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UNIVERSITY PRESS

# English Language

for Cambridge International AS & A Level

COURSEBOOK

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Acknowledgements

# Introduction

The purpose of this coursebook is to help you to develop and apply the key reading and writing skills you need to succeed in your AS & A Level English Language course. It is particularly designed for those working towards the Cambridge Assessment International Education syllabus 9093.

The book covers a wide range of reading skills, such as decoding questions, drawing out important words and phrases, and understanding elements of style, voice and tone. It addresses the conventions of certain kinds of written and spoken language, from scripted speeches to travel articles, from memoirs to letters, and looks at how you can understand and then capture these conventions and writers' techniques in your own work.

In writing, you will learn how to plan and structure shorter and extended responses, either for specified audiences or for a more general readership, and then to write with originality and flair as directed. You will learn about significant topics in the English Language which will be supplemented with opportunities for guided independent research to ensure you have relevant information about significant changes and developments. You will read model or sample answers which will help you evaluate your own work.

## How the coursebook is structured

This coursebook is divided into sections which correspond to the main subject areas of the course. Each section is subdivided into a number of units which correspond to specific topics within the broader subject area. The sections follow the content of the Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language syllabus (9093) for examination from 2021 but are central to any study of English Language.

### Part 1 - AS Level

The first part of the book, for AS Level, is divided into six sections which cover the reading and writing skills essential for your AS Level English Language study.

- In **Section 1 Introduction to AS Level English Language**, you are introduced to the relevant tools and skills for language analysis and response which you will need throughout your AS Level English Language course.
- In **Section 2 Exploring text types**, you will explore the conventions of different text types.
- In **Section 3 Reading skills - directed response**, you will learn the skills of writing appropriately for a directed response.
- In **Section 4 Reading skills - text analysis**, you will learn the skills for successful text analysis, including how to organise and structure your responses.
- In **Section 5 Writing skills - shorter writing and reflective commentary**, you will learn the skills for writing a shorter written response, and how to structure a commentary to reflect on your own writing.
- In **Section 6 Writing skills - extended writing**, you will develop both your abilities in extended writing and skills to appraise your own writing in a critical response.

### Part 2 - A Level

The second part of the coursebook supports your A Level study. It builds on the reading and writing skills you have learned at AS Level and applies them to four specialist subject areas of English. This part of the book is divided into four sections which continue numerically from AS Level.

- In **Section 7 Language change**, you will learn about important stages in the development of English; ideas relating to how and why language changes as well as techniques for measuring rates of change.
- In **Section 8 Child language acquisition**, you will learn about the main stages of early childhood language acquisition up to eight years old, as well as theories on the ways in which children learn and use language. You will also learn the conventions and features of unspoken conversation, and how spoken language is transcribed.
- In **Section 9 English in the world**, you will learn about the influences which have made English a global language. You will consider debates about the ways that English has been spreading in relation to the decline in importance of local languages. You will discuss the ethics involved in promoting English over local languages and learn about the varieties of English which now exist worldwide.
- In **Section 10 Language and the self**, you will learn about the many influences on language, social groups and self-identity. You will examine the theories on the link between language and thought, and evaluate the different ideas to do with the relative importance of 'nature versus nurture' in learning and using language.

Most sections in the coursebook end with a unit in which you will have the opportunity to practise responding to exam-style questions. These practice units allow you to assess your understanding and levels of achievement in the topic you have studied.

## Key concepts

Your Cambridge International English Language course has **key concepts**. These are broad principles which underpin the areas of study.

These concepts are essential ideas that will be at the core of the work you do. They provide a basis for understanding the content you learn and the ideas you discuss, so that they give you a framework for class and independent study.

The key concepts are an integral part of each unit in the book, with the ideas in each unit related to one or more of these concepts. You will find key concept features in each unit, to make you aware of the focus for the information and discussion in that unit. The key concepts for Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language are outlined as follows:

### Text and context

A text can be defined as a single, coherent unit of language, from the briefest spoken utterance to a book published across several volumes. However, no text exists without context; students of English language must always consider how a text's meaning is informed by the circumstances not only of its production, but also of its communication and reception.

### Meaning and style

The study of English language involves developing a range of strategies for exploring the complex ways in which different linguistic elements come together to create meaning. Whether producing their own texts or analysing texts produced by others, students of English language must consider how choices regarding form, structure and language also interact to create a distinctive style.

### Audience

Students of English language must learn to identify and analyse the strategies writers and speakers use to communicate with their intended audience(s). Likewise, they must be able to predict, recognise and analyse the various responses these strategies might elicit.

### Creativity

Whether writing artfully for a specified purpose and audience, reading deeply between the lines of a challenging text, or developing strategies for acquiring the language in the first place, users of the English language must demonstrate creativity in a range of forms and contexts.

### Diversity

Constantly subject to a range of influences – whether personal, social, geographical or otherwise – the English language exists in a range of competing and overlapping forms at any given moment. This extraordinary diversity offers a rich opportunity for analysis, comparison and exploration.

### Change

The phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic and other aspects of the English language are liable to change over time. Students of English language must analyse these changes and explore in detail the factors that drive them.

# Assessment overview

This section provides an overview of the aims and component parts of the course, as well as the ways in which you are likely to be assessed. It will help you to see how the different parts combine to provide a stimulating and hopefully a rewarding programme of study.

## Assessment objectives

These five assessment objectives form the basis for assessing your knowledge and understanding as you progress through the skills and content taught by the Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language syllabus.

- **AO1:** Read and demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts.
- **AO2:** Write effectively, creatively, accurately and appropriately for a range of audiences and purposes.
- **AO3:** Analyse the ways in which writers' and speakers' choices of form, structure and language produce meaning and style.
- **AO4:** Demonstrate understanding of linguistic issues, concepts, methods and approaches.
- **AO5:** Analyse and synthesise language data from a variety of sources.

In the book, each unit starts with clear learning objectives to be achieved. These learning objectives are supported by the relevant assessment objective, so that, through each part of your study, you will be clear about what you are expected to learn and understand.

## Command words used in the Cambridge International syllabus

The following key command words relate to the subject content throughout the syllabus. They are used in exam-style questions throughout this coursebook. It is important that you are familiar with these, and understand what they are asking you to do.

Command word	What it means
Analyse	Examine in detail to show meaning, identify elements and the relationship between them
Compare	Identify/comment on similarities and/or differences
Discuss	Write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way

## The structure of the exam papers

This section explains the format of the two AS Level papers and the two A Level papers. To achieve the full Cambridge International A Level English Language, you must sit all four papers. The AS Level papers must be sat before, or at the same time as, the A Level papers.

Paper	Details	Section	AOs	Marks	Timing
<b>AS Level</b> Paper 1: Reading	You must answer two compulsory questions: Question 1 in Section A and Question 2 in Section B.	Section A: Directed response	AO1, AO2, AO3	25	2 hours 15 minutes
		Section B: Text analysis	AO1, AO3	25	
<b>AS Level</b> Paper 2: Writing	You must answer two questions: one compulsory question from Section A and one question from a choice of three in Section B.	Section A: Shorter writing and reflective commentary	AO2, AO3	25	2 hours
		Section B: Extended writing	AO2	25	
<b>A Level</b> Paper 3: Language Analysis	You must answer two compulsory questions: Question 1 in Section A and Question 2 in Section B.	Section A: Language change	AO2, AO4, AO5	25	2 hours 15 minutes
		Section B: Child language acquisition	AO1, AO4, AO5	25	

<b>A Level</b>	You must answer two compulsory questions each on a separate topic area: Question 1 in Section A, and Question 2 in Section B.	Section A: English in the world	AO1, AO2, AO4	25	2 hours 15 minutes
Paper 4: Language topics		Section B: Language and the self	AO1, AO2, AO4	25	

Visit the Cambridge Assessment International Education website [www.cambridgeinternational.org](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org) to consult the full 9093 syllabus for examination from 2021.

### Important points for all four papers

Remember the following important points:

- Dictionaries may not be used in any exam paper.
- For questions which require you to read unseen texts, these texts will be drawn from a very wide variety of writing styles, genres and contexts.
- For questions which require you to write in the style of a specific text type, these may be drawn from a wide range of text types. To respond to this question, you will need to be familiar with the characteristics and conventions of a wide variety of different types of text.
- You must write fluently and use Standard English in all your answers.

### And finally...

You have chosen a dynamic and rigorous subject, in which you will be given a core of relevant information, as well as ideas and data for discussion. Your own interests and enthusiasm will lead you to discover many narrative points of view, theories and research studies which will add to your competence and confidence in English Language. It's important to remember that reading beyond the material in this textbook will help you to develop your skills, as well as contributing to your enjoyment of the course.

# How to use this book

This book contains a number of features to help you in your study.

## Learning objectives

*In this unit, you will:*

- learn how the context, audience and purpose are linked to a text (AO3)
- learn how these factors influence the way a text is constructed (AO3).

**Learning objectives** at the start of each unit explain what you will cover and show how this links to the course's assessment objectives.

**Before you start** activities at the start of each unit provide a set of questions for you to see what you know before starting the unit.

## Before you start

- 1 Have you heard or used the word 'context' before? If so, when? For example, what does it mean if you are told to look at the 'context' of an unfamiliar word to work out its meaning?
- 2 You will know the word 'audience' – what is its usual meaning? For example, when you go to films or music shows with friends – who is the audience? Are audiences always the same people for every film or show? Why not?

## ACTIVITY 7

Which of these conventions of story openings can you identify in Desai's text? Make notes on these questions:

- 1 In what way does the writer evoke a time, setting or location, or introduce a situation?
- 2 Are particular characters introduced? If so, in what way?
- 3 How does the writer set in motion a plot? Through presenting a problem, obstacle, surprising event, arrival or departure?
- 4 How does the writer reveal information? A typical feature of the story form is to withhold information for effect – how, if at all, is this done here?

Throughout each unit there are **Activity boxes** which allow you to practise applying your knowledge.

## KEY CONCEPT

### Meaning and style

Feelings and attitudes may be conveyed when they are not directly expressed. For example, read these three student responses discussing the writer's attitude.

Throughout the book, **Key concept** boxes contain questions or activities that help you make links back to the key concepts in the course.

### ••• THINK LIKE ... A LITERARY REVIEWER

Write a short review of a book or story you have read, focusing on the writer's style and the effects they create (rather than the plot or action). Consider how he or she has created voice or mood, or conveyed time and the sequence of events. You might try and use some of the five key points for an effective analysis listed here.

**Think like ...** boxes show how the skills you are developing through your English Language study can be used in the wider world.

 Some of the information in this book goes beyond the syllabus, but has been included to enhance your understanding. Where **Extension** material appears in the book, it is marked by a green bar to the left of the text.

You have been asked to contribute a descriptive piece of writing about secret places to a creative writing website. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere and focus on colours, sounds and movements to help your reader imagine the scene.

Write the description, using no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)

**Exam-style questions** appear throughout the book, but mainly in the final units of each chapter, when you have covered most of the chapter content. They allow you to practise applying your knowledge and skills and increase your confidence about answering questions.

**Reflection:** Evaluate your response as you write. Consider the following points:

- 1 Have you made effective linguistic choices to sustain the appropriate style?
- 2 Have you stuck to the conventions of the form you have chosen?
- 3 Have you kept your focus on the details you were given?
- 4 Is the mood or feeling you are meant to express sufficiently clear?

Try to complete the remaining two set tasks at another time. Remember that you need to have mastered all the potential styles you might be briefed with.

Reflecting on your learning is an important part of the learning process. **Reflection** boxes contain questions or activities to help you with this.

Throughout the book there are **Student response** boxes, which show examples of possible student responses to questions. Be careful – these may not always be examples of good answers; sometimes you will need to evaluate the responses to identify how they can improved.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

I immediately set the scene for a 'secret' location by using the phrase 'have to follow a winding, gritty path', which leads the reader to the lake itself. Then, by including the clause 'you can stand looking down' I made the reader see the lake from a distance, which adds to the idea of it being hidden.

I tried to evoke the colours of the scene by including noun phrases like 'emerald water' and 'tiny, white flowers'.

I also tried to convey the movements through reference to the 'nodding heads' of the flowers and the verb 'flutter' which emphasizes the way their petals shake.

### TEACHER COMMENT

The student sets the scene in a clear way and includes some details to create mood. There is a sense of voice in the text, but the opening sentences are rather dull and lack variety. There could be more detail about the shop itself and the surrounding area to develop the atmosphere and the sense of the experience being 'life-changing'.

Some of the Student responses are accompanied by **Teacher comment** boxes, which point out strengths and weaknesses in the responses.

At the end of each unit there is a **Self-assessment checklist**. This checklist lists the key skills covered in the unit and asks you to assess yourself against the statements. You are guided to revisit any areas that you are less confident about, in order to strengthen your understanding. These checklists can also be used during revision.



### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

Skill	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can identify the key words in a shorter writing question		
I understand what makes an effective commentary		
I can plan my own short written response		

**Part 1**

**AS Level**



## **Section 1**

### **Introduction to AS Level English Language**

# **Unit 1.1**

## **Understanding context, audience and purpose**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how the context, audience and purpose are linked to a text (AO3)
- learn how these factors influence the way a text is constructed (AO3).

### **Before you start**

- 1 Have you heard or used the word ‘context’ before? If so, when? For example, what does it mean if you are told to look at the ‘context’ of an unfamiliar word to work out its meaning?
- 2 You will know the word ‘audience’ – what is its usual meaning? For example, when you go to films or music shows with friends – who is the audience? Are audiences always the same people for every film or show? Why not?
- 3 ‘Purpose’ will also be a word you probably know, but can you think of any **synonyms** for it? How might ‘purpose’ and ‘audience’ be linked?

Each of these elements is important, both in understanding whether a text is effective and in shaping your own work.

As you progress through this course, you will need to understand clearly what **context**, **audience** and **purpose** mean.

## Why is it important to understand these key ideas?

When you write any text, identifying audience, context and purpose is vital. For example, look at this typical exam-style writing question:

[1] context – time (left school), situation (working for a charity)

[2] audience – members of the school

[3] purpose – to explain why it was a rewarding experience

After leaving school, a student decides to work for a year as a volunteer for a local charity. At the end of the year, the student returns to their previous school to give a speech about their experience to other students. Write the speech. In your writing, create a sense of a positive and enthusiastic attitude towards the experience.

### ACTIVITY 1

Why is it important to identify these core elements? What might be the outcome if you ignore such things?

It is also important to realise that many texts you read and write have more than one purpose and, sometimes, different types of reader.

### ACTIVITY 2

What might be a secondary purpose for the speech in the task at the bottom of page 3?

Now, look at this extract from a student's letter to an editor of a newspaper on a different topic:

### STUDENT RESPONSE

It is completely unfair of your paper to accuse our local island communities of contributing to the pollution of the seas, and the destruction of the coral. We have no control over climate change and one of the few ways we can survive on our tiny strips of land is to extend the landmass by taking rocks and other materials from the sea-bed. Rather than blame us, why don't you attack local government for abandoning indigenous people, and demand that they invest in our communities?

[1] purpose – to express anger at the newspaper's stance; to persuade readers that it is not the islanders' fault

[2] context – a newspaper has criticised local people for damaging the environment

### ACTIVITY 3

What do you learn about the audience and purposes here?

- a What - or who - is the audience for this text? Look at the personal and possessive pronouns: 'your paper', 'our local island', 'we have no control'.
- b A key feature of persuasive texts is often a 'call to action' (a request for the reader/audience to do something or change their behaviour). What is the call to action here?



### Why does knowing about these things matter?

If you understand the context, audience and purpose of a text you need to **write**, it will help you to:

- include the relevant content (for example, the speech for [Activity 2](#) wouldn't be much use if the student wrote about his favourite music!)
- write in the correct style (for example, writing for people your own age will have a different tone than when you write for people much older or younger than you)
- use techniques that will help you achieve the required purpose (explanations tend to require factual information, and some detail about processes; persuasive texts might address the audience directly, have a 'call to action' and so on).

If you understand the context, audience and purpose of a text you are **reading**, it will help you to:

- understand the **mood** or **tone** created
- identify the ways the writer has achieved their purpose
- engage emotionally with or understand the views expressed.

### ACTIVITY 4

How would you describe the mood or tone of the writer of the letter to the editor of the newspaper?

So, we can refine our definitions of context, audience and purpose now:

Context	Audience	Purpose
This can be the situation in which the text was constructed (e.g. criticism of island communities), or the particular conditions which influenced the writer (e.g. growing up on an island), or wider political, cultural or social movements (e.g. climate change and how governments respond).	Audience can be a general group or category of people who might read an article or hear a speech, or a specific single individual at whom the text is directed (or, indeed, both!).	Purpose can be expressed in simple terms such as 'to persuade' or 'to describe', but writing intentions are often much more specific (e.g. to persuade readers that islanders are not to blame). Importantly, texts can be <b>hybrids</b> that have several purposes.

Understanding these factors is vitally important when understanding and responding to texts. For example, read this opening explanation which accompanies a typical text you might read in the exam:

The following text is taken from the writer's diary. It describes a midsummer's night and her memories of her dead husband.

### ACTIVITY 5

Based on this alone, which words relate to 'context', 'audience' and 'purpose' (you may have to think a bit about 'audience')?

### Responding to audience, context and purpose when reading texts

Now let us look at the passage in question. It is taken from the diary of Mary Shelley (the author of 'Frankenstein') and was written in 1824. The first paragraph has been annotated to show all three elements.

What a **divine night** it is! I have just returned from **Kentish Town**; a calm twilight pervades the clear sky; the lamp-like moon is **hung out in heaven**, and the bright west retains the dye of sunset. If such weather would continue, I should write again; the lamp of thought is again illumined in my heart, and the fire descends from **heaven that kindles it**. Such, my loved **Shelley**, now **ten years ago**, at this season, did we first meet, and these were the very scenes - that churchyard, with its sacred tomb, was the spot where first love shone in your dear eyes. The stars of heaven are now your country, and your spirit drinks beauty and wisdom in those spheres, and I, beloved, shall one day join you. **Nature speaks to me of you. In towns and society I do not feel your presence**; but there you are with me, my own, my unalienable!

I feel my powers again, and this is, of itself, happiness; the eclipse of winter is passing from my mind. I shall again feel the enthusiastic glow of composition, again, as I pour forth my soul upon paper, feel the winged ideas arise, and enjoy the delight of expressing them. Study and occupation will be a pleasure, and not a task, and this I shall owe to sight and companionship of trees and meadows, flowers and sunshine.

**From The Journals of Mary Shelley.**



**Kentish Town:** then, a village on the edge of London

**Shelley:** Mary Shelley's late husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who died in 1822

**[1]** context – time and setting: now – the beautiful summer's evening linked to God's creation

**[2]** audience – direct address to her late husband

**[3]** context – time and setting: the past – memories of the churchyard, where they met

**[4]** purpose – to explain the continuing strength of her love

**[5]** context – the influence of the natural world and its beauty in contrast to city life

### ACTIVITY 6

How do context, audience and purpose work in Shelley's text? Write brief notes in response to these questions:

- 1** What other examples of each of the three elements (context, audience, purpose) can you find in the first paragraph?
- 2** In the second paragraph her purpose and audience seem to change.
  - a** What new feelings or ideas does she want to express?
  - b** To whom does she seem to be speaking now?
- 3** The use of context reappears in the second paragraph. How does Shelley link the natural world and the changing seasons to her mood and work?

**Reflection:** What have you learned about how to approach reading tasks? Consider:

- the reading skills you used in this last task
- how you used the task wording to identify or select answers
- how you read the text – did you read it all in one go, and then line-by-line? Did you read every word or **skim** read it? Or did you **scan** for the information you wanted?

### ACTIVITY 7

Now, write up your ideas in about 75–100 words, explaining what the context, audience and purpose of Mary Shelley's diary extract reveal about her, and what mood they create.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand what the terms 'context', 'audience' and 'purpose' mean		
I can identify how they are used in writing tasks		
I can identify how they are used in reading passages		

## Unit 1.2

# Understanding form and structure

### Learning objectives

***In this unit, you will:***

- understand the forms and structures of different texts (AO1)
- learn what the terms form and structure mean (AO3).

### Before you start

Think about the variety and range of texts you write, use or study in your work at school or college:

- 1 Do these texts all look the same? What is different about their appearance or presentation?
- 2 Are they all organised in the same way? (In other words, are the texts divided up in the same way, or is each text different?)



#### KEY CONCEPT

##### Meaning and style

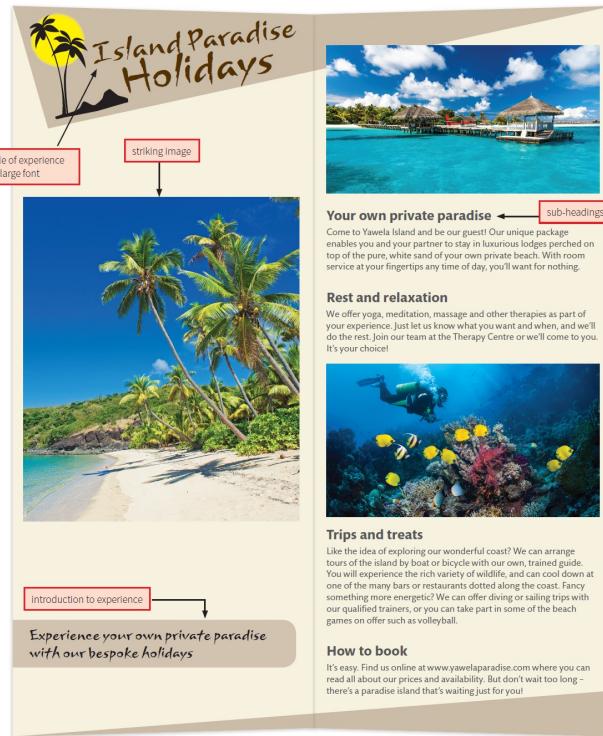
The writer's choice of form and structure help as much as their lexical choice to create the meaning and style of a text. For example, how does the form and structure of a cookery book contribute to its effectiveness? How would the book work without a separate list of ingredients, weights and measures for each recipe?

## The importance of form and structure

The presentation and organisation of texts are key factors in the way writers shape their content. Such factors can tell readers where to look, the order in which to read material and what information or ideas have particular priority or importance, but they can also create effects, causing us to read something more quickly, or to make us stop and reflect. These elements are generally referred to as **form** and **structure**.

### How can you recognise form and structure in a text?

Look at the annotated leaflet on the opposite page.



### ACTIVITY 1

Work with a partner to discuss the following questions about form and structure in the leaflet:

- 1 Are there any other elements of form that could be added to the annotations? Think about any visual features in the leaflet that do not have arrows pointing to them.
- 2 Is the text structured in a **chronological** way, as a story might be, or is it organised in a different way (for example, according to the importance of the information)?

## Form and structure in non-visual texts

Form and structure are easy to see and comment on in highly visual texts, such as advertisements and brochures, but are more difficult to identify in texts that are predominantly **prose**.

Read the following passage taken from *The Flowers*, by Alice Walker. It is not the opening of the story, but comes shortly after the girl described has left her house.

She had explored the woods behind the house many times. Often, in late autumn, her mother took her to gather nuts among the fallen leaves. Today she made her own path, bouncing this way and that way, vaguely keeping an eye out for snakes. She found, in addition to various common but pretty ferns and leaves, an armful of strange blue flowers with velvety ridges and a sweet suds bush full of the brown, fragrant buds.

By twelve o'clock, her arms laden with sprigs of her findings, she was a mile or more from home. She had often been as far before, but the strangeness of the land made it not as pleasant as her usual haunts. It seemed gloomy in the little cove in which she found herself. The air was damp, the silence close and deep.

**From *The Flowers*, by Alice Walker.**

### ACTIVITY 2

Working with a partner, copy and complete this table. Use it to:

- check off the features of form you can identify
- provide more detail about the features you have selected, including a brief note of any examples. The first has been done for you.

Feature of form (or its absence)	Comment and example
Paragraphs	Yes – two of approximately equal length. The first starts ‘She had explored…’. The second begins, ‘By twelve o’clock…’.
<b>Direct speech</b>	
Prose description of setting or action	
Short simple sentences	
Longer, <b>complex sentences</b>	

### ACTIVITY 3

In terms of its form, in what ways is this text different to that of the leaflet? Think about its:

- use of images, diagrams and design
- size and style of text and so on
- stylistic features, headings, titles and so on.

### ACTIVITY 4

What is *absent* from a text can sometimes tell us as much as what has been included. Discuss with your partner the following possible effects of there being no direct speech in the extract from *The Flowers*. Which do you find most convincing? Why?

- 1 It creates a sense of the girl’s interior world of thoughts.

- 2** It creates a claustrophobic effect – the girl is trapped with no one to share her ideas with.
- 3** It creates a sense of peace and tranquillity – nothing breaks into the girl's world.

**Reflection:** Write down your own definition of form and how you think it differs from structure: do you understand the differences yet? Don't worry if you are still unsure – the rest of this unit should help.

## Analysing form and structure

In order to understand how texts are structured, you need to do some close analysis. This will also be important for you in your own writing, either when you are required to write in a similar style to a text you have read, or in your own extended writing.

### ACTIVITY 5

Read the extract from *The Flowers* again. Consider the structure of the text, and how the content is organised and sequenced. Once you have identified the key elements you will be able to get an overall sense of how the text works.

Write brief answers to each of these questions:

- 1 Can you identify the use of **prepositions** related to place or where things are?
- 2 Can you find any time markers (words such as 'Yesterday', 'Later')?
- 3 Can you find any evidence of the **past perfect tense** to tell us about events in the past?

### ACTIVITY 6

What overall sense do you get of the structure of the extract from *The Flowers*? Working with your partner again, consider each of the following comments. Which do you both think best sums up the structure of the extract? Why?

- a The text deals with the girl's actions that morning.
- b The text deals with the girl's actions that morning, and then changes when it reaches midday.
- c The text looks back in time before describing the actions that morning, and then at midday.

## Writing analytically about form and structure

It is important to first identify the different elements of form and structure in a text, before providing a coherent analysis. Read this sample commentary on *The Flowers*. Consider how the commentary moves from identifying elements of the structure to analysis. How is this achieved?

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The extract from the story is divided into two paragraphs which roughly address the time the girl spends before midday, and where she finds herself at the moment midday arrives. The very first short, simple sentence tells us that the narrator has done this walk 'many times' previously, and the second, supporting sentence tells us more about those walks with her mother 'to gather nuts'. So, in fact, the opening two sentences with the use of the past perfect 'had' send us back in time before returning the reader to the present. The idea of familiarity is established so that the initial tone is unthreatening: as readers we follow with interest rather than unease.

The first paragraph then goes on to trace the girl's steps as she creates 'her own path', and provides details on what she finds, such as the 'strange blue flowers.' This last detail, introduced at this point, alters the tone somewhat – the familiar becoming noteworthy.

The second paragraph suddenly locates the reader in a specific time – 'by twelve o'clock', and she is no longer on the move. She is in a 'little

cove'. The sentences shorten and the final one has an ominous tone in the monosyllabic adjectives: 'damp', close' and 'deep'

[1] overall structure of text

[2] specific focus of the sentences (in order)

[3] the structural effect: we are taken back in time as readers

[4] specific comment on where the writer takes us now

[5] the function of the second paragraph

[6] comment on the ending of the second paragraph and its effect

**Reflection:** Explore the effectiveness of this commentary by jotting down answers to these questions:

- 1 What other elements of structure are addressed in this commentary?
- 2 What effect does the commentary say is created?

#### ACTIVITY 7

Take the opening two paragraphs of any prose text (fiction or non-fiction – from books, newspapers, or online). If possible, make a copy of it and stick it onto a larger sheet of paper so that you can write annotations around it. Write down anything you find relating to form and structure in the text.

#### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the difference between form and structure		
I can identify how texts are sequenced and organised in different ways, using features such as tenses, paragraphs and prepositions		

# **Unit 1.3**

## **Exploring language and style**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn what language and style means in relation to written texts (AO3)
- identify linguistic devices (AO3)
- develop ways of exploring language and style as reader and writer (AO2).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What does the word 'style' mean to you when it is applied to books, films, plays, poems and so on?
- 2 When you have previously studied 'language', what sorts of things did you explore or learn about?

## Key elements of language

When you respond to a writer's use of language or create your own text it is rather like tasting or cooking a particular dish: it has distinct flavours and sensations – sudden heat, indulgent smooth sweetness, or sharp and acidic taste. So, it is important to understand *the ingredients* that have given the text its particular flavour. In this unit, you will explore three key elements, or ingredients, of language:

- lexis
- sentence variety and grammar
- **figurative** language and other linguistic devices

Language is, of course, much more than this: there are linguistic devices related to sound and rhythm, specific uses of dialogue and ways in which writers use tenses, punctuation and so on, but these will be addressed and explored in subsequent units.

Read these three short extracts. They all describe a similar thing, but their 'flavours' are quite different:

- 1 Rain. Incessant rain. Drum, drum... more drumming. I hate it.
- 2 He stood in the downpour and let the water flow in rivulets down his neck, enjoying the cleansing, pure baptism.
- 3 Rain is formed when the Sun's heat evaporates water from seas and lakes. First it exists in the atmosphere as invisible vapour. Then, as the air cools condensation is created and this turns to rain.



### ACTIVITY 1

What is the style or language used in each of these examples?  
Working in pairs or small groups, discuss these questions:

- 1 How would you describe each extract? Consider adjectives related to the feelings each creates (e.g. 'personal', 'sad') or those related to the sound or rhythm of the words, such as 'sharp', 'soft'.
- 2 Do you all agree on the different feelings each text produces? How did group members differ (if at all) in what they said?

## Lexical choice

As you saw in the three extracts, the same thing was described in different ways and the specific word choices contributed to the different effects achieved in each. For example, one extract used the adjective 'cleansing' to describe the rain, while another used 'incessant'.

### THINK LIKE ... A STORY WRITER

Adapting or adjusting lexis in this way demonstrates how a writer's choice of words creates a range of different effects or meanings.

It can be useful to break down the study of lexis into three areas:

- 1 lexical fields
- 2 word classes
- 3 meaning and **interpretation**.

## Lexical fields

This is a linguistic term that describes the way certain words in a text relate to, or seem to be about, the same thing or idea. For example, in an advert for a car we might expect the lexical field to contain words such as 'engine', 'dashboard', 'speed', 'braking'. These are specific to cars, but there could be other words in the same advert related to a different lexical field, such as 'leather', 'reclining', 'arm-rest', 'lumbar support' – all of which relate to 'seating and comfort'.

Read this short passage taken from *Slipper Satin*, by Alex La Guma:

The street couldn't have changed much in four months. The same two rows of houses were there, with their fenced stoeps and verandahs; the same Indian grocery shop, and the back of the warehouse that has a big sign painted across the whole expanse of wall. There were the same grey pavements, cracked in places. Perhaps the paint and colour-wash on the houses had faded and peeled somewhat during the four months, and there were wide streaks down the wall of the warehouse, damaging the black lettering.

**From *Slipper Satin*, by Alex La Guma.**

### ACTIVITY 2

With a partner, discuss these questions:

- 1 What links the words in blue?
- 2 The other set of highlighted words/phrases in yellow relates less to specific things but what they are *like*. What is the link here?

This example allows you as a reader to see how, by focusing on the buildings and their features, and then on their condition, the writer has built up the description.

## Word classes

A related way of categorising lexis is through recognising when writers use particular types of words. For example, a text that has lots of active verbs will have a very different effect from one made up mostly of adjectives and nouns. You have already encountered some of the word classes in [Units 1.1](#) and [1.2](#) but the following table is a useful reference to check your knowledge.

Word class	Brief definition	Examples
Noun	Name we give things, ideas, and places. These are generally divided into <b>proper nouns</b> (the particular unique name of someone, place etc) and <b>common nouns</b> . Another useful division is between	'Ravi', 'Cairo', (proper nouns) 'hope', 'rain', 'teacher' (common nouns)

	abstract nouns (such as 'hope') which describe ideas and concrete nouns (such as 'table') which describe physical entities.	
Verb	Describes an action or state. Often separated into two sub-classes – <b>lexical</b> , or 'full' verbs which operate in an independent way, such as 'I go' and <b>auxiliary verbs</b> which assist or alter the meaning of other verbs. For example, in the <i>modal</i> form 'I should go.' <b>Phrasal verbs</b> (usually made up of verbs plus adverbs and/or prepositions) are an important part of English language, too, for example in understanding the difference in meaning between 'Look up', 'Look at', 'Look down', 'Look around' and so on.	'(to) dream', '(to) run' (full verbs) 'might, ought, should' (modal verbs) 'pick up', 'make up', 'get away', 'get along with', 'give in' (phrasal verbs)
Adjective	Describes a noun	'dark tower', 'incessant rain'
Adverb	Describes the manner in which something is done	'quickly', 'before', 'completely'
Pronoun	There are different types of pronoun. Pronouns are usually described as words which take the place of nouns or noun phrases. The most common categories are:  personal pronouns (e.g., <i>he, they</i> ); possessive pronouns (e.g., <i>her, your</i> ); demonstrative pronouns (eg <i>this, these</i> ); interrogative pronouns (e.g., <i>which, who</i> ); indefinite pronouns (e.g., <i>none, several</i> ) reciprocal pronouns (e.g., <i>each other, one another</i> ); relative pronouns (e.g., <i>which, where</i> )	'He', 'she', 'they', 'we'
Preposition	Describes the relationship between things in time, place and so on	'Under', 'near', 'after'
Conjunction	A <b>connective</b> word that links parts of a sentence or sentences	'and', 'because', 'but'
Determiner	A short word that helps specify a noun	' <u>this</u> dog', 'a storm', ' <u>every</u> child'
Exclamation	Word or phrase that stands on its own, usually expressing surprise or emotion	'Cool!', 'That hurt!'

It is important to understand how simple changes affect a text's meaning or mood.

### ACTIVITY 3

Read these two short sentences and jot down answers to the following questions.

- a I met **a** girl on the way home from **some** shops.
- b I met **the** girl on the way home from **the** shops.

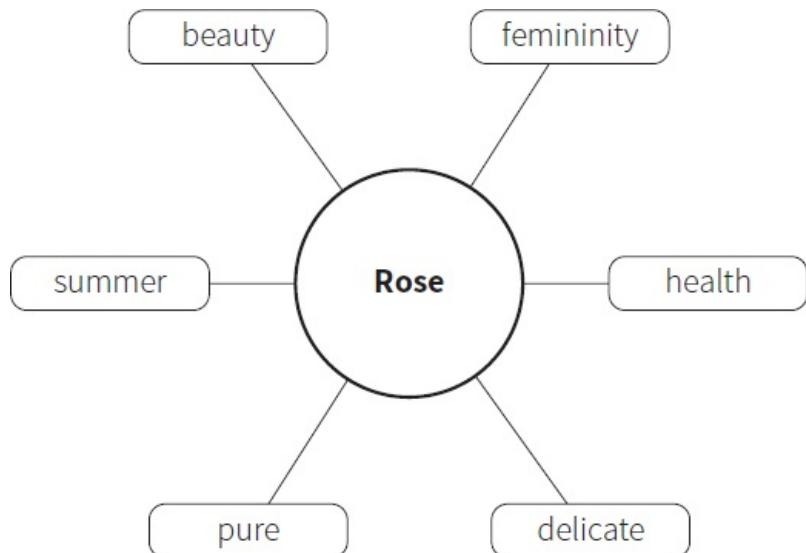
- 1 What types of word have been highlighted?
- 2 How is the meaning of the sentence changed by the word choices?

## Meaning and interpretation

It may seem obvious to state that you need to know what words mean, but words can have shades of **literal** and figurative meaning.

'Denotative' (or literal) meanings provide a scientific, factual description. (For example, when water 'evaporates' it changes from water into invisible vapour), whereas 'connotative' meanings (or 'connotations') are broader and more open to interpretation. These refer to the social, cultural or emotional

meanings associated with a word or idea. In simple terms, a 'rose' means a colourful flower, but it can bring to mind and represent much more:



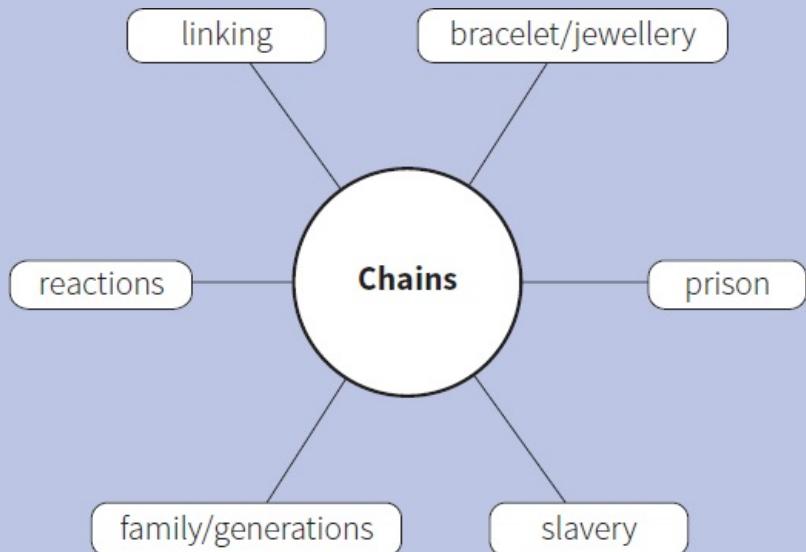
Many words are not as rich in connotation as 'rose' is, but they do have non-literal meanings. For example, if you were to say 'my friend's confidence evaporated' you would not mean your friend's emotions turned into vapour, but that they disappeared!

#### ACTIVITY 4

On your own, write down each of the following words and then think of as many connotations as you can for each. Try to let your mind 'go free' and write down whatever links come to mind.

apple      forest      sunrise      chains

You could use spider diagrams like the one on [page 17](#).



#### Positive, negative, weak and strong words and phrases

Individual words or phrases, due to their literal meanings or connotations, can express positive (good, pleasant) or negative (bad, unpleasant) ideas, or have a weak or strong impact. They can also be neutral (somewhere in between). For example, consider:

- 1 the difference in strength ('wetness!') between:

*damp, sodden, drenched, soaked, moist, wet*

- 2 the difference in positive and negative meaning between:

*praise, compliment, flatter, sweet-talk, agree with.*

## ACTIVITY 5

Look at the two sets of words again.

- a Can you put the first set of ‘wet’ adjectives into order of ‘wetness’? Which word is most neutral (neither very wet nor slightly wet)?
- b Now decide which of the words in the second list is the most positive and which the most negative.
- c Which of the two adjectives describing rain in the start of the unit (‘cleansing’ and ‘incessant’) is more positive? Why?

## Sentence variety and grammar

The choices a writer makes about the length, type and style of sentence – and the order of words within the sentence – are equally important. The four core sentence types used by writers are:

Type	How constructed	Example	Effect or effects
<b>1</b> Simple sentences	One main clause, usually containing a <b>subject</b> and verb (and probably an <b>object</b> , too).	<i>The rain fell incessantly. The man was dead.</i>	A simple, clear expression OR Creates shock, a sudden pause.
<b>2</b> Compound sentences	Two equal clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction such as 'but', 'so', 'and'.	<i>The rain fell and the clouds gathered. The rain fell so the trip was cancelled.</i>	Expresses two related events – for example, to show cause and effect.
<b>3</b> Complex (or multi-clause) sentences	Contains a main clause, plus one or more subordinate or dependent clauses, usually linked by a conjunction or relative pronoun.	<i>The rain fell (main clause), even though no one had predicted it. (subordinate clause)</i>	Expresses a main idea supported by other ideas which would not make sense independently. More likely to be used for longer chain of events, explanations, descriptions.
<b>4</b> Minor sentences	A word, phrase or clause that works like a sentence but does not fit the grammatical requirements for one. Often used in speech.	<i>'Where are you?' 'At home!' <u>The sound of traffic and the sound of birds. Morning.</u></i>	Used stylistically to create impressions – perhaps in a poetic way, or to evoke mood or pace in a text.

Sentences can also be categorised according to their function: i.e

Type	Function	Example
Declarative	Make a statement	The rain fell heavily.
Interrogative	Ask a question	Is it raining?
Exclamatory	Express surprise, shock, strength of feeling and so on	How heavy the rain is!
Imperative	Give an order or command	Shut all the windows.

### ACTIVITY 6

Now think about the example from the start of the unit:

*Rain. Incessant rain. Drum, drum... more drumming. I hate it.*

- a What sentence types are used?
- b What impact does the final sentence ('I hate it.') create?
- c How else might the falling rain have been described? (Think about the alternatives – the same idea could have been expressed with 'I am not very happy about the rain that is falling.') What different effect would be created?

The order of words or clauses in sentences can also affect the mood or meaning of a text. A well-known example is the order and omission of words and phrases in news headlines. For example:

- *Police attack demonstrators*
- *Demonstrators attacked by police*
- *Demonstrators attacked*

By **foregrounding** (putting at the front of the sentence) certain details, particular ideas are given priority. For example, in the first headline, 'Police attack' comes first, making this idea the core focus.



### ACTIVITY 7

Working in small groups, discuss:

- a** how each of the headlines is different in terms of what is included or omitted
- b** how the order of words is different in each of the headlines
- c** how the focus changes in the second and third versions.

## Figurative language

You have already begun to explore the figurative nature of literal and non-literal language, and how certain words and phrases have a range of connotations. However, there are specific figurative devices which you will need to reference in your analysis or commentary on texts.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Creativity** – Figurative language is one of the main ways in which writers give their own work a distinct or original style. Try using figurative language to develop your own imaginative descriptions; for example, create similes or metaphors for these descriptions:

- The jagged peaks of the mountains were like .....  
.....
- The roaring ocean is a .....  
.....

## Figurative devices

Imagery is the general term used for the figurative language writers use to create vivid pictures in our minds. This can be achieved in a number of ways, but simile and metaphor are the most common.

Device	Example
<b>Simile</b> is when one thing is compared to another, using 'like' or 'as'.	<i>The Pacific Coast of Costa Rica is shaped <u>like</u> a giant crab with two great claws</i>
<b>Metaphor</b> is more powerful. It assumes a comparison without using 'like' or 'as.'	<i>The Pacific Coast of Costa Rica <u>is</u> [...] a giant crab with two great claws.</i> Note: The earlier example of someone's confidence 'evaporating' is also <i>metaphorical</i> .
<b>Personification</b> is a particular type of figurative language when a thing, idea or animal is given human attributes.	<i>When it comes, the Landscape listens – Shadows – hold their breath</i> (From the poem 'There's a certain Slant of light', by Emily Dickinson)
<b>Symbolism</b> is a particularly strong form of metaphor, when a particular event, image or even person represents a larger idea.	Some objects are automatically symbolic – white doves representing peace; roses representing romance or love. In texts, a longer description can represent a bigger idea; sometimes the symbolism is consciously referenced.
<b>Pathetic fallacy</b> is a kind of personification which gives human emotions and traits to inanimate objects or nature; for example, referring to weather features as reflecting a mood.	The sun smiled brightly and drove away the rain. The leaves danced.

Read the following passage taken from a newspaper article. Note how the writer makes reference to 'symbol'.

### A chainsaw-toting nun has won praise after being spotted tearing through fallen trees in the wake of Hurricane Irma.

Sister Margaret Ann's habit didn't hold her back when it came to helping with the relief effort, making her an unlikely symbol of the community clean-up. The nun used the power tool as she joined the emergency services to help clear roads blocked by debris in southwest Miami, Florida.

**From 'Chainsaw-wielding nun pitches in with Hurricane Irma relief effort', by Harriet Pavely, *Evening Standard*.**

### ACTIVITY 8

What, in particular, does the nun in the text symbolise? Discuss the following three ideas with a partner:

- 1** Social barriers are meaningless when it comes to helping out in times of crisis.
- 2** The church always helps out in times of need.
- 3** Women are just as good as men in a crisis.

## Bringing it all together

You will need to bring together the different elements of language and style when you comment on texts, and when you write your own.

Now read this longer passage, taken from *Burning Lights*, by Bella Chagall, and as you do so, make initial notes about its language. At this point, just note anything that you notice, for example:

- lexis – particularly striking words or phrases
- types or styles of sentences
- simile, metaphor or other figurative language.

A quite different world opens before me when I only just push at the heavy door that separates the shop from our apartment.

It is a door entirely covered with tin. Instead of a latch it has a big key that is always in the lock. In the dark rear shop, into which I tumble first, I grope along the walls as though I were blind. Thick yellow sheets of paper rustle underfoot.

Wrapped-up wall clocks rest on the floor here. Until they are hung on walls, they do not move; they lie quiet and soundless, as if buried alive. But the stuffy air of the dark chamber seems swollen with the voices that seep in from the shop. The voices crowd against the high wooden wall and recoil from it again. I stand behind it as in a prison, and listen to what is being said. I want to make out whose voice is talking. And if I catch mother's voice, I am content.

But wait! Is her voice quiet, calm, or, God forbid, angry? Mother's voice will give me warning, tell me whether to go into the shop or not.

Her high tones encourage me. I touch the curtain of the last door, which leads to the shop. I become dizzy at once because of the mirrors and glass. All the clocks are being wound in my ears. The shop is full of glitter on every side. The flashing of silver and gold blinds me like fire; it is reflected in the mirrors, roams over the glass drawers. It dazzles my eyes.



Two large gas chandeliers burn high up under the ceiling, humming loudly; the sound becomes a moan of pain. Fire spatters from the close-netted caps on the burners that barely hold back the sparks.

There are two high walls entirely lined from top to bottom with glass cupboards. The cupboards reach up to the ceiling and are so solidly

built that they seem to have grown into it. Their glass doors slide easily back and forth. Through the glass one can clearly see all the objects on display, almost touch them with one's hand. On the shelves are goblets, wineglasses, sugar bowls, saucers, braided baskets, milk and water pitchers, fruit bowls. Everything shines and glitters with a newly polished look. Whenever I move, all the objects run after me in reflection. The fire of the lamps and the light of the silver cross each other. Now the silver drowns in a flash of the lamplight, now it re-emerges with an even sharper glitter.

**From *Burning Lights*, by Bella Chagall.**

### ACTIVITY 9

You are going to write a commentary about the language and style which Chagall uses and their effects.

- 1 Firstly, look at your notes and compare your ideas with a partner. Did you identify the same things?
- 2 Complete your notes, adding anything new that you have discovered.
- 3 Now, write at least 100 words on the language used in this text. In your exploration of it, make sure you:
  - refer to particular words, phrases or sentences
  - describe the effects created by the writer. Think about using terms such as 'detailed', 'reflective', 'active', 'tense', and phrases such as 'I get a strong sense of...', or 'This feels as if...'.

**Reflection:** What have you learned about language choices in this unit? Write down the most important thing you have found out that you didn't know before. Share ideas with other members of the class. Compile a 'Top Five' class list of key points to take forward in your study of texts and in your own writing.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand how core elements of language, such as lexical choice, sentence variety and grammar, and linguistic devices can create impact and alter narrative point of view		
I can identify elements of language use across a text and explain their meanings and effects		

# **Unit 1.4**

## **Voice and narrative point of view**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit you will:***

- understand what voice and narrative point of view are (AO3)
- explore how they contribute to the effects of a text (AO2, AO3).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What do you think the terms 'voice' and 'narrative point of view' mean? Discuss your ideas with a partner or small group and share your thoughts.
- 2 Have you used or encountered these terms in your previous study? If you have, for what subjects and in what contexts?

## Voice

Think about the different ways in which your friends and family members speak. Presumably, some speak slowly and carefully, while others speak with excitement and speed. There may also be variation in how ideas are expressed, with some people doing so directly, or even bluntly, while others are more vague or even disguise their true feelings when they speak. These are all elements of ‘voice’ in real people, which can be found in texts, too. There is more detail about different types of speech, such as dialect, in Section 10.

