** dominance theory claims that women are conditioned from childhood to be subordinate in language. Lakoff identified a 'women's register': a language girls are brought up to use that makes them appear as the weaker sex. (tag questions, rising intonations on non-questions etc.)
- **Pilkington** criticised Lakoff's dominance theory, arguing men weren't dominant, but competitive
- **Zimmerman and West** conducted a study where they recorded 31 conversations between pairs of men and women, and pairs of just men or women. They found that men spoke more, interrupted women more, but did not interrupt other men as much. Women were silent more, and only interrupted other women, not men.
- **Beattie** criticised their study, performed his own on a larger scale and found men and women interrupted with an equal frequency

## (3) Deficit Theory

- The deficit theory is the idea that the language men use is seen as the standard, whereas the language women use differs from the standard and is seen as insufficient.
- This theory could be seen as sexist as it portrays women as weaker and of lower status, highlighting the inequality faced by women
- Main supporter is **Otto Jespersen (1922)**, who found that women talk too much, have simpler vocabularies, are emotional not grammatical, and are too indirect so not effective
- Men on the otherhand, have a larger vocabulary and create words. Therefore men's language is more impressive
- Essentially, he believed that if men were to speak in the way that women did, or if they continued letting women speak in such a way, the language would become weaker and uninteresting. ('\_')



#### (4) Diversity Theory

- The diversity approach focuses on the idea that sex and gender are different, and that our sex does not affect the language we use. Sex refers to biological characteristics, whereas gender refers to socially constructed characteristics.
- **Cameron** challenges the idea that men and women use different language and calls difference a myth - differences in gender are because of the expectations placed on us by society.
- She coined the term '**verbal hygiene**' to refer to the ways in which people think they are supposed to speak in order to fit into the norm and meet the expectations of a correct society.
- So women are expected by society to be more submissive and quiet, therefore they interrupt less and speak less, not due to any biological reasons, but because they are socialised into gender expectations held by society (can use Greif's study here)
- **Butler** links gender to **gender performativity**, suggesting that we perform the gender we want to present to others through repeated behaviours that imitate certain gender roles/norms. Butler believes gender is constructed through language, not the other way around.
- **Baxter** believes that women don't lack power in conversations with men; they are capable of being as powerful as men. Weak language used by the powerless, not gender specific (Upper Class women speak with certainty)

#### Additional Interesting Gender Theorists

- **Greif** examined gender differences in interruptions and simultaneous speech between parents and pre-school children, she found :
  - No significant differences between the pre-school boys and girls
  - However, fathers interrupted more and spoke simultaneously more than mothers did
  - Both parents were more likely to interrupt and speak simultaneously with their daughters
  - What this study can show is that very early on, girls are socialised into speaking less and to accept being interrupted more, while the opposite is true for boys
  - Her study used in support of dominance model
- **Fisherman** found that conversation between sexes does not usually fail due to anything wrong with the way women speak, rather because of how men respond or their lack of response. Women do '**conversational shitwork**' in order to keep a convo going

#### Language and Ethnicity

- **Ethnicity** refers to our social identity, involving factors such as cultural practices, nationality, language, religious beliefs, and familial bonds.
- **Race** and **ethnicity** are closely linked terms that can sometimes get confused. The main difference is that race refers to the distinctive physical characteristics of a

person whereas ethnicity refers to social factors such as culture, tradition, and language.

- Language plays a huge part in defining ethnicity as it is a factor that can indicate where someone comes from and the social group that they belong to.
- **Dialect** is a variety of a language that is spoken in a particular region of a country. It contains its own language features such as distinctive words, grammar, and pronunciation.
- A person's dialect expresses where a person is from or is currently living. People may have a mixture of dialects that they use and these make up their idiolect.
- **Idiolect** refers to an individual's unique use of language. Our idiolect is influenced by many aspects of our lives such as where we live, our education, friendship groups, hobbies, and so on.
- **Ethnolect** refers to a language variety that is specific to an ethnic group. An example of an ethnolect is **African American Vernacular English (AAVE)**.

Multiple theorists have explored the interaction between language and ethnicity, such as :

#### **Code Switching : Holmes**

- Code-switching is when a person changes between two different languages or language varieties within a single verbal exchange
- People may code switch languages in order to fit in, or to disclude someone else
- **Holmes** discusses code-switching, stating that it allows a speaker to convey emotion effectively by drawing the most appropriate vocabulary from other languages or linguistic varieties.
- A person can still express their ethnic identity using their second language, even if they do not speak it to a native level of fluency. 2nd and 3rd gen immigrants, for example.

#### **Multicultural London English - Kerswill**

- The MLE accent and dialect originate from immigrants and are typically used by **young, working-class people living in London**.
- Despite features of MLE being seen in people from all ethnic backgrounds, it is particularly common in people who are part of a multi-ethnic social network.
- Kerswill et al. suggested that ethnicity was not necessarily a determining factor affecting the variation of English used by their participants.
- Instead, they explored the effect of **social networks** on language use and how this interacts with ethnic identity.