### ACTIVITY 1

Choose three to four members of your friends and family.

- a Jot down what is distinctive about their way of speaking (e.g. ‘Uncle Joe: deep, gravelly voice – always laughing’)
- b Say what that person’s voice tells us about them (if accurate!) (e.g. ‘Uncle Joe: a person we respect, but who has a good sense of humour’)

Texts have their own voices. These may or may not be those of the writer; they could also be the distinctive voice of a character or **narrator**. The voice also helps us to understand the **narrative point of view** of the writer or the character – their **perspective** on what happens.

Now read these three short passages. It may help to read them aloud.

### Passage A

*March 23rd, 1912*

Blizzard bad as ever – Wilson and Bowers unable to start – to-morrow last chance – no fuel and only one or two of food left – must be near the end. Have decided it shall be natural – we shall march for the depot with or without our effects and die in our tracks...

R. Scott.

**From the diaries of Captain Robert Scott, Antarctic explorer.**



Rescuers found the tent that Captain Robert Scott and his two expedition members had stayed in.

### Passage B

The bookshops on Charing Cross Road stay open until six. Until six he has somewhere to go. After that he will be adrift amid the Saturday-night fun-seekers. For a while he can follow the flow, pretending he

too is seeking fun, pretending he has somewhere to go, someone to meet; but in the end he will have to give up and catch the train back to Archway station and the solitude of his room.

**From *Lost in London*, by J.M. Coetzee.**

## Passage C

### **Virunga: Africa's Most Beautiful and Diverse Oil Field?**

Keep oil exploration out of Africa's oldest national park. Your support really matters. People-power works. Together we will draw the line.

**From the World Wide Fund for Nature's website.**

## ACTIVITY 2

- 1** Working in groups of three, take one each of Passage A, B or C and make notes on what is distinctive about its voice and narrative point of view. You should consider:
  - the use of the **first-, second- or third-person narrative** voice: what effect, if any, does that have on how close or distant we feel from the narrator/writer?
  - the sound and structure created by the voice: does it flow, break-up, ramble, stop?
  - the overall mood or perspective created by the language: what is it like (sad, angry, joyful)?
  - how the writer or narrator seems to feel about what they are describing.
- 2** Feed back your ideas on your passage to the others in your group. Discuss your sense of the voice used in each passage.

## Types of narrator

The perspective or voice can help the reader determine the type of narrator in a text. These are often described as follows:

Type	Definition	Example
Omniscient	A narrator who sees or understands everything.	Often not a character, but the overarching perspective of the writer. Might often comment, as if in judgement, on the actions and fallibility of humankind.
Limited	A narrator who has some knowledge of events, thoughts and feelings, but not complete understanding.	This might be a character who can only experience what he/she observes and is unaware of parallel stories or events.
Fallible	A narrator whose account might be seen as unreliable.	They could be lying, or misreading a situation, or have inconsistent or contradictory memories.
Unusual	Any sort of narrator who does not fall into the usual categories.	Thus, an account told from the point of view of an animal, an inanimate object like a robot, someone who is dead, a child who is too young to speak or write, or a minor character who is not directly involved in the plot.

## Narrative point of view

Narrative point of view is closely linked to voice. For example, it would be difficult to gauge what someone's narrative point of view is, whether as narrator or as a character in a text, without identifying what is distinctive about their voice. It can be expressed directly and explicitly. For example:

- 'Keep oil exploration out of Africa's oldest national park'
- 'I hated him from the first moment we met'
- 'Buy our latest model - it's the most efficient on the market'

As a reader you can work out the narrative point of view in these examples from the use of emotive verbs (verbs that express personal feeling or belief such as 'I hated...'), imperatives (strong, command verbs or phrases such as 'Keep ... out', 'Buy ...') or from **comparatives** and **superlatives** ('the most efficient...').

Narrative point of view can also be expressed more subtly, requiring you as a reader to **infer** meaning to work out what is being **implied**.

*Until six he has somewhere to go. After that he will be adrift amid the Saturday night fun-seekers.*

Here, the word 'adrift' creates an image of someone who is left floating alone on the sea. It implies the loneliness of the character but does not express it directly.

### ACTIVITY 3

In the following sentences, identify:

- 1 two clear expressions of narrative point of view.
- 2 at least one narrative point of view implied through the language.

*He left for school, his heart aching. He loved and hated her at the same time. There was a dull throbbing in his chest which would not let go.*

## The effect of **direct** and **indirect (reported)** speech on the immediacy of a text

Narrative point of view can also be expressed in terms of *proximity* – how close or far the narrative voice seems to be from the things or events being described. This is often a result of the way in which speech and tenses are used. For example:

- **Direct speech** is the use of the actual words spoken in a conversation which are enclosed in speech marks ('I hate you!' she said).
- **Indirect/reported speech** is the gist of what has been said but not the precise words. It is often conversation that is reported at a later time (She *said* that she hated him/She *told* him that she hated him).

The following table shows how the use of different tenses positions the reader in time and place to a text.

Tense form	Example
Present tense	She <i>waits</i> by the lake/She <i>is waiting</i> by the lake
Past tense	She <i>waited</i> by the lake / She <i>was waiting</i> by the lake / She <i>had waited</i> by the lake / She <i>had been waiting</i> by the lake
Future/modal	She <i>will/could/might/may/should/ought to/would</i> wait by the lake

Modality expresses necessity and possibility and can be sub-divided in the following broad ways:

Certainty	she <i>will</i> go
Obligation	she <i>should/ought to</i> go
Possibility	she <i>might</i> go (' <i>may</i> ' also allowed in common usage)
Ability	she <i>can/could</i> go
Conditional/hypothetical	she <i>would</i> go (if she <i>were free</i> )

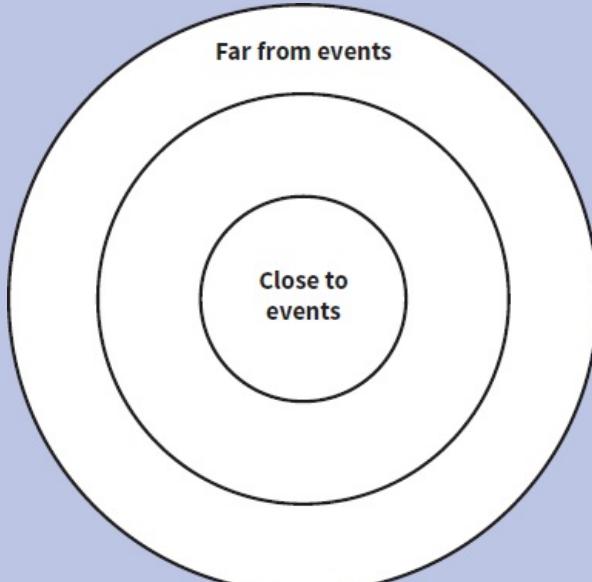
These categories are very broad and the use of modals creates further nuances of meaning when used with past tense forms etc.

Now, read these three descriptions of the same events.

- The party was in full swing. In the corner Lord and Lady Rivers discussed the storm that had ravaged their lands. The band played a fast jazzy number and the couples took to the dance floor as if unaware of recent events.*
- 'Dreadful storm, wasn't it?' said Lord Rivers to his wife. 'How can people dance when so much was destroyed?' His wife looked over at the dancers – her husband was right; they seemed carefree.*
- While the music plays, I stand with Diana by the fire. 'Dreadful storm, wasn't it?' I say. 'How can people dance when so much was destroyed?' Diana glances at the dance floor – she seems to agree with me.*

#### ACTIVITY 4

Now, bearing in mind what you have learnt about narrative point of view and the use of speech and tense, complete a copy of the following diagram, assigning Description 1, 2 or 3 to the relevant space.



#### ACTIVITY 5

Look again at the three descriptions of the couple at the party. How is the effect of the first two different to that of the third? Consider:

- the use of direct or indirect/reported speech
- the use of a different tense.

**Reflection:** Find two to three lines of direct speech in an article or story you know. Then try one of the following:

- Convert to reported speech by removing speech marks and adding 'that' to the account (e.g. *he said that he...*).
- Change the main tense used (e.g. from past to present forms).

What effects are created by the change?

Now read this longer extract.

Through the gate and up the walk toward the front door. It'll be good to get this gun belt off, the jacket, the boots. You've earned your supper.

Locked, just as you instructed. You jangle the big key ring, searching.

Open the door and the light blinds you. Fresh bread, and the salty

crackle of fat. On the floor of the sitting room lies Amelia's stuffed duck, toppled on its side. You undo the gun belt — Marta won't have it around the child — and stow it high in the front closet, thumping the door shut to announce yourself. When no one comes, you make your way to the kitchen. It's empty, a wisp of steam floating up through a hole in the stove top.

'Marta,' you call.

In the dining room the table's set, your milk poured, the high chair between the two seats so you can each minister to her. The tray holds a spray of crumbs, a slug of gravy. Maybe they couldn't wait.

The back of the house is dark.

'Marta?'

You try your room first, peering in the door. She's not on the bed, and immediately you turn to the nursery.

It's black, and you have to leave the hallway before you see Marta sitting in the rocking chair, her hair a bright frame, her face dark, impossible to read.

**From *A Prayer for the Dying*, by Stewart O'Nan.**

## ACTIVITY 6

Discuss this text with a partner. Think about:

- the use of the second person – what effect, if any, does it have on the tone or mood of the piece? (Consider that the narrator is simultaneously describing a 'character' doing something and using a direct address to the reader)
- the use of tenses
- the range and nature of *what* is described and *how* it is presented to the reader
- the positioning of the reader in terms of how and where the writer *directs our gaze*
- what is implied and suggested by what we are told (or not told)
- the use of speech or dialogue.

Share your ideas with another pair and make notes before writing up your ideas as a brief commentary on the style and language of the extract.



### THINK LIKE ... A NOVELIST

Write the opening 50 words of a mystery story in which a character enters a strange place. Make careful choices about narrative point of view (e.g. first, second, third person?) and tense (e.g. mostly present – or past?). Try to convey a strong sense of unease or tension.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can identify different narrative narrative points of view		
I can understand the difference between voice and narrative point of view		
I can identify how writers use voice and narrative point of view to create particular effects		



# **Unit 1.5**

## **Analysing texts**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit you will:***

- learn about the key reading skills you need to succeed in your Cambridge International AS Level English Language course (AO1)
- explore how to express your ideas analytically (AO3).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What close reading skills have you already demonstrated when using this coursebook? In what ways have you used similar skills in other areas of your school work (for example, in other subjects)?
- 2 What reading or study strategies do your and your classmates employ when reading a text closely?

## Key skills for reading and analysis

Here are some of the core reading and analysis skills you will need in your Cambridge International AS Level English Language course.

skimming	scanning	close reading	finding	responding
analysing	interpreting	engaging	quoting	personally
evaluating	researching	with	selecting	using
		predicting		evidence

### ACTIVITY 1

Look at each skill closely. What do you think each skill means or involves?

Most of your work in your Cambridge International AS Level English Language course will involve close reading, which means looking at a specific text in detail, breaking it down into chunks and exploring particular uses of language. In fact, you have already applied many of the skills listed in Activity 1 in your work so far in this section. However, there are some key skills which need to be practised and developed.

## Identifying and selecting information

When writing a text analysis (or commentary) you cannot comment on everything at the same time – you will need to be selective. For example, read this short commentary from a student. You do not need to see the text they are writing about.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

In the third paragraph, the writer conveys a powerful sense of the crowd's behaviour through his lexical choice. He describes them as 'very still' and how a 'deep, low, happy sigh' emanated from them. He likens the scene to one at the theatre, and says how the crowd were pleased they were going to get 'their bit of fun' when he finally shoots the elephant.

## Using quotations

A vital element in analysing effectively is how you quote directly from a source text. The key points to remember are:

- Only quote what is necessary to support the point you make
- Use quotation marks/inverted commas for any words taken directly from the source text
- Embed your quoted words fluently in your sentences.

### ACTIVITY 2

In pairs, discuss the following questions:

- 1 What is the general focus of this commentary extract? (e.g. who or what is the text about?)
- 2 What specific element of language in the passage has been identified by the student?
- 3 What specific words or phrases have been quoted from the text?
- 4 Have these quotations been embedded fluently in the sentence?

The passage the student was commenting on is an extract from an autobiographical account by George Orwell of when he had to shoot an elephant while working in Burma (present-day Myanmar).

Read this passage from another part of Orwell's account:

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behaviour. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the **mahout** came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing.

**From 'Shooting an Elephant', by George Orwell.**

**mahout:** a person who works with and rides an elephant

### ACTIVITY 3

Make a note of which words or phrases you would select if you were commenting on Orwell's state of mind, in particular the course of action he is considering. For example:

- modal verbs indicating his obligations (what is the *right thing* to do?)
- verbs indicating what he will *actually* do

It might help to look again at [Unit 1.4](#) (Voice and narrative point of view).

## Analysis and interpretation

These skills do not always go together but close analysis – looking at what a word or phrase suggests or conveys – often leads to interpretation. A good way of looking at it is to think of analysis as the ‘unpicking’ of detail from the text to understand how the text works, and to think of interpretation as looking *beyond* the specific details to draw conclusions.

Read a further passage from the same commentary:

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The writer goes on to describe the ‘devilish roar of glee’ that the crowd makes when he fires the first shot. The adjective ‘devilish’ suggests something primitive and almost evil in their joy, and that he does not share the crowd’s delight. The noun ‘roar’ suggests he sees the crowd as almost being like a wild beast which is unpredictable and dangerous, and fears them.

### ACTIVITY 4

Consider how the student writing this commentary has used analytical **and** interpretative skills.

- a What phrase has the student chosen to analyse? What two words within that phrase have they ‘zoomed in’ on?
- b What interpretation has the student made about these words in each case?

Remember, an interpretation is your own idea (a bit like a hypothesis) of what the writer is trying to say or convey. This will involve the skills of inference and expressing these ideas in your own words. For example:

Word/phrase	Meaning	Inference/interpretation
‘roar’	the sound made by a wild animal, such as a lion	Dangerous and unpredictable – the writer fears the crowd

Here is another short passage from the same text by George Orwell, after the writer shoots the first bullet:

In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down.

**From ‘Shooting an Elephant’, by George Orwell.**

### ACTIVITY 5

Working in pairs, discuss the language Orwell uses to describe the effect of the shot on the elephant.

Copy and complete the following table. Add any other words or phrases you can find related to the effect of the shot.

Word/phrase	Meaning	Inference/interpretation
mysterious (change)	difficult to understand	There is something almost beyond reason which the writer cannot make sense of.

terrible (change)	causing horrible or horrified feelings	The writer ...
immensely (old)	hugely or enormously	The elephant seems ...
frightful (impact)		
(your own selection of a word or phrase)		

Now share your ideas with other members of the class, to answer the following questions:

- 1 What is the overall effect *on the writer* of firing the shot?
- 2 What is the overall effect *on the elephant* of being shot?

## Putting your analysis into words

When writing a commentary, you will need to be very precise about the words and phrases you choose to analyse a text. However, you should write your analysis in a clear, fluent way.

You will need to select and use **quotations** effectively, and use an appropriate **evaluative lexis** to express your ideas. For example, here is a student writing about the narrative point of view of the writer based on the extract which follows [Activity 2](#):

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The writer clearly knows what his responsibilities are and what would be the best form of action. This can be seen in his repeated use of the modal form 'ought to' which shows he understands his obligations but that he hasn't yet acted. However, in the final sentence he switches to the more direct and certain future tense form, telling the reader he 'was going to do no such thing.' This is a very effective way of suggesting that he has known all along that he doesn't have the nerve to deal with the situation in the proper manner.

[1] use of 'clearly' indicates student appraising the text

[2] point about the writer's state of mind

[3] evidence – a quotation – drawn directly from the text

[4] explains and expands on the quotation and what it might mean

[5] a further, linked point

[6] embedded quotation supports point

[7] final developed explanation of the overall state of mind of the writer

### ACTIVITY 6

There are some basic and more complex skills to explore here. Look again at the example commentary and write answers to the following questions:

- 1 How does the student show that a quotation has been taken directly from the text?
- 2 Are the chosen quotations relevant? (Do they show the 'state of mind of the writer'?)
- 3 Does the student use the whole quotation from the original text ('But also I knew I was going to do no such thing')? Why not? Would it fit the point in the commentary, or not?
- 4 Does the student simply explain what each quotation means, or go further?

It is important to practise your text analysis skills as often as possible. You don't always need to write full-

length essays – **concise**, thoughtful paragraphs are sufficient to practise these skills. Read the following paragraph, which needs completing, about the writer’s feelings when he shoots the elephant.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The writer finds it difficult to understand the elephant’s response when he fires the first bullet, and writes about the ‘[quotation]... . . . . .’ that came over the animal. This suggests that [explanation] . . . . . . . He is also affected by the elephant’s apparent physical change and how he suddenly appears ‘[quotation] . . . . . . .’. Clearly, Orwell cannot [further explanation] . . . . . . .

### ACTIVITY 7

Copy and complete the paragraph and add in the spaces provided:

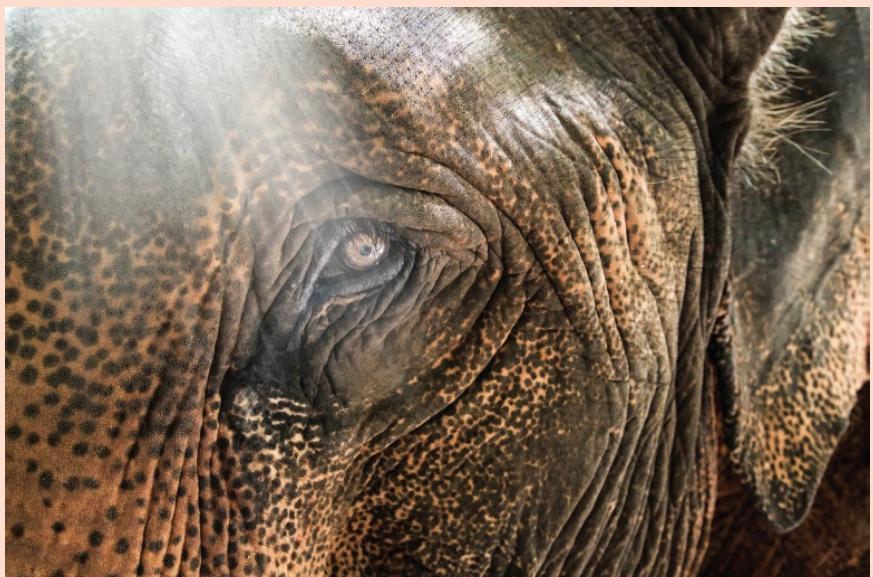
- 1 suitable quotations from the table you completed in [Activity 5](#)
- 2 your own explanation or further points.

**Reflection:** Re-read the example student response, and discuss with a partner what you consider to be the three to four ‘key rules’ for using quotations effectively.

Read the following extract, the first paragraph of *Shooting an Elephant*. Then complete the tasks that follow.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal). Besides, there was the beast’s owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

**From ‘Shooting an Elephant’, by George Orwell.**



## ACTIVITY 8

Applying the skills you have learned, work through these stages to analyse the passage:

- **Stage one:** identify any suitable words or phrases that indicate the writer's narrative point of view or state of mind.
- **Stage two:** create a table, like the one that follows, in which you record these words or phrases and explain their meaning, and any wider interpretation or analysis of the writer's feelings. An example has been provided for you:

Word/phrase from passage	Meaning	Inference or interpretation
'I did not want to shoot the elephant'	The writer has no wish to kill the elephant.	The short, blunt monosyllabic words make it clear the writer is set against shooting the elephant at this point.
'grandmotherly air'		

- **Stage three:** write at least one paragraph analysing the text and focusing on how the language demonstrates the writer's state of mind. In your commentary, make sure you:
  - make your point (or points) clearly
  - include 'embedded' quotations (words or phrases that are included in a way that makes your sentences fluent)
  - develop or expand the points you make (for example, summing up the writer's overall state of mind).

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand some of the main approaches needed to read and respond effectively to texts		
I can apply some key techniques when analysing a text		

# **Unit 1.6**

## **Key writing skills**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn techniques for improving clarity and accuracy in your own work (AO2).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What do you consider your strengths and weaknesses in terms of your writing? For example, do you spell reasonably well? How good is your punctuation?
- 2 How could you further develop your skills in these areas?

## **Why clarity and technical accuracy matters**

Your writing needs to be technically accurate (for example, correctly punctuated) and clear in terms of meaning (you say what you intended to say) for a number of reasons.

Remember, you will be marked on your technical accuracy and expression. Whilst this will be combined with other skills you demonstrate, you should make sure that anyone – whether a friend, teacher or examiner – is able to focus on your ideas without being distracted or confused by errors or by weak expression.

## How to check the clarity of your writing

Imagine you have just been given someone else's story or article to mark. Would you know what to look for in terms of the text being clear and accurate? What about your own work - how do you know whether it is clear?

When you write, regardless of the form or purpose of the writing, you need to make sure that the reader 'receives' the ideas, information or language effects which you have intended.

Read through this useful checklist of points to look out for. You can use it (see [Activity 1](#)) to decide, on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), how well you have achieved each listed skill.

### Points to check (scale of one to five)

	1	2	3	4	5
Have I organised my writing in clear <i>paragraphs</i> and/or <i>topic sentences</i> for key points or ideas?					
Is the <i>order of my ideas</i> as effective as it could be? For example, in a commentary is the order logical? Or, in imaginative writing, does the opening make an impact?)					
Is my <i>lexical choice</i> precise and/or varied when it needs to be?					
Is the text <i>cohesive</i> ? Do the ideas link together smoothly through the use of lexical choice appropriate time, or other <b>discourse markers</b> ? (e.g. does it use words or phrases like 'finally', or 'in contrast')?					
Are my <i>tenses</i> appropriate to the text, and are they consistent?					

### ACTIVITY 1

Now, conduct your own audit of your work using the 1-5 scale and list of points to check:

- 1 Select a piece of your written work (from any of your subjects).
- 2 Work through the checklist and award yourself a mark (1-5) for each skill.
- 3 Identify at least two targets for improving the clarity of your writing.

## How to check the accuracy of your writing

Written English is composed of so many rules and conventions – as well as their exceptions – that it can be very difficult to be completely accurate in your use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The following useful checklist will help you identify the areas in which you need to improve. As with the previous checklist, apply a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) for each of these questions:

	1	2	3	4	5
Do I use commas correctly for lists and separating some clauses? Do I avoid the <b>comma splice</b> ? This is where a comma is used to separate parts of the sentence rather than a linking word like a conjunction, semi-colon or colon, or starting a new sentence. For example: <i>Raj went to the market, he bought some melons.</i> (wrong) This should be either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Raj went to the market <u>and</u> bought some melons.</i></li><li>• <i>Raj went to the market; he bought some melons.</i></li><li>• <i>Raj went to the <u>market</u>. He bought some melons.</i></li></ul>					
Do I use colons and semi-colons accurately?					
Do I use brackets, dashes and ellipses appropriately?					
Do I use apostrophes correctly for possession and omission?					
Can I set out direct speech and quotations correctly?					
Do all my sentences end with appropriate punctuation (full stop, question mark or exclamation mark)?					
Do my subjects and verbs agree in all sentences? (e.g. <i>I have been</i> / <i>She has been</i> / <i>They have been</i> )					
Are my sentences complete? (Do they feature a subject and a verb – and, usually, an object?)					
Is my use of common <b>homophones</b> or similar-sounding words correct? (e.g. <i>its/it's</i> ; <i>wear/where</i> ; <i>there/their/they're</i> )					
Do I spell silent letters correctly? (e.g. <i>bought</i> ; <i>through</i> ; <i>enough</i> ; <i>though</i> )					
Do I spell common English language-related terms correctly? (e.g. <i>rhythm</i> , <i>onomatopoeia</i> , <i>character</i> , <i>genre</i> , <i>vowel</i> , <i>narrator</i> )					

## Checking your work

It is important to check your work, both as you go along and when you finish. This is because, in the act of thinking and writing, it can be easy to make silly errors yet also become so involved with what you are saying in a particular sentence that you can't see the 'bigger picture.'

It might help you to follow this advice at regular stages as you write and when you have completed your text:

- 1 Run your eyes over each line or sentence, one at a time, to check for errors and clarity.
- 2 Read lines or sentences from the end to the beginning: this can be a useful way of checking spellings, as you are not being 'carried along' by the meaning but are checking each word in turn.
- 3 Check for those errors which you are aware you habitually make (for example, a particular spelling you often get wrong).
- 4 Use some simple correction marks as shown in the following diagram to correct any errors or omissions (but make sure you do not correct your work to the point that it is so smothered in revisions and marks that it cannot be read or looks messy and illegible!).

 **THINK LIKE ... AN EDITOR**

Editors are often responsible for making sure texts make sense, are spelled correctly and follow the conventions of **Standard English** grammar. Taking a step back and looking at your own work as if you were someone else (like an editor who is professionally checking your work) can help you see where errors have occurred.

### Correction marks

- 1 Inserting a missing word: use to A insert a missing word.
- 2 Capital letter: simply write over the lower-case letter with a capital/upper case letter.
- 3 Missing punctuation: where there is space, add the omitted punctuation mark.
- 4 Deleting a letter, punctuation mark or word/phrase: put a single horizontal line through the item to be deleted. If necessary, write the correct alternative above the item.
- 5 Missing paragraph break: add a double forward slash (//) between sentences and write 'NP' above the space where the new paragraph should start.

1 I left A restaurant.

2 I left the restaurant.

3 I left the restaurant.

4 I left the restaurant.

5 I left the restaurant. // Tomorrow I will go to the park.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

Confidence level | Revisited?

I can proof-read and check my work for technical accuracy

I can evaluate and improve the clarity of my writing



## **Section 2**

### **Exploring text types**

# **Unit 2.1**

## **Personal writing**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn about the key conventions of diaries, blogs, personal letters and autobiographies (AO1)
- explore the effects of first-person accounts on the reader (AO3).

### **Before you start**

What makes a piece of writing ‘personal’? Surely **all** writing is personal to some degree – after all, someone had to write it!

- 1** Working on your own, note down what you think someone would put into a blog, diary, personal letter or autobiography?
- 2** Share your ideas with a partner – did you come up with the same things?

## Diary writing

Personal writing in diary form can allow the reader to:

- 1 see a glimpse of the writer's more private thoughts and feelings
- 2 explore reasons and motives for behaving in a particular way or feeling particular emotions
- 3 witness characters and events from the point of view of the narrator when written in the first person (e.g. 'I').

Read the following diary entry, taken from the diary of Captain Scott, a British explorer whose expedition to the South Pole in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century ended in tragedy. This extract comes towards the end of his diary, when the expedition was on its way back to base.

*March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1912*

My right foot **has gone**, nearly all the toes – two days ago **I was** proud possessor of best feet. These are the steps of my downfall. Like an ass I mixed a small spoonful of curry powder with my melted **pemmican** – **it gave me violent indigestion**. I lay awake and in pain **all night**; woke and felt done on the march; foot went and I didn't know it. A very small measure of neglect and have a foot which is not pleasant to contemplate. Bowers takes first place in condition, but there is not much to choose after all. The others are still confident of getting through – or pretend to be – I don't know! We have the last half fill of oil in our primus and a very small quantity of spirit – this alone between us and thirst. **The wind is fair** for the moment, and that is perhaps a fact to help. The mileage would have seemed ridiculously small on our outward journey.

**From the diaries of Captain Robert Scott, Antarctic explorer.**

**pemmican:** a compressed mixture of fat and protein made from dried meat.

**[1] present perfect** tense

**[2]** use of first person

**[3]** inward-looking reflections

**[5]** recording very recent or ongoing events at the point, or just after, they happen.

**[4] present simple** tense for current situation

### ACTIVITY 1

Work with a partner to discuss the following questions:

- 1 As a reader, what evidence can you find in the passage of the writer's:
  - private thoughts and feelings
  - reasons for behaving in a particular way or feeling particular emotions
  - experience of characters and events.
- 2 What initial impression is given of Scott from this account?



## KEY CONCEPT

**Meaning and style** – Diaries are usually written in continuous prose but can sometimes be fragmented or broken up in some way.

- 1 How might the style in which a diary is written reflect the situation of the writer at the time? In the extract from Captain Scott's diary, how does the writing style reflect his situation and state of mind?

## ACTIVITY 2

Look again at the diary extract to explore in more detail what we can find out about Captain Scott. What does the reader find out about Scott's state of mind and the expedition as a whole from this short entry? Write a paragraph noting down:

- a what he says about his and the others' physical conditions
- b what he says about his and the others' hopes for survival.

Diaries – or journals, as they are sometimes called – can have very different styles. Superficially, the following extract shares some similarities with Scott's writing in some of its shortened, abbreviated comments and observations. Look at some of the annotations accompanying the first part of the entry.

20 April

Yesterday, up early in the morning – the washing, the dressing, the brushing, then to the station on my bicycle. Everything planned, everything done, the ticket bought, the clean gloves in the pocket.

How late the train was – waiting, waiting there. Then the bursting carriages and all the passage filled with soldiers – their tin hats, bottles, knapsacks hitting on the walls when they turned. I wondered how I could stand ... I tried to sit down in the loop of a strap, then on a fire extinguisher. Sore, painful, I felt desperate. How ill and tired I would be if I could not sit down. I gazed at the fat suitcase for some time, then at last I dared to sit down on it. Pleasure, bliss, gazing out of the window, sitting down at last.

The fields, the feathery trees, wonderful poison green, fresh as new lettuce. The large lonely young man carrying a huge implement across unending fields. Then the long, long tunnel with its whistle and the belching white smoke, not escaping, flowing over the train in a thick cape. Sparks flew and faded. The red demon glow on the white smoke belchings and the growing of it till I was really ready for some catastrophe. Can something be on fire? Will the engine burst and the driver be burnt to death in the steam, as I have read? Will I be groping in wreckage in the dark tunnel? All this through my mind and more. No change from early childhood.

Then the sooted wall seen faintly, the lamps of some workers, like miners' lamps or the lamps of gaolers in a dungeon. It is like a haunted house ...The green, luminous skeleton should descend, champing its terrible jaws, grinning. The concrete grime, then at last the air, on, on. Quite happy now, almost peaceful.

**From *The Journals of Denton Welch*.**



**[1]** brisk recount of actions taken by the writer

**[2]** recollection of how the writer felt at that moment

**[3]** this ‘non-sentence’ is impressionistic – and contradictory

### ACTIVITY 3

- 1 How do the writer’s mood and emotions change rapidly from sentence to sentence – sometimes even within a sentence (e.g. ‘wonderful poison green’)?
- 2 Working on your own, go through the diary entry and identify moments when the writer feels:
  - happy, excited or at ease
  - unhappy, frightened or unsure.

In this account, unlike in Scott’s diary entry, it is the *imagery* that provides us with a vivid insight into the writer’s thoughts. For example:

- He personifies the smoke of the train: ‘flowing over the train *in a thick cape ...*’.
- He compares the lights reflected on the wall of the tunnel to ‘*the lamps of gaolers in a dungeon*’.
- He compares the tunnel walls to those of a ‘*haunted house*’.

### ACTIVITY 4

Make notes on the use of imagery in the extract:

- 1 What final, frightening image does the writer describe?
- 2 What overall effect does the reader get of how the writer felt as he went through the tunnel?

## Blogs

Writers use many different ways to recount personal experiences or reflect on their feelings, both at the time and after the event. Most recently, a much more immediate form of personal writing has become popular: the blog.

### What are the key conventions of blogs?

- Accessed online through websites, apps or well-known social media platforms, blogs have become a particularly popular way of sharing experiences. They differ most specifically from printed diaries and are generally designed to be read by a specific audience, which may be restricted to friends or personal contacts of the writer, or to a wider readership (e.g. Barcelona fans or people who like the latest fashions).
- They are often vehicles for giving advice, or selling and promoting ideas or products.
- They use interactive features – for example, hyperlinks to related content.
- They often feature a greater degree of audio or sound – many blogs are predominantly image- or video-driven.
- They might utilise specialised or technical lexis or **jargon**, where closely targeted to a core interest (e.g. fashion, music or location).

Alternatively, blogs may be more informal and chatty and address their audience directly.

Read the following example of a blog written by an English writer called Alison Luke. Her blog is called '['Aliventures.com'](#)' and is aimed at an audience of fellow creative writers.

#### Six Simple Ways to Improve Your Writing Environment (and Get More Done)

Do you have lots of great writing intentions ... only to find your day filling up with all sorts of other things? When you *do* sit down to write, are you easily distracted? Yes?

Hey, me too! I've come to realise that this isn't a weakness in myself: it's more about the nature of writing. There's often a lot of resistance associated with getting started ... and even once you do get going, it can be very hard to get into flow.

For years, I used to imagine that I would – somehow – become able to effortlessly focus for hours at a time. And, in fact, I can! But not when I'm at home.

#### Is Your Writing Environment Killing Your Writing?

Most writers work at home. It's a useful perk of the job (or a necessary part of the hobby) – and I certainly wouldn't want to commute to an office every day, like I once did.

However... Home can be a very distracting place. I've got a four-year-old and a two-year-old, so our house often looks like someone did a mad sweep of a toy shop and scattered the contents liberally around every room. The rooms the kids *don't* go in (primarily the master bedroom and the study) are always right at the bottom of my priority list for tidying. There are always things to be done at home, too. Laundry to put on; dishes to wash; bits of paper to file (now that we have one child in school, we're generating even larger quantities of paperwork than before).

Is it any wonder it's hard to focus on writing? If your home life looks remotely similar, please don't beat yourself up for struggling to focus! Instead, try to have occasional writing sessions away from home (or away from your usual writing environment). My favourite places for this are:

- our local library (free, air-conditioned, and full of books – what's not to like?!)
- one of our local independent coffee shops, Pride & Produce (great cappuccinos)

- a small, good value local hotel (brilliant for occasional overnight writing retreats).

At home, two blog posts (say, 2000 words total) plus 500 or so words of my novel would be a great writing day. In my hotel room, I can often knock off 7000 + words between 2 p.m. and bedtime.

**From [www.aliventures.com](http://www.aliventures.com), by Alison Luke.**

### ACTIVITY 5

With a partner, re-read the blog entry. Note any examples of where Alison:

- shares information about her personal life
- directly makes contact with the reader / her audience
- offers advice or guidance
- uses informal or chatty turns of phrase.

How is the writer's tone in this blog fundamentally different from that of Scott and Welch?



#### THINK LIKE ... A BLOGGER

Perhaps you already have a blog? If you don't, what topic or subject would you blog about? Would it be about your own life and experiences, or a special interest or activity? Or something else?

## Autobiography

Autobiography usually presents a personal account of the writer's life so far, or a large period of it (e.g. childhood). Memoirs are similar to autobiography but usually take the form of a collection of individual memories rather than a complete account.

### What are the key conventions of autobiography or memoirs?

Autobiography and memoirs:

- are usually written in the first person (some texts use the second or third person for deliberate effect)
- may focus on key dates/facts related to the author's life (e.g. circumstances of their birth or details about parents, siblings)
- record significant moments or experiences (which have shaped the writer's character or influenced the direction their lives took) – these might be **anecdotes** or more substantial formative moments
- describe significant places or settings in the writer's life
- often reflect on people who have been important to the writer, or who have influenced their lives
- are usually written in the past tense, but may include current reflections (e.g. '*I was born in...*', 'Now, *I live in...*'').

#### ACTIVITY 6

Read this short account, written by a student, and, using the list of key conventions, make a note of any key autobiographical features that you can identify.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

It was at first light on July 19<sup>th</sup> 2002, that I entered the world, the second child in our family. My mother tells me my sister cried when I was born as she wanted a girl to play with. Apparently, she stomped off and spent the rest of the day angrily throwing a rubber ball against the brick wall of our house. This is all the more amusing as we are now the best of friends.

Some of the most important experiences of life are recorded in memoir and autobiography, and seek to answer such questions as:

- Who am I?
- Where do I come from?
- What were my ancestors like?
- Why am I like I am?
- How did I get to where I am today?

Read the following passage taken from an exploration of one writer's own identity.

My grandfather said he knew what people we came from. I reeled off all the names I knew. **Yoruba? Ibo? Ashanti? Mandingo?** He said no to all of them, saying that he would know it if he heard it. I was thirteen. I was anxious for him to remember.

I pestered him for days. He told me to stop bothering him and that he would remember. Or stop bothering or else he would not remember. I hovered about him in any room in which he rested. I followed him around asking him if he wanted me to do this or that for him, clean his glasses, polish his shoes, bring his tea. I studied him intently when he came home.

I searched the grey bristles of his moustache for any flicker which might suggest he was about to speak. He raised his Sunday Guardian newspaper to block my view. He shooed me away, telling me to find some book to read or work to do. At times it seemed as if Papa was

on the brink of remembering. I imagined pulling the word off his tongue if only I knew the first syllable.

I scoured the San Fernando library and found no other lists of names at the time. Having no way of finding other names, I could only repeat the ones I knew, asking him if he was sure it wasn't Yoruba, how about Ashanti? I couldn't help myself. I wanted to be either one. I had heard that they were noble people. But I could also be Ibo; I had heard that they were gentle. And I had followed the war in **Biafra**. I was on their side.

Papa never remembered. Each week he came I asked him had he remembered. Each week he told me no. Then I stopped asking. He was disappointed. I was disappointed. We lived after that in this mutual disappointment. It was a rift between us. It gathered into a kind of estrangement. After that he grew old. I grew young. A small space opened in me.

**From A Map to the Door of No Return, by Dionne Brand.**

**Yoruba, Ibo, Ashanti, Mandingo:** languages spoken in West Africa

**Biafra:** a former state in Nigeria that tried to break free in 1967–1970

## ACTIVITY 7

How can you tell that this is a memoir rather than a diary or blog? With a partner or small group, discuss the following questions:

- 1 What facts or information do we find out about the writer at the time she is remembering (look at paragraph one and the first sentence of paragraph four)?
- 2 What is the core question the writer wants an answer to (look again at paragraphs one and four)?
- 3 What do we learn about one of her family members (look particularly at paragraphs three and five)?
- 4 What did the writer learn from the experience and how was she changed as a result of it (look at the final paragraph)?

Dionne Brand uses a number of key techniques to convey her memories and reflections. For example:

- **Lists of three** (*clean his glasses, polish his shoes, bring his tea*) are used to create a sense of everything the writer does in a frustrated attempt to please her grandfather.
- Similar sounding word patterns, such as '*I hovered about him...*', '*I followed him...*', are used to create the sense of the writer's repetitive obsession with the search.
- Short sentences and repeated lexis are used to express the limited progress she made and the ongoing routine as a result ('*Papa never remembered. Each week he came I asked him had he remembered. Each week he told me no.*').

## ACTIVITY 8

Can you find further examples of the techniques of short sentences, similar sounding word patterns and repetitions in the text by Dionne Brand?

## Depicting place in personal writing

Another key feature of memoir and autobiography is the depiction of place. Writers explain the memories they evoke, the people associated with them, or the changes that have occurred. Read the following passage, taken from *Stella in Bombay*, by Kirin Narayan.

The houses all had high ceilings and sloping roofs made of corrugated asbestos that monsoon rains would drum on, then slide off in vertical lines. (Once in a while, during a storm, milk-heavy coconuts or even an entire head of a coconut tree would crash through a roof amid

torrents of water.) All the houses had a sense of space, light and circulating air, with open porches. Long flat windows set high under the roofs made frames for swirling palm fronds against sky. Lower down, there were windows with black panes, rectangular bars, and white wooden shutters. The doors to all the houses were always open, except for the hours of sleep at night.

Stella's open door, though, did not mean free visitation rights. 'Stella doesn't like children' was an adage that I grew up with. There were occasions when we were formally taken over to visit Stella, scrubbed and brushed and admonished to be on best behavior. Otherwise, we observed Stella from afar: through hedges, across porches, from the other ends of gardens, or even by actually creeping into her own well-tended garden when the air hung heavy with afternoon siestas of adults...

'Going over to Stella's' was an occasion that came twice or thrice a year. Coming from our house, with too many children and never quite enough money, Stella's house — so similar with its white walls and high windows — seemed dreamily opulent. An entire table was often set aside for a jigsaw puzzle she was working on, at her own speed, with no one to tell her to pick it up. She read the latest expensive books with glossy covers. On the walls, or simply hanging from lines, were the latest black and white pictures she had developed: beach patterns, jungle ruins, animals from temple friezes, interesting looking people. The servants, Zachariah and Raghu, in their white uniforms, exuded faint disapproval at us, the raggle-taggle ensemble. It was at Stella's house that I would feel the most acutely that my mother did not remember to trim or groom, let alone paint, her toenails.

If we were invited for tea, we were served on china that had belonged to Stella's mother. The delicate plates, saucers and cups had floral patterns in brown and black along the edges. We were given little forks with shell handles. In an early memory I have of such an occasion, I must have been about four. Whoever was beside me — my grandmother, or mother or elder sister Maya — was trying to make sure that I ate leaning forward towards the glass-topped table without sending that precious china crashing to the floor.

**From *Stella in Bombay*, by Kirin Narayan.**

Reading this passage, you may have noticed:

- how the writer creates a sense of freedom ('had a sense of space, light and circulating air, with open porches')
- the way in which a sense of order is suggested ('flat windows set high under the roofs made frames for swirling palm fronds against sky')
- that the interior world seems to offer a sense of regularity and protection from the intrusion of the wilder elements of the outside world, an idea echoed in the way that the roofs would make the threatening rain 'then slide off in vertical lines'. Such a sense of an ordered and safe world is echoed by the description of how 'there were windows with black panes, rectangular bars, and white wooden shutters'.

### ACTIVITY 9

Having read the extract as a whole, discuss with a partner:

- 1 What might the description of the location suggest about its occupant?
- 2 What do we learn about the children's thoughts about their grandmother from the descriptions of the location (for example, why the words 'black' and 'white' are repeated and what this suggests)?

### ACTIVITY 10

Now, write your own diary or memoir text. It should focus on a recent or past event, place or person who has had an impact on you. Write at least 125 words.

**Reflection:** Once you have completed your writing for [Activity 10](#), evaluate how effectively you have applied the conventions of that form. If need be, go back to the relevant sections in this unit.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can identify the key features of diaries, memoirs, autobiographies or blogs		
I can write a first-person narrative to achieve particular effects		

## **Unit 2.2**

# **Writing to review and comment**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn about the key conventions of reviews and essays (AO1)
- explore how the conventions create impact on the reader (AO3).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What do you understand by the terms 'review' and 'comment'?
- 2 In what ways is a review or commentary on something you have seen or read different from an *explanation* of it?

## Writing to review

Reviews and essays comment on and describe an event or experience. Generally speaking, reviews and essays present the writer's viewpoint or opinion. However, it is equally important that they give a full exploration, or explanation, of the issue or text under discussion.

### What are the key conventions of reviews?

Reviews often:

- provide an overview of the 'key facts' of the experience (e.g. prices, who played what part, the performers in a concert, or the name of the restaurant).
- convey the writer's expertise or knowledge of the field (e.g. theatre, film, food, music).
- express an opinion about the experience or material through the use of language, form and structure (positive and negative adjectives, vivid imagery).
- make comparisons (good or bad) with related texts or performances, sometimes using exaggerated or humorous ideas.
- adopt informal, chatty language designed to engage with the reader.

#### ACTIVITY 1

Read these four passages taken from reviews and discuss them with a partner.

- a ...Broadway has found a new star in this glittering production...
- b ...the plot twist in the final chapter was so obvious they might as well have put a sign up in 100-foot-high letters announcing it at the start...
- c ...a surprisingly smooth drive, even over the pock-marked country roads round here...
- d ...the dip was a crisp, acidic delight to complement the fiery beef platter...

- 1 What is being reviewed in each case?
- 2 What words or phrases tell you what their viewpoint is?

The clues relating to subject matter and the writer's opinion which you identified in [Activity 1](#) can be found in most reviews. However, there are other ways reviewers can convey this information. Read the following passage, taken from a longer review. You will soon realise what the writer's opinion is and what is being reviewed. Look at the annotations accompanying the beginning of the passage, which highlight some of the key techniques used.

So come with me then, into the flag-stoned hallway, which is brightly lit. Not just 'Oh, I can see my way' brightly lit but 'Blimey, that's a bit sharp' brightly lit. And from there into the 'lounge', which is the last place you'd want to do such a thing. The lights are up so high you can see every scuffmark on the walls, every tatty seam on the oddly positioned dun-coloured sofas. Young people's music **clatters** and **bangs** off every hard surface.

We order a couple of 'Kia Royals' which I assume is a misprint of 'kir' until I taste it. It's viciously sweet. I wonder, cruelly, whether the name is correct and it has indeed been made with **Kia-Ora**. Then I think: maybe it's my fault. When what should be a mix of champagne and a blush of cassis costs £4 the clue is in the price. One of the staff gets out a mop and starts slopping down the floor in the doorway. Through to the completely empty dining room, which is equally brightly lit. The music continues to rattle the lonely glassware. This is a very quiet restaurant. It is trying. To which I immediately want to add 'very'. It feels like a place that hasn't worked out how to do the thing it wants to do.

The food is a mix of odd and uncertain and not quite. Sautéed field mushrooms come on what feel like toasted pieces of pre-sliced brown bread. The advertised smoked stilton – why would you smoke stilton?

- makes no impact. It's a pile of things, as though cobbled together from ingredients at the back of the fridge. Dense cod fritters come on a big, dry pile of garden peas with hunks of chorizo. There is meant to be a butter and sage sauce, but there is no sign of it. A main-course duck dish is brown. Very, very brown: a few squares of roasted brown root vegetables, a huge brown breaded mashed potato croquette like a draught excluder, some slices of overdone brown duck. A brown sauce. It's a strange plateful for £17.50. Better are some plaice fillets with planks of crisp bacon and vast amounts of mash. We console ourselves with a well-priced bottle of wine.

**From 'A handsome restaurant in the heart of Norwich seems like good news - but will it live up to its promise?', by Jay Rayner, *The Guardian*.**

**Kia-Ora:** a sweet fruit drink popular in the UK

**[1]** writer speaks directly to reader as if leading them by the hand

**[2]** reminds us of original meaning of 'lounge' (a type of room), which is to relax or spread out

**[3]** negative adjectives describe the environment

**[4]** written in present tense for immediacy and impact

## ACTIVITY 2

As well as the techniques which have been highlighted in this passage, the writer uses a number of other methods to get his ideas across.

- 1 Go through the text carefully on your own, and identify the following:
  - a The writer's use of the first-person voice to express thoughts and feelings, or to explain what he did.
  - b Evidence that the writer knows about food, such as his lexical choices.
  - c The writer's use of funny or powerful comparisons, such as 'as' or 'like', to express his view about a part of the meal.
  - d Positive or negative descriptions of food using adjectives which convey taste, touch, sound, smell or sight.
  - e Any use of structural techniques – repeated words, short sentences – for comic or dramatic impact.
  - f Paragraphs that deal with different elements of the experience (What is the focus of each?).
- 2 Compare your findings with a partner.

## ACTIVITY 3

Write a brief summary paragraph explaining:

- 1 what Jay Rayner's view of the restaurant is
- 2 what particular expressions or observations of the review stood out for you, and why.

## A theatre review

Reviews of other things – for example, books or plays – often feature similar techniques to Rayner's, but of

course the content will be different. They may also have a different mood. Not all reviews use humour, but they can be equally sharp and to the point. Read the following passage from a review of the musical *Evita*.

Taken on its own terms, however, my first brush with the show on stage (I saw the film version with Madonna) leaves little impression. Most of the numbers blend together and the strongest melody is reprised throughout beginning with 'What A Circus', the famed peak 'Don't Cry For Me, Argentina' and the finale. This unfolding of a melody throughout a show can climax with a powerful 'reveal' of the number. Here it simply feels like leaning on a good tune too often.

Still, this is a handsome production with a full orchestra sounding marvelous. One can imagine a hungry, attention-grabbing actress like Patti LuPone making the most of the spotlight. Unfortunately, the acclaimed actress Elena Roger can barely hold the stage. Her voice is not remotely equipped for the part and her stage presence is minimal. You look at the spectacle of this *Evita* when you should be riveted on **Eva Perón** herself. An entire nation prostrates itself at her feet? You doubt they'd even notice her ...

*Evita* should be a fiercely ambitious character as embodied in her singing. But Roger's voice is so thin and small (she played Edith Piaf in another hit show in London) that it simply disappears in the higher register. You're more worried for her than intimidated or magnetized. Her best moments occur when she can stay in that lower register and speak-sing a song, such as the duet 'I'd Be Surprisingly Good For You', with Michael Cerveris. He, by the way, is a marvelous performer, but paired with Roger and singing what is essentially a dull and uninteresting role, even Cerveris can't do much. Also less demanding vocally (though during this song she's dancing quite a bit) is 'Buenos Aires' with Ricky Martin. He's an amiable presence on stage albeit with little of the ability to give **Che** the edginess and cynicism the role desperately needs.

**From 'Theatre: Do cry for Evita', by Michael Giltz, from *The Huffington Post*.**

**Eva Perón:** wife of the former President of Argentina, Juan Peron

**Che:** Che Guevara, an Argentinian revolutionary

#### ACTIVITY 4

Make brief notes on the following questions:

- 1 What is the writer's viewpoint (of the show)?
- 2 Which of the techniques or language features listed at the start of the unit (and in [Activity 2](#)) can be seen here?

Now read the following student commentary on the review.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

In the opening to the review, the writer's views are not entirely clear from the start, although a sense of personal voice is strong (the writer refers to having seen the film version, for example). The show 'leaves little impression' and the songs 'blend together' but conversely the production is described as 'handsome' and the orchestra is 'marvelous'. Both of these observations give a sense of a reviewer who knows his stuff.

However, the main focus of the review is the actress who plays the lead role and here there is no doubt about the reviewer's opinion. 'Elena Roger can barely hold the stage', he says, and the negative phrasing 'not remotely equipped for the part' and her 'minimal' stage presence, create a highly critical tone. This is made more credible by the fact that the

reviewer sounds authoritative when he uses the modal form to state what he would have liked to have seen ('Evita should be a fiercely ambitious character ...')

### ACTIVITY 5

The idea of the expert view is central to most reviews. Discuss the following questions with a partner:

- 1** What areas of the reviewer's knowledge does the student pick up on?
- 2** Where else in the review itself does the reviewer show that he is knowledgeable about:
  - the musical 'Evita' and what a good performance of it requires
  - stage shows/musicals and drama in general?



#### THINK LIKE ... A REVIEWER

You can get into the habit of practising the conventions of reviews by making notes on any sort of text you read, media clip or show you view, or performance you see, before writing up a short review. The key thing is to evaluate its features (i.e. what was presented or conveyed) against your expectations.

## Writing to comment

Writing to comment is closely related to review writing. However, whereas a review usually tackles artistic forms, such as books or plays, commentaries may often address newsworthy events or topical issues.

### What are the key conventions of commentary essays or articles?

Commentary essays or articles:

- tackle or explore ideas arising from newsworthy events or topical issues
- share similarities with texts that argue or persuade, but may be more exploratory in nature
- demonstrate understanding or show authority about the topic in question
- provide explanatory background information for the 'non-expert' reader
- present ideas in the present tense to explain the current situation, but may use the past to fill in contextual detail, or future or modal forms to anticipate future developments
- are usually written in the first person, but may be less personal than 'persuasive' texts.

Read this example of a commentary article and identify the key conventions.

#### **The instincts of Charlie Gard's parents should echo in courts**

Few over the past few weeks can have been unaware of the plight of Charlie Gard. The peaceful face of this 10-month-old has graced many a front page, as have the words and pictures of his devoted and determined parents. They have fought through the courts to be allowed to take their desperately ill child to the US for experimental treatment that they believe could have a chance of saving him.

All the courts in the UK, up to and including the Supreme Court, have said no. Now, their journey – and Charlie's – appears to have come to an end with this week's ruling from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. On Tuesday it upheld the decisions of the British courts and declined to intervene. One day in the not too distant future, Charlie's life-support will be switched off and he will receive only palliative care for what remains of his short life.

As an outsider, taking what I flatter myself to be a rational perspective, I have no quarrel with these rulings. Some of the best qualified paediatricians in the land identified a rare genetic condition that doomed Charlie's existence from the start.

There are countries where life support would have been withdrawn much sooner or never given at all. Other very sick children with a better chance of life, it might have been argued, had a greater claim to a finite and expensive resource. Charlie's parents were entirely within their rights to challenge the doctors, but, quite simply, there was no hope.

And yet, and yet... I don't think it is only Charlie's winsome face or the very public anguish of his parents that leave misgivings. While accepting the final verdict, I have two questions to throw into the mix – questions that may simply have no answers but should at least be asked. The first concerns parental rights; the second, the state of public trust in doctors.

Charlie's parents, Connie Yates and Chris Gard wanted to take their child abroad for treatment they saw as a last resort. It would not have been any expense to the public purse. They had raised the £1.3m themselves. But money was not the point at issue. The judges had to rule on the welfare of the child. The judgment of the UK Supreme Court was that taking Charlie to the US would cause him additional and unnecessary suffering. The ECHR, also by a majority, did not demur.

England's Children Act of 1989 – updated in 2004 – was hailed then, and is still regarded now, as a landmark piece of legislation. At its core is the principle that the child's welfare is always, and in all circumstances, paramount. Where litigation is concerned, a child is required to have his or her own representation – an advocate who is separate from parents or guardian, and who argues in the interests of

the child alone.



Where a child has been harmed, or is judged to be at risk of harm, that principle is unimpeachable. Nor is there anything wrong with the principle that a child should have separate legal representation. But does it make sense for a court to overrule the wishes of the parents of such a very young child – wishes of parents who so patently want their child to flourish?

**From 'The instincts of Charlie Gard's parents should echo in courts', by Mary Dejevsky, *The Independent*.**

#### ACTIVITY 6

Working with a partner, go through the passage and make notes on each of the points from the list of key text conventions. For example:

Feature/convention	Evidence	Quotation or key reference
Explore ideas from recent newsworthy events	The article is about the recent case of Charlie Gard.	'Few over the past few weeks can have been unaware of the <i>plight of Charlie Gard</i> '

**Reflection:** Discuss the ways in which the essay/commentary and review forms are similar and different. Think about:

- what topics or issues each tends to cover
- whether one is more opinionated than the other.

#### ACTIVITY 7

Write the opening 125 words of a review of a new single or album by your favourite musician or band. Remember to:

- provide an overview of the 'key facts' about the music
- convey your expert knowledge about the music or performer

- express your opinion through the use of language, form and structure
- make comparisons (good or bad) with other music or other performers
- adopt informal, chatty language designed to engage with the reader.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I can understand the conventions of texts that review or comment		
I can explore the different ways in which writers create particular effects in reviews, essays or commentary articles		
I can write my own review or commentary texts, applying the skills I have learned		

## **Unit 2.3**

# **Writing to persuade and advise**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn about the main conventions of writing which seeks to persuade or advise (AO1)
- explore how persuasive and advisory texts create an impact on the reader (AO3).

### **Before you start**

Imagine you have to go and see a doctor. They say you are not living as healthy a lifestyle as you should.

- 1** What might they **advise** you to do?
- 2** How might they **persuade** you to follow the advice?

## Persuasive writing

Persuasive writing is a core form of writing that you will encounter in your course. When exploring texts that are written to persuade, look out for:

- the specific language devices used by writers to persuade readers
- different types of evidence and how it is used (or abused) in support of a point of view
- how the form and structure of particular persuasive texts contribute to their effect
- how persuasive texts are targeted to a particular audience (e.g. by age, interest).

Both persuasive and advisory texts *promote* a particular idea or product. For instance, governmental organisations or particular individuals (such as doctors) might promote healthy living, or ways of saving water, whereas commercial organisations might promote their product through the financial or lifestyle benefits they claim to provide.

Read these three examples of advisory or persuasive texts.

The coastline south of Mombassa is a tropical paradise of palm-fringed white sand beaches, where the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean meet beautiful coral reefs.

Feeling stressed or under pressure, but don't want to take lots of medication? Ask your doctor about some of the alternative therapies available. Consider the benefits of meditation, yoga or other relaxation strategies. These can be as effective as conventional remedies – and be a lot of fun, too!

We've taken everything you love about MINI – thrilling cornering, acceleration, driving enjoyment, creative use of space, iconic design – and added a whole new dimension.

### ACTIVITY 1

Working with a partner, discuss the following questions:

- 1 What is being promoted or advertised in these extracts? (Is it a thing/product? An idea? A way of life?)
- 2 Where – or in what form – would you find these texts? (Magazine articles? Leaflets?)
- 3 What is it in each text that tells you these are persuasive/advisory texts? (Think about particular phrases used, or persuasive techniques which you might have come across before.)

## What are the key conventions of persuasive writing?

Particular forms of persuasive writing, such as advertisements, will have additional conventions to those listed here, or will be subtly different, but, as a whole, the following features are typical of the form.

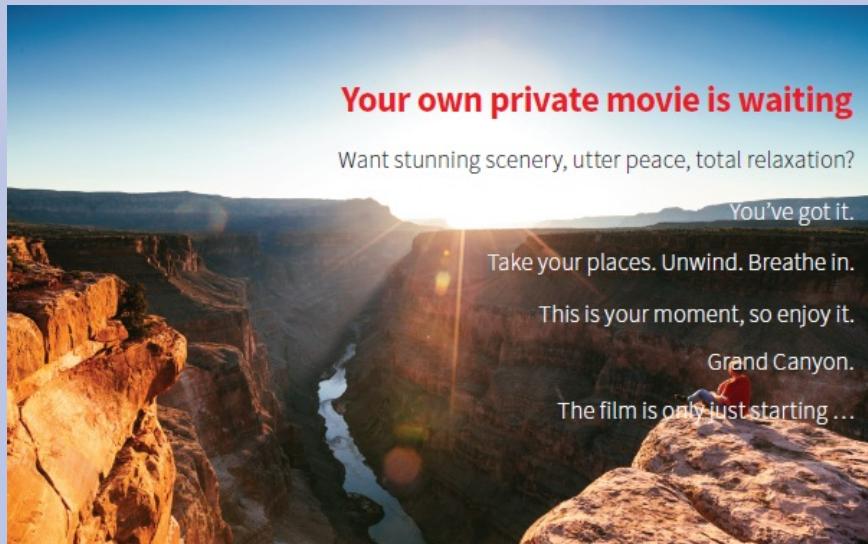
Persuasive texts often:

- promote a strong, single point of view rather than a more balanced argument
- make direct appeals to the reader/listener (e.g. 'We need *your help...*', '*You* don't want to miss out...')
- use highly charged language (e.g. **intensifiers** such as 'utterly gorgeous' or 'totally unacceptable')
- use vivid imagery or examples to engage the reader – either actual pictures/photos or descriptions (e.g. 'palm-fringed white sand beaches')
- use varied sentence structures for shock, impact or elaboration (e.g. 'This must stop')
- use rhetorical devices (e.g. **rhetorical questions**, repetition, lists of three)
- Use headings, captions, **slogans** or **logos** to engage the reader

- provide statistics, data or other numerical measures to persuade the reader
- use expert evidence or customer reviews to promote the benefits of a product/idea/experience
- include a ‘call to action’, often phrased using imperatives (e.g. ‘Buy now while stocks last’, ‘Act now before it’s too late’).

## ACTIVITY 2

Look at this simple advertisement for a holiday destination. Can you identify any of the conventions of persuasive writing from the list on page 60?



- What is the key ‘sales idea’ in the main heading? What is it saying a view like this is like?
- What do you notice about the structure of the text as a whole and the style of its sentences?
- How does the ‘slogan’ link to the main idea in the heading?



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Meaning and style

Remember to consider the shape and organisation of a text as well as the lexis and other language choices used. The form and structure of a text are key to understanding its impact.

The following promotional material for an electric bicycle uses some of the features in the advertisement in [Activity 2](#) as well as some others.

#### **LET'S SPEED IT UP. ARE YOU IN?**

Everyone knows that driving to work is slow. Sitting in the car, watching the traffic lights, crawling along to your destination. But do you really want to join the cycling Lycra-brigade? Turning up to meetings sweaty and red-faced?

#### **THERE'S ANOTHER WAY.**

The Electrobyke lets you glide through traffic without breaking a sweat. The perfect blend of style and power, the Electrobyke makes the commute effortless. And if you wish to save the planet, it won't cost the earth. You can even do it in a suit.



### ELECTROBYKE: EASY, ECONOMICAL, EXTRAORDINARY

[www.electrobyke.co.uk](http://www.electrobyke.co.uk)

Why have the advertisers chosen to head this advertisement with a short sentence and a question rather than listing the features of the Electrobyke?

#### ACTIVITY 3

Make notes in response to the following questions.

- 1 How is the information organised on the page? For example, is there an obvious **narrative** or time order to the bits of information? Are there shorter and longer 'chunks' of text – if there are, why and what is their effect?)
- 2 Which of the conventions of persuasive writing from the list at the start of the unit have been employed here? You could especially look at any features that are additional to the ones in the Grand Canyon advertisement.

Now, with a partner, share your findings and together work to answer these questions:

- 3 What do you think is the core message the advertisers want to get across? What words or phrases suggest this?
- 4 There are both full sentences and minor or non-sentences here. Why do you think the advertisers have employed the shorter, non-sentences here?



#### THINK LIKE ... AN ADVERTISER

In both adverts the advertisers are targeting particular audiences.

- Who do you think is the target audience in each case?
- Consider who a typical 'purchaser' might be, based on the product and the way it has been advertised.

## Soft- versus hard-sell

You will notice from looking at persuasive or promotional texts whether the writers are using 'soft' or 'hard' sales techniques.

**Soft-sell** is where more persuasive, gentle methods are used to promote products or ideas. The technique appeals to lifestyle, through imagery or ideas conveyed to the reader. For example:

*Imagine the warm air caressing you as you stroll along stretches of sandy beach.*

**Hard-sell** tends to focus on essential points such as value and practicality. For example:

*Want a Caribbean beach holiday which doesn't cost the earth?  
Look no further. 7 nights for just \$499.*

Hard-sell techniques are also used to persuade in non-commercial material:

*Don't drink and drive. Alcohol reduces reaction times and blurs judgement. Think twice before you drink drive!*

[1] noun phrases which appeal to the senses

[2] is a verb phrase which places the reader in the scene

[3] direct appeal to reader's idea of value

[4] fairly blunt short sentence

[5] a minor sentence (no verb) which bluntly states the cost

## The rationale for 'soft-sell'

'Soft-sell' can be seen in one of the latest techniques organisations and governments are using to get consumers or citizens to act in a particular way. It is called 'nudge theory' and is based on the idea that threatening people with consequences (e.g. 'if you don't cut down on junk food you'll have health problems') is less effective than 'nudging' or subtly suggesting the benefits of following a particular path. One common example is that putting fruit at eye level in supermarkets is more effective than banning junk food. What issues do you care about (personally, locally, nationally or globally)? Can you think of any ways in which 'nudge' theory could apply? Is it something you see in written texts – even the ones in this unit?

## Campaign literature

A campaign is an organised movement or set of actions for change carried out by commercial or public organisations. Campaign literature is one of the methods such organisations use on a range of issues (e.g. the protection of wildlife, the climate/environment, human rights, fair trade) and shares similarities with other forms of persuasive texts, such as advertisements or political speeches. However, campaign literature will often seek to shock or surprise the reader with facts or data, or by revealing the 'truth' about a particular situation. You are probably more likely to see 'hard-sell' techniques in campaign literature designed to make you feel ashamed, angry or encouraged to act to change things.

In the following passage, you will see some of the same features of persuasive writing you identified in [Activities 1](#) and [2](#). However, here the tone and purpose is different.

### **Virunga: Africa's Most Beautiful and Diverse Oil Field?**

Keep oil exploration out of Africa's oldest national park.

Your support really matters. People-power works. Together we will draw the line.

#### **Why Virunga?**

Heard of Virunga? It's Africa's oldest national park, and a treasured World Heritage Site.

Rainforests, volcanoes, rare and beautiful wildlife – Virunga has it all. People who live and work there know it's a very special place.

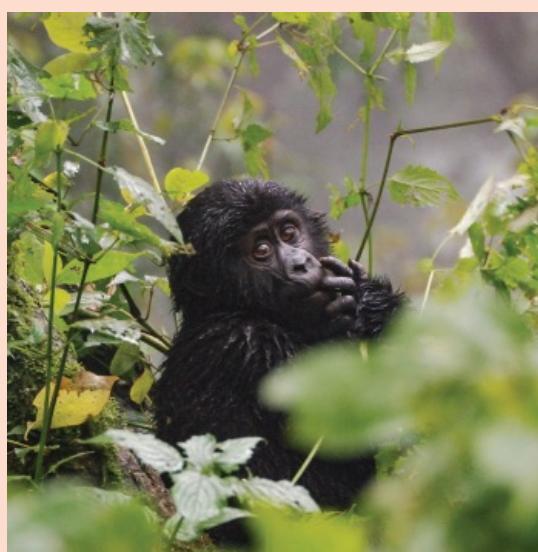
But Virunga is at risk of becoming Africa's newest oil field. When we heard UK oil company Soco were exploring for oil inside Virunga, we had to draw the line. Some places are just too precious to exploit.

#### **Virunga and Oil**

Virunga National Park is the size of a small country, straddling the equator in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It's got more than its share of wonderful wildlife – not just huge numbers of unique birds, but African icons like lions, elephants, hippos, chimps and the remarkable okapi. And a quarter of the world's critically endangered mountain gorillas.

Soco's exploring for oil isn't the only threat to Virunga – civil unrest and wars have put pressure on local people, wildlife and resources on-and-off for years. But we believe oil exploration would bring a new and unacceptable level of risk for Virunga's environment and communities.



That's why we need to draw the line.

**World Wildlife Fund.**

## ACTIVITY 4

Re-read the text about Virunga.

- 1 Working in pairs, identify the features listed in the following table. On a copy of the table, give an example of each feature.

Feature/convention	Example
Forceful language, using direct statements in the present tense	Virunga is at risk ...
Brief and abrupt phrases in the form of slogans (perhaps using imperative verbs)	
Identification of the opponent/'villain'	
Direct appeal to reader as friend/fellow believer	
Emotional appeal	
Vivid imagery	
Consequences of not acting	
Ends with a 'call to action'	

- 2 Share your ideas with another pair and redraft your table, adding any further points you missed, or removing any inaccurate examples of the feature listed.
- 3 Now, on your own, write 100–125 words comparing the Virunga campaign text with the Electrobyke advertisement.
- Start by commenting on the similarities: *Both texts...*
  - Then, move on to comment on any differences: *However, while the Electrobyke advertisement ... the writer of the Virunga wants...*
  - Conclude by commenting on whether one text uses more 'hard sell' techniques than the other.

Now, read this question:

A recycling charity in your area is very concerned about the amount of waste and household rubbish. Write an online campaign text aimed at parents to persuade them to think carefully about what they throw away. In your text, create a sense of optimism and belief in change.

(15 marks)

## ACTIVITY 5

Working with a partner, imagine you have been commissioned to create the online text.

- 1** Begin by making notes together on these key questions, and copy and complete the following planning grid:

Questions	Notes
Is this campaign literature or commercial advertising? How is this likely to change the tone of voice to adopt, and the approach to take?	
Who is the audience? How will this affect how you address them in terms of what you say and how you say it?	
Which of the features at the start of the unit could/should you employ here?	
Is a soft- or hard-sell approach more likely to work? Or perhaps a bit of both?	
Are there any other factors to bear in mind?	

- 2** Now, on your own, once you have discussed your ideas, draft a campaign text of no more than 150 words. Make sure you include an attention-grabbing (but relevant) heading. You do not need to include a picture but you could use some simple design features, such as bullet points, sub headings and so on, to create an impact on the reader.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the main conventions of different forms of persuasive and advice writing		
I can apply some of those conventions effectively to my own writing		

## **Unit 2.4**

# **Writing to argue and discuss**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn about the main conventions of writing which seeks to argue or discuss a particular point of view (AO1)
- explore how texts that argue a point create an impact on the reader (AO3).

### **Before you start**

Winning an argument is achieved in a number of ways. This is rarely about who shouts the loudest but about who is able to present points and ideas in such a way that their opinion seems most valid and reasonable.

- 1 If you were arguing your point of view on an issue with your friends or fellow students, how would you approach it? Would you just say the first thing that came into your head, or would you direct your ideas in a particular way?
- 2 In what ways do you think the skills of ‘argument’ might be of use to you in your future life and career?

## Different perspectives in arguments or discursive writing

There are always two (and sometimes more) sides or perspectives to an argument. Understanding, if not necessarily accepting, them, is an important element of effective argument. Sometimes, the argument features an exploratory discussion of an issue before the writer comes down on one side or the other.

Look at these different points of view about whether fashion brands are a benefit to our lives.

*Fashion brands tell you that the clothing you buy is good quality.*

*Although it provides employment, branded clothing is often produced in sweat shops where workers are exploited.*

*Fashion brands are diversifying into lots of other areas of our lives, e.g. developing media channels.*

*I feel cool when I am wearing a fashion brand my friends recognise.*

*Fashion brands provide lots of employment worldwide.*

*Lots of fashion brands are socially responsible nowadays.*

*Fashion brands are over-priced – just because they have a well-known label doesn't mean they are well made.*

*Even if brands support charitable work, they are still driven by profit.*

*There's no point wearing fashion brands because they are trendy – what is on trend one year is off trend the next.*

### ACTIVITY 1

With a partner, discuss the following questions:

- 1 Which of these viewpoints about fashion brands are positive and which negative? Are there any which feel 'neutral', and do not fall into either category?
- 2 Which of these points can be linked together? For example, look at the point about fashion brands providing employment. Is there a **counter-argument** for this?
- 3 What would your and your partner's view be on this issue? Can you see both sides of the argument, or do you want to argue passionately for one side or the other? If the latter, you might adopt more of the persuasive techniques mentioned in **Unit 2.3** if asked to express your views.

Read this passage taken from a student's **discursive**/argument text about fashion brands.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Another key issue to consider is what fashion brands tell the purchaser about the quality of the product. One view is that seeing a well-known brand or logo enables the purchaser to trust the quality. On the other hand, others argue that a logo is no guarantee of quality – you need to check by reading the label, and feeling the material to be sure of whether it is well made and will last.

[1] topic sentence introducing the area in focus

[2] a point in favour of buying fashion brands

[3] discourse marker signaling the alternative view

**[5]** a point against accepting the quality of fashion brands unthinkingly

## ACTIVITY 2

- 1** Working on your own, re-read the student's discursive/argument text and then make notes on the following questions:
  - a** How clearly is the issue explored here? (Does the paragraph deal with one main thing?)
  - b** What seems to be the writer's view? (Do they come down on one side or the other? How personal does it seem to be? Is it more of a discursive or argumentative text?)
  - c** How logically or thoughtfully are the ideas expressed?
- 2** Write a concluding sentence that would make the paragraph seem more personal. You could use one of these starters:
  - 'For my own part, I believe...'
  - 'Taking these views into account, I feel that...'

### What are the key features and conventions of argumentative or discursive texts?

Such texts often:

- express a strong viewpoint but deal with both sides of an argument, or explore obstacles/challenges
- use the first person (e.g. 'I') but are sometimes expressed using less personal, objective language
- use vivid imagery, anecdotes or examples to engage the reader, or to provide the background to the ideas being discussed
- use varied sentence structures for developing an argument in a logical, progressive way.
- use discourse markers, such as adverbs, and other linking words/phrases to direct the argument logically (e.g. 'Finally', 'In this way', 'This demonstrates...')
- use rhetorical devices (e.g. rhetorical questions, repetition, lists of three)
- use statistics, data or other numerical measures to persuade the reader
- use expert evidence to explain the core ideas or argue a particular view.

Labels such as 'argumentative writing' and 'discursive writing' are very much open to interpretation, but, in the end, one of the key factors to consider – whatever you call the type of writing you do – is the tone of voice: are you going to explore the issues around a topic in a more detached, impersonal way, or will you do so in a more personal, emotive way? Generally speaking, discursive writing – when you explore all the different views on a topic – tends to be less personal.

Read the following passage about how much to tip in cafes and restaurants, taken from the *Toronto Star* newspaper. Look at the annotations.

There is no 'right' amount to tip, but I agree that the floor is being raised for tipping in Toronto. Without overthinking it, I often default to that 18 per cent, too. A tip of 15 per cent is still very good, it is just that 18 per cent (or 20 percent) is better. I hear the groans of how expensive things already are here, which they are, but let's be reasonable: If your morning latte is \$2.80, tipping 18 per cent instead of 15 per cent is a difference of eight cents. My hunch is that those of us who have waited tables or tended bar are more open to gratuity nudging up, because they know how much of a grind that can be, for a nominal wage. Tipping strikes a chord with Torontonians for a reason I've never quite understood. We feel really strongly about it. For the person who is thinking, 'well, a jump from 15 per cent to 18 per cent might not matter on a daily latte, but what about a \$250 dinner?' If you can afford a lavish dinner, you can afford to tip the people that made that meal happen.

**'Do I really have to tip 18% at a restaurant?'**,  
by Karen Cleveland, *The Toronto Star*.

**[1]** seems to express view of writer

**[2]** identifies alternative view on tipping

**[3]** counter-argument

**[4]** provides evidence in support of higher tipping

### ACTIVITY 3

Working with a partner, read the text again and discuss these questions:

- 1** What seems to be the point of view of the writer concerning higher tipping, based on Notes 1, 3 and 4?
- 2** How often in the text does the writer refer to her own experience? How often does she link herself to Torontonians in general?
- 3** How strongly is the view expressed? (Think about the use of the phrase 'My hunch...' – is a hunch a strongly felt emotion? Is it the same as saying 'My belief is...'?)
- 4** What are the argument and counter-argument expressed in Notes 2 and 3?
- 5** At the end of the passage, the writer uses the argument/counter-argument technique again. How does she do this? (Look at the sentence starting 'For the person who is thinking...'.)

## Arguments in a speech

Longer texts will deal with different points in an extended way, allowing greater exploration and discussion. This can be seen in speeches, in which arguments tend to be more personal but generally have a logical, thoughtful structure which acknowledges problems and challenges.

Read this speech given by actor Leonardo DiCaprio to the United Nations in 2014. Look carefully at the annotations in the first part of the speech.

Thank you, Mr Secretary General, your excellencies, ladies and gentleman, and distinguished guests. I'm honored to be here today. I stand before you not as an expert but as a concerned citizen, one of the 400,000 people who marched in the streets of New York on Sunday, and the billions of others around the world who want to solve our climate crisis.

As an actor I pretend for a living. I play fictitious characters often solving fictitious problems. I believe humankind has looked at climate change in that same way: as if it were a fiction, happening to someone else's planet, as if pretending that climate change wasn't real would somehow make it go away.

But I think we know better than that. Every week, we're seeing new and undeniable climate events, evidence that accelerated climate change is here now. We know that droughts are intensifying, our oceans are warming and acidifying, with methane plumes rising up from beneath the ocean floor. We are seeing extreme weather events, increased temperatures, and the West Antarctic and Greenland ice-sheets melting at unprecedented rates, decades ahead of scientific projections.

None of this is rhetoric, and none of it is hysteria. It is fact. The scientific community knows it, industry and governments know it, even the United States military knows it. The chief of the US Navy's Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Locklear, recently said that climate change is our single greatest security threat.

My friends, this body – perhaps more than any other gathering in human history – now faces that difficult task. You can make history... or be vilified by it. To be clear, this is not about just telling people to change their light bulbs or to buy a hybrid car. This disaster has grown BEYOND the choices that individuals make.

This is now about our industries, and governments around the world taking decisive, large-scale action.

I am not a scientist, but I don't need to be. Because the world's scientific community has spoken, and they have given us our prognosis. If we do not act together, we will surely perish. Now is our moment for action.

We need to put a price tag on carbon emissions, and eliminate government subsidies for coal, gas, and oil companies. We need to end the free ride that industrial polluters have been given in the name of a free-market economy: they don't deserve our tax dollars, they deserve our scrutiny. For the economy itself will die if our ecosystems collapse.



The good news is that renewable energy is not only achievable but good economic policy. New research shows that by 2050 clean, renewable energy could supply 100% of the world's energy needs using existing technologies, and it would create millions of jobs.

This is not a partisan debate; it is a human one. Clean air and water, and a livable climate are inalienable human rights. And solving this crisis is not a question of politics. It is our moral obligation – if, admittedly, a daunting one.

We only get one planet. Humankind must become accountable on a massive scale for the wanton destruction of our collective home. Protecting our future on this planet depends on the conscious evolution of our species. This is the most urgent of times, and the most urgent of messages.

Honoured delegates, leaders of the world, I pretend for a living. But you do not. The people made their voices heard on Sunday around the world and the momentum will not stop. And now it's YOUR turn. The time to answer the greatest challenge of our existence on this planet... is now.

I beg you to face it with courage. And honesty. Thank you.

**'Climate change is not hysteria - it's a fact', by Leonardo DiCaprio.**

**[1]** anecdote makes experience personal

**[2]** use of 'we' to involve audience, and short sentence for impact

**[3]** clear topic sentence introduces paragraph focus

**[4]** vivid imagery creates emotional impact

#### ACTIVITY 4

This speech presents a very good example of the sort of **evidentiary logic** you might employ in your own work. Working in a small group, explore the whole speech, with each person identifying at least one of the following techniques and features:

- Use of different tense forms for the situation now, and in the future.

- Short sentences for impact and effect.
- Longer sentences to explain or develop an idea or point.
- Patterning (e.g. lists of three and repetition of words or phrases) for rhetorical impact.
- Paragraphs or separate sections of the speech for each new point or focus
- Inclusion of counter-arguments, obstacles or challenges – then ‘knocking them down’.
- Overall structure: where does DiCaprio begin and end? How does the end of the speech mirror the start?

Share your ideas, and then write up your notes to produce a basic analysis of the passage. With examples, you should demonstrate:

- how DiCaprio argues his case
- how he uses form, structure and language to promote his ideas.

## Arguments in a letter

The letter is another form of text in which writers argue a point of view, but how would the form, structure and language in a letter be different? Read the following student's response to DiCaprio's speech. Consider not just the conventions of arguments that have been used, but also how the writer has used the form and structure of a letter to get their ideas across.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Dear Mr DiCaprio,

I listened to your speech about climate change with great interest, and felt compelled to write to you to express my opinions. I agree wholeheartedly with you that this is an issue that concerns all of us, however there are a number of points I wish to take issue you with you about.

Firstly, I would like to tackle the view that climate change is 'our biggest single security threat'. While I agree that drought and flooding, for example, do lead to migration and devastation of people's homes, surely a far bigger threat to the world is conflict? Wars between states and countries is far more likely to drive people from their homes and into poverty.

The other main point I wish to make relates to our use of energy and plans for the future. While I do not disagree that we only have 'one planet', in the past mankind has always come up with inventive solutions to problems. Perhaps the key to renewable energy lies not on this planet but on other planets? Scientists already believe that life might have been possible on Mars, and there are even greater hopes for places like Europa, a moon of the planet Jupiter.

I do not think we should give up hope on mankind's ability to come up with solutions to our problems.

Yours sincerely,

J A Martins

[1] formal greeting

[2] opening sentence relates to the context

[3] reason for writing

[4] directly addresses single reader (DiCaprio) rather than a general audience

[5] signals viewpoint of writer

[6] formal closing (for 'Dear Sir' it would be 'Yours faithfully')

[7] formal version of name

### ACTIVITY 5

On your own, write a short commentary on the letter. Write about:

- the viewpoint expressed
- the different points addressed in the second and third paragraphs
- how the writer uses the argument/counter-argument technique
- any other argumentative techniques you can identify
- how the letter differs from the speech in its use of form, structure and language

**Reflection:** What are the key techniques and features of argumentative writing that you could apply in your own work? What *three* techniques would you regard as most important?

### ••• THINK LIKE ... A SPEECH WRITER

What do you consider to be the most effective way of engaging an audience's attention at the start of a speech? Remember, your purpose is to argue a particular point of view.

Is it to:

- start with a personal anecdote which links you to the topic?
- begin with important or surprising facts and figures?
- express your viewpoint straight away?
- begin with something that doesn't seem to have any obvious connection to the topic?

Why do you think this way is the most effective?

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the main conventions, techniques, features and language used when writing to argue and discuss		
I can analyse how these techniques work and the impact they make on readers		

## **Unit 2.5**

# **Writing to narrate and describe**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn about the main conventions of narrative and descriptive writing (AO1)
- explore how writers make an impact in stories and descriptive texts (AO3).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What was the last really good story you heard, saw or read? What was good about it? What elements made it memorable?
- 2 In what ways have you had to describe things in great detail in your school studies so far?

## Narrative and descriptive writing

Stories, also called ‘narratives’, generally include description, but because the focus is on the plot and **characterisation**, description should not be the dominant feature. However, in **descriptive** texts, too much focus on narrative can mean that detail gets lost.

### ACTIVITY 1

Look at the following list of text titles. Which do you think will be mostly narrative and which will be mostly descriptive? Discuss each one with a partner.

*The longest beach in Bangladesh (and perhaps the world)*

*Climbing Everest for the first time*

*One afternoon at Glastonbury music festival*

*Tiger in a cage*

*An unexpected visitor*

*The rise and fall of a rock star*

Of course, anything can be turned into a story, so there is no absolute right or wrong answer to the question in [Activity 1](#), but certain ideas do lend themselves more to narrative than description.

### What are the key features and conventions of effective narrative and descriptive texts?

An effective narrative will:

- have a compelling plot (possibly of five stages: ‘exposition’, ‘rising action’, ‘climax’, ‘falling action’, ‘resolution’)
- effectively establish characters who interest the reader and whose voices or motivations are believable and consistent
- include dialogue that advances the plot or characterisation
- convey powerfully or atmospherically one or two main settings relevant to the story
- sustain the reader’s interest through vivid description, a variety of sentence and/or paragraph structures and relevant linguistic devices, such as imagery
- use structure to surprise or create impact (e.g. through flashback or multiple narration)
- open and end in interesting or satisfying ways.

An effective descriptive text will:

- vividly convey what a specific person, setting or experience is like rather than tell a story
- use a variety of sensory detail (i.e. sight, sound, smell, taste, touch)
- use language to ‘zoom in’ or ‘zoom out’, as you would use a camera
- use sentence or paragraph structure and organisation to convey different elements of a description
- use well-chosen lexis to be precise or expansive as the text requires
- use linguistic devices such as imagery or sound effects (e.g. **alliteration**, **assonance**) to convey mood or atmosphere.

Many imaginative texts – especially stories – combine both description and narration.

Read the following opening to a story, and look carefully at the annotations.

Nazneen waved at the tattoo lady. The tattoo lady was always there when Nazneen looked out across the dead grass and broken paving stones to the block opposite. Most of the flats that closed three sides of a square had net curtains and the life behind them was all shapes and shadows. But the tattoo lady had no curtains. Morning and afternoon she sat with her big thighs spilling over the sides of her chair, tipping forward to drop ash into a bowl, tipping back to slug from her can. She drank now, and tossed the can out of the window.

[1] short first sentence establishes characters

[2] imagery establishes mood/setting

[3] metaphor develops picture of character

## ACTIVITY 2

Why is this opening so effective? Working with a partner, identify the elements of this story opening that engage us as readers. You could think about:

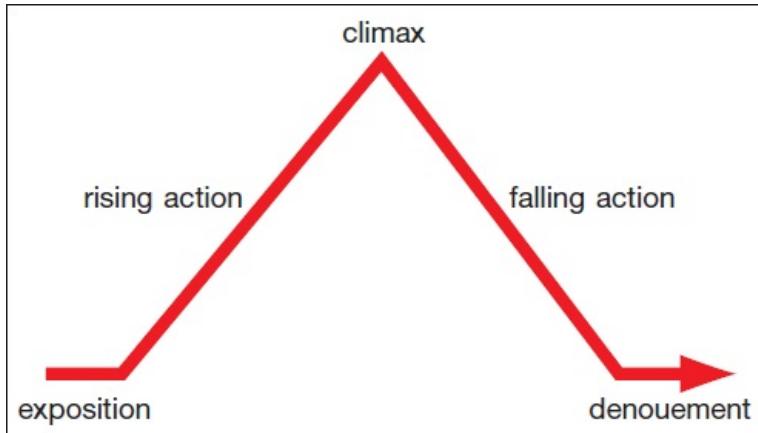
- 1 the way the setting is established – how does Ali use descriptive skills to make it seem vivid and real?
- 2 the way character is established – what do we learn about the ‘tattoo lady’ and how she is different from everyone else?
- 3 the way questions are raised in our minds – what has not been revealed at this point, and what would we like to know?

You may not have to write a whole story, but having an understanding of how the various stages fit together can be useful. For example, look at one student’s plan, based on a story idea similar to Ali’s:

Stage of story	Example
<b>Introduction/exposition:</b> the main character, setting	A young, childless woman feels lonely apart from her distant friendship with an older woman who she sees infrequently.
<b>A complication/problem:</b> something new occurs which changes things	Suddenly the older woman disappears without warning. The narrator’s husband warns her not to investigate.
<b>Development:</b> life but under new circumstances, situation changes	Some days later, the young woman ventures out and enquires after the older woman. She learns she is in hospital but has no family.
<b>Climax:</b> things come to a head – a dramatic moment; things could go one way or another	The young woman secretly goes out while her husband is at work and visits the hospital. She visits the older woman who confesses she has a child who she’s never seen, and who never knew her. She dies, but gives the (now grown-up) child’s address to the younger woman.
<b>Conclusion/resolution:</b> events are completed, but not necessarily happily or definitively	The younger woman visits the daughter, but when she gets to the door and sees her, she decides not to tell her about her mother.

This is, of course, a very simplistic structure and many stories feature several dramatic reversals of fortune when the **protagonist** faces obstacles to happiness or success. While keeping this basic overarching structure, the story does not have to begin with the introduction/exposition – it could begin halfway through, **in medias res**. Alternatively, it could begin with the ending of the story, **in ultimata res**.

Many narratives have a structure based on a simple visual representation developed by the German novelist Georg Freytag, and known as ‘Freytag’s Pyramid’. This describes a series of five stages of growing tension and action which is resolved following a dramatic climax:



### Freytag's Pyramid.

An alternative, if related, way of understanding narrative structure is William Labov's six core elements:

- 1 Abstract – How does it begin?
- 2 Orientation – Who/what does it involve, and when/where?
- 3 Complicating action – Then what happened?
- 4 Resolution – What finally happened?
- 5 Evaluation – So what?
- 6 Coda – What does it all mean?

Here, there is a greater focus on the meaning – what do I take from the story? What is it telling us? What were the consequences for those involved? These are elements, rather than a rigid chronological structure as 'so what?' might be the first part of the story ('Here I am in prison') before the remainder reveals the how, when and why.

This is a simplified explanation of Labov's theory. If you want to read more, you can look at his essay: The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax. When writing a story you can use Labov's theory to help organise your ideas and plan the structure. See [Unit 6.2](#) for more information.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Meaning and style** – Many stories will follow a structure similar to the one shown in 'Freytag's Pyramid'. Choose a story you know, or a novel you have read for this course. Annotate a copy of the diagram to show how the story you have chosen follows this model. How closely does it follow Freytag's structure?

### ACTIVITY 3

Using Freytag's five-part structure, work with a partner to plan out your own story based on the title '*The Disappearance*'. Plot out the stages, and make sure you decide:

- who the protagonist is – write a few notes about his/her background, character.
- whether there is an **antagonist** – if so, who is he/she and why does he/she want to put obstacles or challenges in the main character's way?
- where the story mainly takes place – choose no more than two to three locations
- the main themes or motifs of the story (e.g love, grief, greed).

## Characterisation

Characterisation is the process of bringing characters to life. Whether writing non-fiction travel accounts, or entirely imagined fictional narratives, writers use a number of methods and devices to convey what a character is like. These may include:

- details of physical appearance and clothing
- behaviour towards others – their general attitude and specific actions (these might include anecdotes or examples of the character's past actions)
- what the character says
- what other characters say about them
- how others behave towards him/her
- the location he or she is placed in, and how they relate to, or are reflected by it
- what we know, or are told, about the character's personal circumstances (e.g. family, friends, job, history)
- the circumstances of his or her first and last appearance in a text.

However, if a writer were merely to give a list of these details, it would be very uninteresting. *How* the writer reveals this information about a character is as important as *what* is revealed.

Read the following passage which gives us some very direct information about the protagonist, a tribal leader.

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.

The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end, Okonkwo threw the Cat. That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire.

**From *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe.**

### ACTIVITY 4

Make your own notes on the following:

- 1 What characterisation devices or methods are used by the writer to describe Okonkwo?
- 2 Which devices or methods are missing? (For example, do we find out how he speaks?)

## Describing place and landscape

Sometimes the detail *is* the story (for example, in travel writing). Read the following passage taken from writer John Pilger's book *A Secret Country*, and the annotations around it.

On the surface, this appears to be no more than a description of a landscape. In fact the writer's own voice comes through in the way he characterises the land.

In Australia's secret heartlands monoliths stand where the ice receded, and fine white sand drifts over the red earth, through spinifex and dead trees rising like black needles in mist. From a distance this is no more than desert, but look closer and the simplicity is really a rich mosaic of acacias, cassias, emu bushes, honey myrtles, grasses, even daisies, binding the sand. Through the skeins of the sand-mist, out on the plain, a red kangaroo comes into sight, a species once almost extinct.

**From A Secret Country, by John Pilger**

**spinifex:** tough grass found in the deserts of Central Australia

**acacia, cassia, honey myrtle:** types of shrub or tree

**skein:** a loosely knotted thread

[1] a general 'wide-angle' view of the scene

[2] present tense

[3] use of vivid imagery

[4] specific details of types of plant

[5] the imperative verb 'look' makes us 'zoom in' on detail



## ACTIVITY 5

Make notes on the following questions:

- 1 What impression (or impressions) of the landscape do you get from the writer's descriptions? Think about:
  - the atmosphere or 'feel' created by the references to the mist, drifting sand and the dead trees
  - the effect of listing the variety of plant forms
  - the use of the metaphor 'rich mosaic'.
- 2 Is the description fixed - or does it change as the text progresses?

Now read this passage from one student's commentary on this part of a longer extract:

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The opening phrase 'secret heartlands' immediately establishes the idea of a private, almost magical place and this notion is reinforced by the 'fine white sand' that 'drifts', the use of the present tense verb conveying the way everything is seen as if through a filter. This phantom-like effect is the first of a number of instances of imagery which convey the idea of things being ghostly: the simile of the 'dead trees' which rise 'like black needles', is dark and ominous. This suggests a particular perspective, but after this point, the language and the depiction of the landscape changes.

## ACTIVITY 6

Discuss the commentary with a partner and consider the following questions:

- 1 How far do you agree with the writer's comments on the opening to the passage? (To what extent is it 'magical' or 'phantom-like')?
- 2 In what ways does the student connect particular ideas within the passage? How effectively is this done?
- 3 Is there anything that seems contradictory or which doesn't make sense?

Now, write about the second part of the passage, starting 'From a distance...', using a similar style to that of the student commentary.

Begin with a general comment about the next part of the text. For example:

*Next, the writer paints a picture of...*

Develop your commentary by focusing on particular lexical choices or other language devices (e.g. the 'rich mosaic') to explore how the mood changes. For example:

*The references to... convey the idea that...*

### ••• THINK LIKE ... A TRAVEL WRITER

It may appear that non-fiction is not 'creative' in the same way poems or novels are, but travel writing is story-telling – just with a different type of story. Practise writing about a place or person that you know by starting with a first sentence that captures the reader's attention. For example:

*Here is the place where the floods rose and destroyed a town.  
Now as I walk by the banks of the dry river...*

## **Using camera techniques**

One useful technique for descriptive writing is to write as if you were viewing the scene through a camera lens (e.g. 'zoom', 'pan', 'wide-angle'). The 'camera' approach is very useful in descriptive writing and can be applied to many scenes and experiences. Think for a moment about describing a sports match, and the way the camera moves between players, crowds, lighting, individual incidents and so on.

You could bear these in mind as you read the next passage.

## Describing experience

Writers apply similar techniques when writing about experiences. Elements such as setting, people and actions are highlighted to create a description of a particular moment in time. Here, in her short story 'Bank Holiday', Katherine Mansfield describes a public holiday:

A stout man with a pink face wears dingy white flannel trousers, a blue coat with a pink handkerchief showing, and a straw hat much too small for him, perched at the back of his head. He plays the guitar. A little chap in white canvas shoes, his face hidden under a felt hat like a broken wing, breathes into a flute; and a tall thin fellow, with bursting over-ripe button boots, draws ribbons—long, twisted, streaming ribbons—of tune out of a fiddle. They stand, unsmiling, but not serious, in the broad sunlight opposite the fruit-shop; the pink spider of a hand beats the guitar, the little squat hand, with a brass-and-turquoise ring, forces the reluctant flute, and the fiddler's arm tries to saw the fiddle in two.

A crowd collects, eating oranges and bananas, tearing off the skins, dividing, sharing. One young girl has even a basket of strawberries, but she does not eat them. "Aren't they dear!" She stares at the tiny pointed fruits as if she were afraid of them. The Australian soldier laughs. "Here, go on, there's not more than a mouthful." But he doesn't want her to eat them, either. He likes to watch her little frightened face, and her puzzled eyes lifted to his: "Aren't they a price!" He pushes out his chest and grins. Old fat women in velvet bodices—old dusty pin-cushions—lean old hags like worn umbrellas with a quivering bonnet on top; young women, in muslins, with hats that might have grown on hedges, and high pointed shoes; men in khaki, sailors, shabby clerks, young Jews in fine cloth suits with padded shoulders and wide trousers, "hospital boys" in blue—the sun discovers them—the loud, bold music holds them together in one big knot for a moment. The young ones are larking, pushing each other on and off the pavement, dodging, nudging; the old ones are talking: "So I said to 'im, if you wants the doctor to yourself, fetch 'im, says I."

"An' by the time they was cooked there wasn't so much as you could put in the palm of me 'and!"

The only ones who are quiet are the ragged children. They stand, as close up to the musicians as they can get, their hands behind their backs, their eyes big. Occasionally a leg hops, an arm wags. A tiny stammerer, overcome, turns round twice, sits down solemn, and then gets up again.

"Ain't it lovely?" whispers a small girl behind her hand.

And the music breaks into bright pieces, and joins together again, and again breaks, and is dissolved, and the crowd scatters, moving slowly up the hill.

**From 'Bank Holiday', by Katherine Mansfield.**

### ACTIVITY 7

With a partner, work through the passage from 'The Bank Holiday' and make a list of all the people or activities Mansfield describes. For example:

- 1 A 'stout man' playing a guitar
- 2 The 'little' man in 'canvas shoes'

Alongside each of these, note whether we are seeing a 'close-up' or a more general 'wider' view of the scene. Is the item or physical feature listed described in particular detail?

What is the overall mood created in the passage? How, if at all, does it begin to change towards the end?