#### **Gary Ives Bradford Study**

- Gary Ives' carried out two case studies that looked at the relationship between language and ethnicity.
- Interviewed students from a school in which had a strong Pakistani influence. He asked teenage boys from a Pakistani background about their language use and code-switching.
- Their responses suggested that they found it was 'natural'

- Also found that code-switching between Punjabi and English was a conscious choice made by the British Asian boys (born in the UK with Pakistani origins) as a way to distinguish themselves from the 'freshies' (born in Pakistan and moved to the UK)
- Code-switching was therefore a way to **emphasise group identity** and **exclude people** from other ethnicities who wouldn't understand the language.

### Gary Ives London Study

- Ives identified key vocabulary such as 'bare', 'calm', and 'hype', which makes up a variety of language called Multicultural London English (or MLE for short).
- MLE was used by students from all ethnic backgrounds, including teenagers from a White British background who also used lexis with Jamaican/Afro-Caribbean origins.
- Therefore, showed that language use didn't hugely depend on ethnicity but rather where you live and your group identity.

### Drummond

- Polish immigrants who liked the UK adapted local accents, those who wanted to leave back to Poland did not

### Language and Social Class

A person's social class is defined by their socio-economic status. This relates to their social standing in society and their income. Other factors influencing social class include wealth, education, and occupation.

- There have been some outdated views relating to language use and class. Speaking with a regional accent was associated with the working class, and speaking with an RP accent was associated with the upper class.
- However, some of these perceptions still hold true in today's society.
- People still tend to alter how they speak to accommodate the perceptions they either want to associate themselves with or distance themselves from.
- This is done through **convergence** and **divergence** and can be either a subconscious or conscious choice.
- People may use predetermined and known perceptions relating to language use and class to exhibit either overt or covert prestige.
- **Overt prestige** is when a speaker takes pride in using more standard, formal language as they associate it with a certain level of prestige.
- This is most commonly seen by those who aspire to be in a higher class as they're using common preconceptions of language to give themselves a high social status that is publicly acknowledged.
- **Covert prestige** is when someone takes pride in using their regional accent or other non-standard forms of language. From doing this, the speaker gains status within their peer group. This retains a high social status within a specific social group without them needing to exhibit themselves as being of a higher class.

### Theories related to this topic include :

- **Labov** - study found a link between social class and the way people speak, with higher-class department store employees using more prestigious speech patterns.
- **Trudgill** - study in Norwich found that social class and linguistic variables, such as pronunciation and vocabulary, were closely linked, with middle-class speakers using more standard forms of English. Variables such as (ng), (t), and (h). Found that :
  - Lower class speakers used more non-standard variants.
  - Higher class speakers used more standard variants.
  - All speakers used more non-standard variants in informal speech.
  - All speakers used more standard variants in formal speech.
- **Bernstein** - there are two types of linguistic codes that people use. Elaborated and restricted. These linguistic codes are closely linked to social class.
  - **Restricted code** is associated with informal situations and requires external context or shared insider knowledge to be understood. It uses non-standard forms, simpler syntax, and more idioms.
  - **Elaborated code** is associated with formal situations and education, and elaborated utterances can stand alone without depending on external context. It uses standard language forms, more complex syntax, and more detail.
  - Restricted code is most commonly linked to lower social classes, whereas elaborated code is linked to higher social classes.
  - Children are socialised into these linguistic codes
  - Bernstein believed that students from working-class backgrounds performed poorly in language-based subjects due to their use of restricted code. Students who used elaborated code often found better social mobility and opportunities.
  - Bernstein's study has many critics who comment on his lack of concrete evidence and his tendency to generalise.

### Social Network Theory

- Social Network Theory is concerned with how social factors impact language use and change, transmission of information, and general attitudes and behaviours within communities.
- Gender, age, social class, ethnicity, and occupation are all important factors when exploring social networks and the effects they have on language.
- It is not just one factor, like say ethnicity, that determines a person's language. There are many factors that overlap to create a person's idiolect

## Steven Pinker - Euphemism Treadmill

- The **euphemism treadmill** is a phenomenon where euphemisms become increasingly negative over time.
- The concept was introduced by Steven Pinker, a cognitive psychologist and linguist.
- Pinker argues that the euphemism treadmill occurs because the underlying negative concept remains the same, regardless of the word used to describe it.
- As society becomes desensitized to the euphemism, the word loses its positive connotations and becomes just as negative as the original term.
- Pinker gives examples such as "mentally retarded" being replaced by "mentally handicapped," "mentally challenged," and "intellectually disabled" as society looks for less offensive terms to describe those with intellectual disabilities.
- However, as each term becomes associated with the negative concept of intellectual disability, it too becomes stigmatized and is eventually replaced with a new euphemism.
- Pinker argues that this phenomenon reflects the power of language and its ability to shape our perceptions and attitudes towards certain groups of people or concepts.