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the main conventions of narrative and descriptive writing		
I can analyse how these techniques work and the impact they make on readers		



## **Section 3**

### **Reading skills - directed response**

# **Unit 3.1**

## **What is directed response?**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to decode a typical directed writing task (AO1)
- learn and develop some of the core skills required when writing a directed response (AO2, AO3).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What sorts of things would you look for if comparing the form, structure and language of two texts?
- 2 How would you go about it? (What order would you look at things – structure first, or the use of language or literary devices?)

## What is directed writing?

A directed writing task will ask you to:

- read and understand one of a range of text types, such as articles, letters, stories, diaries, leaflets or reviews. The text will be approximately 550–750 words in length.
- write your own shorter text of between 150–200 words connected thematically to the first, but for a specified audience and purpose, which may be different from the original.

Here is an example of what a directed writing task might look like. It is based on the article that you can find in [Unit 3.2](#) ('Planning your response'). You do not need to read the article yet – this is about understanding the task and how to approach it.

The following text by Bibi Lynch consists of part of an article from the online edition of a newspaper. The article is about how a single woman who has no children feels when she hears about mothers complaining about their lives.

- a Imagine you are an advice columnist (someone who gives professional advice to people who have problems). Write a blog for a website aimed at young people in which you discuss the issues raised and give balanced advice about parenting. Write 150–200 words.

(10 marks)

- b Compare your blog with the original article, analysing form, structure and language.

(15 marks)

### ACTIVITY 1

Work with a partner to answer the following questions:

#### The original passage

- 1 What is the focus of the original passage/source text?
- 2 What form is it written in (e.g. diary, blog, letter)?
- 3 Who is the writer of the passage? (A mother? A single man? An 'agony aunt'?)
- 4 What is the writer's narrative point of view or purpose (if any)?

#### The response

- 1 What is the focus of the text you are asked to write? (Is it the same as the original?)
- 2 What different form is it to be written in?
- 3 From whose perspective is the directed response written?
- 4 What different narrative point of view (or perspective) must your text take?

## Decoding tasks

Read how one student has addressed these questions by annotating the key words and phrases in the question itself.

The following text by Bibi Lynch consists of part of an article from the online edition of a newspaper. The article is about how a single woman who has no children feels when she hears about mothers complaining about their lives.

- a Imagine you are an 'agony aunt' or 'uncle' (someone who gives professional advice to people who have problems). Write a blog for a website aimed at young people in which you discuss the issues raised and give balanced advice about what it is like to be a

parent. Write between 150–200 words.

(10 marks)

- b Compare your blog with the original article, analysing form, structure and language.

(15 marks)

[1] the writer – a single woman

[2] the text type of the original article

[3] the focus of the article

[4] suggests she is angry or objects

[5] the role/writer of the second text

[6] the form of the second text

[7] the second text will address the same topic

[8] the purpose

Check your notes again – have these annotations helped you?

**Reflection:** Share your ideas with a partner to make sure you are clear about what is being asked.

You will return to your answers to [Activity 1](#) later in this section, but now you will have an opportunity to attempt to ‘decode’ a similar question. Remember, you are trying to make sure you fully understand the different requirements of the question. The article referred to in this question is in [Unit 3.2](#), but you don’t need to read it yet.

Read the question(s) carefully:

The following text consists of part of an article from the online edition of a newspaper. The article is a report on how some young people are choosing to move out of London due to the high cost of living.

- a Imagine you are an employer keen to attract young people to live and work in London. You believe the article has not fairly represented London life and believe there are many advantages to living and working in the capital: you are keen for readers to know your views. Write a letter to the author of the article expressing your view. Write 150–200 words.
- (10 marks)
- b Compare your letter with the original article, analysing the form, structure and language.
- (15 marks)



Now, 'decode' the task's questions. Make sure your notes include information about:

The text you are asked to read	The text you are asked to write
what the original text is about	what the new text will be about
what text type it is	what different form or type of text it will be in
who wrote it	who - or in what role - it will be written
the purpose or narrative point of view	what the purpose or narrative point of view (if any) might be

What are the main differences between the two texts (i.e. the one you are asked to read, and the one you are asked to write)? Write a paragraph outlining these differences. Begin your paragraph with the following sentence:

*While the first text is an article which ...*

## Being clear about the skills

The skills you will use in completing the two tasks (the writing and the comparison) will be complementary (each will inform the other) but, in broad terms, which of the following skills do you think can be more applied to one task than the other?

- Understand the key points in an unfamiliar text and apply analytical skills.
- Write analytically about the effects produced by form, structure and language in two different texts.
- Comment on the overall style and qualities of a passage.
- Plan, sequence and write your own text in your own words (or in a given role).
- Use quotations and evidence precisely and thoughtfully.
- Use your knowledge of non-fiction conventions to write your own text.

There are, of course, many other skills you will need to demonstrate and, as has been stated, these skills will ‘cross over’ between the two tasks, but by decoding the task even before you begin you have given yourself a ‘mental template’ of what to look for when you come to write.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### **Text and context: Writing in role**

When you write ‘in role’, you have to imagine yourselves ‘in the shoes’ of someone else.

Make a list of things you might consider to help you understand how another person would think and write.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can understand the requirements for directed response		
I can ‘decode’ directed response writing tasks by using highlighting and annotation skills		
I have practised the skills needed to write a successful response to one of these tasks		

## **Unit 3.2**

# **Planning your directed response**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- understand how to analyse and make appropriate selections of material from a given text (AO1)
- learn how to decide how to use the material in your written response (AO2).

### **Before you start**

Consider how you normally approach an unfamiliar text you have to read, either for a subject you are studying or out of your own interest:

- 1 How far do you try to interpret what the title might mean?
- 2 In what ways do you approach the text? (Do you look for captions or images? Or do you 'plunge straight in'?)

## Making links between the text and the question

When you are given a directed writing question, you will have to read the given text with a view to how you will use it. This means understanding the key points made in the text, including the attitude (if any) of the writer, and analysing elements of form, language and structure in order to draw conclusions about the effects created. However, as you do this, you will need to be aware of the specific elements which are required by the set task.

Here is the question you already ‘decoded’ in [Unit 3.1](#). Re-read it and remind yourself of the key words and phrases which will direct or guide your reading of the passage that follows. Then read the passage itself.

The following text consists of part of an article from the online edition of a newspaper. The article is a report on how some young people are choosing to move out of London due to the high cost of living.

- a Imagine you are an employer keen to attract young people to live and work in London. You believe the article has not fairly represented London life and believe there are many advantages to living and working in the capital: you are keen for readers to know your views. Write a letter to the author of the article expressing your view. Write 150–200 words.

(10 marks)

- b Compare your letter with the original article, analysing the form, structure and language.

(15 marks)

### Meet the 20-somethings priced out of London, leaving for a new life elsewhere



Anyone standing in a lengthy queue waiting for a sandwich at lunchtime in London would be forgiven for daydreaming about the prospect of a quieter life, running their own coffee shop by the sea, or opening an antique shop selling vintage classics. It is of little surprise, then, that Londoners are

- 5 increasingly moving out of the city as they buy up cheaper homes and start families in areas like Bristol, Leeds and Margate. More surprising, however, is the number of people still in their 20s who are choosing to leave the capital.

- Fed up with extortionate rents and hoping to improve their quality of life,  
10 many 20-somethings are bucking the tradition of enjoying big city life during their younger years and instead moving to cheaper areas where they can work remotely while enjoying lunchtime swims and midweek days off.

- ‘For the same cost as taking a share in a three-bed in Camden you could  
15 rent a two- or a three-bed property in more affordable markets such as Bristol, Manchester and Leeds,’ says Lawrence Bowles, a research analyst at

**Savills**. ‘Obviously, the cost of renting isn’t the only factor. But with growing numbers of high-value job opportunities in regional cities, being able to rent more space for less money can only add to the appeal.’

- 20 There are staggering savings to be made by changing postcode: according to **Rightmove** the average asking rent for a property in Greater London is £1920, compared to £789 nationally. One of the towns synonymous with this shift has been Margate in Kent.

Sam Bristow, 25, moved there last September after a friend suggested they 25 both test out the coastal town. ‘I’d been living in London for three years and become tired of it,’ says the freelance graphic designer and illustrator. He swapped his room in a seven-person/five-bed houseshare in Camberwell that set him back £850 plus bills every month, for a room in a large four-bed houseshare at £300 plus bills. ‘Obviously there are events in London and it’s 30 a brilliant place, but no one I knew was going out as they couldn’t afford to,’ he says.

But like many others who move to Margate, it is not just the affordable rents that attracted them, it’s the change in lifestyle. ‘I like the quietness, and the air is fresh,’ says Bristow. ‘It also feels like you can do whatever you want 35 here – such as open a shop. It’s given me more free time to do other things. I work less – I take Wednesdays off.’

Like many other 20-somethings exiting London, cost was the most influential factor in spurring Violet Myers, 27, to leave. The copywriter and her friend had lived in the capital for seven years, but soon after returning 40 from travelling around Asia they decided that the cost of moving into a one-bed flat together was just too extortionate.

‘I felt like it was merely a playground for the rich and that I didn’t really belong there because I didn’t have the money to experience everything that makes it great,’ says Myers. ‘In the end I was working and going home to 45 stay in, with the odd night out with mates. I started thinking, ‘wait, maybe I can do that anywhere’.’

After hearing friends rave about Bristol, the couple **upped sticks** to the city in September. They now pay £750 for a two-bed flat, less than the £850 they paid for a room in a two-bed shared house in Kilburn. Not only has the 50 move meant they can now save £1000 a month, but it’s enabling Myers to follow some of her interests.

One of the biggest annoyances was not being able to try new hobbies. ‘Everything seems to be £15–£20 a session in London, say for yoga or pilates, so I felt even though I earned a pretty good wage, my life was forced 55 to be a bit small. Here classes are cheaper – and less busy – so I can try some new things.’

Dan Wilson Craw, director of campaign group Generation Rent, says this trend highlights the difficulties of living in London. ‘It seems like there are more pressures on people in their 20s and 30s ... it’s challenging ... there’s so much struggle with housing costs.’

Wilson Craw also believes the wave of 20-somethings leaving London reflects changes in the economy. ‘Certainly, places like Manchester are seeing improvements in the job markets which means relocating is more viable,’ he adds. ‘It also reflects wider patterns, such as people being able to 65 work remotely and businesses moving to those areas as they realise it’s more cost effective to have an office up north.’

**'Meet the 20-somethings priced out of London, leaving for a new life elsewhere',  
by Suzanne Bearn, *The Guardian*.**

**Savills:** a London-based estate agent (seller of property)

**Rightmove:** an online site where flats and houses are advertised for rent or sale

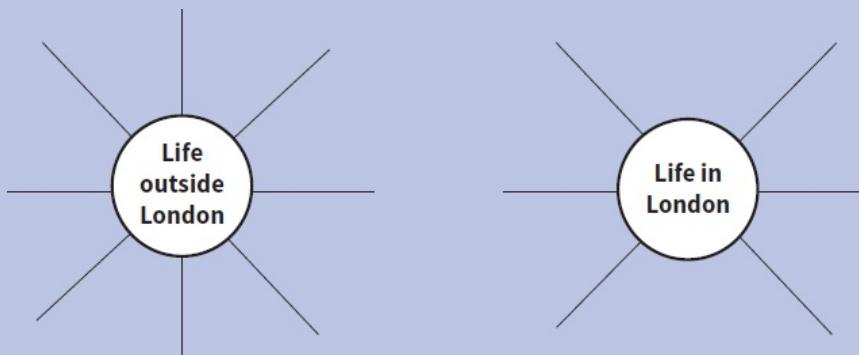
**Upped sticks:** informal phrase meaning 'to move'

### ACTIVITY 1

Working independently, create two mind maps to record your ideas about this article.

- 1 In the left-hand mind map, add ideas about the picture painted of life outside London (look at paragraphs 1, 2, 6, 10, 11 and 12).

In the right-hand mind map, add ideas about the problems young people face living in London (look at paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10).



Share your ideas with a partner so that you have an accurate, overall sense of the text. You will be using this information in the next unit, so keep your notes close to hand!

Here are some of the points which one student made after reading the text.

Points against London	Language use	Meaning or interpretation
Young people are: 'fed up of extortionate rents'	Informal phrase 'fed up'	Makes writer seem on the same level as the young people.
	Highly charged adjective – 'extortionate'	'Extortion' is a crime – here it is used to suggest how punishing high rents are.
Cost of going out too high: '...no one I knew was going out as they couldn't afford to,'	Direct speech; use of first-person account	Provides first-hand – and therefore trustworthy – personal evidence of the problem.
Only for the rich: 'I felt like it was merely a playground for the rich'		
Kept people out: 'I didn't really belong there'		
Leisure costs too high: '...even though I earned a pretty good wage, my life was forced to be a bit small.'		

### ACTIVITY 2

Complete a copy of the student's table. Comment on the particular language choices made by the writer in the article, and on the mood or effect they create. Add at least one row of your own.

## Drawing conclusions

The information you select from the text (e.g. specific words and phrases, particular language usages) will inform both your comparative commentary and the directed task. Whilst you will not have space to refer to every comment made in the original article, you will need to grasp the core points in order to either agree with them, develop them, or refute them.

How would you sum up the overall experience presented of young people living in London? Think about how particular words or phrases could concisely describe how they feel. For example, which of the following adjectives from the following word bank could you use?

*excluded alien cruel interesting tiring dull boring  
isolating expensive exciting demanding envious*

### ACTIVITY 3

Look at how the same student has ‘interrogated’ other phrases from the text about the positive benefits of moving elsewhere. Make a copy of the following table. Complete row 3 and add any further positive points/language you can find from the text.

Positive benefits of moving elsewhere	Language use	Effect
<i>‘...bucking the tradition of enjoying big city life during their younger years...’</i>	Phrase: ‘bucking the tradition’, meaning to go against convention, choose a different path	Suggests such young people are trail-blazers, unafraid to think for themselves rather than follow the crowd.
<i>‘...moving to cheaper areas where they can work remotely...’</i>	Phrase: ‘work remotely’, meaning to still be employed by the same company but work at home or away from the office	Makes process sound professional and achievable without damaging career.
<i>‘..while enjoying lunchtime swims and midweek days off.’</i>	Phrase – ‘enjoying lunchtime swims’, meaning ...	

### KEY CONCEPT

#### Meaning and style

A directed writing response does not require you to analyse the *style* of the text, but you should identify any key points that you wish to counter in your response.

Counter-arguments (arguments that give an opposite viewpoint) are a key element when arguing a particular point of view. These will help make your own writing convincing and match the required style. In order to do this, you should highlight the key points from the original text so that you can reference them quickly and efficiently.

Here is one student’s list of key points that the writer makes in the article against living in London. Remember, your response is only going to be 150–200 words long, so you are unlikely to address more than five to six points (maximum).

#### Against living in London

- 1) High rents (compared to other towns and cities)

- 2) No one can afford to go out, pursue leisure activities
- 3) Quieter, more peaceful life elsewhere
- 4) Young people feel they don't belong – it's for the rich
- 5) Working remotely means people can live anywhere

You will now need to think of some positive reasons for young people to remain in London. Ideally, try to choose ones that will *counter* the points above. Bear in mind, too, that you will be writing from the point of view of an employer – they will have a particular perspective on things.

#### ACTIVITY 4

Here are some arguments for young people remaining in London. Add other points of your own.

*Leisure activities don't have to cost much – try jogging or cycling  
London has lots of beautiful parks and squares which are peaceful  
Not all jobs can be done remotely – it's good to mix and meet others  
You can earn higher wages in London  
You need to be in a big city for your career – to work with top-end companies  
London has so much to offer: free art galleries and museums, famous monuments.*

Now, choose the five to six points you will use in your letter.

With a partner, decide which points:

- directly counter the arguments provided in the article
- might be made by an employer.

## Planning your response

Your letter should be 150–200 words long. Make sure you are familiar with all the key features that are found in a letter, as shown here. Follow the structure of this model text and include these features in your response. Remember that you will also be comparing form/structure so you will need to be clear how your approach differs from the original.

		Name and address of sender Date
Welcome / salutation / Dear...		
Brief concise introduction		
Body paragraphs – perhaps two at most		
Concise, concluding paragraph		
[Sign off] Yours sincerely/Regards		

### ACTIVITY 5

Copy out the following writing frame and write into it the key points you would make, and what you would include in the main body paragraphs and conclusion. For example, the two body paragraphs could deal with slightly different overall focuses.

*Dear [name of reporter]  
Intro: mention article and my view  
Para 1:  
Para 2:  
Conclusion:  
Yours*

**Reflection:** What skills have you had to use in completing the task in Activity 5? Think about the process of reading the text and what you had to do to complete the writing frame.

## Skills practice

Now you can practise the skills you have learned on another text and directed question. You will have already seen this task in [Unit 3.1](#) – this time you will get to see the question *and* the text.

Read the question and text first and then answer the questions that follow it.

The following text by Bibi Lynch consists of part of an article from the online edition of a newspaper. The article is about how a single woman who has no children feels when she hears about mothers complaining about their lives.

- a Imagine you are an advice columnist (someone who gives professional advice to people who have problems). Write a blog for

a website aimed at young people in which you discuss the issues raised and give balanced advice about what it is like to be a parent. Write 150–200 words.

(10 marks)

Enough. Enough already. I don't want to hear any more. I am sick of reading about mums feeling desolate, how hard motherhood is ... The joy around Victoria Beckham having a girl after three boys was as ridiculous as her heels. Yes, her life making frocks in LA with David and three gorgeous

5 boys must have been torture before.

I don't want to mum-bash, but I do want mums to open their eyes and see what they have. At the risk of being lynched – give it a break. Give me a break. Give women like me, who wanted children but don't have them, a break. You mums do not know how blessed you are – so please just be happy

10 and quit complaining. You got the prize. You have the child. Rejoice.

Of course being a mum has its difficulties – but they are finite and surmountable. If you haven't had a child, that devastating problem can never be solved. So raising a child is expensive? So is being single and living alone. You are tired and shattered? That must be horrible – but that feeling

15 can be short-term and the pros (snuggling up to your warm, chubby baby) surely outweigh that particular con? (And let me tell you, the emotional upset of crying congratulations down the phone when your sister nervously tells you she is pregnant, just days after you've been told you most probably never will be, can be exhausting too.)

20 You feel you have lost your identity? Well, I'd say you've gained a better one. And the women who write 'mum' on their Twitter and Facebook bios know that too. Mothers are treated as superior citizens. Pavements and public transport become yours (I was once asked to get off a bus so a woman with a pram could get on, but let's not re-enact that ugly scene here) and the

25 world can't get enough of you.

From every government reaching out to 'hard-working families' – the implication being that singles or the childless (or both) don't work hard or have problems or need help (ever read a headline of how single people or the childless fared in a **budget**, say?) – to tragic news reports that will always

30 mention the loss of a mother before the loss of her equally accomplished no-kids friend, you, the mother, are worth more than childless me.

Mums are the luckiest people on earth. Yes, I don't have the difficulty of combining child-rearing and a career (which could be seen as having the best of both worlds?) but do you really think I'll be on my deathbed

35 whispering 'Remember me' to the boss who gave me a promotion because I worked 24/7 for her?

Yes, some mums have to deal with postnatal depression. I know how debilitating and horrendous that is. But I would say depression is depression – and I don't know that the postnatal variety (even loaded with the guilt of

40 not bonding with your child) is any less hideous than the no-natal kind.

[...]

It is overwhelming to know that my legacy begins and ends with me. So no 'family gathering' photographs of me and mine with my siblings and theirs; no proudly watching my kid grow up; no natural place in life's cycle.

- 45 You, mums, have created the next generation. A new wonderful lineage – of children and probably grandchildren – who are yours and you are theirs. I think that would make me very happy.

**'Mothers, stop moaning!', by Bibi Lynch, *The Guardian*.**

**budget:** the UK government's annual financial plans



Look again at the task (it was 'decoded' for you in [Unit 3.1](#)) and make sure you are clear about what is required in your own writing. Then use this to help shape your response.

### ACTIVITY 6

Bearing in mind the requirements of the task, work through the article making a note of:

- the key points made by the writer
- particular uses of form, structure and language, including lexical choices or imagery, and what might be inferred from them.

You could use a table like the one in [Activity 3](#) where you list points and explain the language use and the effect, or a briefer summative list of key points. However, bear in mind that you will also have to write later about the style of the text, too, so just noting down the key points won't take you that far.

### ACTIVITY 7

Once you have your key points from the text, you will need to think of more balanced points to use in the blog. This might mean restating some of Bibi Lynch's points but also adding some of your own.

Write down five to six points you could use in your advice blog. You could start:

*Parenthood can be tough – there's a lot to do – especially if you work as well ...*

Now, consider how they would fit into a blog post:

- What would your title be?
- What information would come first?
- What would you put in later sections?
- Would you need headings?

Look back at [Unit 2.1](#) to remind yourself of the key points about writing blogs.

You will now have a clear plan for the first part of your response. In the next unit you will take this one step

further and write your response in full.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can read a text and distil the key information I need for my own response		
I can use the information from the text to shape and plan my response		

## **Unit 3.3**

# **Matching tone to purpose and audience**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to write a response in a specific form for a particular purpose and audience (AO2)
- learn how to match your tone and form to the purpose and audience (AO2)
- learn how to use appropriate language techniques to create effects (AO2).

### **Before you start**

Think about what you have learned about the following terms related to form and language. What do they mean, and how do they affect what you write?

- 1 Formal and informal language**
- 2 First-, second- and third- person narrative point of view**
- 3 The use of *synonyms* to create nuances of meaning**
- 4 The *conventions* used when writing letters.**

Look back to [Unit 1.1](#) for more about tone and synonyms.

## Different texts for different purposes

Writing a response in a different style and form requires you to think quickly about how your new text will look. Your own writing may be similar to the original text in terms of formal layout, but it may be very different in terms of its purpose and the use of language.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Audience** – It might not seem obvious why you should change what you say to suit your readers or audience, but think for a moment about a situation where you wanted to borrow some money. Would you speak in the same way to a friend as you would to a teacher or an adult, such as the manager of a bank? You might even change your approach if you were asking different friends, each with different outlooks or personalities. Whether you are communicating with people close to you or those in authority you need to adapt your *tone* through the lexical choices you make or particular grammatical constructions you use (e.g. short versus full sentences).

For example, look at each of these alternative texts you could write based on the article 'Meet the 20-somethings priced out of London, leaving for a new life elsewhere' in [Unit 3.2](#).

- An advert in a magazine for young professionals which promotes the benefits of living in London.
- A speech by a young person who lives outside London presented to his/her classmates giving reasons why he/she would like to move to London to work or study.
- A letter from an older person to the writer of the article explaining why life outside a big city isn't as good as it is portrayed in the article.

### ACTIVITY 1

For each of these text ideas, note down:

- the form, the audience and the purpose of the text
- which is most different in form and structure (i.e. how the text is presented and organised) from the original article
- which is most different in role/writer (from the article).

## Tone and register

When considering the role and purpose for your text, it is important to choose the appropriate tone and **register** to make your writing effective. For example, when tackling [Activity 5](#) in [Unit 3.2](#) related to living in London, you are required to write a letter to the reporter from the point of view of an employer who feels the article is unfair.

The tone you use would be personal, but not too informal – remember, this is a professional person writing to someone they do not know. The purpose is to persuade the author that young people need not move away from London.

In your text, you should use:

- the first person
- Standard English and lexis, rather than informal abbreviated forms or phrasing
- persuasive techniques, such as use of evidence, countering arguments – perhaps even emotive vocabulary.

### ACTIVITY 2

In pairs, take turns to play the role of the employer who is writing the letter and a young person considering leaving London. Use some of the arguments from [Unit 3.2](#) and try to persuade each other that ‘your’ view is best.

## Putting arguments into writing

Your role play should have enabled you to marshal the arguments you wish to make, and also to begin to get a sense of how the tone of your writing should sound (the employer and the young person would have expressed their views in different ways).

Now, read the following response by one student to the task at the beginning of [Unit 3.2](#) (a letter from an employer to the author of the article about leaving London), and then answer the questions that follow it.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Dear Ms Bearne,

I read your article about young people leaving London and feel, as an employer, that I need to provide an alternative perspective on the issues.

Firstly, I believe that whilst London is undeniably expensive, there are many ways young people can manage to have fulfilling lives. The wide range of free cultural events, access to fascinating galleries and museums – and the verdant parks – cost little or nothing. Moreover, the huge variety of experiences on offer means young professionals can pick and choose those which fit within their budget.

In addition, I feel that by leaving London young people will exclude themselves from the job opportunities and higher wages offered by large, prestigious companies, mostly based in the capital. Besides, not everyone can work remotely: meeting face to face with colleagues is vitally important in business. In the digital age, one can underestimate the importance of the personal touch.

In conclusion, I urge young people to think hard before they choose to leave. London is a rich, diverse community which has a lot to offer. We need them, and they need London.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Smith



**Feeding swans in Hyde Park, London.**

### ACTIVITY 3

Re-read the student response carefully. Using either a copy of the text or making notes under the following bullets, identify where in the text (it may be more than one place) the student has:

- given (at least) five reasons why young people should stay in London
- tackled the counter-argument before giving their view
- used the first person followed by verbs expressing belief or opinion or calling readers to act
- used connective words or phrases to link key points or paragraphs
- used a variety of shorter and longer sentences for explanation or impact
- used positive or negative adjectives to convey key points.

### ACTIVITY 4

In what respect has the student's response matched the conventions of the required form (a letter)? Think about:

- specific formal features you would expect to see in a letter (look back to [Unit 3.2](#) to remind yourself about these)
- the structure of the text: how the paragraphs are organised, the information in each paragraph, and features such as use of tenses.

## Applying your skills to a different form

In Unit 3.2 you read an article about parenthood. Here is a reminder of the question that accompanied it:

Imagine you are an advice columnist (someone who gives professional advice to people who have problems). Write a blog for a website aimed at young people in which you discuss the issues raised and give balanced advice about what it is like to be a parent. Write 150–200 words.

Check back over the plan you made for the question in Unit 3.2. Now, consider the tone and register of your response. Remember:

- It is written by a professional guidance adviser/counsellor.
- It needs to be balanced and fair in its approach.
- It will be written as a blog, but on a website that young people will read.

### ACTIVITY 5

With a partner, discuss the following questions:

- 1 What narrative point of view will you use for writing your blog? For example, how formal or informal will it be?
- 2 Will its tone be strongly persuasive or more detached and reflective, or will it adopt another tone?
- 3 What will this mean for the sorts of phrases and sentences you use? For example, will it be very forceful (e.g. 'I urge you...'), or more subtle, using **modal** forms (e.g. 'You might want to consider...', 'It seems...').

#### ••• THINK LIKE ... AN ADVICE COLUMNIST

What kinds of problems do young people worry about? List four to five of the most common and share with a partner. Who would be best suited to help with these issues? Another young person, a member of the family, an older adult in authority, or someone else?

Once you have considered the issues, decide what would be the best form of response. Traditionally advice columnists responded to anonymous letters in a magazine or newspaper column, for instance, but is this the best way?

### Different tones

Choosing the right tone to match the form, purpose and audience of the blog you are going to write is all-important. Here are three passages from different blogs on the topic of being single and parenthood'. Think about how they differ in style – in particular, consider the lexis used, the grammatical construction and the use of punctuation.

#### Passage 1

Single people without kids have no idea! They have it sooo easy! All that free time – no one getting under your feet. Hey – I'm ... like ... envious. What a life!!

#### Passage 2

In 2017 there were 19.0 million families in the UK, a 15% increase from 16.6 million in 1996.

With 12.9 million families, the married or civil partner couple family remains the most common in 2017, although other, less traditional structures are growing rapidly.

### Passage 3

Whatever your family background, everyone faces challenges. While it is true that loneliness can be a problem for single people, you might think about how mothers and fathers can feel lonely too – especially when everyone lavishes attention on the child.



### ACTIVITY 6

With a partner or in a small group, discuss these three extracts and decide:

- 1 which of the three, if any, would be best suited to the style of blog you have to write in response to the task
- 2 what makes your choice the most suitable.

Now, using the plan you made at the end of [Unit 3.2](#), write your blog in response to the set task. Remember that you should:

- include five to six main points (drawn from or responding to the article by Bibi Lynch)
- write 150–200 words, so, a maximum of three sections or paragraphs
- follow the conventions of a blog
- write in an appropriate tone.

**Reflection:** Once you have written your blog for Activity 6, swap answers with a partner. How well have they followed the criteria for a good answer, as outlined in Question 2 of the activity? What could they do to improve their answer? When your partner has given you their feedback on your answer, look at any areas that you could improve, and rewrite your answer to make it more effective.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

Confidence level | Revisited?

I can identify the tone and register required for a particular audience and purpose		
I can apply the skills relating to tone and register to my own written responses		

## **Unit 3.4**

# **Comparing form, structure and language**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn to identify differences in form, structure and language between two texts on the same topic (AO1)
- write a comparative response to explain the differences you have identified (AO3).

### **Before you start**

Can you think of any other occasions when you have been asked to compare or contrast different texts, either in English studies or other subjects?

- 1 What sorts of features were you looking for?
- 2 What system or method did you use for identifying the similarities and differences between the two texts?

## Lexis for comparison

It is important that when you compare elements of different texts you are able to draw on lexis which will allow you to do so effectively. This forms part of the evaluative lexis mentioned in earlier units. For example:

For comparison	For difference or contrast
in the same way	however
both	yet
similarly	in contrast
likewise	on the one hand/on the other hand
as well as	although/even though
the same as	unlike
have in common	whereas/while
so too	on the contrary

These are not entirely interchangeable and how you use them will depend on the context and **syntax** of the sentence. For example:

- ✓ *Both* texts open with an appeal to the reader. *However*, my text addresses a wider, global audience.
- ✗ *Likewise* texts open with an appeal to the reader, *unlike* my text addresses a wider global audience.
- ✓ The first text opens with an appeal to the reader; *likewise* mine does the same. *Unlike* the first text, mine addresses a wider global audience.

### ACTIVITY 1

With a partner, use appropriate words or phrases from the word bank on page 102 to complete these sentences:

- a ..... *my text has a direct, immediate style, the original article is more reflective and thoughtful.*
- b *The original article uses vivid imagery to describe city life.*  
....., my version does, too.
- c *Structurally, the ending of the letter is stiff and formal.*  
..... my blog has an informal, chatty tone.

## The features of a good comparative response

A good comparative response should be structured carefully. This helps the reader to follow your explanations, and clearly see how you have addressed the different elements of the two texts you are comparing. An effective comparative response should therefore:

- 1 Provide a succinct overview of both pieces of writing. This means having a sense of the overall tone, approach and style of the two texts, not just the ability to list individual snippets of text and comment on them.
- 2 Comment on the different forms and styles of both passages. This means being able to identify the particular differences and express those differing qualities clearly and analytically, rather than in vague or unspecific ways.
- 3 Explain the effects of different linguistic and structural features. This means not merely identifying differences but being able to explain how they affect the tone and purpose of the text in question, or how they create a particular impact on the reader.
- 4 Refer precisely to evidence or quotation from each text. This means being able to select the relevant words, phrases or references to longer ‘chunks’ of text to support the points you make.

Read the following comparison, written by a student, of the article ‘Meet the 20-somethings priced out of London, leaving for a new life elsewhere’ in [Unit 3.2](#), and the letter written in response, in [Unit 3.3 \(Activity 1\)](#). The first part of the response has been annotated to show some of the techniques used by the student. Consider how this first part meets the four criteria for an effective comparative response, as listed earlier in the unit.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The form of the original text is an article in which the reporter canvasses the views of young Londoners, such as ‘Sam’ and ‘Violet’ about living in the city, and why they want to leave.

The text begins with the convention of evoking a picture before explaining its relevance to the main topic. Here, this is a ‘lengthy queue’ with an unnamed person ‘daydreaming’ of a better life elsewhere and makes clear that although the writer does not refer to her own experience she is broadly supportive of the idea that moving out of London is a good idea. This is further emphasised by the dream-like snapshots of this new quieter life – with people running their own ‘coffee shop’ or an ‘antique shop’ with ‘vintage classics’.

The article also includes first-hand direct speech from both Sam and Violet, giving the idea of departure authenticity. Violet uses emotive imagery, such as describing London as a ‘playground for the rich’, suggesting young people are pawns in a greater game, while Sam comments positively on his new life with its ‘fresh air’ and ‘quietness.’

The sense that the article is broadly in agreement with the interviewees is emphasised by the use of statistical data to back up the opinions expressed, and by the inclusion at the end of ‘expert testimony’ from Dan Wilson Craw, a campaigner on the issue.

In contrast, the letter from the employer is more personal, expressed throughout in the first person, with no question as to where her sympathies lie. However, the overall tone is authoritative and largely formal, conveying a sense of professionalism.

It begins by setting out the terms of the letter – what it is in response to – and goes on to sell the idea of London by countering arguments from the text: yes, it is ‘undeniably expensive’ but there are many free events. The writer uses a pattern of three ideas to emphasise her point: ‘free cultural events’, ‘fascinating galleries’ and ‘verdant parks’.

The letter also differs from the article in being set out logically as a series of arguments: ‘firstly’, ‘in addition’ and so on. There is also a sense that sentences are being crafted for maximum impact, and the use of ‘we’ and

‘you’, directed to young people, is designed to engage the reader. The final short sentence is a pithy summing up of the theme of the letter – with the repeated verb ‘need’ and inverted ‘you’ – both subject and object – stressing the key message.

**[1]** sets out concisely the overall purpose and focus of the original article

**[2]** comments on a structural convention of feature articles – starting with anecdotes or arresting imagery

**[3]** relevant quotation fluently embedded in the comparison

**[5]** comment on the narrative point of view of the reporter

## ACTIVITY 2

Now consider the response as a whole. In what ways does the whole text (rather than just the opening) meet the four criteria set out earlier? Work with a partner to:

- read through the response and make notes listing where each point has been achieved
- identify any additional points the student could have made about the differences in form, structure and language between the two texts
- identify where additional quotations or evidence could have been included.

## Structuring your comparative response

The example student response works well, not just because of the particular elements the student has chosen to include and comment on, but also because the comparative response is set out in a clear, fluent and logical way which is easy for the reader to follow.

However, there are various ways of structuring such a response: three of these are listed here. In each case there are advantages and disadvantages to using each one, and it will be for you to decide which response you feel most comfortable adopting.

### Option A: 'half and half'

The example response uses the following structure to set out the comparison, tackling the first text in one go before moving on to the second.

Paragraph	Focus
1	Sums up overall approach of original article
2	First part of article – conventions of article
3	Deals with next part of article – interviewees Violet and Sam, focus on language
4	Comments on notable form and structure (e.g. how use of statistical data is introduced)
5	Moves on to second text – contrasts second text's language and conventions with the first and gives overall approach
6	Explains first part of second text – the letter, structural use of counter-arguments and text patterns
7	Comments on form and structural features, such as discourse markers, use of sentence variety and syntax in second text

- Advantages: good in terms of clarity, very easy to follow.
- Disadvantages: may restrict you from making direct comparisons between specific language uses or conventions.

### Option B: comparing texts within paragraphs

An alternative structure would be to deal with particular elements of language and style – moving between each text as you proceed. In this case, the structure would look more like this:

Paragraph	Focus
1	Sums up overall focus of both articles, perhaps suggesting the key ways in which they are similar/different
2	Deals with the use of conventions: those from an article; those from a letter – as shown in the text
3	Explores use of language: lexis or phrases to indicate narrative point of view in both texts
4	Explores the form and structure of both texts and how they operate in each
5	Explores additional structural or linguistic devices in both texts

- Advantages: an effective approach for drawing close attention to details and making interesting, thoughtful connections.
- Disadvantages: might be quite challenging in terms of following ideas and making sure you have covered everything. Also, paragraphs could become over-long and unwieldy.

### Option C: switching between texts through alternate paragraphs

You could decide on writing a greater number of paragraphs, swapping between texts as you go along. For example:

Paragraph	Focus
1	As above in A or B
2	Use of conventions in article
3	Use of conventions in letter

4	Use of language/lexis in article
5	Use of language/lexis in letter
6	Use of form/structure in article
7	Use of form/structure in letter
8	Use of other structural or linguistic devices in article
9	Use of other structural or linguistic devices in letter

- Advantages: this would certainly be clear, and you would cover a great deal of material.
- Disadvantages: you may end up writing more than you need to (there may be relatively little to say about language devices in one text, so why waste a whole paragraph on it?). Also, the nature of each paragraph being like a ping-pong bat switching focus back and forth might be rather mechanical and repetitive.

**Reflection:** Which of the three structural approaches to comparison would you feel most comfortable with? Consider these questions:

- 1 Which approach would suit your writing style and abilities?
- 2 Would the style of comparison depend on the texts? (For example, is it better to use Options B or C when there are very clearly defined differences between the texts, or would Option A be more suitable? If you are writing about a text with a clearly defined structure, like a letter, does that make it easier to use Option A with its simple approach?)

You could make time to try out different ways of comparing texts as a practice and see which approach suits you best.

## Practising a comparative response

The following is a student's response to this question, based on the article 'Meet the 20-somethings priced out of London, leaving for a new life elsewhere' in [Unit 3.2](#).

Imagine you have been asked to produce the text of an advert in a magazine for young professionals which promotes the benefits of living in London. Write the text using 150–200 words.

(10 marks)

### STUDENT RESPONSE

#### FREE YOUR MIND IN LONDON!

London is the nation's beating heart, its lifeblood, its pulse. But it's more, much more than that.

Imagine the beautiful parks; from rolling Richmond Park to elegant St James's Park. Did you know that approximately 45% of London is green space?

Imagine the wonderful galleries, exhibitions and museums. Did you know that most are free to enter? Yes, you heard correctly – free!

Imagine the people: from every city, every nation, every continent. Did you know that there are almost 300 different languages spoken across the city?

Imagine the social life: the free festivals, the picnics in the park, the long conversations over coffees.

Now – imagine yourself living here ...

It doesn't have to be a dream.

There is a world of opportunities here. You can be who you want to be: from city slicker to urban artist; from software designer to soft toy seller; from train driver to plane pilot, there's a job or business waiting just for you.

London is a hub for start-ups, a springboard for trendsetters, and a hive for collaboration. London is not one city, but many cities. And you can have them all.

London welcomes you with open arms.

Feel its force and be part of the community that gives it life.

### KEY CONCEPT

#### Diversity

Texts exist in many different forms and styles, depending on their purpose.

Working with a partner, make some quick notes on the particular form, structure and language in this sample response. Comment on the following:

- the overall tone/mood created
- particular noteworthy use of lexis or grammatical patterns
- particular formal conventions which are typical of advertisements
- any structural or linguistic devices that you can identify.

### ACTIVITY 3

Working on your own, complete the following paragraph (based on the Option B model) which compares elements of the structure of the original article with the advert.

*While both texts begin with an imperative – ‘Meet’ and ‘Free’ – the advert’s heading is much ..... In addition, by using the possessive pronoun ‘your’ it gives the impression that .....*

*Overall, the opening to the advert is ..... while the article’s is more .....*

### ACTIVITY 4

Now, practise structuring some new ideas. Imagine you wish to comment on further language or structural uses in the two texts (the original article in [Unit 3.2](#) about moving out of London and the ‘Free your mind in London!’ advertisement).

- 1 Write **one** paragraph in which you combine comments about how both writers use sentence patterns and variety.
- 2 Write **two** related paragraphs on the use of idiom and/or imagery in the two texts. In the first paragraph, comment on the original article; in the second, comment on the advertisement.
- 3 When you have completed your writing, compare your work with that of another class member.

### ACTIVITY 5

Now you are going to compare the Bibi Lynch article in [Unit 3.2](#) with your own response to it from [Unit 3.3](#). You will be responding to the following question:

Compare your blog with the original article, analysing the form, structure and language.

**(15 marks)**

Before you start writing your response, you should check back to:

- the notes you made on Bibi Lynch’s article (see [Activity 6](#) in [Unit 3.2](#))
- your own written response (see [Activity 6](#) in [Unit 3.3](#)).

Then, write your comparative response. Remember to:

- decide on the structure you will use to write your comparison (either Option A, B or C, as outlined earlier in this unit)
- make links between the two texts clearly and logically.

**Reflection:** In pairs, compare your responses. Discuss the following points:

- a Which of the three options did you each choose to structure your responses? Explain the reasons for your choice. On reflection, do you think you chose the best option?
- b Use the information in this unit to help you evaluate how effectively you made links between the two texts.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you

score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I can select the relevant points for an effective comparison of two texts		
I can structure a comparison clearly and logically		

## **Unit 3.5**

# **Practice and self-assessment**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- apply the skills you have learned to an exam-style directed response task (AO1, AO2)
- apply the skills you have learned to an exam-style comparison response (AO1, AO3).

### **Before you start**

What key skills will you need when tackling the directed writing response task and the comparison task? Think about:

- 1 how you will approach the reading of the given text
- 2 what you will look for in terms of key ideas, form, structure and language
- 3 how you will approach planning and structuring a response
- 4 how you will approach comparing your text and the given text.

## Evaluating your level

Before you begin the sequence of work in this unit, it will be useful for you to make your own assessment about your progress so far. The following table gives a broad indication of the features of competent and excellent responses. Look at the table, and make a judgement about your current attainment. Bear in mind that you may not be squarely in one column or the other, and may have certain 'excellent' features mixed with slightly weaker ones.

	<b>Competent response</b>	<b>Excellent response</b>
Directed response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reasonable understanding of audience, task and purpose</li><li>Reasonable attempt at using conventions with some understanding of effects created</li><li>Generally clear reworking of the original material, with mostly accurate expression</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Excellent grasp of audience, task and purpose</li><li>Highly effective use of conventions with an understanding of effects created</li><li>Fluent and highly accurate reworking of given material</li></ul>
Comparison task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Steady, generally well-focused awareness of form, structure and language in both texts</li><li>Clear comments on texts if not always well developed</li><li>Some relevant references to the texts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Very detailed and informed awareness of form, structure and language in both texts</li><li>Very clear focus on effects created</li><li>Very well selected and close references to the text(s)</li></ul>

## **Understanding the task**

Remember that you cannot successfully respond to a set task until you have established what it requires.

Read the following task.

The following text is an article about a family of coffee drinkers and the cost of coffee.

- a** Imagine you are one of the author's children. Write a diary entry describing your mother's reactions and how you feel about it.  
Write between 150-200 words.

**(10 marks)**

- b** Compare your diary entry with the article, analysing form, structure and language.

**(15 marks)**

## Planning and writing your response

### Step 1

Make notes which show you have understood the requirements. Jot down:

- the key words of the task
- any initial thoughts about the structures, conventions or language devices you will need to use in your writing for task **a**.

Make sure you know what you are looking for as you read the text. Remember, the task will direct you to the features you need to consider.

### Step 2

Now read the following article, and make notes to help you with your responses to parts **a** and **b** of the task. Bear in mind the following points:

- You will be commenting on form, structure and language in part **b**, so remember to make notes on this to use for this part of the task.
- Identify four to five key points (these could be to do with your mother's behaviour, your feelings, your actions) that you may wish to respond to or refer to in your diary entry.

#### Making coffee is fraught with danger since my adult kids got in on the act

Coffee drinking is one of those habits that signifies adulthood, the flat white, cappuccino or espresso clutched in your hand a marker of being a grownup at last. So, now that all my children are adult enough to be coffee drinkers, technically they should have left home.

Except, of course, they haven't.

I have one coffee a day, at about 11am. The ritual is more special and precious to me because of its rarity. I like a medium-strength blend and make it in an Italian **macchinetta** on the stove, mixing it with hot oat milk and drinking it from my favourite mug.

But I am no longer the only one with the habit. As well as my partner, Ed, who is partial to an espresso, my four stay-at-home children are all coffee drinkers, including Zac, the youngest, who began to consume it in pint mugs while he was revising for his A Levels. The coffee grains in the tin go down at an alarming rate. It is not just my children who drink it, it's their friends as well. When I wander into our kitchen, it feels as though I've accidentally entered a Starbucks: twenty-somethings are slumped around our table, sipping from giant cups, the scent of freshly brewed coffee overpowering the smell of pets. As I walk past, they don't even glance up. I feel like an anonymous customer.



Sharing my French roast with multitudes of **kidults** is not bringing out the best in me. I hate to be mean, but having a latte or a mocha out will cost you about £2.50. My eyes flit around the table and I do the calculations. These kids are saving themselves a fortune at the cafe of Mum and Dad. I notice that Lily's boyfriend, William, always makes a full pot, then drinks less than half of it. William obviously

likes his espresso strong. But I don't want to heat up his leftovers, so I ask him nicely if he would mind using the smaller pot, so there's no waste. 'OK,' he grunts. Problem sorted.

'Mum, you really upset William,' Lily tells me later. 'He's very sensitive.' He's not the only one, I think. Making coffee is fraught with difficulty and danger since my whole family got in on the act.

Arriving home after a wet walk, desperate for my 11am fix, I find that someone else has been using my macchinetta and is sitting comfortably in my kitchen, flicking through the paper while drinking out of my favourite cup, having used up the last of the milk. Standing forlorn in damp socks, my hair dripping into my eyes, I understand exactly how the three bears felt when they found **Goldilocks** asleep after she had eaten their porridge. I would like to let out a grizzly roar to express my rage and disappointment, but instead I force an English smile and make myself a cup of black English breakfast tea. Both the smile and the tea feel like poor substitutes.

Later, after discovering that we have gone through a whole bag of Kenyan medium roast in a matter of days, I complain to Megan. 'Perhaps,' I hiss, 'Claire could contribute a bag of coffee next time she comes to stay.'

**'Making coffee is fraught with danger since my adult kids got in on the act', by Saskia Sarginson, *The Guardian*.**

**macchinetta:** coffee maker or coffee machine, probably here a small steel pot rather like an upright kettle

**kidults:** a made-up word referring to young adults who still behave like children

**Goldilocks:** girl in a fairy story who sneaks into a cottage owned by three bears

### Step 3

Now read the following sample student response and accompanying comments which highlight its strong and weak points.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February

My mother was very annoying today. She seemed really upset about people using the coffee. Lots of my friends came round and drink coffee but I didn't understand what the big deal was. We've all got into coffee recently which is weird as I hated the stuff when I was a kid. So, it feels great to have all my friends there, chatting. When my mother comes in so what if we didn't all speak to her? It is my kitchen too.

But I suppose I do feel a bit guilty now: my friends do take over the kitchen a bit. Mum came in from a walk today and was all wet and my friend was using her cup. Maybe I should purchase another one? And I guess I could ask my friends to buy some coffee every now and then. Perhaps my mother wouldn't be so cross then. It is not just me anyway. It is my brothers and sisters.

[1] over formal – this is a personal diary

[2] clearly about what has just happened

[3] tenses not consistent

**[4]** personal feelings – relevant for a diary

**[5]** clear references to events from text

**[6]** this sounds as if it is a new point – new paragraph needed?

#### TEACHER COMMENT

This diary entry makes relevant reference to the original text. We get a good sense of the writer and her private thoughts, but occasionally the language is too formal, and there are some small errors with the use of tenses.

#### Step 4

Consider the teacher's comments and rewrite the response to improve it where necessary. Make sure that:

- the style is appropriate for a personal diary (thoughts now, looking back at recent events)
- the register is appropriate
- tenses are used consistently.

#### Step 5

Now read this sample response by the same student. This is based on the diary entry response and the original article. Look at the annotations and think about how this student response might be improved.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

The coffee article begins with a title that tells you about it. We know this is personal and about coffee as it says ‘my adult kids’ and ‘Making coffee’.

The first paragraph tells us about coffee but reveals that the writer’s kids have not left home, but in the second paragraph we find out how important coffee is to the writer. She uses adjectives like ‘special’, ‘precious’ and ‘favourite’ to say how much she likes having her 11 o’clock coffee.

The rest of the article shows how her children and her friends behave. So it starts with her comparing her kitchen to ‘Starbucks’ which is a coffee shop chain. This must make her feel like an outsider. She clearly doesn’t like this – ‘they don’t even glance up.’

She then describes the scene as if we are there. She uses the present tense – ‘I hate to be mean’ so it’s like we see it through her eyes. She also uses quite informal language too; ‘kids’ and the short sentence ‘Problem sorted.’

The article comes to life because there is not just description but also direct speech. The writer speaks to William, Lily and Megan. And it ends with a really good comparison which is funny when the writer says she is like one of the three bears who has found Goldilocks eating all their porridge.

My own text is the same in that it has personal feelings because it is a diary – I say ‘I do feel a bit guilty’. However it is from my perspective as a child of the writer so I am not so fussed about things.

Also my diary text is about what has happened that day – so I say ‘My mother was very annoying today’ – I use ‘today’ to make this clear. Also there is the date at the start.

I also use more informal expressions because I’m younger, like ‘the big

deal' and 'I guess'. Also diaries are used for thinking things over so I ask questions of myself like 'Maybe I should purchase another one?'. My diary also doesn't have fancy or funny comparisons – it's just me giving my views.

[1] reference to newspaper article convention

[2] language use – but does 'favourite' refer to the coffee itself?

[3] accurately picks up on the **analogy** with basic comment on the effect

[4] good quotation – but comment undeveloped

[5] convention of article

[6] comment on style but not developed

[7] comment on style and basic explanation of effect – 'comes to life'

[8] mentions final main analogy but rather basic analysis

## Step 6

Add your own annotations on a copy of the response, or make notes for the remaining part of the response. Now, read the following overall comment on the response and the task that follows.

### TEACHER COMMENT

The writer mentions several of the language devices and conventions used in the main article, and selects some useful quotations. However, explanation of these is rather undeveloped. There also needs to be greater exploration of the overall voice and tone of the writer, as well as the structural elements.

## Step 7

Rewrite the response. Consider these points for improvement:

- how clearly the overall voice and tone which is created by the writer and by the second text is explained.
- how much detail is given about the two main analogies used in the article.
- how reference to diary conventions and style could be developed more fully.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can evaluate sample responses to a text and identify strengths and weaknesses		

I can improve sample responses or my own work taking into account key areas for attention



## **Section 4**

### **Reading skills - text analysis**

# **Unit 4.1**

## **What is text analysis?**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn the core skills and approaches for analysing a given text (AO1 and AO3)
- learn how detailed analysis can lead to an overview of tone and effect (AO1 and AO3).

### **Before you start**

What things might you look for when reading a text closely? Think about the following, and give some examples of each:

- 1** features related to form or text type
- 2** structural features
- 3** language features.

## What is effective analysis?

When you analyse a text, you focus closely on specific elements of it to examine how they work, both on their own, but also in terms of how they link to the overall effect of the text. Thus, if you were reading about a storm, you might explore a powerful phrase such as 'army of clouds', but also explore whether this phrase contributed to a more general way in which a writer might want to describe a storm as a battle.

In text analysis, you will need to:

- 1 identify distinctive features of the text and link them to its purpose and context
- 2 comment on elements such as lexis, figurative language, word ordering, sentence structure and formality/informality of tone
- 3 explore how particular attitudes, bias or prejudice are conveyed by the writer
- 4 provide both an overview of the text as a whole, and specific commentary on individual elements.

Here is the opening paragraph from a student's analysis of a text.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The overall tone of the text is mournful and **elegiac** – a man remembering the death of a loved one some time ago. The opening two sentences are short simple ones in the present tense which express the finality of death. The first – ‘She’s gone’ – could be about any departure, but later in the text the reader learns that the past tense ‘gone’ refers to her passing away. Then, the text shifts in time with the phrase ‘It was on a morning...’ so that the reader begins to realise this is as much about memory as anything else.

**elegiac:** expressing sorrow, often for something or someone in the past

### ACTIVITY 1

Which of the skills of text analysis listed has the student demonstrated in this opening paragraph? For now, you do not need to have read the text the student is commenting on.

## Exploring text

Now read the passage that the student was commenting on in the sample analysis and some of the notes they made.

She's gone. She won't ever come back. It was on a morning, just before Christmas, when everything felt exposed because of the leafless trees. Black lines were etched against the blue and green; sky and field.

The hedgerows were threadbare, but jittery with the chirp and wiggle of small birds. There was a choir of calls. There was a tinkle of running water, like many tiny bells in an underground stream. Small life, I thought.

Further away, a copse was a jagged outcrop. A row of trees was a line of camels climbing a hill. Then higher up, on Mitchel's Fold, there was a cairn. Once, on a long walk stopping there, I had added a stone to the mound for her. I was far from home and that cairn was far from her grave in Lapeyrouse cemetery behind the blue stone wall between Ariapita Avenue and Tragarete Road in Port of Spain where the sun would be beating down and the palms would be caught by the breeze off the sea in the gulf.

**From 'That Touch of Blue', by Lawrence Scott.**



**cairn:** a pile of stones or rocks which can be a memorial or a landmark

**[1]** adjectives convey sense of winter, emptiness

**[2]** figurative language refers to trees, then the church/religious sounds

### ACTIVITY 2

Now that you have read the text and the student's analysis of it, discuss the following questions with a partner:

- 1 To what extent do you agree that the tone of the whole text is 'mournful and elegiac'? Are there any words or phrases in the second paragraph of Scott's text that support this idea? Does anything contradict it or make this piece less mournful?
- 2 What further uses of figurative language can you identify? Are there any repeated words or phrases? Look back to [Unit 1.3](#) to remind yourself about figurative language.
- 3 In what way does the description of weather and landscape at the end of the second paragraph contrast with the opening of the first paragraph?

The analysis you have completed is a good example of the level of detail you will need to apply to a given text. However, this is only effective if it allows you to:

- explain the shifting tones in a text (e.g. how a perspective or mood might change according to the language used)
- trace the text's chronology – the order in which things happen, such as shifts in time from present to past and back again.



## KEY CONCEPT

### Meaning and style

Feelings and attitudes may be conveyed when they are not directly expressed. For example, read these three student responses discussing the writer's attitude.

Student A

Well, the reader finds out the woman is buried 'far away' from the cairn where the writer 'added a stone'. Where she is buried is clearly a sunny place.

Student B

Yes, but this makes it sound all a bit unclear, like he's struggling with the memory. Was she dead when he laid the stone? The opening makes it sound like he's describing a specific time –'It was on a morning' but then he says 'Once ...' as if that's a different time.

Student C

Yeah, and then you get the bit at the end where he's far away – it sounds like another country because of the descriptions of the weather – the 'leafless trees' to begin with and then the sun 'beating down.' Perhaps Christmas is a time of year when you remember family and loved ones, so that's why he's writing this?

Which of the student responses seems to be making inferences from the form, language and structure of the text? What ideas do they suggest (which aren't stated explicitly)? Look back to [Unit 1.4](#) for more about inference.

What inferences would you make about the writer and his attitude or perspective on things? Remember, an inference is *not* guesswork, ideas must be supported by evidence from the text. For example, you cannot say 'She must have died in a plane crash because they might have travelled a long way from one place to another'. There is no mention of a 'plane', and even if there was, you would need to have a further reference to an accident or tragic event to surmise that this was the reason for the person's death.

## Summary of key points for an effective analysis

From this introduction to text analysis you should remember the following key points. Try to develop these skills as you work through the remaining units in this section.

### 1 Get the overview of the given text

- What overall view or sense of the text do you get from reading it?
- Is there a specific message or core theme?

### 2 Identify the distinctive features of form, structure and language

- What do you notice about the language used (e.g. voice and lexis)?
- What do you notice about the form, structure, patterns and chronology?

### 3 Focus on effects

- What specific effects do these choices of form, structure and language have?
- Why have these specific words, phrases or structures been chosen?
- Are they positive, negative, or neutral in their effect?

### 4 Explain, explore and evaluate

- What is the reader told explicitly?
- What is revealed or what can be inferred? (What do we have to guess about?)
- What valid interpretations can be made?

### 5 Check for changes or contrasts

- Is the text consistent in its message, or in the mood or tone conveyed?
- Are there shifts in tone or focus?
- If it does change, where does it happen structurally?
- Are there elements in the text that are ambiguous, or that contrast or contradict each other?



### THINK LIKE ... A LITERARY REVIEWER

Write a short review of a book or story you have read, focusing on the writer's style and the effects they create (rather than the plot or action). Consider how he or she has created voice or mood, or conveyed time and the sequence of events. You might try and use some of the five key points for an effective analysis listed here.

### ACTIVITY 3

Choose any text (whether one you are studying or not) and practise applying the five key points for an effective analysis. Make a note of those which you find the most difficult or most challenging to apply to your text, and track how you improve as you work through this section.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand what features of a text to look for when undertaking a close analysis		
I can use a range of different ways to analyse texts, and ensure that inference is supported by evidence		

## **Unit 4.2**

# **Understanding and analysing the text**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- identify the distinctive elements of form, structure and language in a text (AO1)
- analyse the specific features, exploring the effects created (AO3).

### **Before you start**

[Unit 4.1](#) suggested five key points to consider when making an effective text analysis. What can you recall about them?

- 1 ‘Get the overview’ – what is an ‘overview’ and why is it important?
- 2 ‘Identify the distinctive features’ – what does ‘distinctive’ mean? What should you be looking out for in terms of form, structure and language?
- 3 ‘Focus on effects’ – what kind of effects? Who are these aimed at?
- 4 ‘Explain, explore, evaluate’ – how are these skills slightly different in meaning?
- 5 ‘Check for changes or contrasts’ – what elements might you refer to?

## Getting an overview

Whilst these pointers are not a sequence of steps you should always follow, 'Get the overview' may well be the first thing you do when you read an unfamiliar text.

To do this, read each paragraph of the text in turn, and look for what is expressed directly. At this stage you are looking to form quick judgements about the main focus of the text, not looking for specific details or to make wider inferences.

For example, read the following passage from a newspaper article:

Visiting the Trevi Fountain these days can feel uncannily like attending a rock concert. Not just the Trevi Fountain, of course: front up to any of the world's most popular sights, from Buckingham Palace to **Old Faithful**, and you will find that your view is obscured by a forest of outstretched arms, brandishing camera phones instead of lighters.

The camera phone has become an unavoidable part of the travel experience, one that is both a blessing and a curse, depending on who is wielding it. You and I are sensible people who use our camera phones as a convenient tool for capturing essential memories of our travels. Those people over there, however, are irresponsible **narcissists** who are less interested in exploring a destination than in uploading endless images of themselves in exotic climes.

There are plenty of travellers ready to sound off on the topic of how the selfie circus is destroying the whole travel experience. Selfie snappers don't even bother setting foot inside monuments half the time, we are told; once they've snapped a suitably attractive shot, they simply move on to the next monument. Grand castles, mighty glaciers, ancient ruins and scenic villages – all are reduced to providing backdrops for 'panda travellers', the type that **shoots, tweets and leaves**.

Personally, I am sceptical of this argument, which tends to be long on **invective** and short on facts.

**From 'Selfies: are they ruining travel?', by Ute Junker, *The Courier*.**



**Old Faithful:** a geyser in Yellowstone Park, USA, which shoots out a spectacular plume of water into the air

**narcissists:** people who love themselves and how they look

**shoots, tweets and leaves:** a play on words – pandas 'eat shoots and leaves' ('shoots' and 'leaves' are nouns describing parts of a plant as well as verbs meaning to take a picture and depart from a place)

**invective:** insulting or abusive language

### ACTIVITY 1

How did you get on? Were you able to draw any conclusions about

the overall subject and viewpoint?

Re-read the first paragraph of the text. Now, check the topic sentence (which is often, but not always, the first sentence of the paragraph). Does it give the reader any clues?

Visiting *the Trevi Fountain* these days can feel uncannily like attending *a rock concert*.

This suggests the text might be something to do with tourism. The viewpoint could possibly be critical or negative – should a visit to a cultural landmark be like a rock concert? However, this sentence doesn't give us enough information.

Read the rest of the paragraph, and then answer the following questions:

- 1 Are there further references to tourist locations?
  - 2 What further reference does the writer make to visiting tourist sights being like attending a rock concert?

The first paragraph alone does not provide sufficient detail to make it clear what the article is about.

## ACTIVITY 2

Now read the second paragraph. You should be looking to see whether it:

- carries on the analogy of tourist sites being like rock concerts (in other words, a general complaint about how noisy and crowded they are)

or

- switches focus to another idea linked to rock concerts, or to something new altogether.

Work with a partner to discuss these questions:

- 1 Start with the topic sentence at the start of the paragraph. What idea does it pick up on from the first paragraph? What repeated word or idea is mentioned?
  - 2 Is the word or idea mentioned in any of the remaining sentences?
  - 3 How is the idea or focus established in the topic sentence changed or slightly altered again in the final sentence?

Now, write a sentence explaining what you think the article is broadly about based on the first two paragraphs.

**analogy:** a developed comparison between two separate ideas

## ACTIVITY 3

Now re-read the third paragraph. There are two core linked areas of language:

- a** Tourism/travel: 'travellers', 'travel experience', 'monument', 'castles', 'glaciers', 'ruins', 'villages'
  - b** Cameras/phones: 'selfie circus', 'selfie snappers', 'snapped a ... shot', 'backdrop', 'shoots', 'tweets'

Which of the following three overviews do you think best sums up the overall focus of the article?

- 1 How tourist destinations are being destroyed by overcrowding and bad behaviour.
  - 2 How popular and useful camera phones are and why people take them on trips.

How popular taking 'selfies' has become at tourist spots and  
**3** people's views about it.

What evidence can you find to support your answer?

Write an overview sentence which sums up the focus of the given passage. You could begin:

*This article explores ...*

## Distinctive language and structural features

Read the following passage taken from a short story by Anita Desai. As you do so, keep in mind what you have learned about forming an overview of a text. The opening part of the passage has a number of language or linguistic features highlighted.

All was prepared for the summer exodus: the trunks packed, the household wound down, wound up, ready to be abandoned to three months of withering heat and engulfing dust while its owners withdrew to their retreat in the mountains. The last few days were a little uncomfortable - so many of their clothes already packed away, so many of their books and papers bundled up and ready for the move. The house looked stark, with the silver put away, the vases emptied of flowers, the rugs and carpets rolled up; it was difficult to get through this stretch, delayed by one thing or another - a final visit to the dentist, last instructions to the stockbrokers, a nephew to be entertained on his way to Oxford. It was only the prospect of escape from the blinding heat that already hammered at the closed doors and windows, poured down on the roof and verandas, and withdrawal to the freshness and cool of the mountains which helped them to bear it. Sinking down on veranda chairs to sip lemonade from tall glasses, they sighed, 'Well, we'll soon be out of it.'

In that uncomfortable interlude, a postcard arrived - a cheap, yellow printed postcard that for some reason to do with his age, his generation, Raja still used. Sarla's hands began to tremble: news from Raja. In a quivering voice she asked for her spectacles. Ravi passed them to her and she peered through them to decipher the words as if they were a flight of migrating birds in the distance: Raja was in India, at his ashram in the south, Raja was going to be in Delhi next week, Raja expected to find her there. She would be there, wouldn't she? 'You won't desert me?'

After Ravi had made several appeals to her for information, for a sharing of the news, she lifted her face to him, grey and mottled, and said in a broken voice, 'Oh Ravi, Raja has come. He is in the south. He wants to visit us - next week.' It was only to be expected that Ravi's hands would fall upon the table, fall onto china and silverware, with a crash, making all rattle and jar. Raja was coming! Raja was to be amongst them again!



A great shiver ran through the house like a wind blowing that was not a wind so much as a stream of shining light, shimmering and undulating through the still, shadowy house, a radiant serpent, not without menace, some threat of danger. Whether it liked it or not, the house became the one chosen by Raja for a visitation, a house in waiting.

With her sari wrapped around her shoulders as if she were cold, Sarla

went about unlocking cupboards, taking out sheets, silver, table linen. Her own trunks, and Ravi's, had to be thrown open. What had been put away had to be taken out again. Ravi sat uncomfortably in the darkened drawing room, watching her go back and forth, his lips thin and tight, but his expression one of helplessness. Sometimes he dared to make things difficult for her, demanding a book or file he knew was at the very bottom of the trunk, pretending that it was indispensable, but when she performed the difficult task with every expression of weary martyrdom, he relented and asked, 'Are you all right, Sarla?' She refused to answer, her face was clenched in a tightly contained storm of emotion.

**From 'Royalty', by Anita Desai.**

**stockbroker:** someone who deals in stocks and shares on behalf of others

**ashram:** a spiritual sanctuary, such as a monastery, in India

**[1]** noun phrase indicates the scale of the event

**[2]** negative idea personifies the house

**[3]** strong imagery draws on senses

**[4]** third-person narration

**[5]** repeated adverb + adjective combination confirms scale of departure

**[6]** introduces change to story

#### ACTIVITY 4

An important part of the process for engaging with a text is to list words or phrases that can help you identify particular tones, voices, moods or qualities. You might also identify structural patterns within the text which contribute to these qualities, or which show how the text develops. Which of the annotations to this passage from 'Royalty':

- focus on lexical choices
- identify features of form or structure?

Work through the remainder of the text, listing words or phrases that:

- suggest a particular mood or attitude of the writer at that point in the passage
- suggest certain qualities or ideas
- seem to echo others in the extract
- seem to contrast with others in the extract
- you can use for your introduction.

When writing under timed conditions, you will probably need to limit your list of words and phrases to six or seven. For this activity, note down any that you can identify.

## Explaining the effects of writers' language choices

Writers like Desai often create language 'tapestries' that combine for an overall effect.

Here are some notes made by one student on some of the earlier annotations as well as some of their own:

Word/phrase/feature	Language or structural usage	Specific effect	Overall effect
'its owners' and 'their retreat'	Use of third person possessive pronouns	Distances reader from the owners - creates empathy with the 'abandoned' house	The text shifts in tone from the oppressive, drawn-out limbo of the waiting to the more empathetic, active drama of the news Sarla receives.
'Sarla's hands began to tremble: news from Raja.'	Simple sentence and physical detail about one person's response	Redirects reader's attention abruptly from the drawn-out departure to the 'up close and personal'	
'In a quivering voice ...'	Adverbial tells us more about...		
'... to decipher the words as if they were a flight of migrating birds in the distance.'	Imagery which ...		

### ACTIVITY 5

Working with a partner, complete the table for the final two entries. Try to explain:

- (Column 2) what the language/structural point is doing. (For example, is it a verb which explains an action? Is it a metaphor which creates a particular type of image?)
- (Column 3) what its effect is. (For example, how it makes the reader feel, or what tone/mood it creates, or how it changes or continues a particular focus)
- (Column 4) if the two details (the adverbial and the imagery) create an overall effect (for example, a more general picture of Sarla, or an overall tone or atmosphere) or develop the story.

Create a similar table of your own for at least six to seven of your own listed features from reading the passage. Once you have filled in the first three columns, you can look at your choices and answer these questions:

- 1 What conclusions about tone, voice, perspective, character and time can you draw from the examples of structure and language you have listed?
- 2 In what way does the earlier part of the passage, prior to the receipt of the postcard, contrast with the later part?

### ACTIVITY 6

What is the overall impact of the use of **modality** in the following lines?

*Raja was going to be in Delhi next week, Raja expected to find her there.*

expresses future certainty

*She would be there, wouldn't she? You won't desert me?*

expresses obligation      expresses obligation      a question expressed as a

certainty

Discuss the following possibilities with a partner or small group and select the one you think is most accurate:

- a** it tells us that Raja is definitely coming and that he hopes Sarla will meet him
- b** it tells us that Raja may come and that Sarla might want to meet him
- c** it tells us that Raja is definitely coming and expects Sarla to meet him.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Meaning and style

Anita Desai uses modality in her text in a number of different ways. At the start, there is a sense of certainty: 'Well, we'll soon be out of it.' This is an annual 'exodus'. Identify examples of how different modal forms are used to express new ideas in the passage.

## Analysing text conventions

Another important element to consider when analysing a text is its form and purpose. The text by Anita Desai that you read earlier in this unit is a narrative – the opening of a story. The openings of stories follow particular conventions.

### ACTIVITY 7

Which of these conventions of story openings can you identify in Desai's text? Make notes on these questions:

- 1 In what way does the writer evoke a time, setting or location, or introduce a situation?
- 2 Are particular characters introduced? If so, in what way?
- 3 How does the writer set in motion a plot? Through presenting a problem, obstacle, surprising event, arrival or departure?
- 4 How does the writer reveal information? A typical feature of the story form is to withhold information for effect – how, if at all, is this done here?

One student has written about the structure of the opening of Desai's story and how it sets the scene for what is to come.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The writer carefully sets the scene through the depiction of the soon to be 'abandoned' house and its weary inhabitants, offering the promise of the 'retreat' from the 'withering' heat, as if they have lost a battle with nature, and as if to stay would be to suffer both emotional and physical pain. By calling the departure an 'exodus', Desai calls up ideas of religious migration, giving the move weight and power. This, then, makes the later arrival of the postcard all the more significant.

[1] concisely sums up the situation, in particular the 'facts' of the opening

[2] offers an interpretation of the move, based on the language and what it means

[3] links forward, showing understanding of the opening section in the context of the passage's overall structure

### ACTIVITY 8

Write your own analysis paragraph, focusing on the convention of withholding information. You can choose any part of the text to comment on (for example, the opening reference to 'they', or what we find out – or don't find out – about other characters).

### ACTIVITY 9

This activity will give you the opportunity to apply what you have learned in this unit. Focusing on the final section of the passage, from 'A great shiver ...' to the end, write two paragraphs in which you

analyse the language and linguistic choices made by the writer.

- Begin your analysis with an overview statement of what the last two paragraphs focus on.
- Make links between any of the words or phrases you have selected for comment.
- Explain the effect of structural and language choices on the tone, mood or voice of the passage, and how and where the reader's view is directed.

**Reflection:** Once you have completed Activity 9, consider which parts of the response you found most challenging.

- 1 Evaluate how well you think you were able to:
  - analyse specific words and phrases
  - draw overall conclusions
  - express ideas and support them with evidence.
- 2 Make some notes on how well you think you did on each of these elements, and give at least one example of each.
- 3 Swap responses with a classmate. Evaluate each other's responses and discuss how far they agree with your own assessment.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can select key words, phrases and other language features in a text for analysis		
I can apply what I know of a text's form or structure to my analysis		
I can comment on the effect of these features and their overall impact on the tone, mood or development of the text		

## **Unit 4.3**

# **Planning your response**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to approach text analysis (AO1 and AO3)
- learn how to organise your analysis so that you address key elements of form, language and structure (AO3).

### **Before you start**

How you express your ideas is as important as the ideas themselves. How would you:

- 1 Begin a sentence in which you wanted to examine a new feature from the text for analysis? (Would you refer to the position in the passage with a preposition, such as 'At...', or 'In...', or use some other construction?)
- 2 Define the tone or mood of a specific word, phrase or sentence? (What sort of adjectives or adverbs might you use?)

## How to approach text analysis

An effective system is important when approaching your response to text-based questions. Here is a list of the key success criteria to bear in mind when approaching the reading and writing stages of your response:

### Do:

- read the text at least twice
- list or highlight key words and phrases from the text before you begin to write
- start your commentary with a clear, brief introduction in which you offer an overview or framework for your analysis of the set text
- focus on what the writer does (the structural and language techniques he or she uses) and the features presented
- describe the effects of those techniques and features on the reader
- support what you say with well chosen, selective evidence and apt quotation
- write in a coherent, fluent way which links rather than lists ideas
- keep your focus on form, structure and language
- check your work as you write and tweak or adapt carefully to make sure your expression is succinct and clear, yet sufficiently detailed.

### Don't:

- start writing before you have read the text properly
- simply list or highlight everything in the text – be selective!
- **assert** an idea or opinion without supporting evidence
- ‘feature-spot’, meaning simply point out a technique or a language device without explaining its effect or purpose (for example, mention that the writer has used alliteration without saying what its effect is)
- just summarise what happens or paraphrase without offering any commentary or interpretation
- only discuss language, ignoring form and structure
- list points or ideas in an unconnected way
- drift off into discussing areas outside the scope of the question.

## Putting your approach into action

In [Unit 4.2](#), you learned how to analyse a text, so some of the following guidance will already be familiar. In this unit you will learn how to structure your response.

Read the following passage before looking at the stages of the process that follow it.

### Where is our chai? Among other national crises this one is equally dire: A flood of mediocre machine tea

Ask any Indian how he or she likes his or her tea. They will tell you chai has to be brewed and boiled for a few minutes, with water and a small amount of milk. Sounds simple enough, isn't it?

No sir. Go to any airport in the country, and try to get a cup of tea like you make at home. You won't get it. Instead, what you will get is a disgusting, synthetic version. It will contain coagulated milk powder and a tea bag with an ugly thread hanging out.

The temperature will be lukewarm to start with and refrigerator-cold by the time you manage to finish half a cup. The same is the case in most modern offices. The tea we get in our so-called high-end places is disgusting. It tastes and looks like leftover water in the sink with sugar added.

All this is happening in a country where tea is a life force. Indians don't just love tea; they can't live without it. Tea for Indians is like blood or hormones or enzymes or whatever fluid your body needs to function. And yet, you have seen them – the thousands of groggy-eyed people at any airport every morning. As they take those godforsaken early morning flights, they beg for tea.

You have been there too – at one of those shops with a noisy tea-machine that spews out lukewarm dirty water, laden with too much

sugar. To have a bad cup of tea in the morning is to ruin your day. It creates an existential crisis, making you question the entire purpose of living.



Even on the plane in ‘full-service’ airlines, they drop warm water in in your cup. They then give you a milk powder packet that bursts when you open it, blasting white powder all over your clothes (maybe that happens only to me). Finally, they give you something that should have been made illegal long time ago – a pathetic teabag with the thread that’s probably there to strangle yourself.

How have we as a nation allowed ourselves to get here? If a song and dance film can launch nationwide protests and cause chief ministers to write letters, how do we tolerate bad tea every day? You, the people who work in modern offices or travel from airports, does your blood not boil when a bad cup of tea is shoved in front of you in a soggy paper cup?

Do you not want to smash that machine that makes more noise than a diesel auto, only to throw out warm waste water? How can we as Indians look at each other in the eye when we have not been able to find a solution for something as simple and vital as tea?

[...]

If every street corner and home can get it right, then our airports and offices can too. We just need to demand it. We need to innovate here, to ensure tea remains of a certain quality. Unfortunately, like Indians often do, we have accepted mediocrity here too.

Nevertheless, we should stand up for good tea. To all those entrepreneurs out there – this is a billion dollar idea. Make an automated tea machine that makes decent tea. Open fires aren’t allowed everywhere, we need machines which make tea like we like it. Piping hot, brewed and boiled.

**From 'Where is our chai? Among other national crises this one is equally dire: A flood of mediocre machine tea', by Chetan Bagat, The Times of India.**

## Preparing to write your response

For analysis of the article ‘Where is our chai?’, follow the process below, step by step, drawing on what you have learned from the previous units.

**Step 1:** Read the text closely at least twice.

The first reading will give you an overall sense of the text, what happens and how it is structured. The second reading will allow you to focus on the way the text works, the specific details of language, and the form and the mood created.

**Step 2:** Divide the text into equal sections.

This will help you to give equal attention to the different sections and focus your mind on the structure of the text. You should also allocate equal writing time to each part of the unit.

This can be done quite easily if the paragraphs are of regular and fairly equal length. If they are not of equal length, then divide the text into roughly equal sections, dividing the number of lines into, say, four parts. For example, the article ‘Where is our chai?’ has 40 lines, so four sections of approximately ten lines each should work. However, don’t stick too closely to numerical divisions – if there is a natural break in the action or the structure then end a section there, as shown in [Activity 1](#).

**ACTIVITY 1**

A student has begun to subdivide the article ‘Where is our chai?’. Decide where you would divide the remaining 14–15 lines. Copy and complete the table.

<b>Section 1</b>	from the beginning to ‘... <i>in the sink with sugar added.</i> ’ – it makes sense to stop here as the next sentence moves its focus from the specific to the general.
<b>Section 2</b>	from ‘ <i>All this is happening in a country ...</i> ’ to ‘... <i>that's probably there to strangle yourself.</i> ’
<b>Section 3</b>	from _____ to _____
<b>Section 4</b>	from _____ to the end.

**Step 3:** Divide the time available to write your response by the number of equal sections, so that you can give equal attention to each part of the text.

Candidates often write impressive material about the first part of an extract but skip over the rest. Make sure you write about all parts of the text in the same depth.

Once you have logically and systematically divided the text up you can begin to do your analysis and make notes. You should now make your notes quickly and efficiently, and plan your response.

**Step 4:** Make a list of key words and phrases from the text (no longer than six or seven words). Look back to [Unit 4.2](#) to check what you should be looking for.

You cannot write about everything, but you should identify particularly powerful, vivid or meaningful words or phrases to organise your key ideas around. You may wish to colour-code words and phrases which seem to be related to each other.

**ACTIVITY 2**

What other words or phrases from the article ‘Where is our chai?’ could you link with the following?

- Disgusting, ugly.
- (Tea as a) life-force.
- Stand up for (good tea).

Do any other words or phrases stand out? If so, quickly list them.

Focus on the following four ideas:

- 1 What voice or perspective is exemplified through these selected words and phrases?
- 2 What do these words or phrases imply – what message is being given?
- 3 What relationships and/or social positions are presented in the text and how do they change or develop, if at all?
- 4 What contexts are shown? For example, are they cultural, social, economic, geographical or historical?

All four of these ideas might apply, but sometimes just one or two of them will, and you should prioritise them according to the text. For example, if the voice was especially powerful and dominant, you might wish to prioritise this element. The most important ideas will form the basis for your introduction, but also help shape your response.

#### Step 5: Plan your response.

Even if you do not have time to write out a plan, mentally you need to consider the structure of your response. You have a list of key words/phrases and you have divided up the text, but you also need to consider your own writing. There is more than one way to respond to the text, but the most logical way is to follow its progression. In other words, write about each section one at a time, exploring how the text develops and unfolds. This will allow you to:

- focus on the text's structure
- explain how focuses shift from one thing, idea, person or place to another.
- comment on similarities and contrasts within the text
- show how attitudes develop or change.

#### ACTIVITY 3

Write your own plan, noting down very briefly what you will comment on in each paragraph. For example, start with Paragraph 1:

- Explain the general gist of the text, and writer's overall viewpoint.

#### Writing your response

**Step 6:** The final step is to take the examples of form, language and structure you have identified and organise your ideas into coherent paragraphs.

Look at the following model paragraph written by one student about the first section of the 'Where is our chai?' article.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

The article starts with the imperative 'Ask any Indian...' which sets the tone for a series of rhetorical flourishes which convey the writer's prevailing feeling that tea cannot be made outside the home. The writer presents himself as the voice of reason, appealing to 'you' the reader. Surely it is 'simple enough' to make a good cup? The curt utterance, 'No, sir.' has dramatic impact, as does the equally curt and certain modal 'won't' in 'You won't get it.' This then leads the reader into a series of negative noun phrases – 'disgusting, synthetic version', and the beginning of a hint of mockery in the phrase 'so-called high-end places', implying that the writer believes no office can be sophisticated if it does not serve good tea.

[1] clear focus on the language from the start

[2] the perspective of the writer

[3] focus on tone and audience

[4] reference to language devices

[5] comments on the structure

#### ACTIVITY 4

Consider the following three questions about the end of the paragraph:

- 1 What new element of tone does the student refer to in the final sentence?
- 2 What phrase does he/she refer to in order to support this comment?
- 3 What interpretation of the writer's views does the student make as a result of the quotation and the tone?

**Reflection:** Unit 4.1 explained how you can guide a reader through your analysis. This can include:

- indicating how a text develops or is sequenced: 'Here the writer introduces ...'; 'At this point, the text moves on to ...'; 'Firstly...'; 'Later ...'
- explaining how a text changes focus: 'At this point, the focus switches to ...'; 'Here, a new perspective is provided ...'
- Exploring a contrasting idea or element of language: 'While the language at this point is ... elsewhere it is quite different when ...'; 'On the one hand, the writer ..., on the other he ...'
- Moving from the general to the specific, or vice versa: 'At this point, we see ... which contributes to the overall sense of ...'; 'The overarching tone is one of ..., however at this moment ...'; 'The prevailing mood is of ... and, here we see ...'

What other useful words, phrases or linking statements could you add to these categories? How could you use any of these in writing about the article 'Where is our chai'?

#### ACTIVITY 5

Based on the notes you have made in your plan, choose one other section from the text 'Where is our chai?' and write a further paragraph. Remember to:

- use two or three of the words or phrases you listed when you originally read/analysed the text
- refer as accurately as you can to any language or linguistic devices used
- comment on the effect of these - in particular the tone they create.

If appropriate, develop your comments by interpreting more deeply what it is the writer is saying, or how it develops the overall argument.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand how to divide a text for analysis according to its form or structure		
I can plan and write a text analysis using a clear process and drawing on the features I have identified		

## **Unit 4.4**

# **Practice and self-assessment**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to read and understand the key features and conventions of a given text (AO1)
- learn how to plan, structure and write a response to a text analysis question (AO3)
- learn how to evaluate the effectiveness of responses and improve as necessary (AO3).

### **Before you start**

What key skills will you need in tackling a text analysis question?

- 1** What overall process will you follow for reading, making notes, planning and writing?
- 2** What particular elements or features will you look for in the text?

## Assessing your level

Before you begin the sequence of work in this unit, it will be useful for you to make your own assessment about your progress so far. The following table gives a broad indication of the features of competent and excellent responses. Review the table and make a judgement about your current attainment. Bear in mind that you may not fit exactly in one column or the other, and that you may have certain 'excellent' features mixed with slightly weaker ones.

	<b>Competent response</b>	<b>Excellent response</b>
Text analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear, structured response</li><li>• Steady engagement with content and ideas</li><li>• General understanding of form, structure and language of text.</li><li>• Identifies range of features, gives examples in form of appropriate quotations.</li><li>• Shows some ability to explain effects and impact on overall tone of piece</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fluent, perceptive response</li><li>• Sensitive and keen awareness of writer's intentions</li><li>• Detailed analysis of form, structure, and language of text.</li><li>• Fluently analyses specific features moving seamlessly between individual and whole-text effects</li><li>• Embeds quotations concisely and fluently.</li></ul>

## Understanding the question

Read the following question and the passage that follows it. Consider how you might approach the question as a whole.

You have already encountered some short passages from this text in [Unit 1.5](#), but here you are given it as a whole passage to comment on.

Read the following text which describes the writer's experience in Burma when he was serving as a police officer at a time when the British ruled the country. He has been ordered to deal with a possible threat posed by an elephant.

a Analyse the text, focusing on form, structure and language.

**(25 marks)**

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behaviour. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the **mahout** came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller.

There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim. The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole; actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick – one never does when a shot goes home – but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down.

At last, after what seemed a long time – it might have been five seconds, I dare say – he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open – I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away.

**From ‘Shooting an Elephant’, by George Orwell.**

**mahout:** an elephant owner or keeper



## Planning and writing your response

### Step 1: Decoding the task

Begin by noting down the key words in the task and making sure you are clear about what you have to do.

Then, follow the six-step process you learned in [Unit 4.3](#):

- 1 Read the text again (briefly make a note of what happens).
- 2 Divide the text into sections.
- 3 Allocate time equally to writing about each section.
- 4 Make a list of six to eight key words and phrases, as well as any other features you find particularly effective or striking in relation to form, language, structure and overall style or tone.
- 5 Plan a response, jotting down what you might comment on in each part of your response. Ideally, do so on paper although you may not always have time.
- 6 Write!

### Step 2: Evaluating a response

Read this passage from a sample response to the task. As you read it, consider to what extent it meets the success criteria given in the table at the start of this unit.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

This text is about how the writer weighs up what he should do and a depiction of how an animal is shot. It gives a graphic account of the shooting itself, and explains it in a clear and structured way.

The opening part shows how the narrator is indecisive by repeating the word ‘if’ to show what might happen. It tells us that he is going over things in his mind, and this creates tension. But there is a contrast between what he ‘ought’ to do and what he will do. The first paragraph ends with a strong simile which tells us about the writer’s fear – if the elephant charged: ‘I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller.’ This suggests the size and power of the elephant.

The next paragraph moves on so the reader follows how Orwell takes aim. The crowd are all watching and Orwell says it is like ‘theatre’. He also talks about the crowd having ‘their bit of fun’. This tells us that for them it is entertainment. But by lumping everyone together as ‘the people’ and ‘the crowd’ the effect is one of contrast with him. He is also quite innocent as he does not know the proper way to shoot an elephant. It says, ‘I did not then know ...’ so presumably later he becomes more experienced.

**[1]** clear overview of the text

**[2]** attempt to focus on ‘if’ clauses, but more on patterning of language here would help

**[3]** comment on language and some analysis of the effect

**[4]** clearly indicates how the text develops structurally

**[5]** explores the effect – but undeveloped

**[6]** not really relevant to the analysis

### TEACHER COMMENT

This opening to the analysis is clear, and deals with relevant points. However, there is no attempt to fit the comments to an overall sense of the tone of the piece, and Orwell's particular perspective. The idea of 'contrast' is not sufficiently explored – what is the contrast and what specific language features create this? How does it contribute structurally to the text's development?

### Step 3: Rewriting a response

Now, rewrite the response above. How could it be improved?

- How could the comments be more relevant?
- What could be improved about the analysis of tone?
- How could the detail about 'contrast' be improved? (Has the student explained what is meant by this?)
- How could the use of quotations be improved in terms of length and how they are referenced?

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I know the criteria for a successful response to a text analysis question		
I can evaluate a response to a text analysis and improve it where necessary		
I know how to plan and structure my own response to a text analysis question		



## **Section 5**

### **Writing skills - shorter writing and reflective commentary**

# Unit 5.1

## What is shorter writing and reflective commentary?

### Learning objectives

**In this unit, you will:**

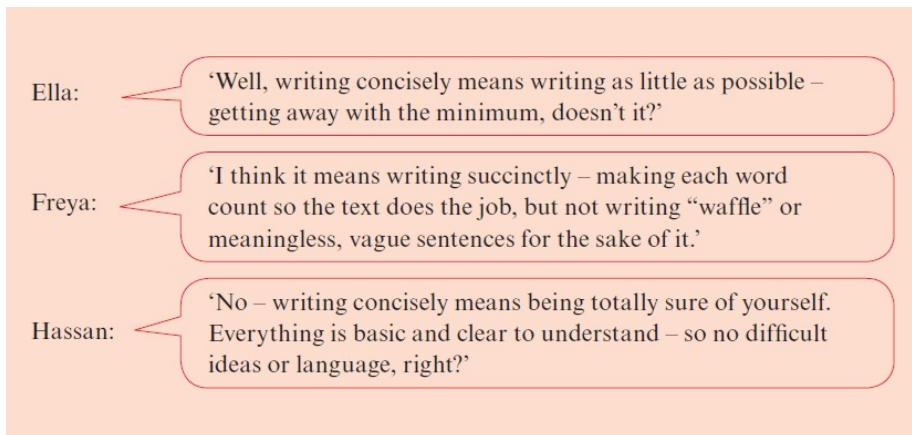
- learn to identify the core elements of shorter writing tasks and **prompts** and plan for writing (AO1)
- learn to identify the core elements of a reflective commentary and plan for writing (AO3).

### Before you start

What do you understand by the term ‘shorter’ writing, compared with ‘extended’ writing? Think about:

- 1 times when you have had to write in a concise way for English or other subjects
- 2 the benefits of writing concisely: when might it be a useful skill in real life?

Three students are discussing writing concisely – who do you agree with?



## Understanding the question

Shorter writing in the context of your Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language course means:

- selecting the most appropriate language for the task
- not going ‘off-task’ but sticking to the purpose
- making each word or phrase count and not writing any more than you really need to.

You will be given a question which requires you to write in a particular form or use a particular text type. This could be a descriptive or narrative text, or a **transactional** text such as a letter or magazine article.

The most effective way to write a good answer is to make sure you are absolutely clear about the requirements of the question. If you understand the question, you are more likely to answer it effectively and focus on the task set.

Read the following three questions. Each one requires a concise, particular response.

### 1 Diary entry

Your family has recently moved to a new and unfamiliar place. That night, you write your diary, reflecting on the day’s events and conveying your outlook and mood.

Write your diary entry, using no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)

### 2 Non-fiction/transactional

You have been asked to write a letter to your local paper, encouraging local businesses to reduce plastic packaging. In your writing, create a sense of concern and passion for the subject.

Write the text of the letter, using no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)

### 3 Descriptive

You have been asked to contribute a descriptive piece of writing about secret places to a creative writing website. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere and focus on colours, sounds and movements to help your reader imagine the scene.

Write the description, using no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)

## ACTIVITY 1

What are the key requirements of each question?

- First, identify the key words in each question.
- Then, copy and complete the following table (the first one has been done for you).

Form/type of text	Whole text or part of it?	Key focus or content	Desired effect
A: Diary	Whole	Written by someone who has moved to a new/unfamiliar place	Sense of the writer’s outlook and mood
B:			
C:			

Looking at the tasks in this way will help you to focus on the elements within each task, and also provide guidance on how you should proceed. For example, a student has made these notes on how to approach

their response to the first task, a diary entry:

- Diary – must be written from my point of view. Needs to include events that have happened to me that same day, or in the time leading up to it.
- Whole text – it's one entry so I'll need to get everything I need to say into one 'end-of-day' recount of what happened and how I felt.
- Focus – I will need to think of / imagine a place that is very different from my actual home (or my made-up actual home). I'll need to describe what it looks like, the people I met, and how I felt as we arrived.
- Effect – I must include my feelings (good, bad or indifferent) towards my new home. My diary must create an overall mood – for example, sad? Angry? Curious and excited?

## ACTIVITY 2

Write some notes on how you might answer Questions 2 and 3. They should be in a similar style to those the student has written for Question 1.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Creativity

When writing for a specific purpose and audience, students of the English language must demonstrate creativity in a range of different forms and contexts.

In what ways do each of the three forms of writing given here require you to be creative? Make a list of points for each type of text.

## Writing a commentary

Once you have completed your own piece of writing, you will be asked to review it and evaluate how well it met the **brief**. What are the key skills you need to comment on your own work effectively?

Like your own piece of writing, your commentary should be concise and to the point.

When reviewing your own work, you should try to match the points you make in your commentary to the key focuses in the original question. For example:

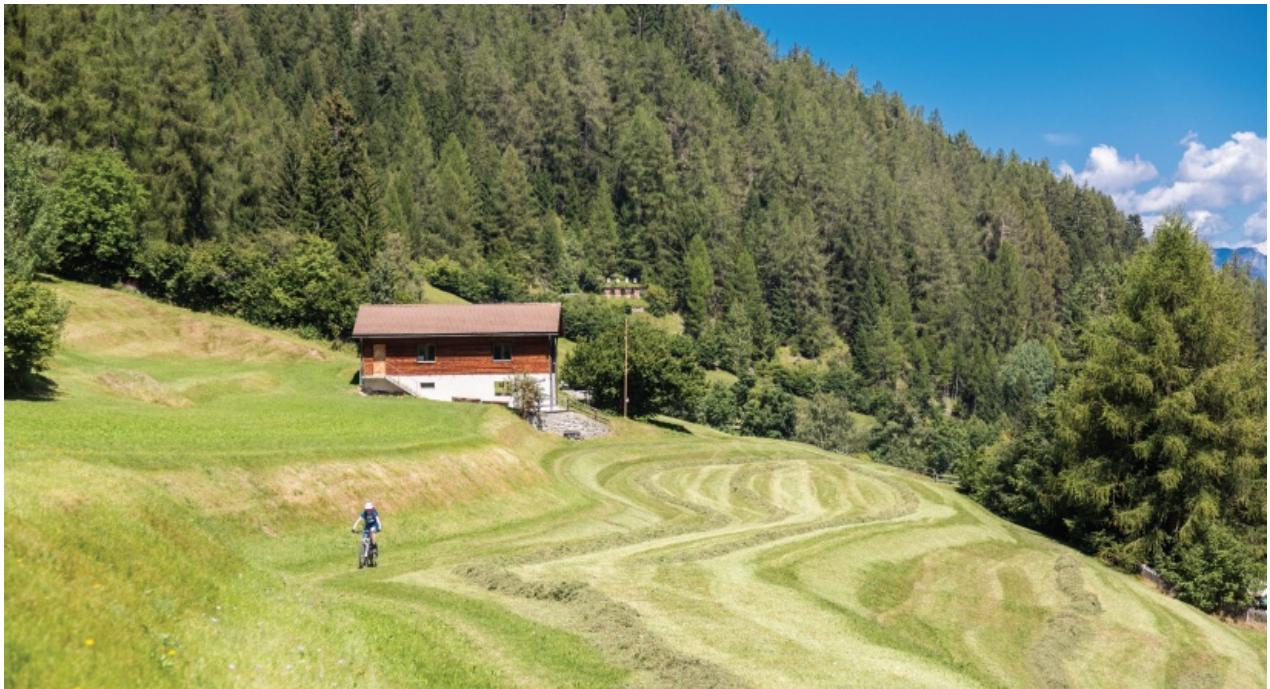
- In what way did I write in an appropriate style and format?
- Did I include the details requested? (Did I write about an unfamiliar place we'd moved to?) How did I show this?
- In what way did I demonstrate my outlook (my viewpoint)? What linguistic choices (words, phrases) helped me achieve this?
- What mood did I create, and how did I achieve this?

Read this short opening to a diary entry written by one student.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

#### Diary entry

At last, we're here! I have been waiting for this moment so long. I was desperate to leave the city, our cramped apartment, the noise, the smell and the dirt. And the power cuts – especially the power cuts! I had to almost push poor old Mama out of the door, however. The apartment had always been her home, so she was reluctant to say goodbye, but she knows it's the right thing for us. Just think – we're now going to share this huge house with my uncle and his family! We used to come here for holidays – now it's our new home. I feel like dancing on the roof!



### ACTIVITY 3

What elements of the question has the student met so far in this extract? Check the original set task:

- 1 Have they written a diary entry in an appropriate diary style?
- 2 Have they included the right content – moving from a previous home to an unfamiliar place?

- 3** Have they included their viewpoint?
- 4** Have they conveyed a particular mood or tone?

Now, read the opening paragraph of the student's commentary:

#### ACTIVITY 4

Read the following student response. How effective do you think this commentary paragraph is? In what ways has the student:

- referred to particular linguistic choices in their own work
- explained how they have met the key elements of the question with examples? ([Unit 5.3](#) gives more guidance on how to write a good commentary)

Remember, when writing a response to this type of concise writing question:

- make sure you know what the question is asking for
- write in a strategic way, aware of the requirements of the question
- do not go beyond what was asked for (keep within the word limit, and the requirements set)
- keep in mind the decisions you have made and the techniques you have used to meet the brief.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

I achieved the style of the diary through my use of the short present tense opening – ‘We’re here!’ – which conveys the sense that this has just been experienced. I also think I indicated my outlook through the negative references to the ‘cramped apartment’ and the list of three – ‘noise’, ‘smell’ and ‘dirt’.

#### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

Skill	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can identify the key words in a shorter writing question		
I understand what makes an effective commentary		
I can plan my own short written response		

## Unit 5.2

# Developing a shorter written response

### Learning objectives

**In this unit, you will:**

- draw on your understanding of textual conventions to plan a shorter written response (AO2)
- learn how to convey a particular mood or tone to fit the purpose and audience for your shorter written responses (AO2).

### Before you start

In the previous unit, you looked at how to decode questions based on prompts. This enabled you to see what core elements you needed to address: identifying the writing type/form; understanding the key content to include; and knowing what effects or mood to create with your linguistic choices.

However, this only gives you the ‘bare bones’ of what you need to include. To meet the requirements of the question effectively, you will need to go further. For example, look again at the diary entry task from [Unit 5.1](#), with the key words highlighted:

Your family has recently moved to a new and unfamiliar place. That night, you write your diary, reflecting on the day’s events and conveying your outlook and mood.

Write your diary entry, using no more than 400 words.

**(15 marks)**

You will now consider each element in turn.

## Understanding a shorter writing question

Whatever the question is, you still need to understand the implications for your own writing based on any prompt you have been given.

### Getting the conventions right

It is very important that you match the style of your writing to the specific text type requested.

In this case, the form is 'diary entry': this means that you will need to show you understand the conventions of the diary form. For example:

- Linguistic choices (use of first person and particular tenses): you need to give a sense of the here and now, as well as reflect on events that have just happened. For example:

*I am sitting in my room staring out of the window at the wide open fields.*

*To think that this morning, I was packing up my bags in my tiny room, while the traffic whizzed by outside ...*

- Form and structure: diaries often begin by describing where you are and how you feel as you write the diary, and then flash back to an earlier point (as in the previous example).

However, some diaries plunge straight into what happened at the start of the day.

*At 7 this morning, I got up and packed my bags. I felt relieved to be leaving ...*



#### KEY CONCEPT

##### **Meaning and style** – What other conventions are found in diaries?

Check back to [Unit 2.1](#) to read some of the entries there, or look at any other diaries you have read.

- What do you notice about the use of language?
- What other structural features (perhaps to do with layout or the way the information is ordered) do you notice?
- Does one linguistic style fit all types of diary? For example, Captain Scott's rather broken-up narrative of his Antarctic expedition, with some sentences missing the subject 'I', suits the painful situation he is in, but would it work for a teenager reflecting on a day spent at a party?

#### ACTIVITY 1

In what way would the writing conventions change if the task was to write a *letter* about the move addressed to a friend in the place where you previously lived? Think about:

- the form and structure of a personal letter
- how the linguistic choices would change as a result of writing to someone else, rather than *for yourself*.

### Getting the detail and content right

Remember that any writing task will include some direction for you to include certain things. Here, it is to write about a 'new and unfamiliar place', which means you will need to decide what this new place is like. Think of the details you will include about the people, place or location. For example:

- The people: who did you meet when you arrived? Were they friendly or unfriendly? What are your neighbours like? Do you even have any neighbours?
- The building you will be living in: is it a house, apartment, or other form of home? Is it in a village, town, city or the countryside? How many rooms? What is your room like?
- The landscape: what can you see from your window? Are you in the heart of a bustling city, or in a remote village or area? Is it mountainous, flat, lush, dry, full of concrete/tarmac? For example:

*The concrete balcony has a rusty iron railing. Looking down, I could see a scowling boy gunning a grimy motorbike, which sent foul fumes spiralling upwards.*

## ACTIVITY 2

Write an alternative sentence, describing pleasant views or smells.

### Getting the ‘outlook and mood’ right

In your diary entry, the brief says you need to convey particular feelings and a perspective. This can be done through your linguistic choices, too:

- The voice of the diary writer – such as short sentences or rhetorical questions for surprise (good or bad). For example:

*They expect me to live in this dump? Really? I mean ... I'm almost speechless!*

- The use of vivid or emotive lexis to convey setting or feelings. For example powerful noun phrases ('foul fumes'); intensifiers ('utterly disgusting wallpaper').
- The use of punctuation to convey shock, surprise or uncertainty. For example:

*The door opened slowly ... This was my room. It was beautiful!*

## Planning and structuring your shorter written response

Once you are clear in your mind about the sort of writing you have to do and what to include, you should start to plan your response. For instance, how would you plan your diary response?

You might make notes under the following headings:

- What is the unfamiliar place you will write about? Jot down ideas about the home/buildings, the people, the landscape.
- How will ‘you’ feel? Will you be pleased and excited? Unhappy? Nervous?
- How will you convey this? What things will you compare with your old home? What will you describe? What adjectives will you use?

You will also need to decide on a basic structure for your concise response. You will have 350–400 words – about five to six paragraphs. First, you should decide how your diary entry will begin and end.

### ACTIVITY 3

Use the following plan to help you plan the structure of your diary entry.

- Paragraph 1: how the day began (leaving my old home ...)
- Paragraph 2: the journey to the new place
- Paragraph 3:
- Paragraph 4:
- Paragraph 5:
- Paragraph 6:

Remember, there are different ways of structuring your diary. For example, you could begin at the end of the day looking back at events, so your first paragraph might be observations about your new home before ‘flashing back’ to an earlier time.

## Writing your response

You may or may not have time to write out a plan in a timed situation, but, for now, and to practise sticking to a structure, use the plan you have developed.

### ACTIVITY 4

Write your diary entry in response to the set task. Remember:

- you are being asked to write concisely, so do not waste words by going 'off track'
- stick to the task!

## Practise with different text types and tasks

Look at these three further writing tasks. It is important to be prepared for all eventualities!

### 1 Non-fiction/transactional

You have been asked to write an article for your school magazine encouraging fellow students to make contact with people their own age in other countries. In your writing, create a sense of enthusiasm and hope. Write no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)

### 2 Descriptive/transactional

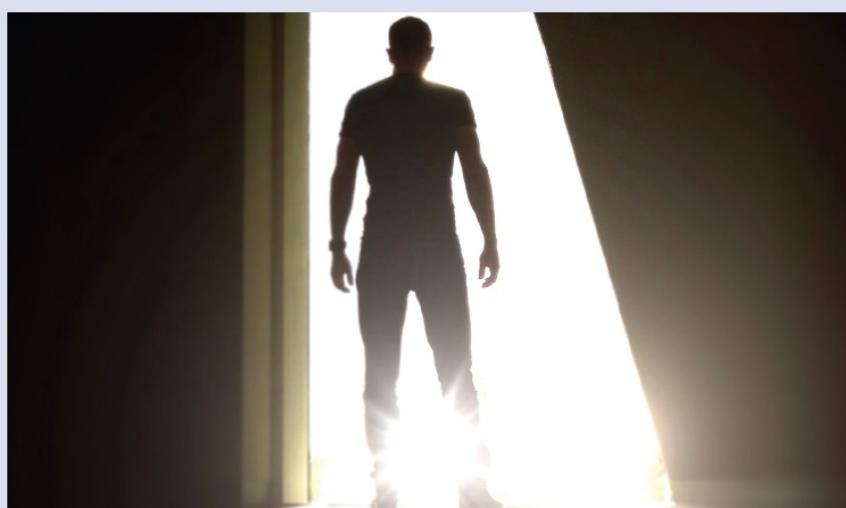
You have been asked to write an article for a travel website suggesting the sort of holiday that would be both fun and educational for young people. In your writing, offer advice and guidance for choosing a good trip. Write no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)

### 3 Narrative

You have been asked to contribute the opening of a story to an anthology of mystery stories for people to finish. In your writing, create a sense of drama and mystery. Write no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)



## ACTIVITY 5

Plan responses for each of these questions by working through the following process, which you have already practised in the diary question from [Unit 5.1](#).

- 1 Decode the questions by copying and completing the grid.

Form/type of text	Whole text or part of it?	Key focus or content	Desired effect?
A: Article for school magazine			
B:			
C:			

- 2 Explore the conventions. For each of the text types decide what common conventions you should include. For example:

- Article for school magazine: *title; opening paragraph explaining context or focus*
- context or focus

- 3 Decide on the detail and mood. For each of the texts, decide what key details you need to include. For example, for the story (narrative writing) it might include ‘who is at the door?’.

## Planning and drafting a response

Choose to answer one of the questions and check the relevant previous units to make sure you understand all the required conventions and linguistic features associated with it (check [Section 2](#) for the relevant text types or purposes).

### ACTIVITY 6

Now plan your response for your chosen text type. Include five to six paragraphs (for a descriptive piece, you might find you need fewer than this).

Write a draft of your whole response. Remember, it should be no more than 400 words.

**Reflection:** Evaluate your response as you write. Consider the following points:

- 1 Have you made effective linguistic choices to sustain the appropriate style?
- 2 Have you stuck to the conventions of the form you have chosen?
- 3 Have you kept your focus on the details you were given?
- 4 Is the mood or feeling you are meant to express sufficiently clear?

Try to complete the remaining two set tasks at another time. Remember that you need to have mastered all the potential styles you might be briefed with.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can use my knowledge of the conventions for different text types when planning a response to a shorter writing question		
I can effectively plan and structure my response		
I can adapt mood and tone to match the purpose and audience for my response		
I know how to evaluate my shorter written responses as I write		

## **Unit 5.3**

# **Writing a reflective commentary**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to approach writing an effective commentary (AO3)
- practise writing your own commentary (AO3).

### **Before you start**

In your Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language course, you are asked to review and evaluate your own work as well as the work of other students.

- 1 Why do you think you are asked to do this? In what ways do you find it helpful?
- 2 Do you find it easy or difficult to review your own work? Give your reasons.

In [Unit 5.1](#) you learned about writing a reflective commentary. What can you remember about this? Write down some brief points concerning:

- the purpose of the reflective commentary
- what areas of your work you should comment on.

## Skills for writing a commentary

The purpose of the commentary you write in response to your own work is to explain how you have met the brief set in the question. At the end of [Unit 5.1](#) you were introduced to some features of an effective commentary. In this unit you will explore these in more detail.

A good commentary should:

- explain concisely how your writing matches the task, audience and purpose set by the brief in the question
- comment (as appropriate) on the form, structure and language you used
- support your comments with appropriate references and quotations.

The following passage is taken from a response to this descriptive writing question from [Unit 5.1](#):

You have been asked to contribute a descriptive piece of writing about secret places to a creative writing website. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere and focus on colours, sounds and movements to help your reader imagine the scene.

Write the description, using no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)

The annotations show how the student has met the requirements of the question.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

To reach the lake, you have to follow a winding, gritty path until you come to a cleft in the rock formation. There, you can stand looking down on an almost-perfect pool of emerald water. If you go at the right time, as the sun comes up, or the moon is full, the surface seems to ripple like a queen's cloak, glittering with jewels.

At the edge of the water, tiny white flowers with nodding heads flutter in the cool breeze. They stretch around the lake like a pearl necklace, both protective and inviting. Amongst the flowers stand a small number of black trees with bare, perhaps dead, branches. They create such a contrast: the limbs of a spirit world, and their absolute stillness sends a shudder through the watcher.

On the trees, if you wait long enough, you will eventually discern the slightest of movements: black, thin lizards with long, pink tongues dart up and down the hollow trunk. Apparently unaware of outside forces, they seem to have come from some ancient time, as if you are the first living being to observe them in this scooped-out landscape.

As the wind increases, it begins to whistle through the barren trees, a high-pitched song of solitude. The trees are its brittle orchestra, the holes and ridges of the ashy bark playing an ever-changing tune.

**[1]** the verb phrase 'have to follow' indicates the hidden nature of the lake

**[2]** visual imagery

**[3]** simile describes movement

**[4]** further verbs describe movement

**[5]** metaphor adds to mood



### ACTIVITY 1

In what other ways has the student met the task requirements? Try to identify:

- further examples of sound, colour or movement
- further descriptions emphasising the secrecy
- particular ways the atmosphere is created
- any examples of when the writer ‘focuses in’ on something in particular.

## Evaluating commentary skills

Now, read the first part of the same student's own commentary on their descriptive text.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

I immediately set the scene for a 'secret' location by using the phrase 'have to follow a winding, gritty path' which leads the reader to the lake itself. Then, by including the clause 'you can stand looking down' I made the reader see the lake from a distance, which adds to the idea of it being hidden.

I tried to evoke the colours of the scene by including noun phrases like 'emerald water' and 'tiny, white flowers'.

I also tried to convey the movements through reference to the 'nodding heads' of the flowers and the verb 'flutter' which emphasizes the way their petals shake.

### ACTIVITY 2

Which key elements of the task has the student managed to include in this part of their commentary? Find examples of:

- 1 how the student has 'helped the reader imagine the scene'
- 2 comments on the mood or atmosphere created
- 3 evaluation of how well sounds, colour and movement have been evoked.

## Structuring your commentary

There are two approaches that you can take when considering how to structure your commentary. These two options are outlined as follows.

**Option A:** Work through the text you have written one paragraph or section at a time, following its structure. For example:

*I start by ... Then, in the next paragraph ...*

This is:

- ✓ **Good** because it allows you to write methodically, covering everything you have done.
- ✗ **Not so good** because you may end up commenting on the same techniques several times. For example, note how colour is referenced in all four paragraphs – would you comment on these references separately?

**Option B:** Work through the different elements mentioned in the task.

This is:

- ✓ **Good** because you can cover several references to, say, colour in one comment. You are more likely to be efficient and concise using this approach.
- ✗ **Not so good** because you might spend too much time on one element (e.g. colour) and not leave enough time to write about other important points (e.g. movement). It can also be challenging to make several references in one sentence or paragraph.

### ACTIVITY 3

Which of these approaches has the student used in their response?

## Using quotations effectively and efficiently

A key part of your commentary will be making references to specific words and phrases from your own writing. How should you use information you have taken from your response? Consider these questions:

- 1 How should you present any words or phrases lifted directly from another text? In other words, how do you show visually that you are referring to evidence from elsewhere?
- 2 How much should you include in any quotation or point you make (e.g. is it okay to quote a whole paragraph of text?)
- 3 How can you ensure that your quoted material fits seamlessly into the point you are making?

In their response to the question, the student has fluently embedded quotations (sometimes more than one) into their writing – there is a section on using quotations in [Unit 1.5](#) if you need a reminder on how to do it. For example:

### STUDENT RESPONSE

I also tried to convey the movements through reference to the ‘nodding heads’ of the flowers and the verb ‘flutter’ which emphasizes the way their petals shake.

[1] introduces quotation by using the verb ‘convey’

[2] the selected quotations

[3] explains the effect

You, too, should use a variety of verbs and phrases to explain what you did, and the effect. For example:

*... suggest / convey the idea of / present / show how / indicate / describe / explain / demonstrate...*

You need to try to embed the quotation so that it flows grammatically. For example:

*I also tried to convey the movements through reference to the 'nodding heads' of the flowers*

- ✓ **Good** because the appropriate quotation – the phrase that refers to movement – is used and it is placed in the sentence so the flow is not broken.

*I also tried to convey the movements: 'tiny white flowers with\_nodding heads, flutter in the cool breeze.'*

- ✗ **Not so good** because a lot of the quotation is irrelevant (e.g. the colour of the flowers, and the cool breeze). Also, the whole quotation has simply been added after the point made, so the sentence is neither concise nor grammatically cohesive.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Meaning and style** – When you are commenting on a text, you may need to ‘edit’ any original quotations you take from it. For example, you could not write, ‘In my piece, I said how ‘stand a small number of black trees’. Clearly, the quotation needs to be shortened to fit the grammatical sense – ‘In my piece, I said how ‘**a** small number of black trees’ were standing by the lake’.

When using quotations, consider how the grammar or syntax of a selected section of a text may need to change when the narrative voice changes.

### ACTIVITY 4

Complete the following points from the response, using the appropriate part of the quotation and embedding it fluently into your sentence.

Point to be made	Relevant part of text to use	Final sentence (to be completed)
Conveying movement	black, thin lizards with long, pink tongues, dart up and down the hollow trunk	I conveyed movement through ...
Suggesting isolation/secrecy	[the lizards] seem to have come from some ancient time, as if you are the first living being to observe them in this scooped-out landscape	I tried to show how distant and isolated the scene was by suggesting the lizards ...
Conveying the sounds	As the wind increases, it begins to whistle through the barren trees, a high-pitched song of solitude.	I also conveyed the sounds of the place by describing the way the wind would ... and ... create a ...

### ACTIVITY 5

Now complete the student’s commentary on their response to the ‘secret place’ task. You should follow on from the opening given in the example earlier in the unit.

- 1 Use the student’s version as a template and add your own points to theirs, as additional sentences or paragraphs.
- 2 If you wish, you can use the sentences from the table in [Activity 4](#), though you may need to add to them.

### ACTIVITY 6

Write your own response to the ‘secret place’ task, and your

commentary to follow it. Here is the question again:

You have been asked to contribute a descriptive piece of writing about secret places to a creative writing website. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere and focus on colours, sounds and movements to help your reader imagine the scene.

Write the description, using no more than 400 words.

**(15 marks)**

Try to come up with a different scenario from the one provided just before **Activity 1**, earlier in this unit. For example:

- a clearing in the middle of a forest
- an underground cavern in a frozen land
- a room at the top of a huge futuristic building.

Remember to apply all the skills you have learned for writing an effective response, and the skills you have developed in this unit for writing the commentary.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I can identify the key elements for an effective commentary		
I can structure my own commentary effectively		
I can use references, including quotations, in an appropriate way		

## Unit 5.4

# Practice and self-assessment

### Learning objectives

**In this unit, you will:**

- plan and write narrative and transactional responses (AO2)
- evaluate two sample written responses (AO2)
- plan and write two commentaries on your own responses (AO3)
- evaluate two sample commentaries (AO3).

### Before you start

The following table gives a broad indication of the features of competent and excellent responses. Review the table and make a judgement about your current attainment. Bear in mind that you may not fit exactly in one column or the other, and that you may have certain 'excellent' features mixed with other ones.

	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Shorter written response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• consistent focus with relevant form and content</li><li>• clear sense of voice and structure</li><li>• some effects of language attempted and achieved</li><li>• clear expression with some language variety</li><li>• mostly technically accurate; the odd error here and there.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• appropriate approach to task, engaging reader/audience</li><li>• tightly-controlled, appropriate structure for text type chosen</li><li>• language used imaginatively or creatively to create specific effects</li><li>• fluent expression</li><li>• high level of technical accuracy.</li></ul>

Based on the shorter written responses you have completed so far, where would you place yourself within these columns? (You may think you are more proficient in one skill than another.)

## Responding to a narrative-style question

Read the following question, which asks for a narrative-style response:

You have been asked to write the opening to a story about a life-changing experience for a website aimed at young people. In your writing, create a sense of a challenging situation or setting.

Write your opening to the story, using no more than 400 words.

(15 marks)

### Step 1: Decoding the task

Begin by noting down the key words from the task so you can answer these questions:

- 1 What is the form of text required?
- 2 Do you have to write a part or all of the text?
- 3 What is the text about?
- 4 What sort of effects do you need to create?

### Step 2: Check the conventions

Now, remind yourself of the key conventions you will need to bear in mind. This is a story, so what core features would you be expected to include? Remember, you are just writing the opening.

### Step 3: Generate ideas and create a plan

What you are going to write? Decide:

- Who is the main character?
- What is the experience? What events will happen in the opening?
- What structure will you use? You only have a maximum of 400 words, so aim for five to six paragraphs.

### Step 4: Get writing!

Write your draft, using your plan and the ideas you generated.

Now read this passage taken from a student response to the task. As you read it, decide what level (based on the table at the beginning of this unit) you think matches this response.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

I opened the shop because it was the cheapest rent I could find. It wasn't in the best of areas, I admit. There were some broken-down cars in the street, and stray dogs roamed about. But it was all I could afford and I was excited. My first business! I knew that whatever happened it would change my life.

I was up early to open the shop on its first day. I pulled up the roller shutters and turned the sign around inside the door so it read 'Open!'. Nervously, I walked up and down the rows of second-hand books I had collected for the last two years, and wiped any dirty covers with a cloth. They were my babies and I was proud of them.

Suddenly, the bell above the door tinkled. My first customer! In walked a teenager with a hood on his head. I couldn't see his face, and began to get worried. Surely I wouldn't be robbed on my first day? The guy walked up and down the rows, idly flicking through the books, picking up one or two and then putting them down. I was about to say, 'Can I help you?' when he came right up close to my shiny, new counter and stared straight at me.

[1] clear opening sentence, but not very engaging

**[2]** details of setting establish mood

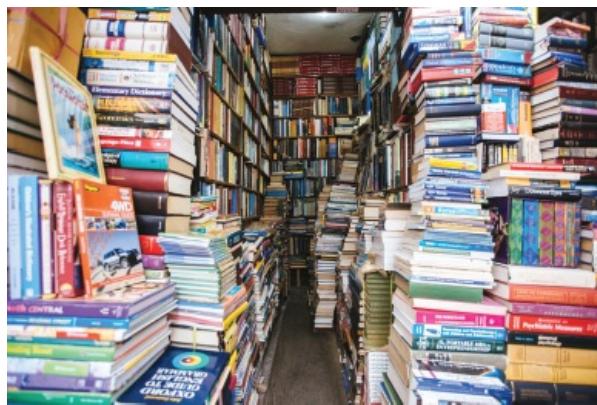
**[3]** sense of authorial voice

**[4]** longer sentence adds variety and develops character

**[5]** figurative language to develop character

**[6]** introduces a potential problem or obstacle which might be 'life-changing'

**[7]** adds tension



#### TEACHER COMMENT

The student sets the scene in a clear way and includes some details to create mood. There is a sense of voice in the text, but the opening sentences are rather dull and lack variety. There could be more detail about the shop itself and the surrounding area to develop the atmosphere and the sense of the experience being 'life-changing'.

#### Step 5: Rewriting a response

Now, rewrite the response. Before you begin, decide whether it meets the 'competent' or 'excellent' criteria.

For example, to improve the extract you might:

- start with a more interesting sentence – either withholding information, or beginning with an action
- provide more detail about the shop and local area
- use a wider variety of lexis and imagery
- make it more powerful to convey the life-changing nature of the experience.

## Responding to a transactional-/descriptive-style response

Read the following task which asks for a transactional/descriptive response:

You have been asked to write an article describing the traffic at rush hour in a city for a website promoting green issues. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere, and focus on sounds and movements to help your reader imagine the scene.

Write the text for the article, using no more than 400 words

(15 marks)



Now, using a similar process to the one you followed for the narrative task, work through these steps to create an effective response.

### Step 1: Decoding the task

Begin by noting down the key words from the task, and then answer the following questions:

- 1 What is the form of text required? What is its purpose?
- 2 Do you have to write a part or all of the text?
- 3 What is the text about? What is the background information?
- 4 What sort of effects do you need to create?

### Step 2: Check the conventions

Now, remind yourself of the key conventions you will need to bear in mind. This response is a *description*, but it is also in the form of an *article*. What core features would you be expected to include?

### Step 3: Generate ideas and create a plan

Decide what you are going to write. You should make decisions about the following:

- What details will you include? (A particular car or bus? A specific location, such as crossroads?)
- What is the weather / time of day / season?
- What people will you focus on? What will they be doing?
- What structure will your article have? You only have a maximum of 400 words, so aim for no more than five to six paragraphs. Remember, as this is an article you should include some factual information in your opening paragraph.

### Step 4: Get writing!

Write your article/description, sticking closely to the task.

Now read this passage taken from a student's article written in response to this task. As you read it, consider to what extent it meets the success criteria.

## STUDENT RESPONSE

Have you seen our city centre at rush hour? It is a disaster. I was unlucky enough to be walking through the centre yesterday, and what I saw was horrendous.

Picture the scene. At the massive crossroads by the main shopping centre, there were lines of grimy cars inching forward. Buses crawled along the bus lanes, braking every few minutes to let some pedestrian scuttle across the road. Lorries were grinding to a standstill while their drivers shook their fists at other road-users.

It was all made worse by the weather. The hot sun beat down on everyone, making people even more bad-tempered. I saw one man in a blue Ford pour a whole bottle of water over his head! Walkers kept under the shade of the skyscrapers but this just meant there was no room to pass by on the pavement. I found myself putting my newspaper over my head to protect myself from the beating heat.

I saw an angry exchange between two drivers, who had got out of their cars. One, an elderly woman, was shaking her fist at another person – a young man in a black t-shirt. The drivers behind them were pressing down hard on their horns, creating a dreadful noise.

[1] opening line creates a sense of audience

[2] gives the basic information

[3] clear visual detail

[4] further information but lacking detail – e.g. colour, size

[5] effective topic sentence introduces focus for this paragraph

[6] good focus – zooming in – but could be developed

[7] rather a weak detail – in what way is it dreadful? (High-pitched? Screeching? Repetitive?)

## TEACHER COMMENT

This is an effective opening to the description which makes it clear it is an article. Each paragraph deals with a different element of the scene, but a number of details could be developed further (for example, the encounter between the two drivers, adding more about their facial expressions, clothing or mannerisms). The language is reasonably varied but there is a lack of imagery which would make the description more original and creative.

### Step 5: Rewriting a response

Now, bearing in mind what you have learned about an effective response, rewrite your own improved draft, if you can see areas to improve.



## Practise writing a reflective commentary

You are now going to practise writing your reflective commentary.

Read this grid which sets out the basic criteria for competent and excellent reflective commentaries.

	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Reflective commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clear analysis of most of the elements of form, structure and language</li><li>• clear and easy-to-follow analysis of the writer's choices and how these link to the audience and create effects.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sophisticated, detailed analysis of form, structure and language</li><li>• detailed and perceptive analysis of how the writer's choices create effects and suit the task and audience</li></ul>

Based on your work so far, where would you place yourself within these columns? (You may think you are more proficient in one area than another.)

Write your own reflective commentary for each of the responses you wrote.

- for the **narrative response** (the story about a life-changing experience), comment on your original draft as you did not write a second, improved version
- or the **descriptive/transactional response** (the article about traffic), comment on your own improved, second version.

Remember the following points:

- 1 Your reflective commentary should be approximately 250 words in length.
- 2 You can structure it by working through your response section by section, or you can deal with elements of the task (e.g. its use of colour) in turn.
- 3 You need to identify what you did to meet the requirements of the task, and explain how these worked and describe the effects created.
- 4 You must quote selectively from your own work, and embed your quotations fluently in your writing.

### Evaluating a commentary on the narrative response

Now, read this passage taken from a student's commentary on their narrative response. This was the task:

You have been asked to write the opening to a story about a life-changing experience for a website aimed at young people. In your writing, create a sense of a challenging situation or setting.

Write your opening to the story, using no more than 400 words.

**(15 marks)**

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

In my story, I began with an opening paragraph that set the scene, saying why I'd opened the shop and what it meant to me. I used a number of visual details, such as: 'broken-down cars in the street' and 'stray dogs roamed about' which created a feeling of a poor area. I used short, minor sentences to make the narrator's voice come alive – 'My first business!' showing how much it meant. The exclamation mark emphasized the narrator's feelings.

Part of what I wanted to do was create the mood of the shop, so I included the reference to 'second-hand books' and said they were 'my babies'. The personification of the books showed how much I cared for them. Including adverbs such as 'Nervously' conveyed a feeling of anticipation.

In what ways is this an effective passage from a reflective commentary?

- try to evaluate it against the criteria for competent and strong reflective commentaries.

- remember, you are assessing how effective the *commentary* is, not the original text.

Now, rewrite your own commentary using the criteria in the ‘Excellent’ column of the grid, and include your own ideas about what you think needs to be improved.

### Evaluating a commentary on the descriptive response

Now, read this passage taken from a commentary on the student’s descriptive response. This was the task:

You have been asked to write an article describing the traffic at rush hour in a city for a website promoting green issues. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere, and focus on sounds and movements to help your reader imagine the scene.

Write the text for the article, using no more than 400 words

**(15 marks)**

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

My article begins by making direct reference to the reader by using the second person pronoun ‘You’. The paragraph does what news articles should do by giving the basic information.

My second paragraph creates a picture by using ‘lines of grimy cars inching forward’. The adjective ‘grimy’ is a negative one and suggests dirt and pollution. I also focus on the slow movement of the buses ('crawled') and lorries ('grinding'). This all creates an atmosphere of everything being slow and gridlocked.

In my third paragraph I change my focus to the weather, using a topic sentence to signal I have switched focus. I made my description vivid by zooming in on the man in the car who pours ‘a whole bottle of water over his head’. This phrase develops the mood of heat and bad temper. I also used prepositions such as ‘under’ to be precise about where and how people moved. The idea was to make it seem crowded and unpleasant.

In what way is this an effective passage from a commentary?

- Try to evaluate it against the criteria under the heading ‘Writing reflective commentaries’.
- Remember, you are assessing how effective the *commentary* is, not the original text.

Now rewrite your own commentary using the criteria in the ‘Excellent’ column of the grid, and your own ideas about what you think needs to be improved.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the skills required for an effective shorter response		
I understand the skills required for an effective commentary		
I can plan and write shorter responses and commentaries		
I can evaluate and improve shorter responses and commentaries		





## **Section 6**

### **Writing skills - extended writing**

# **Unit 6.1**

## **What is extended writing?**

### **Learning objectives**

**In this unit, you will:**

- learn how to understand the requirements for an effective extended writing response (AO2)
- learn how to use the conventions of particular text types to shape your responses (AO2).

### **Before you start**

What do the following styles of writing mean to you? Discuss each one in turn with a partner, and consider what specific features or conventions you associate with each. The first has been started for you.

- Imaginative: *creating striking characters or situations that aren't strictly 'real'; inventing stories or engaging events or action.*
- Descriptive: ...
- Discursive: ...
- Argumentative: ...
- Review/critical: ...

## Selecting a question to answer

Here are four potential writing questions you might be asked. Read each one carefully and, as you do so, think about the different skills that might be required to write a good response.

- 1 Write the opening of a story called 'The Return'. The story is about a character who returns to a place they have not been for many years. In your writing, create a sense of mystery and surprise.
- 2 A new 'healthy food' café for young people has just opened in your area. Write a review of it for your school magazine or newsletter aimed at other students.
- 3 Your head teacher is considering banning all ball games on school premises for safety reasons. They have asked you to write a full report evaluating the impact of the ban.
- 4 Write a descriptive piece called 'The Old Bookshop'. In your writing, create a sense of atmosphere, focusing on colours and textures to help your reader imagine the scene.

**(25 marks)**

### ACTIVITY 1

- 1 Which of these questions would you choose to respond to (if you could choose just one)?
- 2 How did you make your decision? For example, was it because you could visualise something easily? Or was it because you find visual details difficult and so prefer to deal with more 'factual writing'? Or was it for another reason?

## What does 'extended' writing mean?

You will be expected to write 600–900 words on questions similar to these four potential writing examples. The key skills to develop for extended writing are to sustain and fully explore ideas, which requires effective planning. You will also need to carefully structure these ideas so that you retain clarity.

Look at the following example, in which a student has started to make notes on Question 2. They have begun by underlining the key points they need to address in the task.

A new ‘healthy food’ café for young people has just opened in your area. Write a review of it for your school magazine or newsletter aimed at other students.



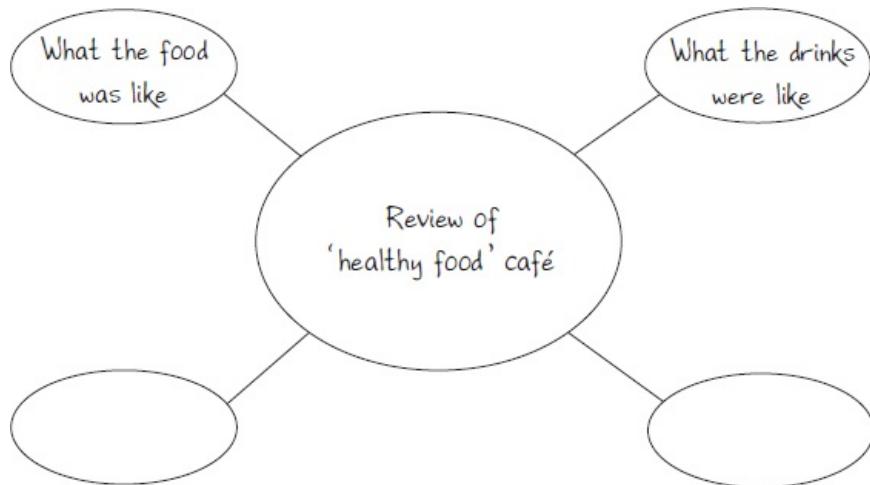
### ACTIVITY 2

Read the question again carefully and discuss the following points with a partner:

- 1 What form of text is the question asking you to write?
- 2 What will be the theme or focus of the text?
- 3 What will its purpose be?
- 4 Who will it be for – who is the audience?

The two most important things to consider are the *form* and the *purpose* of the text. These will guide the ideas you will include in your response.

The same student has begun to generate some ideas for his text. This is what they noted down.



They then used the ideas from their mind map to create the following plan for their response.

- Paragraph 1: introduce what I'm reviewing
- Paragraph 2: describe what the food was like
- Paragraph 3: describe the drinks
- Paragraph 4: my conclusion – whether it is any good



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Audience

Bearing in mind the audience for this response, what other key factors might have been of interest to them?

#### ACTIVITY 3

- 1 In what ways could the ideas and plan have been improved?
- 2 How likely is it that these ideas and this plan will enable the student to write an 'extended' review which provides a full picture of the experience of going to this café?
- 3 What could have been added to the ideas and planning stages?

Here is another student's set of ideas, this time in the form of a list. In what ways is this likely to produce a better response?

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

- 'Healthy food' café review
- Name, location of café, time of day I went
  - Appearance/look of building, inside and out
  - Range of food available
  - What I/we actually ordered – savoury and sweet, drinks
  - Service – how long I had to wait, how helpful staff were
  - The bill – good or bad value
  - Would I come again?

This student's ideas will produce a more effective response. They are more detailed and use the typical conventions of a restaurant review, which relate to the whole dining experience, not just the food.

#### ACTIVITY 4

Discuss this student's plan with a partner. Consider the following points:

- 1 What else could have been added?
- 2 In what ways could the 'healthy' features of the café be addressed?
- 3 Given this is a new café, who might the review mention?
- 4 Are there any other elements that are missing?

When generating your ideas for an extended writing response, you should remember the following key points:

- 1 Always consider as wide a range of ideas as possible.
- 2 Make sure your ideas match what you know about the audience and purpose for your response.
- 3 Use what you know of text conventions to guide what you need to include (check [Section 2](#) for reminders about different text types).

#### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the characteristics of extended writing		
I understand the requirements of an extended writing question		
I understand how to use the conventions of particular text types to shape my extended responses		

## Unit 6.2

# Developing an imaginative or descriptive response

### Learning objectives

**In this unit, you will:**

- learn how to distinguish between particular types of imaginative and descriptive writing (AO2)
- learn how to plan, structure and develop effective imaginative and descriptive responses (AO2)
- apply a range of imaginative and descriptive skills to create engaging responses (AO2).

### Before you start

Read this short passage taken from a traveller's account of walking the Normandy coastline in France, in winter.

The sea had retreated miles out into the bay, revealing the mussel beds, like charcoal sticks against the greying sky-line. Above me sand-martins swooped furiously, ducked and dived amongst the dunes, and the tufts of marram grass recalled to me childhood games, picking the spiky leaves and sending them spiralling towards my younger sister. Ah, Alice ... I wish you were here now. But you are gone five years, and nothing can bring you back.

**From 'Le Bout du Monde', by Mike Gould.**



Discuss the following questions with a partner:

- 1 Is this an imaginary account or a real account? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 What specific descriptive or narrative skills does the extract demonstrate?

## What is imaginative and descriptive writing?

Deciding what is ‘imaginative’ or ‘descriptive’ is difficult. We could say that all writing comes from the imagination because ideas always come from the mind, yet all writing contains some form of description, although the amount may vary between different forms of text. As far as ‘imagination’ goes, the travel writer who wrote the passage from ‘Le Bout du Monde’ might be a real person and his trip to Normandy in France an actual one. But what about the sister? Was she invented to add to a real account?



### KEY CONCEPT

**Creativity** – What we really mean when we talk about ‘imaginative writing’ is writing that is creative because it invents or imagines situations, characters, contexts and storylines. Such writing can sometimes be inspired by personal experience or real events. It doesn’t really matter whether the events in the opening passage actually happened or not – the skills demonstrated by the writer are the same whether the piece is fiction or non-fiction. In both cases, however, the imagination is at work, either to bring back to life a real memory, or to create one that seems real. Think about a real place you know. What features of this place can you recall accurately? What elements might you have to invent or recreate?

## Types of imaginative or descriptive questions

- 1 You could be asked to do a variety of imaginative or descriptive writing tasks. For example, the question might ask you to write two contrasting pieces based on a 'before and after' scenario. For example:

Write two contrasting descriptive pieces (300–450 words each) about a location immediately before the arrival of a storm and some days after it has passed. In your writing, create a sense of setting and atmosphere.

(25 marks)

- 2 Alternatively, you may be asked to write a complete composition about one particular topic. You could be asked to focus on specific qualities such as sounds, colours and textures, or to explore a particular experience or process. For example:

Write a descriptive piece called *The Shopping Centre*. In your writing, create a detailed sense of people and setting. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

Write a descriptive piece called *The Shower*, in which the narrator describes in detail their experience of being caught in falling rain. In your writing, focus on colours and sounds to help your reader imagine the scene. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

- 3 Other types of question may have a more narrative element to them and ask you to compose the opening to a novel or short story, for example. The focus here will be on creating a sense of possibilities for future development at the end of the piece, such as:
- the gradual revelation of a character's motivation
  - the way in which the narrative may go as it ends on a cliffhanger
  - the way the mystery or suspense of the characters and setting may contribute to future events.

For example:

Write the opening chapter of a novel entitled *The Private Detective*. In your writing, create a sense of mood and place. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

- 4 Or you may be asked to write a complete story. For example:

Write a short story called *The Unexpected Guest*. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

- 5 Other questions may ask you to begin your composition with words given in the task. You do not have to bring the writing to a close or offer a final ending.

For example:

*'The open road stretched ahead of them. There was only one way they could go.'* Continue the opening to this story (although you do not have to write a complete story). In your writing, create a sense of a mysterious future. Write 600–900 words.

**(25 marks)**

- 6 Some questions may require you to end your composition with words given in the task.

Write a short story which ends with these words: '*... gradually the light grew clearer: it was real.*' Write 600-900 words.

**(25 marks)**

## Developing your descriptive writing skills

To make your descriptive writing effective, you will need to draw on a range of key skills and techniques. Some of these are:

- detailed, specific adjectives and nouns describing geographical or other physical features (e.g. ‘a squat hut made of thin strips of larch, ‘a snow-capped, jagged peak’)
- references to the senses – sight, sound, texture, taste and smell (e.g. ‘The harsh cawing of crows at the top of the birch trees outside, their bodies dark shaggy inkstains against the sky’)
- verbs, adverbs and prepositions that convey movement, stasis and relationships as required by the text (e.g. ‘the winding streets curve mysteriously towards the old citadel’)
- personification of inanimate objects, buildings or natural phenomena or the use of pathetic fallacy (e.g. ‘The tower leans down to inspect us as we climb the steps, mocking our tired paces.’)
- imagery, such as simile or metaphor, either in individual words or phrases, or across whole texts (e.g. ‘The city is a pond seething with danger from creatures hidden in the depths or openly pursuing their prey.’)
- description of weather, nature and other natural phenomena to reflect or create a setting for events (e.g. ‘She felt the sharp needles of rain prick her skin and ran for shelter, watching as the grey dome of the sky unloaded its force.’)
- contrast and juxtaposition (e.g. ‘The new town, all gleaming glass, noise and money; the old town, a quiet sanctuary of museums and galleries.’)
- compound and complex sentences that develop initial ideas (e.g. ‘The mountain areas have olive groves, apricots and figs, but the desert below provides only oil. The gently sloping vineyards dominated the land for miles, although the rain battered on my windscreen and, at the head of the valley, storm-clouds reared like warriors before battle.’)
- verbal patterning and repetitions creating effects that imitate what is being described, or reflect the experience of the narrator (e.g. ‘We left the café at midnight, the lights flickering in the street windows, the stars shimmering across the dark sky, our voices echoing along the narrow alleys’)
- using the pen as a camera lens, allowing it to zoom in, zoom out, pan up, down, across and cut from one detail or person to another (e.g. ‘From above, the Hackney Marshes looked like a set of dominoes, rectangles with dots on, but ones that moved and swarmed. By one football pitch, a plastic bag of half-eaten oranges lay in the mud’).

**Reflection:** Look back over the skills and techniques listed and divide them into those you believe you have already mastered, and those you have not yet included in your work.

### ACTIVITY 1

Extended descriptive writing will require you to develop a simple idea by drawing on techniques like those listed above. Choose one of the following simple actions and write 100 words in the present tense to describe it. Try to use at least three of the listed skills and techniques in your writing to make the experience come alive.

- 1 Making a cup of tea or coffee.
- 2 Diving into a swimming pool or the sea.
- 3 Picking up a broken bird’s egg from the ground.



## Planning a piece of extended descriptive writing

The following is a suggested process for answering a question that asks you to write one complete composition. But the same or similar ideas could be used for different types of question.

### Step 1: Read the question.

Write a descriptive piece called *The Shower* in which the narrator describes in detail their experience of being caught in falling rain. In your writing, focus on colours and sounds to help your reader imagine the scene. Write 600–900 words.

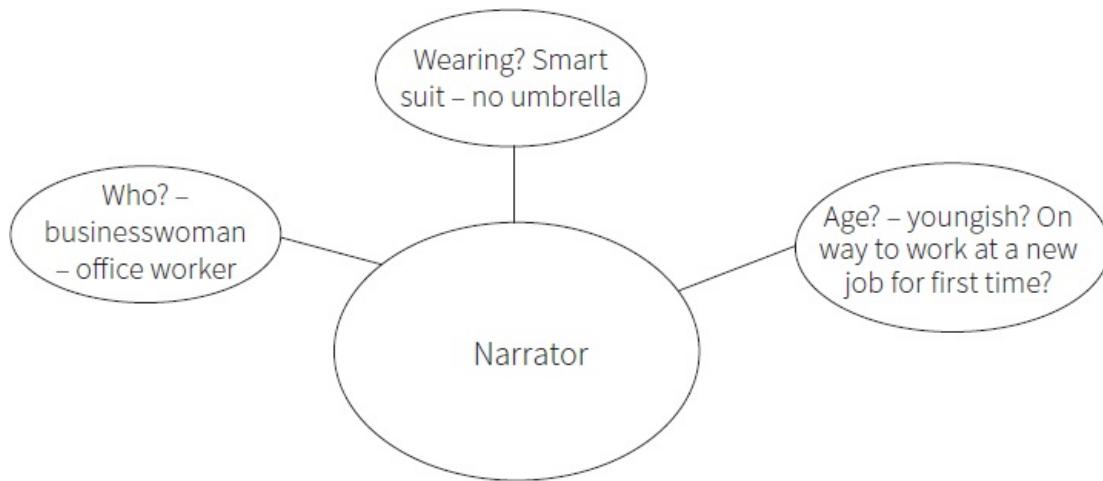
(25 marks)

### Step 2: Identify the following key words and phrases from the task:

- *narrator, their experience*
- *shower, being caught in falling rain*
- *colours and sounds*

### Step 3: Generate and develop ideas.

You might find it helpful to use either a list or spider diagram format to put some flesh onto these details. For example, here are some ideas arising from the first bullet:



### ACTIVITY 2

Either use your own ideas to create three spider diagrams or lists, or use this example and build on it by adding details for the other two areas (the shower – where and when it happens, and what impact it has on the narrator – and colours and sounds).

### Step 4: Organise and sequence your ideas.

Now you have several options in terms of how to organise your ideas into paragraphs. You could:

- organise the piece chronologically (that is, describe the experience as it happened), for example:
  1. *getting off the train*; 2. *walking towards office*; 3. *sudden rain*; 4. *trying to find shelter*; 5. *aftermath as rain stops*
- Write it in a more impressionistic manner, paying less attention to the time and order and more to the experience. You could begin *in medias res* or at the end, looking back, or simply explore the experience in a less 'connected' way. For example:
  1. *rain on skin*; 2. *buildings around me*; 3. *puddles and images*; 4. *memories of being a child...*
- Make the reader see things as if through a camera lens. For example:
  1. *wide-angle – me on a street seen from above*; 2. *long shot; clouds over the buildings*; 3. *close-up – my face, my cheeks*; 4. *close-up; first spots of rain*; 5. *medium shot; other passers-by ...*

- Or any other way you choose to organise your description.

### ••• THINK LIKE ... AN EXPLORER

Imagine you are keeping a travel blog and have discovered a particularly spectacular scene or inspiring location while exploring a remote landscape. Write the blog, describing in close detail the place you have 'discovered'.

## Other structural features

Here are some other features of form and structure to consider:

- 1 Tense: decide which tense you will mostly use (using the present tense means you are less likely to slip into telling a story, but make sure you use it consistently).
- 2 Narrative voice: the task suggests that the description should be from the narrator's point of view (i.e. the first person), but you could consider using the second person ('you') for a different type of effect. You could also consider the type of narrator – could it be an unreliable or unusual one? Someone who imagines rain when there isn't any?
- 3 Sentences and paragraphs: these do not have to be uniform in length; might there be a benefit in having a very short sentence or paragraph after a much longer one? Could you use this effect for a sudden change in weather or a new description or a change in pace or mood? For example:

*Suddenly, the sky darkened.*

Read this sample plan completed by a student working on a similar task about being caught in a heatwave (rather than a rain shower).

- Tense: present
- Person: first person (*I*)
- Para 1: short paragraph – wide-angle shot, sun appearing after rain over the valley
- Para 2: long paragraph – me, working in field picking fruit, the effects of the sun on my neck (close-up) and then my arms, body, back and so on
- Para 3: long paragraph – the heat's effect on the earth, flowers, crops; a bird flying above me; rocky hills nearby
- Para 4: short paragraph – my mouth and tongue, parched
- Para 5: long paragraph – mirages in the road and valley; flickering; things blurry
- Para 6: Sun's abrupt disappearance behind a mountain peak

## ACTIVITY 3

- 1 Organise the ideas you generated earlier about the rain description into five or six sections or paragraphs, as in the student's plan. Do not worry if it is not completely precise – this is just a guide for your writing.
- 2 Now spend two or three minutes looking at the ideas. Decide on the tense, the person (first, second or third) and perhaps which paragraphs will be long and which will be short. Then complete your plan and share your ideas with a partner:
  - Do they have any suggestions to make the description more vivid or detailed?
  - Are you happy with what you have planned or could it be amended?
  - Will you be able to write your descriptive piece from this or is more required? If necessary, redraft your plan, adding new elements or cutting others out.

- 3** With your plan or notes beside you, write your response to the shower task. Before you do so, glance back over the range of language features and devices covered in this unit so far (e.g. symbols, allusions to other stories) to remind yourself of techniques you could use. Try to write about 600 words.

If you prefer to work on a different task, use this one:

Write two contrasting descriptive pieces (between 300 and 450 words each) about a location immediately before the arrival of a storm and some days after it has passed. In your writing, create a sense of setting and atmosphere.

**(25 marks)**

Remember that you will still need to plan, even though the task has already divided the writing into two sections for you. You will need to make the same decisions about how you generate ideas, plan for paragraphs and select tense, voice and style of paragraphs.

You should remember these key points when planning your response:

- 1 highlight or list the key words and phrases from the task to keep you on track
- 2 use these key words to generate ideas and provide a solid base for the plan
- 3 consider the range of different ways to organise those ideas (e.g. chronologically).

## Planning a piece of narrative writing

An extended narrative piece may involve some description, but this should be expressed concisely so as not to hold up the flow of the action. In narrative writing, you need to consider the following elements carefully:

- The plot and structure of your story (even if you are only writing part of it).
- Characterisation, voice and narration – who tells the story? Why? Is it the protagonist or someone else?
- The setting and location – where does it take place and how does this link to the story and characters?
- The use of dialogue or other forms of speech – how can speech develop the action or contribute to characterisation?
- The use of literary and linguistic devices – what particular uses of language will create impact and engage the reader?

Read the following imaginative writing question.

Write a story called *The Letter*. In it, someone close to the narrator receives a letter which has a big impact. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)



Now, follow a similar four-step process to the one you used in descriptive writing.

**Step 1:** Read the question carefully.

**Step 2:** Identify the key words and phrases from the question:

- ‘letter’
- ‘someone close to the narrator’
- ‘big impact’.

**Step 3:** Generate and develop ideas.

### ACTIVITY 4

Use the same process as you did for descriptive writing and construct a spider diagram based on the central heading ‘The Letter’, or a list to generate answers to the following questions:

- 1 Who?** Decide who the narrator is, who ‘someone close to the narrator’ is and who might have written the letter.
- 2 What and why?** Decide what is in the letter and why it creates the ‘big impact’ (e.g. a piece of shocking news, a photo, an item).
- 3 Where?** Decide what the setting is – where the story takes place.

**When?** Decide the time – is the story set in the present, the past, or the future, or a mix of some/all of these?

#### Step 4: Organise and sequence your ideas:

- How will it begin?
- What will be the main climax?

#### Organising your ideas

When planning a structure for your writing, you should begin by considering the overall arc of the story. This will include the following elements:

Stage	What happens?
Introduction/exposition	the character/setting, etc.
A complication/problem	something new occurs which changes things
Development	life but under new circumstances; situation changing
Climax	things come to a head; dramatic moment when events can go one way or another
Conclusion/resolution	events are completed, but not necessarily happily or definitively.

This, of course, is a very simplistic version of a story structure, and many stories have more than one problem or complication. In Hollywood terms, these are often referred to as reversals but these could be small problems, which are overcome before the bigger ones occur.

You might find it helpful to look back to [Unit 2.5](#), which explains how Freytag's Pyramid can be used to represent the sequence of the events in a storyline. You could also consider some of Labov's ideas – what does it all mean? What is at stake? How is the reader 'oriented' in the world of the text?

#### ACTIVITY 5

Using this grid, create an 'arc' for your story 'The Letter', adding in the key details in the sequence you prefer.

#### Character, voice and narration

You should by now have decided what your main story is. However, there are further decisions to make about your characters and their perspectives. For example, what sort of narration will it have? Will it:

- Be **unreliable**, for example the narrator might pretend not to care about the letter when the reader knows it is important: 'What did I care that the letter was from my wife's oldest friend? I wasn't jealous... not at all.'
- Be **omniscient**, for example 'The letter which lay on the mat contained news that would shock her to the core. Yet she still hadn't read it.'
- Be **limited**, for example 'He watched her open the letter, and her face underwent a terrible change. What was it? He wished he knew.'
- Might the narrator be unexpected or **unusual**? For example, could the letter itself tell the story? 'He held me in his hands. Little did he know the secret I contained...'
- Will it be told in in the first, second or third person?
- Have a particular narrative point of view – will it be written in the immediate moment, or look back to the past?

#### ACTIVITY 6

Look again at your initial ideas for your story 'The Letter'. Note down the narrative point of view and type of narrator you will use.

#### How to structure your narrative

In addition to the overall arc of the story, there are a number of different variations that you can use to

structure your narrative. For example:

- a straightforward chronological account recounts the story in time order (e.g. the story develops from the receipt of the letter with little or no looking back)
- dual or multiple narration switches between two or more narrators (e.g. the narrator, the friend and/or the letter writer)
- a framed narrative is a story within a story (e.g. the main story is in the letter that has been received)
- in flashbacks or flashforwards, the story moves between past, present or future in a slightly less linear way (e.g. the letter takes the narrator back in time to their childhood)

### ACTIVITY 7

Decide on one of these forms of narration for your story, or consider combining them. For example, one narrator could be a dead writer of the letter who describes events in the distant past, while the recipient describes what is happening in the present. Bear in mind that if you go for a more complex narration, you need to be confident you can develop the story consistently.

**Reflection:** How confident do you feel about using multiple narration or more unusual perspectives in your story? What practical techniques could you use to develop skills in these areas? For example, how could you practise multiple narration?

## Character dialogue

A key element in **characterisation** is dialogue. Although speech can be used to advance the plot, it is equally important in conveying character traits and moods. This can be done in a number of different ways, for example:

- *what* is said (the actual words spoken and the information or ideas they convey)
- the *style* of speech (e.g. short abrupt statements, questions)
- *how* it is said (e.g. tone of voice, manner)
- the use of *description* between spoken words (e.g. the actions of a character; the setting).

### ACTIVITY 8

Working on your own, continue the following dialogue using the same tone and style. Add five more lines or sentences.

*She sat down in front of me and put her head in her hands. The pale light of the prison cell cast a vague shadow on the table between us. I put the letter on the table.*

*'So, how can you explain this?' I asked, watching her intently.*

*Slowly, she raised her head and looked at the opened envelope and the single sheet of paper. She pushed the hair back from her eyes, and finally spoke.*

*'I ... I ...,' she paused.*

*'Go on,' I said.*

*'It's difficult. Yes ... I mean, it is my handwriting, but ...'*



## Openings

Once you have a clear idea of structure, character and narration for your story, you should consider how you will compose the individual elements, such as the conversation in [Activity 8](#). For example, your story should have an effective opening to get the reader's attention.

What makes a good opening to a story? Writers do this in many ways, however any opening must engage the reader. This can be done by:

- Creating a particular atmosphere or tone which fits with the sort of a story we want to read (e.g. a gothic mystery). For example:

*The candlelight from the old cottage flickered against the window pane as he brushed the branches aside.*

*She could see that the surface of the planet was pockmarked with tiny silver pools as she stepped from the landing craft.*

- Something funny, surprising, surreal or shocking. For example:

*It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.* (From *1984*, by George Orwell)

*I write this sitting in the kitchen sink.* (From *I Capture the Castle*, by Dodie Smith)

- Conveying a particular memory or occasion in a way that makes us want to find out more about what went on. For example:

*It was the day my grandmother exploded.* (From *The Crow Road*, by Iain Banks)

*We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall.* (From *Tracks*, by Louise Erdrich)

- A general statement or metaphor which might thematically 'set up' what is to come. For example:

*The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.* (From *The Go-Between*, by LP Hartley)

*It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.* (From *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen)

- Withholding information to create a sense of mystery. Why? What's happened? For example:

*She shouldn't have done it. It was wrong and now she had to pay. But, the thing was – she'd got away with it, hadn't she?*

- use of *in medias res* to plunge the reader right into the story. For example:

*As he hit me, I felt the taste of blood in my mouth. How could I escape?*

The common factor in all of these is to raise questions in the reader's mind. For example, the story *The Go-Between* by LP Hartley begins:

*The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.*

This suggests someone who is looking back – someone who perhaps questions the actions they or others

took as a younger person – and we want to know what happened in that ‘foreign country’ of past events.

### ACTIVITY 9

Complete each of the following story openings using the technique given in the left-hand column. Or, if you prefer, write your own opening sentences for each type without using the prompts.

Type of opening	Prompt
Atmosphere or tone	<i>Ahead of me ... It was three o'clock in the morning when she ...</i>
Funny, surprising or shocking	<i>It was on a Sunday morning that I woke up and discovered ...</i>
Particular memory or occasion	<i>It all began when ... Ten years ago to this day ...</i>
General statement or metaphor	<i>Funerals are ... Everybody knows that ...</i>
Withholding information	<i>He picked it up and ...</i>
<i>In medias res</i>	<i>I held on for dear life as ...</i>

### ACTIVITY 10

How effective is the following story opening? Which of the techniques above does it seem to use?

The moment that the bus moved on he knew he was in danger, for by the lights of it he saw the figures of the young men waiting under the tree. That was the thing feared by all, to be waited for by the young men. It was a thing he had talked about, now he was to see it for himself.

It was too late to run after the bus; it went down the dark street like an island of safety in a sea of perils. Though he had known of his danger only for a second, his mouth was already dry, his heart was pounding in his breast, something within him was crying out in protest against the coming event.

**From ‘The Waste Land’, by Alan Paton.**

There is no ‘right’ way to write an opening – every imaginative piece will begin differently. However, if you do not immediately engage the reader with something surprising or mysterious, then you will probably need to add a problem or unusual occurrence soon afterwards!

## Writing your response

Now, using what you have learned, write up the ideas you generated earlier for the following question:

Write a story called *The Letter*. In it, someone close to the narrator receives a letter which has a big impact. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

In Activity 11 you have the opportunity to practise the whole process of working from the initial prompt to your writing your final response.

### ACTIVITY 11

Choose one of the following two questions and plan and write a response to it. You might find it helpful to look back at [Units 2.5](#) and 2.6 to remind yourself of the key conventions of both imaginative and descriptive styles of writing.

**Task A:**

Write a descriptive piece called *The Shopping Centre*. In your writing, create a detailed sense of people and setting. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

**OR**

**Task B:**

*'The open road stretched ahead of them. There was only one way they could go.'* Continue the opening to this story (although you do not have to write a complete story). In your writing, create a sense of a mysterious future. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

Remember the following key points for writing a strong response:

- 1 Identify the key words in the title and generate ideas using the techniques you have learned about in this unit and in [Unit 2.5](#) and Unit 2.6.
- 2 Structure or sequence your response using one or more of the methods you have practised.
- 3 Make sure the opening engages the reader's attention.
- 4 Use a wide range of language and literary devices, such as imagery, contrast, the senses to create impact.

**Reflection:** When you have completed your response, swap your work with a partner.

Evaluate each other's work using the key points listed. How well have these key points been applied?

You might want to use the grid at the beginning of [Unit 6.5](#) to make a judgement about how effective your responses are. Are they competent or excellent?

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I understand the skills required to write an effective descriptive or imaginative response		
I can plan and generate ideas for descriptive or imaginative responses		
I can plan and write shorter responses and commentaries		
I can evaluate and improve shorter responses and commentaries		

## **Unit 6.3**

# **Developing a discursive response**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to distinguish between particular approaches to discursive writing (AO2)
- learn how to plan, structure and develop effective discursive responses (AO2)
- apply a range of language skills and techniques to create effective responses (AO2).

### **Before you start**

Discursive writing can be approached in a range of ways and with slightly different outcomes. For example, what do you already know about the similarities and differences between a discursive text that is focused on arguing a point of view and one that is exploratory and general? Consider the following, and discuss the two forms with a partner:

- The tone and manner of both types of writing – does one have a more personal voice?
- The different purposes of each form – what is your aim if you are discussing a topic rather than arguing a particular view?
- Structural differences – how would you expect a purely discursive text to begin and end compared with one arguing a view?

## Opening paragraphs in discursive writing

The following passages, Text A and Text B, are both opening paragraphs to magazine articles on the topic of whether the school leaving age should be lowered or raised in your country.

### Text A

Some people believe that education, the learning of skills and knowledge, is one of the most important ingredients in young people's lives, vital for their personal development and the future of the country. However, others believe that the benefits of long-term education are over-stated and that it is far better for young people to experience the world of work early in their lives for the personal development of the individual and the good of the nation.

### Text B

Two famous sayings – 'You are never too old to learn' and 'a little knowledge goes a long way' – are often heard in this country. Yet I wonder whether education (the transfer of knowledge and skills to other people) is that important. Does it really matter if you do not achieve a certain number of grades at a certain level by the time you leave school? Surely the money spent on education could be invested more wisely?



### ACTIVITY 1

Consider the different approaches:

- 1 Which of these opening paragraphs addresses both sides of the issue?
- 2 Which paragraph offers a more personal point of view on the issue?

Opening paragraphs in discursive or argument texts should include:

- a brief definition or explanation of the topic you are writing about
- an exploratory tone characterised by raising questions or balancing different ideas (e.g. using connectives such as 'yet', 'however')
- a summary of current ideas (e.g. through references such as 'Some people think...')
- a suggestion of the debate and questions you will address in your text.

In what ways do these two opening paragraphs meet these criteria?

Read these questions on a range of issues. As you do so, think about the different ways you might begin a response to each.

- 1 Should people be allowed to carry guns?
- 2 In what way does the internet do more harm than good?
- 3 Is there too much money in sport?

**4** Are animal rights as important as human rights?

**5** Should the punishment fit the crime?

### ACTIVITY 2

Now, select two of these five questions and write opening paragraphs in response.

- For one, use a general introduction which sets out the views as a series of statements.
- For the other, introduce the topic using questions that represent the opposing viewpoints.

**Reflection:** Which of the two approaches did you find easier to adopt? What was difficult about the other?

## Structuring a discursive response

Whether you choose to write in a discursive or personal way, both forms require a balanced and thoughtful approach to the topic. Your writing should not be emotive or persuasive. Instead, you should offer a thoughtful examination of the issue that draws on evidentiary logic of the sort referred to in [Unit 2.4](#). Such a response should be structured to include:

- an initial exposition or introduction to the argument or core idea
- reference to both sides of any argument
- development from less important to more important key points or ideas
- the use of examples to support any points you make – these can be real, or made up (though feasible). For example, you might quote someone who sounds like an expert (e.g. ‘an eminent doctor stated that ...’) or make up some realistic statistics (e.g. ‘70% of local residents questioned objected to the amount of plastic waste on the beach’)
- the use of connectives for:
  - consequences or results (*because of this; the effect of this; consequently*)
  - additional or reinforcing points (*furthermore; moreover; in addition; besides this; similarly; in the same way*)
  - organisation and order (*to begin with; first; at the same time; ultimately; finally; in conclusion; overall; as a whole*)
  - contrast (*however; on the one hand ... on the other hand; yet; despite this; conversely*)
- the use of Standard English, rather than a very informal or chatty writing style.

The three most effective ways to structure your discussion are outlined as follows:

	<b>Two halves</b>	<b>Alternate paragraphs</b>	<b>Counter-argument</b>
Para 1	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
Para 2	View/point A for	View/point A for	Views/points for and against A
Para 3	View/point B for	View/point B against	Views/points for and against B
Para 4	View/point C for	View/point C for	Views/points for and against C
Para 5	View/point D against	View/point D against	Views/points for and against D
Para 6	View/point E against	View/point E for	Views/points for and against E
Para 7	View/point F against	View/point F against	Views/points for and against F
Para 8	Conclusion/synthesis	Conclusion/synthesis	Conclusion/synthesis

Whether or not the final paragraph includes a clearly-stated viewpoint will depend on the overall tone and approach. If the viewpoints are more discursive and exploratory in the approach then a less forceful ending will be more appropriate.

For an ‘argumentative’ response, you would be more likely to adopt the ‘counter-argument’ approach, as it enables you to give your own viewpoint at the start. Whatever approach you take, you are essentially adapting a **dialectical structure** for your own needs.

### ACTIVITY 3

Which of the three models has been used in the following example paragraph? How do you know? Give your reasons.

According to a recent survey in the US, many college graduates felt that their years of study had not really provided long-term benefit for their emotional and psychological well-being. Their stress levels, they argued, had been at an all-time high. However, supporters of college education feel that the time invested in acquiring more in-depth skills and knowledge equips graduates with high-level expertise and understanding of not just their own area of study but the society they live and interact with.

## Structuring evidence in your response

Whichever model you choose to follow for your structure, you should use the 'argument and evidence' technique in each paragraph of your discursive or argumentative writing. After a topic sentence, **inserted phrases** such as *they add/argue/believe* or *additionally* can be helpful in your supporting sentence to give further detail about the point you are making. For example:

*Their stress levels, they argued, had been at an all-time high.*

In the same way, the use of relevant data, statistics and surveys (real or feasible) can help to demonstrate knowledge and expertise, and create the impression of authority. For example:

*However, one survey carried out by the EEC recently found that most students who received an education up to the age of eighteen felt more adjusted and ready to experience the world at large than those who had left school or college at sixteen.*

Read the following discursive writing question:

A newspaper aimed at parents and families publishes an article called '*Should Teachers Be Paid by Results?*'. The article offers different views about the topic. Write the article. In your answer, create a sense of controlled and balanced arguments. Write 600–900 words.

**(25 marks)**

First, read these notes made by a student in response to this question.

- Importance of exam results in a student's development (compared to other skills or experiences gained in class/school)
- Factors that determine whether a student will get a good or bad exam result
- Who is most responsible for 'good' results? (e.g. the teacher, parent, or student – or other factors)
- What should be the role of the teacher (To focus solely on results? To nurture students?)
- What responsibilities do students have for their own learning?
- Whether the general idea is a sound one
- How to measure a teacher's impact on learning/results

#### ACTIVITY 4

In what order would you put these points/areas of discussion?  
Consider the following:

Paragraph 1:	Introducing the topic/issue – what points would go here?
Middle paragraphs 2–7 (also referred to as 'body paragraphs'):	What points would go here? What else might you need to add? (For example, what are the different views?) How would you structure them? (Look again at the three options outlined earlier in this unit)
Paragraph 8:	Conclusion – what points might go here?

## Structure and content within paragraphs

Whether you are writing opening, middle or concluding paragraphs, the tone you adopt – and what you choose to include – are all important.

Read the following passage taken from a ‘middle paragraph’ of a student’s response to the teacher pay question.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Teachers are people who give us knowledge about education and the world from their own experience and hard-working student life. I reckon teachers should be paid for the degree and knowledge they have got. Well they give the education to students in class and well students do nothing and are always daydreaming or texting on their phones or talking in the lectures of teacher’s and why should they be the reason for bad grades? They are providing their education and experience. Well it’s all the fault of students who aren’t interested or working hard at home or even revising after leaving school. Teachers cannot feed you spoon in mouth to get good grades. It’s the job of students to earn and acquire good grades.

How effective is this as a discursive paragraph? Consider the following questions:

- 1 Does this give one perspective only, or does it give equal weight to both?
- 2 Which of the two approaches do you think would work better here?
- 3 In what way does it provide a clear idea of the key issue or issues?
- 4 What is its tone? Is it thoughtful and considered?
- 5 Does it provide appropriate evidence or support for points of view?
- 6 Does it include material which you would expect to see in an opening paragraph?

### ACTIVITY 5

Now, rewrite the student’s response. You might find it helpful to use the following sentences as a way to start your paragraph, or you could use your own.

*The question of whether teachers should be paid by results depends on a number of factors. For example, what is the true role of a teacher? Is it to ...*

## Different styles of paragraph

There are further options available to you when you consider the structure and tone of the content in a paragraph.

Read the following question and passages taken from two different students’ responses.

An online magazine aimed at teenagers publishes a feature called ‘Are Beauty Contests a Thing of the Past?’. Write the article. In your writing, create a sense of reasoned arguments. Write 600–900 words.

**(25 marks)**



First, look at this opening paragraph which presents both side of the issue.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

'Mirror, mirror on the wall: who is the fairest of them all?' this is a well-known line from a fairytale, a myth, from a world in which magic lives and the 'goodies' always come out on top in the end. Yet it can also be seen as a reflection of the world's preoccupation with vanity. So many people want to be beautiful. So many people want to be the fairest in the land. It's an obsession most people seem to possess these days: the need to be admired, even worshipped, and accepted. Is there anything wrong with this? Must the mirror give us a reflection? Does someone really need to be set apart as the most appealing? Does there need to be a Snow White?

[1] the use of a well-known phrase or saying focuses the reader directly on the subject

[2] the use of yet introduces the contrasting point of view

[3] the use of repeated phrases stresses the key idea

[4] this question, and the one at the start, are used to set up the discussion to follow, but no clear personal viewpoint is expressed. The paragraph is **cyclical**, with the final question echoing the fairytale referred to at the beginning

Now, consider this alternative approach. In what ways is it different?

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

Beauty contests, it can be argued, have long-lasting effects on mostly women and girls. Some people believe that these effects can be positive: image, they believe, is important in the world around us nowadays. For

example, job interviews, public presentations and public appearances, all require a certain degree of image-consciousness. Furthermore, a recent survey by the NBC television channel in America showed that many respondents felt that beauty contests teach girls to present themselves effectively, to be polite and ladylike and, to a degree, to take pride in their appearance by caring for their bodies and adopting a healthy lifestyle. There was evidence girls acquired greater confidence and addressed their fears and concerns about mixing with other people and learned to deal with peer pressure. Beauty contests, it revealed, gave girls aspiration, hope and motivation, elements which are very important at any stage in life.

[1] use of a topic sentence sets out a particular view

[2] no evidence of a personal opinion, but a balanced approach introducing one side of the argument

[3] specific example provides supporting evidence

[4] inserted phrases develop and support arguments with a measured tone

[5] lists of three abstract ideas convey depth and range

## ACTIVITY 6

What are the key differences between the two approaches? You can use the annotations to help you. Consider:

- Is one 'better' than the other, or are they equally effective?
- Which approach (putting the arguments aside) would you adopt?

## ACTIVITY 7

Using a similar style, write the first body paragraph to follow on from the second student response. It should tackle the alternative point of view – what is not good about beauty contests. You could:

- include a point about the behaviour and feelings of mothers
- include evidence from a documentary (you could make up its name) about how very young children are manipulated and forced to do things
- suggest what should be done to change or reform such contests  
You might find it helpful to use the following:

*However, opponents of beauty contests feel that it is also a sad reality that mothers, in particular, often become obsessed with them ...*

To write a good response, include:

- a connective to link sentences (e.g. 'indeed')
- inserted phrases (e.g. 'some opponents argue')
- an example (e.g. the name and details of the documentary)
- lists of three (e.g. perhaps describing how the children are forced to dress and behave) to convey depth and range.

## Writing a concluding paragraph

Once you have established a particular tone and approach in your discursive writing, it needs to be sustained. The conclusion must match the approach that you have used throughout. How can this be done?

Read the following sample paragraph which concludes the discursive response on beauty contests. This brings together some of the virtues of both previous student responses.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

So, it is clear that one of the major issues associated with beauty contests is the type of negative self-image it can foster in participants. As we have seen, it seems that beauty should not be judged in this way: competitions, after all, are based on opinions not facts. ‘Beauty’, it is said, ‘lies in the eye of the beholder.’ Those who lose out in such competitions may lose self-esteem and motivation, developing feelings of inferiority in relation to those around them. It may well be that these contests would provide a more positive and beneficial influence if they were controlled, and embraced all kinds of beauty: physical and spiritual. We should be very, very careful: the mirror on the wall may reflect the kinds of negative things we don’t really want to see.

### ACTIVITY 8

How effective is this concluding paragraph? Consider the following questions:

- 1 How does it seem to refer back to earlier arguments or points?
- 2 In what way is the language measured in its approach? (Look for the use of modals such as ‘may’ and softer verbs like ‘seem’.)
- 3 In what way is it cyclical? How does it link back to ideas expressed in the first opening sample paragraph?
- 4 How does it engage the reader and make them feel part of the community discussing the issue?
- 5 How does it offer a sense of range and depth with the use of powerful abstract ideas?
- 6 How does it finally offer a viewpoint which expresses the view of the writer?

### ACTIVITY 9

Read, plan and complete the following task.

A magazine aimed at teenagers publishes an article called ‘Skin Deep’, which assesses the arguments for and against cosmetic surgery. Write the article. In your writing, create a clear sense of both viewpoints. You should write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

**Stage 1:** Begin by generating ‘for’ and ‘against’ ideas on the topic, as you learned at the start of the unit.

**Stage 2:** Then organise your ideas into a series of paragraphs using one of the three structures you explored earlier.

**Stage 3:** Write your response.

Make sure you:

- consider a particular approach you will adopt for your first paragraph (e.g. begin with a quotation)
- adopt a measured tone through careful choice of words and phrases
- give your opinion, either expressed in fairly personal ways or more objectively, in the final paragraph.

**Stage 4:** Reflect.

Once you have completed your first draft, evaluate the ideas, tone and structure:

- Have you been able to adopt the tone you intended and sustain it throughout?
- Is the structure clear with ideas supported by evidence or further detail?

You could use the grid at the start of [Unit 6.5](#) to help you assess your progress.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can plan a discursive or argumentative response, considering a range of structures		
I can adopt a personal or more measured tone according to the approach I decide to take		
I can write a full discursive or argumentative response which sustains tone, style and ideas		

## **Unit 6.4**

# **Developing a critical response or review**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to draw on the different approaches to critical writing and reviews (AO2)
- learn how to plan, structure and develop effective critical responses (AO2)
- apply a range of language skills and techniques to create effective responses (AO2).

### **Before you start**

What do you recall about the key features of writing to review or comment critically on something?

- What sorts of things might you be likely to review or comment on?
- What might be the particular skills you need to demonstrate?
- What different tones might you adopt in reviewing or critiquing something?

## Approaching writing to review questions

As with other forms of extended writing, understanding the requirements of a question is vital.

Read this typical question and consider what it is asking you to do.

A new live music show on television for teenagers and young adults has recently been launched. Write a review of the show, which will be published in your school newsletter. Write 600–900 words.

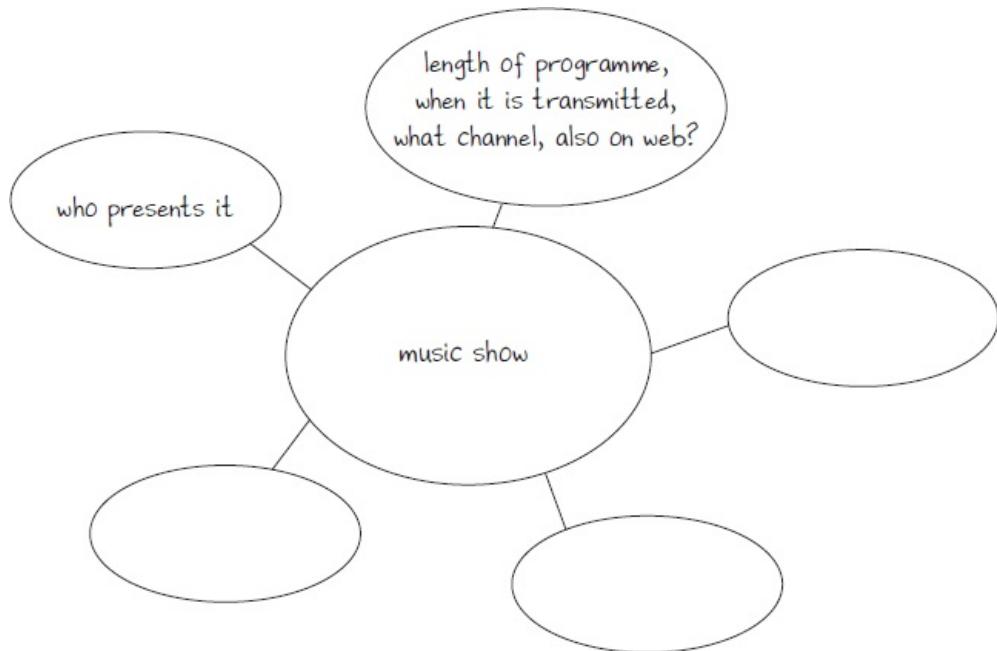
(25 marks)

You should look for:

- 1 what you are being asked to review
- 2 where your review will appear
- 3 who the audience for the review will be.

Once you know these things, you will need to generate your own ideas for your review, although you can of course base it on shows you may have seen.

What sorts of things could you comment on in your review? One student has started to generate ideas using the following spider diagram.



### ACTIVITY 1

- 1 Copy and complete the spider diagram, adding ideas of your own. At this stage, there is no need to include any opinions – you should focus on noting down any facts you can think of. Remember, as a reviewer you need to be an informed observer who mentions all the salient details.

## Structuring your review

How will the review be structured and organised? Reviews vary according to the subject under discussion, but, in essence, you could generally follow a basic sequence, as follows:

- 1 Introduction:** the key facts about what is being reviewed
- 2 Summary:** a concise account of the core elements of the subject under review (in films this might be plot, acting, special effects)
- 3 Evaluation:** your opinion on some or all of these elements – which might or might not be subsumed under ‘summary’ but nevertheless makes clear what you think of the subject under review.

A more sophisticated approach might signal your views from the first sentence as a way of engaging your reader, but even if this approach is adopted you must not forget to include the key information about the subject. Remember, a review is not a personal outpouring of opinion, but a considered – and sometimes highly critical or complimentary – perspective.

Here, a student has written the first paragraph of their review of the music show. How successful is this opening paragraph?

### STUDENT RESPONSE

*Music Now!* aired for the first time last night at 7pm on Muzik Channel 4. It is a programme consisting of live performances from some of today's top artists and is intended to capture the notoriously difficult-to-reach teen and young adult audience.

### ACTIVITY 2

Evaluate the example opening paragraph carefully. Consider the following questions:

- 1** Does it provide all the key facts you would expect to read about the programme?
- 2** What, if anything, could the student have added?
- 3** Can you add one or two further sentences to this introduction? At this point there is no need to say what you think of the programme – although you can hint at it, if you wish.

## The language of criticism and reviews

You may have already learned about some of the stylistic features of reviews in Unit 2.2. You should consider the following key features found in review writing:

- **Use of the present tense:** note how the opening paragraph says ‘It *is* a programme...’. Where possible, continue this through the review when commenting on the core elements (e.g. ‘She *plays* the role of ...’, ‘The plot *drags* slowly ...’)
- **Loaded language:** lexis which conveys opinion while describing elements of the subject, or which states a viewpoint directly. For example:

*The dreadful acting casts a shadow over a story that has been plotted cleverly.*

[1] adjective and adverb express view directly

[2] noun suggests view less explicitly

- **Humorous, intense or exaggerated language:** this will depend on the audience and context for your review and should always be used appropriately. Here are some examples:

*The mountain of gloopy pasta looked like it could be used for filling a hole in the wall. The portions of the dessert, in contrast, were so small you needed a microscope to see them.*

*The book is a glorious, rich evocation of what it is like to grow up in the sun-drenched vineyards of California.*

[1] figurative imagery

[2] humorous analogies

[3] powerful noun phrase



## Evaluative language

For a more considered, authoritative tone you should consider adopting words or phrases which position you as the informed observer, weighing up the merits of the book, film, music, or restaurant. For example, you might use language which:

- introduces the elements under discussion (e.g. ‘Let us turn to...’, ‘A key element is...’, ‘Later, the mood changes when...’)
- asks questions (e.g. ‘Whose idea was it to cast Brad as the hero?’, ‘What was Brad thinking when...?’, ‘Are we really meant to believe that Brad survives...?’)
- weighs up the good and the bad, or tracks the change in fortunes. For example, when a film or meal starts well and ends badly (e.g. ‘On a positive note...’, ‘What really doesn’t work is...’, ‘One redeeming

- feature is...', 'Best/worst of all...', 'Whilst the film starts with a bang, as it develops things deteriorate...')
- sums up the writer's feelings or expectations (e.g. 'I thoroughly enjoyed...', 'I was hugely disappointed with...', 'I had great hopes for this film, but...', 'I loved/hated every minute...', 'I understand what the writer wanted to achieve...')
  - seems to take the reader into its confidence: This may not always be appropriate and will depend on the topic. It can be used to convey the sense of the reviewer being 'just like the reader'. For example, remember Jay Rayner inviting the reader to 'follow' him into the restaurant in his review in [Unit 2.2](#):  
*So come with me then, into the flag-stoned hallway, which is brightly lit. Not just 'Oh, I can see my way' brightly lit but 'Blimey, that's a bit sharp' brightly lit.*

This feeling is strengthened by the chatty, informal term 'Blimey', expressing surprise.

### ACTIVITY 3

Now, look again at another response to the 'review' question. Read the following paragraph a student has written focusing on the music show's presenters:

*So, the show..... ... [1] with Theo Young, co-presenter, who is incredibly excitable and seems to spend most of it leaping around the stage like a ... ... ... [2]. I found this very ... ... ....[3]. When he introduces each act, I ask myself ... ... ...? [4]*

Complete the paragraph and add the following:

- 1 a verb in the present simple
- 2 a suitably humorous or exaggerated simile
- 3 an adjective which expresses the reviewer's feelings
- 4 a question which reflects the reviewer's thoughts about 'Theo Young' as a presenter.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Audience** – You should make sure that the approach you take in your writing is appropriate for the audience. You should consider:

- the level of technical detail or content the reader can cope with (for example, a review of a music show written for professional musicians would be different from one for fans)
- the level of formality or informality (e.g. dependent on how close the writer is in age to the readership)
- the tone of voice (e.g. humorous, reflective, serious, angry).

Remember that you should not write too informally in any review, although the odd **aside** written in a conversational way to the reader can be effective.

### ACTIVITY 4

Match these extracts from reviews of the music show to the appropriate audiences.

Extract	Audience
<i>The dreadful cacophony of sound made by these so-called musicians is a disgrace. And to think this show replaced the well-loved 'Historical monuments' series!</i>	Fan magazine for a pop group
<i>Wow! It's amazing to see my fave band live on TV for once! Ok, so it's a short show and they only get to play one number, but hey -</i>	Magazine for retired people

<i>it's better than nothing!</i>	
<i>While it might not be everyone's cup of tea, the show provides a bit of variety from the usual cop dramas and game shows we're offered most Fridays.</i>	Music website
<i>It's great to see that music lovers can tweet their views about the performances while they watch the show.</i>	TV listings magazine for general readership



### ACTIVITY 5

You should by now have plenty of ideas from the spider diagram you created for [Activity 1](#). These ideas will help you decide what you wish to include in your review, and suggest a basic structure in which you:

- introduce the show
- summarise elements of the show
- summarise its impact on you
- finish with an overall evaluation of the show as a whole.

Now, write your review, in response to the question at the start of the unit:

A new live music show on television for teenagers and young adults has recently been launched. Write a review of the show, which will be published in your school newsletter. Write 600–900 words.

**(25 marks)**

Remember to draw on the key skills of review writing you have learned about in this unit. If you want more guidance on what real reviews and critical writing look like, then re-read [Unit 2.2](#), which

contains extracts from a restaurant review and a play review.

### ••• THINK LIKE ... A CRITIC

Imagine you are writing a review for the school magazine about something you have recently seen, read, visited or experienced. Write one paragraph of the review about one element of what you are discussing. Try to write it without reference to yourself in the first person, but with a sense of authority which nevertheless makes your view clear.

**Reflection:** Assess the response you have written using the following criteria, or ask a classmate to review your work:

- Is the review written in the present tense?
- Does the content match the purpose and audience?
- Is the tone of voice suitably formal or informal for the audience?
- Have you used language to convey your viewpoint, both directly and less directly?

What particular areas do you think you need to focus on to improve your own critical or review writing? How could you improve these areas of your writing?

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can plan, structure and develop a critical review or response		
I can select a tone which is appropriate to the task, audience and purpose		
I can use a range of language techniques and devices to review effectively		

# **Unit 6.5**

## **Practice and self-assessment**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to plan and structure three extended writing responses (AO2)
- evaluate three extended writing responses (AO2)
- learn how to improve the responses, paying attention to specific features and techniques (AO2).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What key skills will you need in writing an extended response?
- 2 What overall process will you follow for generating ideas, planning, writing and checking?
- 3 What particular skills will you need to demonstrate?

## Criteria for an extended writing response

The following table gives a broad indication of the features of competent and excellent responses. Review the table and make a judgement about your current attainment. Bear in mind that you may not fit exactly in one column or the other, and that you may have certain 'excellent' features mixed with slightly weaker ones.

	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Extended writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• generally effective approach to the question, using the form appropriately</li><li>• clear ideas which are mostly developed</li><li>• some sense of voice with elements of personal style</li><li>• clear and appropriate use of structure</li><li>• some language devices used to create impact on the reader</li><li>• clear use of ideas or arguments</li><li>• clear expression with reasonable technical accuracy – i.e. spelling, punctuation and grammar</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• very engaging, lively approach to the question, using the form appropriately</li><li>• ideas, some original, very well developed and sustained</li><li>• very strong sense of voice with distinctive style</li><li>• very effective use of structure to draw reader in, argue a viewpoint or explore ideas</li><li>• wide range and variety of language devices used to create impact on the reader</li><li>• fluent, mature and, where appropriate, complex use of ideas or arguments</li><li>• high level of technical accuracy – i.e. spelling, punctuation and grammar</li></ul>

## Responding to extended writing questions

Read the following questions.

- 1 Write a story called *The Prisoner* in which a narrator describes his or her experiences of being captured and held captive. In your writing, create a sense of the narrator's outlook and mood. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

- 2 A sequel to a successful superhero/action film has just been released. Write a review of the film for a magazine for film fans of all ages. One review should be positive; one negative. Write 300–450 words.

(25 marks)

- 3 A celebrity magazine aimed at teens and young adults publishes an article called *Is This the Real Deal?* The article explores whether reality television talent/competition shows do more harm than good. Write the article. In your writing, create a sense of balanced and reasoned arguments. Write 600–900 words.

(25 marks)

### ACTIVITY 1

For each one of these questions:

- 1 identify/highlight the key points you must address in your writing (these might include the specific focus of the question; the audience; and the purpose)
- 2 plan quickly and effectively how you will structure and organise your ideas (remember that this is 'extended writing' so you will need to sustain your ideas)
- 3 mentally (or on paper, if you prefer) note any key features or conventions of the particular type of text you have chosen that you will need to include.

Now read these passages taken from sample responses to all three questions. In each case, look at what has been done effectively and what could be improved.

#### Question 1: descriptive/imaginative writing

Read this passage from a sample response to Question 1.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

I knew I had to get out of this town. It was too dangerous for me to stay and I knew The Council had spies everywhere looking for a rebel fighter like me. I wasn't even sure I could trust my family so I told no one where I was going. Instead, I woke before my husband and family did, softly walked barefoot across the floor and slipped on my clothes. I hated to act in such an underhand way, but I had no choice.

Closing the door quietly, all was dark in our street. The street lights were off but even so I felt like I stood out. Every step I took seemed to echo and every breath I took seemed as loud as a drum. It wasn't far to the border post where Saliya would be waiting, like we had agreed.

Soon, I was at the end of the street and into the fields surrounding the town. The night was cool and the moon was bright, making it easier for me to see my way. I didn't dare to use my torch. Then, I heard it. A swish

of a bush or something. There was definitely someone there. I turned around.

‘Saliya!’ I said, relieved. ‘What are you doing here? I thought we were supposed to meet later...’

Saliya stood there, saying nothing, her face looked pale. She was a tall woman but in the moonlight she looked frail and weak, and I knew something had gone wrong. I couldn’t work out what.

Then I saw that her hands were tied behind her back and there was another woman, a guard, behind her.

My skin prickled with fear, but I stood rooted to the spot, unable to act. My hand pressed upon the dagger by my side but violence wasn’t the answer. I needed to think – fast!

**[1]** effective short opening sentence captures reader’s attention

**[2]** tells the reader about main character

**[3]** adverbial creates variety to openings of sentences

**[4]** sensory detail and use of simile

**[5]** use of past perfect tense provides detail of earlier action

**[6]** further details of setting add to atmosphere

**[7]** direct speech adds immediacy

**[8]** comma splice error – should be a conjunction or other form of punctuation

**[9]** rather weak sentence which does not really convey the drama

#### TEACHER COMMENT

This opening is clear and we get a good sense of the situation. There are some details which add to the mood, but there is rather too much ‘information-giving’ and more could be withheld to make the reader curious.

There is some use of imagery but it is rather basic and unoriginal. The lexis is effective but more original and imaginative use of it – like the word ‘prickled’ in the final sentence, for example – would add to the overall effect.

#### ACTIVITY 2

Rewrite this response to improve it as far as possible. To do this, bear in mind the following points, and the teacher’s comments:

- 1 Withhold more information: make it less clear who the narrator or

is or why she is trying to escape. If you wish to, alter the voice/narrative point of view. Would it work better in the second or third person? How would it read written mostly in the present tense?

- 2 Improve characterisation: try to convey a clearer sense of the character's fear or desperation.
- 3 Add more visual or other sensory detail to build atmosphere (for example, details about the street or the fields, or the guard who has captured Daz).
- 4 Use more original and striking imagery or other figurative language.
- 5 Develop the story and characterisation so it reaches a satisfying climax and conclusion.

## Question 2: film review

Read this sample response to part of Question 2.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

I was lucky enough to see the new release of 'Z People 2' yesterday evening. This is the sequel to the very popular 'Z People', which was released in 2016 and starred Zeb Davis (Zed) and Daisy Smith (Zeda) as mutants on the run. It is apparently the best blockbuster on our screens just now, though that isn't saying much when you think of some of the terrible films around at the moment.

The new film lasts 140 minutes and has a detailed plot in which Zed and Zeda are happily living in a small settlement and raising their young child, Zelda. But that all changes when The Ministry decide they want to wipe out all mutant children for ever. The family has to go on the run. On the way they meet an orphan girl who has been left to die in the deserts and take her with them. The question is – can they reach the Great Lake, a place where The Ministry can't reach them? I won't reveal the answer!

Personally, I found the plot a bit boring and it was not as exciting as the first film. However, there were some exciting battles and the special effects and CGI were stunning. The best bit is right at the start when The Ministry attack the settlement where the Z family are living. It is very frightening and you think – well, I did - that everyone will be wiped out.

Davis and Smith are OK in their roles but I wonder if they just did it for the money? Also, they are meant to be much older now but they don't seem to have aged. Weird. Maybe if you're a film star you can't allow yourself to suddenly look old, especially in action films?

[1] key information about film title and background

[2] information about stars but rather brief

[3] some use of terminology appropriate to film review

[4] effective use of present tense to sum up opening of film

[5] sense of personal involvement, but a bit limited

**[6]** expression of personal opinion, but no evidence or supporting information provided

**[7]** some basic detail about the action sequences

**[8]** too informal

**[9]** rather weak analysis of acting

#### TEACHER COMMENT

This is a well constructed opening to the review. It provides a basic overview of the film and then dedicates paragraphs to the plot and the beginning of some evaluation of elements of the film.

There is not a great sense of audience although the material is broadly appropriate. There is some use of language common to film reviews, but the review as a whole does not have the strong sense of voice and authority one would expect.

#### ACTIVITY 3

Rewrite this response to improve it as far as possible. To do this, bear in mind the following points, and the teacher's comments:

- 1** Include more detail about the film (e.g. The director? Other supporting actors/actresses? Something about the genre and expectations?)
- 2** Use a wider range of film/review-related lexis and phraseology.
- 3** Give a sense of viewpoint from earlier in the review, perhaps through use of more loaded adjectives, or humorous comparisons or analogies.
- 4** Strengthen the evaluation with more detailed 'evidence' of what works or doesn't work from the film.
- 5** Complete the review, ensuring that all relevant points are addressed and concluding with an overall evaluation of the film's strengths or weaknesses.

#### Question 3: discursive writing – article

Now read this passage from a sample response to Question 3.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

It is said that everyone will be 'famous for fifteen minutes' but nowadays, quite a lot of ordinary people seem to want more than fifteen minutes. This is possibly the reason why television talent shows aimed at people like you and me have become so popular. But are they a good thing?

I want to start by thinking about why people might want to participate in singing competitions or similar talent shows. I think one of the reasons might be that people think their own lives are dull and boring. They believe that a life of glamour awaits them and also one of untold riches. They see pop stars and movie stars on the screen and think if they enter a talent show it will be their passport to success. They might also think that television audiences – people-power – will see that they are truly

talented. So you could say it is democratic.

Also, why is it audiences find these shows popular? Most of the performers are terrible, aren't they? Perhaps audiences want to see people fail and make a fool of themselves but if that is the case, then it is pretty sad. Laughing at others from the safety of your own home is not brave. But maybe there are other reasons too. For example, celebrities are now very difficult to get close to because of all the people around them. They don't seem 'normal'. They are like royalty. People on shows like these are just like you and me, or so we think. But does that make it OK? I'm not sure.

[1] useful saying provides engaging introduction

[2] question sets up debate

[3] clear indication of structure, but use of first person here not necessary

[4] use of modal form expresses tentative discussion

[5] useful idiom appropriate to context

[6] rather simplistic assertion which is undeveloped

[7] indicates new area for discussion, but is rather informal

[8] informal question tag

[9] links to evidence/further detail

[10] variety of sentence lengths and types to engage reader

#### TEACHER COMMENT

This opening to the article is effective in introducing the main issue for debate and then dedicating separate paragraphs to different sides of the debate.

The tone is intended to be exploratory and balanced but contains rather informal usages here and there, and some more powerfully personal words and phrases occasionally shift the tone to one that is more urgent and assertive.

There is also a lack of 'groundwork' – perhaps more on the background and popularity of the shows as an industry in the opening paragraph would help.

#### ACTIVITY 4

Rewrite this response to improve it as far as possible. To do this, bear

in mind the following points, and the teacher's comments:

- 1** Include additional material about the talent show industry at the start (for example, you could make up some statistics or surveys).
- 2** Make the tone more balanced by removing first person references.
- 3** Remove any particularly informal usages.
- 4** Develop the response by adding paragraphs on issues such as materialist society; the trend for ordinary people to become 'stars' via YouTube and whether such talent shows are a fad or will always be popular.
- 5** Include a conclusion that weighs up both sides of the argument and, if you wish, expresses a tentative personal view.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I can plan and structure three extended writing responses		
I can evaluate sample extended responses and identify strengths and weaknesses		
I can improve sample extended responses taking into account key areas for attention		

## **Well done!**

You have now completed the AS section of this coursebook. Now, go back over the book looking again at the self-assessment checklists you have completed and evaluate what you learned. What did you do well? What do you need to revisit? Remember, learning is a continuous process which requires reiteration and refreshment: it is a great achievement to have come so far – now, make the most of the skills you have developed.

## **Part 2**

### **A Level**



## Section 7

### Language change

# Unit 7.1

## How has English changed?

### Learning objectives

***In this unit, you will:***

- explore the reasons for the changes from Early Modern to contemporary English (AO4)
- develop skills to analyse and synthesise information relating to language change from a variety of sources (AO5).

### Before you start

- 1 Work in a small group to create a mind map of all the reasons you can think of why any language changes. Try to apply your reasons to English.
- 2 Discuss the following questions with a partner:
  - a Where does the English language come from?
  - b What other languages have helped to make up English?

## How and why has English changed?

Language change is a big topic. The English language has continued to develop and evolve over the last two thousand years. This unit will provide you with a brief introduction to the topic, outlining the key language influences in Britain which led to the development of what we know as **Early Modern English**. This is the point at which your study of English begins.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Change** – The English language has changed in a variety of ways from Early Modern English, which developed at the end of the 15th century and is similar to that used by Shakespeare. Discuss the ways in which English has changed from Shakespeare's English to your English. You could consider:

- lexis
- spelling
- syntax
- meaning
- pronunciation.

The following linguistic terms are the specific ways in which words, word order, sounds and meaning bring about change in language:

- **Graphology**: the writing system of a language, as well as other visual elements on the page.
- **Grammar**: the rules for organising meaning in a language. Syntax is part of grammar.
- **Orthography**: the part of language concerned with letters and spelling.
- **Phonology**: the pronunciation and sound patterns which affect understanding of words.
- **Pragmatics**: how the context in which words and phrases are used affects their meaning.
- **Morphology**: the structure of words with their meaning.
- **Lexis**: the lexis of a language.
- **Semantics**: the meaning of words.
- **Syntax**: the order of words in a sentence.

The language origins of English have evolved from the Indo-European family of languages which forms a common root to many European and Asian languages and is now virtually unrecognisable in any form of current English. Over time, the Indo-European root split into different languages and one of these was Celtic.

Celtic was widely spoken in Europe and different forms evolved to be spoken in Britain and Ireland from approximately 600 BCE. Different varieties of Celtic existed. The Irish variety of Celtic, known as 'Goidelic', was the root of Irish Gaelic and Scots Gaelic, as well as other forms of the language. Another root of the Celtic language, 'Brythonic', evolved into Welsh, Cornish and Breton languages. Local forms of this Celtic were spoken throughout Britain.

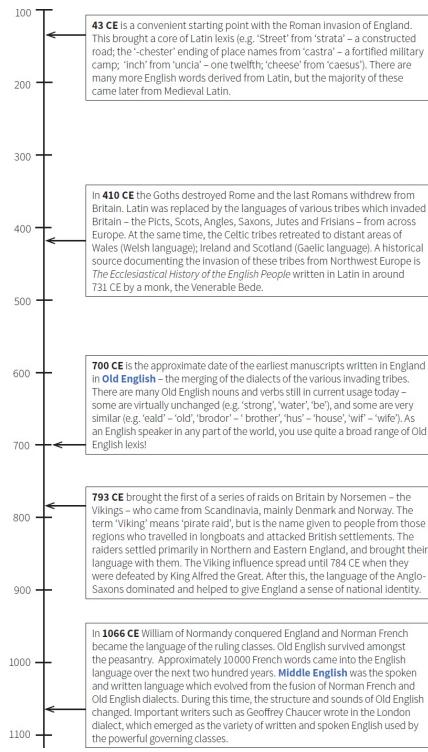


**After the Norman Conquest, French became the dominant language in England.**

The following timeline shows the variety of language influences which have contributed to the nature and composition of English as the language has continued to evolve. Your study of English begins at the end of the 15th century, with Early Modern English, but this timeline will help to remind you that its origins go back very much further!

**ACTIVITY 1**

- a** Use the information about the development of English up until Middle English to draw up your own chart of the major events which brought about changes to the language.
- b** Find two to three examples of the English lexis and/or syntax for each stage of English development.
- c** For each example, give the modern English equivalent as it is used today.



## Early Modern English

Language is a tool, adapted as required by its users. The development of Early Modern English between the years 1500 and 1800 occurred in a period of great change in English social, political and economic life. Some of the key developments of English during this period are shown in the following diagram.



## The Great Vowel Shift

Hugely significant were the changes in pronunciation that took place towards the end of Middle English and continued for approximately 200 years. This is known as the **Great Vowel Shift**, where the pronunciation of vowels, particularly long vowels, changed. This was a complex process, happening faster in some regions than in others. It is very helpful to listen to online recordings of linguists suggesting how the vowels shifted. The changes in pronunciation took place at the same time that spellings of words became standardised and this is a partial explanation of why English has so many words which are not spelt in the way that they are currently pronounced.

Evidence from spelling and rhymes of this period help to prove that these changes in pronunciation took place. For example, before the Great Vowel Shift, 'boots' sounded more like 'boats', and 'feet' like 'fate'. There are several suggested reasons for the changes, including the movement of people in the 14th century to the south-east of England – where accents were different – during and after the devastating Black Death plague, as well as a desire to sound different from the ruling classes. Although they now spoke English, they had more of a French sound to their voices. Vowel shifts in English are still occurring today in a variety of world Englishes. You can find out more about this in [Section 9](#).

Important books such as both William Tyndale's translation and the Authorised King James Version of the Bible, and the works of William Shakespeare, introduced many new words and idioms into the English language. The publication of these influential books in English helped to establish the prestige of the English language.

## Shakespeare's language

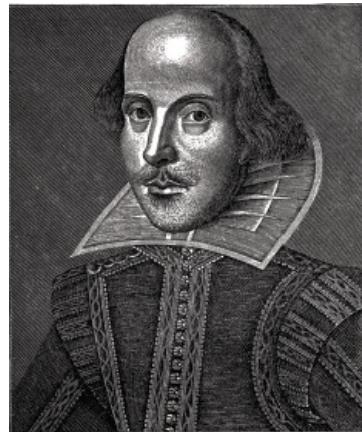
Shakespeare was able to create fresh and unusual imagery by introducing new language idioms which are recognised in many world Englishes. He is credited with introducing over 1700 words which are commonly used in English, such as 'birthplace', 'gossip', 'scuffle', 'zany', 'torture'. He also introduced linguistic variations, such as changing nouns into verbs (e.g. in *Othello*, 'shelter' (noun) becomes 'ensheltered' (verb)).

The following piece is made up entirely of quotations from Shakespeare.

If you cannot understand my argument, and declare 'It's Greek to me', you are quoting Shakespeare; if you claim to be more sinned against than sinning, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall your salad days, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you act more in sorrow

than in anger; if your wish is father to the thought; if your lost property has vanished into thin air, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffered from green-eyed jealousy, if you have played fast and loose, if you have been tongue-tied, a tower of strength, hoodwinked or in a pickle, if you have knitted your brows, made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremony, danced attendance (on your lord and master), laughed yourself into stitches, had short shrift, cold comfort or too much of a good thing, if you have seen better days or lived in a fool's paradise – why, be that as it may, the more fool you, for it is a foregone conclusion that you are (as good luck would have it) quoting Shakespeare.

**From *Enthusiasms*, by Bernard Levin.**



## ACTIVITY 2

- 1** **a**In pairs, identify five of the Shakespearean phrases you recognise from the extract and explain their meaning in your own words.  
**b** Select another five phrases which you are less, or not at all, familiar with and suggest the meaning of each phrase.  
**c** Using your results from activities **a** and **b**, write a short story using at least 10 of Shakespeare's invented words and phrases taken from this paragraph. Share your work with another pair.

In doing this activity, you will be introducing these phrases into common usage so that they spread and become established!

- 2** **a**Look at the following two Shakespeare quotes. Revise your understanding of the function of nouns and verbs by looking back to [Unit 1.3](#), then explain to a partner some examples of the innovations Shakespeare made to the existing language.

*'Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle'*

(The Duke of York speaking in Richard II, Act 2, Scene 3, Line 86)

*Why, what read you there / That have so cowarded and chased  
your blood / Out of appearance?*

(King Harry speaking in Henry V, Act 2, Scene 2, Lines 74-76)

- b** Work together with a partner to think of three more nouns and use them as verbs. Write a sentence for each of the new verbs you have created so that their meaning is clear. This is the way that language changes!

## Late Modern English

In many ways, **Late Modern English** is a continuation of Early Modern English, with regards to spelling, punctuation and grammar. The big difference is in the lexis, which has expanded in response to industrial and social developments as well as **colonialism**. Because Early Modern English applies to language from the 18th century, the term **Present Day English (PDE)** can be used to describe the varieties of English used by those who are living.

### The Industrial Revolution

During the industrial developments of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a great need to find new words for things which had not existed previously – for example, ‘locomotive’, ‘factory’, ‘turbine’, ‘power-loom’ – many of which have now dropped out of use. In addition to the new industrial products, social changes led to the introduction of thousands of new words in many different areas. Some examples are as follows.

Area	Examples
Fashion	‘mackintosh’, ‘leotard’, ‘ jeggings’
Food	‘cereals’, ‘pasta’, ‘ciabatta’
Leisure	‘rugby’, ‘hike’, ‘marathon’
Medicine	‘ambulance’, ‘stethoscope’, ‘aspirin’
Chemistry	‘halogen’, ‘thallium’, ‘germinal’
Psychology	‘agoraphobia’, ‘hysteria’, ‘psychiatry’

### Colonialism, travel and empire-building

The English language was not widely spoken in nearby Wales, Scotland and Ireland until approximately 1700 AD. The speed of colonial expansion which started in the 1700s meant that the language spread widely throughout the world. It borrowed extensively from the language of the countries in which English speakers settled and ruled the native population, such as in India, Australia and America. Different landscapes, environments and ways of life meant that new Englishes developed, while **British English** imported and incorporated much new lexis. You can find out more about new Englishes in [Section 9](#).

#### ••• THINK LIKE ... A LEXICOGRAPHER

A lexicographer is someone responsible for examining how words come into being and how they change in use and meaning.

The major English dictionaries are constantly revising the words they include. You are in charge of one dictionary’s section that covers fashion, music and technology. Work in a small group to suggest the following:

- Ten words you think should be dropped from the dictionary because they are no longer in regular use and are becoming dated.
- Ten new words which have recently come into common usage. Give a definition of each word and suggest how and why they have come into the language.

A huge body of detailed information is readily available about the processes of language change and the reasons for these. You will find information in books, research papers and online. You could increase your knowledge by conducting further research of the topic.

#### ACTIVITY 3

Read the two extracts that follow and list the type of language changes between 1701 and 2016.

#### Text A: Of Behaviour at the Table

Sit not down till thou art bidden by thy Parents or Superiors.  
 Find not fault with any thing that is given thee.  
 Speak not at the Table; if thy Superiors be discoursing, meddle not with the matter.  
 Frown not, nor murmur if there be any thing at the Table which thy Parents or Strangers with them eat of, while thou thy self hast none given thee.  
 When thou riseth from Table, take away thy Plate, and having made a bow at the side of the Table where thou satest, withdraw, removing also thy Seat.

**From *The School of Manners*, by John Garretson (1701).**

### Text B: Big Kid

While kids this age should be well versed in table manners, they're the ones who bring their iPads to the table, grunt in response to questions, and eat as fast as possible to get back to whatever's on TV.

To ensure good manners, get your older kids to start acting like grown-ups at the table by having them place their napkins on their laps, encouraging them to use their cutlery properly, and by teaching them not to dig in before everyone has been served.

The other thing kids this age have in common is complaining about the meal they're served. 'I suggest parents say, "OK, start cooking for yourself. But the rules are that your meal has to be healthy and you have to leave the kitchen spotless,'" says Bunnage. 'Either they'll try it once and decide mom's food tastes great, or they end up loving to cook and clean and become the family chef.'

**Adapted from article 'Age-by-age guide to teaching your child table manners', by Lisa van de Geyn, *Today's Parent* (2016).**

In Text A above, you'll have seen some **archaic** vocabulary. The following table shows the archaic and modern forms of the second person.

	<b>Subject of the sentence</b>	<b>Object of the sentence</b>	<b>Possessive form</b>	<b>Regular verb ending</b>	<b>Examples of irregular verb endings</b>
<b>Archaic forms</b>					
Second person singular	thou	thee	Thy, thine	-est	art, hast, dost
Second person plural	ye	you	your, yours	none	are
<b>Modern forms</b>					
Second person singular	you	you	your, yours	none	are, have, do
Second person plural	you	you	your, yours	none	are, have, do

*Thy/thine* (*your/yours* in modern English) were used in the equivalent way of *a/an*. *Thine* was used where the following word began with a vowel, for example *thine apple*. *Thy* was used where the following word began with a consonant, for example *thy words*.

In this period, the use of *thou* and *ye* also distinguished social class. *Thou* was used as a more familiar form of address, as well as to people who were considered to belong to a lower social class.

### ACTIVITY 4

Evaluate the following student response to the task in [Activity 3](#).

- Has the student compared the syntax and vocabulary structure of the two texts?
- Has the student compared the levels of formality between the two texts?
- Has the student discussed the ways in which advice about table manners has been given by the authors?
- How have the two writers adopted the position of an expert?
- Has the student discussed the contrasting attitudes of the two texts?
- Has the student given brief but relevant examples for all points made?

- Both texts are advisory – offering help. Text A is directed at the children and text B is aimed at parents. As advisory texts they use imperatives to ensure the directives are followed eg ‘sit not down’ and ‘get your older kids to start acting like grown ups’.
- The 1701 text is full of negative advice and the difference is that the verb is inverted/turned around: ‘find not fault’. The helper, modal verb forming the negative ‘do not’ is not in use. By comparison, the modern advice is positive with suggestions to encourage good behaviour such as ‘by having them place their napkins on their laps’.
- The 1701 text uses the archaic second person pronouns ‘thee’ and ‘thou’, contrasting with the modern ‘you’.
- Archaic lexis is used in the 1701 extract (‘satest’); with dated lexis such as ‘bidden’ not associated with the more relaxed, colloquial register used in the second extract (‘dig in’; ‘kids’).
- The social attitudes of the time are also evident. The 1701 extract is concerned to emphasise that young people must be silent (‘meddle not with the matter’) but the modern advice seems to be the opposite, to try to get the children to speak: ‘grunt in response to questions’.

**Reflection:** Compare the student’s notes with your own. In what ways are your notes stronger or weaker? To help you, consider the following points:

- Has the student compared the syntax and lexical structure of the two texts?
- Has the student compared the levels of formality between the two texts?
- Has the student discussed the ways in which advice about table manners has been given by the authors?
- Has the student discussed how the two writers adopt the positions of experts?
- Has the student discussed the contrasting attitudes of the two texts?
- Has the student given brief but relevant examples for all points made?

## ACTIVITY 5

This activity helps you understand the very significant language changes which have taken place during the period being studied. The following extracts will enable you to see the specific ways in which written language changes.

Study each extract, which has the general theme of music. Work with a partner to pick out changes in the following areas:

- Graphology: the writing system
- Orthography: the letters and spelling
- Pragmatics: the social context and meaning of words and phrases

- Morphology: the structure, and building blocks of words
- Lexis: the words
- Syntax: the word order
- Semantics: the meaning of words

**Text C:** The first speech in Shakespeare's play 'Twelfth Night', thought to have been written in 1601-02 (although first published in 1623). Duke Orsino expresses his views on music and its link with love.

**Actus Primus, Scæna Prima.**

*Enter Orsino Duke of Illyria, Curio, and other Lords.*

*Duke.*

IF Musicke be the food of Loue, play on,!  
 Giue me excesse of it: that surfetting,  
 The appetite may sicken, and so dye.  
 That straine agen, it had a dying fall:  
 O, it came ore my eare, like the sweet sound  
 That breathes vpon a banke of Violets;  
 Stealing, and giuing Odour. Enough, no more,  
 'Tis not so sweet now, as it was before.  
 O spirit of Loue, how quicke and fresh art thou,  
 That notwithstanding thy capacitiie,  
 Receiueth as the Sea. Nought enters there,  
 Of what validity, and pitch so ere,  
 But falles into abatement, and low price  
 Euen in a minute; so full of shapes is fancie,  
 That it alone, is high fantasticall.

**From 'Twelfe Night, Or what you will' from the First Folio, by William Shakespeare.**

**Text D:** Part of Thomas Hardy's 1896 preface to his novel *Under the Greenwood Tree*, which is about a group of musicians who played in a country church. In the preface, Hardy writes about the traditions of the village people who used to play.

The zest of these bygone instrumentalists must have been keen and staying to take them, as it did, on foot every Sunday after a toilsome week, through all weathers, to the church, which often lay at a distance from their homes. They usually received so little in payment for their performances that their efforts were really a labour of love. In the parish I had in my mind when writing the present tale, the gratuities received yearly by the musicians at Christmas were somewhat as follows: From the manor-house ten shillings and a supper; from the vicar ten shillings; from the farmers five shillings each; from each cottage-household one shilling; amounting altogether to not more than ten shillings a head annually—just enough, as an old executant told me, to pay for their fiddle-strings, repairs, rosin, and music-paper.

**From *Under the Greenwood Tree*, by Thomas Hardy.**

**Text E:** An extract from an article on the National Public Radio (NPR) website. NPR is a non-profit media organisation which produces programmes for public radio stations in the United States.

### **Women Are The Fabric Of 21st Century Pop**

In 2014 I listened to ‘Dancing On My Own’ by Robyn every day for 24 straight days. I wasn’t alone; four of my friends did it, too. We were on a road trip, driving from Massachusetts to the west coast, down through California and back again. Someone put Robyn on the car stereo the first night of our trip, on a whim. This was four years after the song came out — just enough time for it to have faded into that somewhere between short- and long-term memories. I had maybe listened to the song a handful of times in the intervening years. I thought of it as a *good* song, but perhaps one whose moment had passed. But listening to it that first night of the trip — deliriously thrilled and sleep-deprived, surrounded by the warm buzz of excitement and nerves and the open road — it occurred to me (and everyone in the car around me) that it was, actually, a *great* song. So the next day, someone recommended listening to it again, to lift everyone’s spirits in the midst of a daylong drive west.

**From ‘Women Are the Fabric of 21st Century Pop’,  
by Marissa Lorusso, [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)**

### **Self-assessment checklist**

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I know the important stages in the development of the English Language and the reasons for the changes in the language		
I know the characteristics of Early Modern English		
I know the changes and developments which have produced Late Modern English		
I am able to identify and comment on changes in English lexis and syntax, through text analysis.		

# Unit 7.2

## How language changes

### Learning objectives

**In this unit, you will:**

- explore the different ways in which language changes (AO4)
- identify processes of language change through an analysis of texts (AO5).

### Before you start

- 1 Work with a partner to classify the words in the following list into: those which are in current use; those you recognise but are not widely used; those which are no longer used as they have become **obsolete**.  
*trow; Instagram; floppy disk; quockerwodger; mawkish; avatar; cassette; guru; scallywag; amazeballs; chilly bin; fortnight; hussy*
- 2 Share your ideas with other people in the class. Are you all in agreement? Discuss the reasons why you think the dated and obsolete words have fallen out of use.
- 3 Suggest the processes which have led to the formation and use of the following words in English:  
*infotainment; to text; spaghetti; landline; tweet; CAPTCHA; bus; Barbie; sim card; croissant; motel; bae*

## Processes of language change

English, like all living languages, is in a constant process of change as economic, social and political conditions require different forms and styles of communication. This unit examines how words in English change their meaning and pronunciation, and the different ways in which new words are formed. Although syntax does change, it is in the **lexis** that the majority of the changes occur. The following information explains some of the ways in which language changes as new words come into use.

### The formation of new words

As language changes, new words are formed as they are changed from existing words, which is the process of **derivation**, and as they are borrowed and adapted from other languages. The following list summarises the most significant processes which continue to be important to changes in the English language.

- **Coinage** is the creation of new words (e.g. 'Google'). Coined words are often nouns but they can also be changed to verbs as in 'to google'. Have you 'googled' something today? Some words appear to come from nothing, when a **neologism** is created. Advertising is one area with many neologisms, as the makers of the products want them to be memorable (e.g. 'snax'). New products may take the name of their inventors or discoverers and become **eponyms**, such as 'sandwich', 'Fahrenheit'; 'Alzheimer's', 'hooligan'.



#### Sandwich has become eponymous - find out the origin of the word.

- **Derivation** can occur in many ways as a new word is formed from an existing one. The addition of a **prefix** (e.g. 'like' to 'dislike') changes the meaning, or a **suffix** (e.g. 'slow' to 'slowly') changes the function of a word. Prefixes and suffixes are added to the **root** or the **stem** of a word. In some instances, the derivation changes the function of a word without a change to its form. For example, 'clean', as an adjective, becomes the verb 'to clean'. The changing of the meaning or function of a word without a change to its form is known as **conversion**.

The following list shows specific ways in which words are formed. Many of these formations involve some sort of contraction to the word or words involved. This shortening is known as **telescoping**.

- Initial letters of a name or description can form completely new words, called acronyms. The word may be pronounced as the initials (e.g. 'UN', 'USA'), as a new word (e.g. 'UNESCO', 'scuba', 'radar'), or sometimes a mixture of both (e.g. 'DVD-ROM'; 'JPEG').
- **Compounding** makes new words from joining two complete words, commonly nouns, verbs, adjectives, to form a word with an independent meaning (e.g. 'flower' + 'pot' = 'flowerpot', 'tooth' + 'brush' = 'toothbrush'). Sometimes a hyphen is used to clarify meaning (e.g. 'English-Language learners').
- **Blending** two parts of different words is a common strategy. Famous examples are in Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky' poem in his story book *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, where 'slithy' blends 'slimy' and 'lithe', and 'galumph' blends 'gallop' and 'triumph'. These are not widely used, but are early examples of blending or 'portmanteau' words which combine elements of (mainly) two words to form a new one. Other examples are 'motel' ('motor/hotel') and 'Spanglish' ('Spanish/English'). There are other

combinations, such as using the whole part of one word (e.g. ‘fanzine’ ('fan/magazine') and ‘Eurasia’ ('Europe/Asia'). Blending of words is found widely in the media and online.

- **Clipping** is the shortening of longer words, such as ‘maths’ or ‘math’ from ‘mathematics’, ‘exam’ from ‘examination’ and ‘photo’ from ‘photograph’. Clipped words are often informal and keep the sense and grammatical function of the original word.
- **Coalescence** is when sounds are clipped from endings of words or between two words where the articulation merges or *coalesces*. Informal speech, often produced at speed, leads to such changes in pronunciation. For example, a great majority of English speakers pronounce /wh/ as /w/. ‘Whine’ is pronounced in the same way as ‘wine’ – the separate /w/ and /h/ sounds have merged or coalesced.
- **Backformation** is a form of clipping where a long word or phrase is shortened and gives a new word in a different form – nouns to verbs are common (e.g. the noun ‘babysitter’ becomes the verb ‘babysit’).
- **Onomatopoeia** and **reduplication** are processes which replicate the sounds of a word (e.g. animal sounds ‘moo’ or ‘quack’) as well as duplicate sounds, often making the resulting words sound lively and informal (e.g. ‘chick-flick’, ‘mish-mash’, ‘ping-pong’).

### ACTIVITY 1

Remind yourself of the ways in which new words have entered the English language by naming the process which has occurred for the following words.

- Automate (from ‘automation’)
- Brunch (from ‘breakfast’ and ‘lunch’)
- UNICEF (The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund)
- Celsius (Anders Celsius (1701–44) developed the idea behind the temperature scale)
- Fridge (from ‘refrigerator’)
- Pitter-patter
- Greenhouse
- Crowdsourcing

### KEY CONCEPT

**Change** – The English language is in a process of constant change over time.

Read a short piece from one of Shakespeare’s plays that you may have studied and discuss the differences between the language in your extract and the English which you speak.

## Changes through borrowing

**Borrowing** has significantly enriched the English lexis by incorporating words from the languages of invaders and settlers. Words derived from Latin (e.g. ‘pictura’, ‘flamma’, ‘schola’) and from Greek (e.g. ‘cosmos’, ‘ethnos’, ‘hyper’) have been modified only slightly for current usage. Words derived from French are also common in the English language (e.g. ‘ballet’, ‘croissant’, ‘bouquet’). Of the 1000 most frequently used words in English, approximately 50% come from French and Latin. Globalisation, trade and travel have accelerated language change through borrowing. Words borrowed from other countries are also known as *loanwords*, although the words stay as part of the English language. The Spanish, French, Dutch, Flemish, German, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Hindi, Māori, as well as varieties of Chinese, Aboriginal Australian, and American Indian languages are only some of those which have contributed loanwords to broaden the lexis of the English language.

## Changes in grammar and style

While the English language continues to change, much of the change to its grammar took place around the 16th century:

- Nouns became used as verbs (e.g. ‘chair’, ‘rain’, ‘thunder’).
- The verb ‘do’ emerged as an auxiliary (e.g. ‘do you speak?’ instead of the inverted verb and subject ‘speakest thou?’)
- The ‘thou/you’ distinction disappeared.
- The modern verb ending ‘-s’ replaced ‘-th’ (e.g. ‘speaketh’ became ‘speaks’)

- ‘Its’ was introduced as a possessive pronoun (e.g. ‘the cat jumped into its basket’). ‘It’s’ as a contraction of ‘it is’ came into use.
- By Early Modern English, nouns, other than those directly relating to gender such as ‘man’ and ‘girl’, became **neuter**.
- The double negative became considered to be incorrect (e.g. ‘That picture is not unattractive’).
- English became more reliant on word order instead of using **inflection**, which is where the form of the word, almost always its ending, shows what its function is. Examples of inflections are the tense of the verb (e.g. ‘I jump’/‘I jumped’), singular and plural numbers (e.g. ‘girl’/‘girls’ and case (e.g. ‘boy’/‘boy’s’/‘boys’)).

The early alphabet formation, the graphology, now resembled that of Late Modern English.

## ACTIVITY 2

Complete the following activities in small groups.

- 1 Discover from which languages the following words have come into English.  
*kangaroo, tsunami, jungle, ski, pizza, canyon, haka, magazine, pyjamas, algebra, chauffeur, yam, capsise, saga, yogurt, barbecue, baguette, pasta, radio, orphan, poncho, zeitgeist*
- 2 With a partner, research 20 words in the English language which have been borrowed from at least five other languages, for example, French, German, Spanish, Māori, Navajo, Hindi and so on. Your findings could then be used in the quiz in Question 3.
- 3 Quick Quiz: search online for lists of prefixes and suffixes. Three examples of each are given:

Prefix	Meaning	Words using the prefix
mis-	wrongly	misunderstood misjudge
sub-	under	submarine substandard
e-	electronic	email ecommerce
Suffix	Meaning	Words using suffix
-ment	action/process	enjoyment amazement
-ful	full of	delightful
-er	someone who	actor

Find three more examples of prefixes and suffixes, their meanings and words using these forms.

## Language change in the digital world

The process of change to the English language through the addition of new words is a dynamic process, assisted by global media and social network sites. Words can become part of English very easily if enough people use them. Fluent English speakers can also play with language and invent new lexis for an immediate impact, and new words can become viral very quickly – they are like slang in that they are current, in widespread use and then date very quickly.

English is a common world language on the internet, in science and technology, so global introductions of new lexis in these areas are also added to the English language lexis.

English language change accompanies social changes. We need new English words to describe developments in the fields of science and technology, and changes in social values. At the same time, words drop into disuse as speakers have no need for them (for instance, some of Shakespeare’s language is no longer used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century). These words are called **archaisms**.

### ACTIVITY 3

Look at the following examples of archaisms. With a partner, research the meaning of each word. Suggest reasons why these words have fallen into disuse.

*cordwainer, cottier, cutpurse, fandangle, scullion, swain, relict, wain, yclept*

### Changes in meaning

The study of the ways in which words change their meaning is known as **etymology**. The many influences from various foreign languages on the English language has led to two or more words having the same meaning. Sometimes this has led to specialisation. For example, what is the difference between 'lamb' and 'mutton' and 'chickens' and 'poultry'? English has many synonyms from different origins.

Changes to word meaning can take place in the following ways:

- **Amelioration** is the process by which the meaning of a word changes to become more positive. A well-known example is the word 'nice', which, when it first appeared in about 1300 AD, meant 'clumsy' or 'stupid'. By the late 13<sup>th</sup> century the meaning had shifted to 'senseless', 'foolish' or 'silly'. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century it shifted again to mean 'fussy'. Its meaning gradually became more positive, to mean 'precise' – a meaning it still carries today – and then 'delightful'. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century it had come to mean 'kind' and 'thoughtful'. How would you define the word today?
- **Pejoration** is the reverse process by which the meaning of a word becomes more negative than its meaning in earlier times. For example, 'silly' originally meant 'blessed'. To be blessed, it was thought, was to be innocent, and not have sufficient brains to work things out. This is only a short step from being 'foolish', which is the current meaning of the word.
- **Broadening** is the process by which a word expands from its original meaning and becomes more general. Examples of this are 'business', which originally meant being anxious and full of cares but has now broadened to include all kinds of work; 'cool', in the sense of style, originally only applied to music, but now applied to all artistic fields; 'bird' ('bridd') originally meant only a young bird; and 'pudding' was originally a sausage made with animal intestines.
- **Narrowing** is the process by which a word takes on a more restricted meaning. For example, 'girl' originally meant 'young person' and 'meat' originally meant any form of food (and not just that from animals), while 'hound' originally meant any sort of dog (and not a specific breed).

### ACTIVITY 4

- 1 Research the change in meaning over time from Middle English to the current use, for the following words.
  - a Amelioration: 'pretty', 'geek', 'democrat', 'sophisticated'
  - b Pejoration: 'notorious', 'awful', 'conspiracy', 'cunning'
  - c There are many examples of words which have changed their meanings over a very short time (for example, 'wicked', 'headache', 'wireless', 'blackberry', 'laptop', 'mouse'). In small groups, discuss the ways in which any of these words have changed their meaning. Then, discuss other examples which you know. Suggest the reasons for the change in meaning and why it might have happened so quickly.
- 2 a Work with a partner to research how the following words have broadened their meanings.  
*virus, cookie, companion, broadcast, bookmark*  
b Work with a partner to research how the following words have narrowed their meanings. *starve, wife, vulgar, accident, fowl*  
c Take one word from each group and discuss the possible ways that the changes in meaning might have occurred.

### Social media and language change

Language change is a living means of communication for the people who speak it. Language does not change of its own accord, but is changed by the people who speak it. Perhaps the strongest evidence for language change can be found in the language of social media, where the speed of change is greatest.

Social media allows global sharing of experiences in real time through video, pictures or text on various platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat. You are the experts here, so examples will be limited since the speed of change is so great that they may be out of date by the book's publication! The same processes of language change (e.g. coinage, derivation and blending) are apparent in social media, with many of the same debates about language change and standards.

The written language of social media has produced new forms, such as blogs, chat rooms and forums, wikis, texting, social bookmarking, tweets and podcasts. You will be able to add more, but all of these have produced distinctive new lexis, syntax and styles of language. Tweeting, as a specific example, shows how technology influences language: the limit on the number of characters available to transmit the tweet immediately gives brevity. Initially used as a kind of online diary, tweets are much more an online news service so, already, there are changes in the function.

### ACTIVITY 5

- 1 In small groups, discuss the extent of your social media usage over an average week. Talk about the ways in which you use language for each particular form of social media. Compare your responses with the rest of the class.
- 2 In a 2013 lecture, available online, Linguist David Crystal said 'People think that the internet is having a major influence on English; that English is not the same as it was twenty years ago. That's rubbish. The English language is almost identical to what it was twenty years ago.'

In small groups, create a chart to support and oppose this statement. Think particularly of the language of social media which you use.

### Language change and standards

Language change occurs as lifestyles change. The following passage is from an article about a publisher's decision to remove more traditional words from a children's dictionary and replace them with new lexis.

#### Oxford Junior Dictionary's replacement of 'natural' words with 21st-century terms sparks outcry

'A' should be for acorn, 'B' for buttercup and 'C' for conker, not attachment, blog and chatroom, according to a group of authors, including Margaret Atwood and Andrew Motion who are 'profoundly alarmed' about the loss of a **slew** of words associated with the natural world from the Oxford Junior Dictionary, and their replacement with words "associated with the increasingly interior, solitary childhoods of today".

The 28 authors, including Atwood, Motion, Michael Morpurgo and Robert Macfarlane, warn that the decision to cut around 50 words connected with nature and the countryside from the 10,000-entry children's dictionary, is "shocking and poorly considered" in the light of the decline in outdoor play for today's children. They are calling on publisher Oxford University Press to reverse its decision and, if necessary, to bring forward publication of a new edition of the dictionary to do so.

The likes of almond, blackberry and crocus first made way for analogue, block graph and celebrity in the Oxford Junior Dictionary in 2007, with protests at the time around the loss of a host of religious words such as bishop, saint and sin. The current 2012 edition maintained the changes, and instead of catkin, cauliflower, chestnut and clover, today's edition of the dictionary, which is aimed at seven-year-olds, features cut and paste, broadband and analogue.

The campaign has been pulled together by Laurence Rose, who works for the RSPB and who provided a list of words taken out, including hamster, heron, herring, kingfisher, lark, leopard, lobster, magpie, minnow, mussel, newt, otter, ox, oyster and panther.

**Adapted from 'Oxford Junior Dictionary's replacement of "natural" words with 21st-century terms sparks outcry',**

**slew:** a great number

### ACTIVITY 6

- 1 The Oxford Junior Dictionary has a limit of 10,000 words. Work with a partner to suggest why words connected with nature and the countryside have been omitted in the new edition of the dictionary and replaced with new lexis.
- 2 What do the publisher's decisions reveal about the ways in which certain lexis declines to reflect the changing lifestyle of the language speakers?

#### THINK LIKE ... A LEXICOGRAPHER

Imagine you are a lexicographer, the compiler of dictionary. You have been asked to make some decisions about words to be included in the new edition of a junior dictionary.

- 1 Choose 15 words which you feel have become unimportant to be excluded.
- 2 Choose another 15 words which you would replace them with.
- 3 Write one paragraph to give your reasons for excluding the words which you consider out of date.
- 4 Write one paragraph giving reasons for your inclusion of the new words.
- 5 Write a concluding paragraph linking your word choices with the changing lifestyles of the teenagers who will use your dictionary.

### Language change and standards of English

Language is both personal and public and you will learn in [Section 10](#) that the self and language are interconnected. We each speak a variety of language and we are all aware of the varieties of spoken and written language that swamp our daily lives. For many people, language change involves a decline in the standards of English. This view is often linked to the perceived superiority of one variety over another. This is a **prescriptivist** view, as opposed to the **descriptivist** approach that language is made up of what people say and write and that no one variety is superior. This approach considers that there are no right and wrong standards in language as long as communication and understanding are clear.

The different attitudes are significant when one variety of English may be promoted at an educational and official level, and where guidelines for clear communication are required.

### ACTIVITY 7

Work with a partner to research views about prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes to English language change. For example, you might want to find out more about Jean Aitchison, who has written extensively about attitudes to language change.

## Question practice

Read the following question, extracts and student response. Then either rewrite or improve the student's response or write your own, responding to the points made in the teacher comment.

Read the following three extracts about ketchup, a spicy sauce made from tomatoes and vinegar.

Describe the processes of language change which appear in the extracts.

### Extract from a modern food blog

The word ketchup comes from the Chinese word 'kōe-chiap' or 'ke-tsiap', meaning 'brine of pickled fish or shellfish'. The original Chinese type of ketchup tasted more like soy, and did, of course, contain fish brine, plus herbs and spices.

**From 'Ketchup's colourful past', by Patricia B. Mitchell,  
[FoodHistory.com](http://FoodHistory.com).**

### Extract from an 18th-century recipe

Take a wide-mouth'd bottle, put therein a pint of the beft white wine vinegar, putting in ten or twelve cloves of efchalot peeled and just bruified; then take a quarter of a pint of the beft langoon white wine, boil it a little, and put to it twelve or fourteen anchovies wafhed and fhred, and diffolve them in the wine, and when cold, put them in the wine, and when cold, put them in the bottle; then take a quarter of a pint more of white wine, and put in it mace, ginger fliced, a few cloves, a fpoonful of whole pepper juft bruified, and let them boil all a little; when near cold, flice in almoft a whole nutmeg, and fome lemon peel, and likewife put in two or three fpoonfuls of horfe-radifh; then ftop it clofe, and for a week fhake it once or twice a day; then ufe it; it is good to put into fifh fauce, or any favoury difh of meat; you may add to it the clear liquor that comes from muhrooms.

**'To make English Katchup', by Eliza Smith,  
*The Compleat Housewife***

### Extract from a news feature

Fish and chips, bacon butties, hamburgers ... greasy food usually demands a good glug of ketchup. The sweetness and acidity of this well-loved condiment cuts through fat. In truth, though, it's so much more than just a condiment. To me, it's a seasoning tool and flavour enhancer with a fantastic umami quality.

Ketchup seems to have its origins in east Asia. I believe it started out as some kind of fermented fish sauce, popular long before tomatoes were added to the mix. Early recipes for it have been around since the 18th century, as well as versions in which mushrooms were the main ingredient. When you break it down, it's really quite a simple, but perfect, balance of sweet, savoury and acidic.

**From 'How to cook with ketchup', by Florence Knight, *The Guardian*.**

**STUDENT RESPONSE**

The origin of the name ‘ketchup’ shows the English borrowing lexis. Here, it’s from Chinese, so ketchup is a loanword, however, the spelling has been modified. The borrowing continues in the news feature with ‘umami’ used.

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century recipe shows the formation of the letters is not that of Early Modern English; the ‘s’ letters have an /ʃ/-type graphology for almost, but not all, places where an /s/ would be used (“fpoonfuls” and ‘comes’), so there is an inconsistency of the alphabet representation.

All texts use a lexical field of food ingredients and the spelling of these is consistent with modern spelling (‘lemon’, ‘ginger’, ‘mushrooms’).

The register of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century recipe is informative. The sentences are long and each instruction is separated by a semi colon. Archaism (‘therein’ has fallen out of use) and a change of meaning is evident with the use of the word ‘liquor’, which today has narrowed, from a general description of juices, to a description of an alcoholic drink.

The tone of the news feature is much more informal with onomatopoeia (‘glug’) to replicate the sauce sound. The tone is friendly and, although both the news feature and the 18<sup>th</sup> century text address the reader with ‘You’, the modern text seems much more friendly.

**[1]** Awareness that borrowing is important to language change: a relevant comment with additional information about the modification of the spelling.

**[2]** The student is aware of the process of graphology change: there is no mention of a possible change in pronunciation. Although it is not possible to deduce change of pronunciation from the written text, the student could have made a reference to changing spelling patterns which were linked to pronunciation.

**[3]** Interesting point about the same spelling of some food items. It is valid as it shows that some elements of language have remained unchanged.

**[4]** Another relevant point to do with word change and the loss of function of certain words. Although this is recognisable in current language, it is restricted to formal, legal language.

**[5]** Relevant awareness of narrowing process and change of meaning in modern use.

#### TEACHER COMMENT

All parts of the response were relevant and directed towards language change. Specific processes were mentioned with examples. There was no real comment about the language of the news feature, examples of colloquial informality and personal engagement of the writer, or the first-person pronoun reflecting the ideas of the writer. There was omission of the syntax of the 18th-century recipe and the complex sentence structure broken by semi colons. A suggestion that this would have a different layout in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would have been useful.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the grammatical, and lexical changes which take place continuously and can discuss examples of each		
I understand the link between social changes and language changes and can discuss examples of each		
I understand the significant processes of semantic changes and language change to word structure		
I understand the contrasting views about language change and standards of English		

# **Unit 7.3**

## **Language change in the digital world**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- demonstrate understanding of the linguistic issues and concepts relating to English Language and the internet, including social media, as they relate to language change (AO4)
- demonstrate understanding of the methods and approaches used in analysing and commenting on internet communication and social media in relation to language change (AO4)
- write effectively and appropriately on language change in the digital world (AO2).

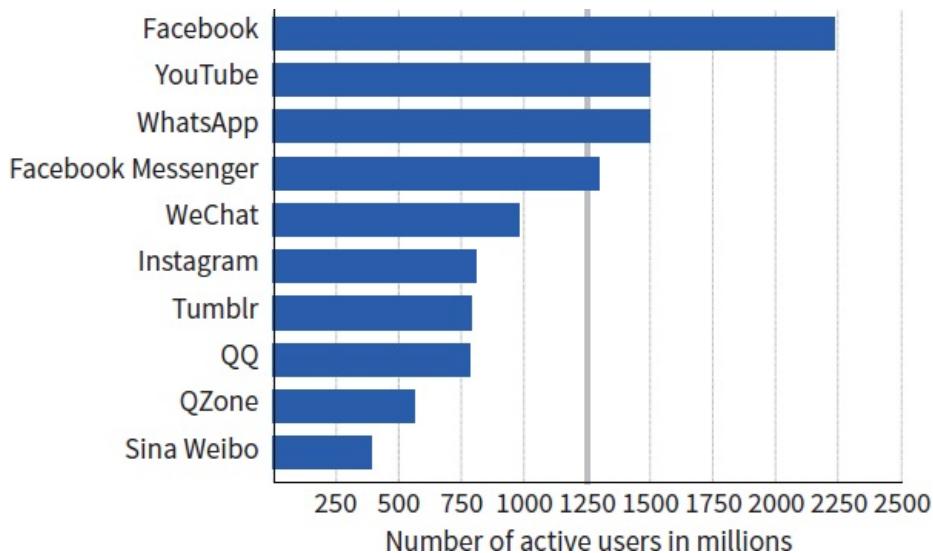
### **Before you start**

It is highly likely that you are expert in the contents of this unit! The familiarity you have with the internet, including social media networking sites, will enable you to gather and analyse information on the specific ways in which these forms of communication contribute to language change. Discuss the following questions with a partner.

- 1 How is your digital communication with people you know different from face-to-face contact?
- 2 What new words, which specifically relate to using the internet, do you use?
- 3 In what ways do you think that the English language has been affected by the digital world?

## Digital English: global use

A wealth of statistical data provides evidence for the fundamental and rapid changes brought about by the development of the internet and its role in the lives of people around the globe. Over the last 25 years, internet use has increased rapidly. In 1995, less than 1% of the world's population was connected. That has now risen to 40% and is rising all the time. Approximately 51% of websites are in English, closely followed by Chinese. The worldwide usage of social media sites is also very large. The most popular social networking sites are shown in the following graph.



### Most popular social networks worldwide, as of April 2018.

In Unit 7.2 you learnt that language serves the people who use it according to their purposes in communicating. Young people today may find it hard to imagine a world without social media, such as discussion forums, blogs, podcasts, social network and content-sharing sites, but all of these relatively new developments in communication have changed the nature of interaction between the people who use them. In the traditional forms of mass media, such as TV, radio, newspapers and magazines, the direction of interaction was from one source to the many. In social media, the content is published by anyone and the free-flow of information on these diverse platforms is to a potentially global audience.

There are many areas relating to the characteristics and usage of social media which you may wish to discuss and research independently. In this unit, the focus will be on how social media has contributed to language change.

### ACTIVITY 1

The term 'blog' is a blend of 'web' + 'log'.

- 1 Discuss, in small groups, the specific style of language used in blogs. If you have access to suitable blogs, you can examine the type of English used. One characteristic is informal language from a first-person perspective, but you will find others.
- 2 Use the characteristics of blogging language to build a class blog where each student takes it in turns to write posts on a topic which interests them. Other students can then add comments. Take turns to analyse the style of language involved and use this to write up notes on blogging language styles.

## Online communication and language change

Social media enables different modes of communication: blogs, forums and other platforms allow participants to interact and share activities, feelings, opinions, breaking news, gossip and other **discourse genres**, such as jokes, videos or gifs (animated images). The exchanges of the information are global and instant with the majority in the public forum, although some forms of one-to-one communication exist, such as private messaging on Facebook.

This online communication means that new forms of English are now used:

- **Meaning change:** social media takes words already in use and adds specific, additional meanings (e.g. 'pin', 'friend', 'troll', 'tablet', 'like', 'tweet', 'page'). The noun-to-verb backformation develops this change (e.g. 'he was pinning while at work').
- **Lexis:** social media introduces new lexis (e.g. 'selfie', 'google', 'phablet', 'hashtag', 'unfriend')
- **Abbreviation:** the instant nature and speed of communication has resulted in a huge number of abbreviations and acronyms (e.g. 'OMG', 'LOL', 'TTYL', 'srslly', 'FOMO'). Character limits on tweets and early limits to text messaging helped to produce this change. The omission of vowels continues as a recognisable form of communication.
- **Graphology:** (see [Unit 7.1](#)) changes in graphology are particularly evident with the hashtag as well as the range of emojis which help to reduce the number of words used, as they add meaning to the communication (an estimated five million emojis are sent every day). The association of capital letters with shouting is also a change of communication values through graphology.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Change** – English language is a dynamic force in the changing language of the digital world.

- 1 List ten words and phrases which you think have been newly coined in the digital world.
- 2 List ten words and phrases whose meanings have been adapted for the digital world.
- 3 What do these two elements of change show about English in the digital world?

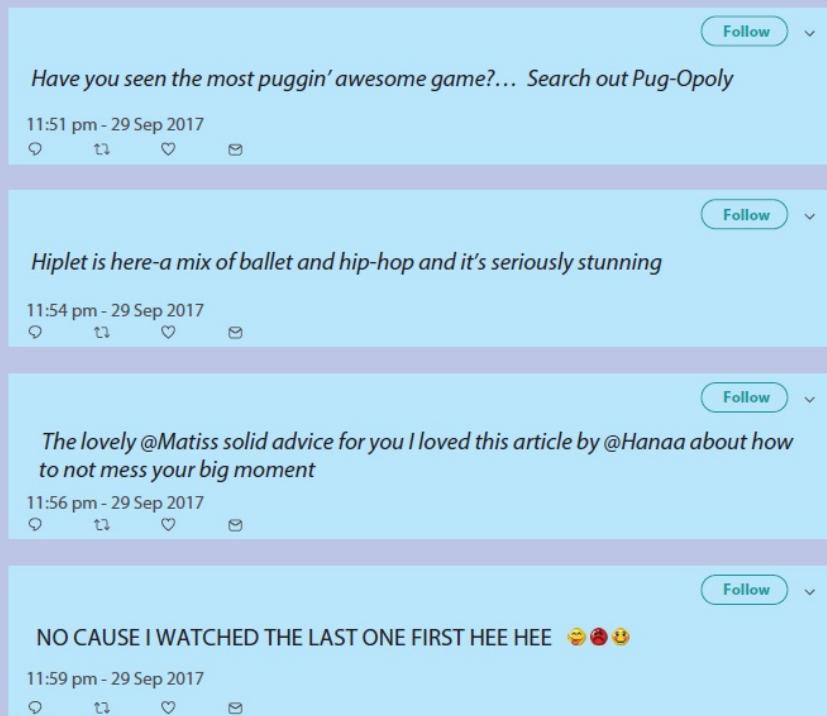
## Computer-mediated discourse

**Computer-mediated discourse** is the distinctive pattern of discourse generated by computer networks. Other sections in this coursebook have dealt with the conventions of written and spoken language, with a focus on unscripted spoken discourse. The two forms have distinctive characteristics which overlap in online discourse. Texts, forums and other forms of online communication enable participants to respond in real time almost as quickly as they could in spoken conversation. Indeed, participants 'chat' and use lexis, forms of content, style and paralinguistic features found in face-to-face conversation. Computer-mediated discourse is usually unplanned and spontaneous with mutually understandable language and graphology, such as those features described earlier. The English linguist, David Crystal, develops the idea that all technological developments have resulted in language change. From the arrival of the printing press, newspapers and the telephone to the internet and social networking sites, each form of communication has a distinctive style. You may want to search for David Crystal's online lectures about the ways in which the internet is changing language.

Just as all language evolves over time to suit the needs of its users, so too will the language of the internet and social networking sites. This is likely to occur relatively quickly.

### ACTIVITY 2

Listed here are some brief quotations taken from social networking sites.



- 1 Search for further examples from other approved media sites available to you.
- 2 For each of the examples given here and found by you, describe the style of lexis, syntax and graphology. Suggest, with reasons, the type of social media site each quotation is likely to have come from.

### ACTIVITY 3

- 1 Read the following introduction taken from an online article about the internet interpretation of 'friend' and face-to-face communication.
- 2 Discuss with a partner how you would write a definition of 'friend' as it is used today, both in online and face-to-face relationships. Write out the definition and share with other pairs of students.

You cannot have 1,000 real friends on Facebook. Nor 500. In fact, anything over 200 starts seeming unlikely, according to a new study.

Limitations on brain capacity and free time mean humans can nurture no more than about 150 true friendships on social media, just as in real life, the study published in the journal *Royal Society Open Science* says.

The rest are acquaintances, or people recognised on sight.

**From 'Facebook: 150 is the limit of real friends on social media', ABC News.**



### THINK LIKE ... A MEDIA JOURNALIST

Write a 500-word article for a newspaper published in your area, in which you explain online language to parents. Your aim is to help them to understand the key characteristics and style of language used in social media.

- 1 Read the question and extracts. Work in a small group to list relevant points. Remember, the question asks for comments from both the extract and your wider knowledge of digital English.
- 2 Read the student response which follows, then compare that answer with your own list.
- 3 Work in a small group to add more comments to provide the basis for a list as a plan for a full answer.

## Question practice

Read the following question, passages and student response.

Using the following passages taken from a website about how to blog and your wider knowledge, write about the ways in which the English language is used in the digital world.

(25 marks)

### Use Social Media Correctly

Social media is an amazing tool that can allow you to reach readers worldwide, however **using social media** isn't as simple as spamming links to your blog. Instead, when tweeting out an article carefully choose the correct, relevant Twitter handles and hashtags to include and remember to engage with others. Post links to other news articles and get involved with other bloggers and readers. Bloggers tend to build a community that is happy to promote each other so you should make the most of this. Live tweeting during important sports events is particularly useful as avid fans have strong opinions and are often looking to discuss matches and events as they unfold – so it's a great opportunity to engage with potential new readers.

### Make your Posts Visually Appealing

People love to see a photograph or video in a blog post – it just adds another dimension to keep readers interested. Get into the habit of adding at least one of these to every post, but make sure you source these correctly or use one of the **many free images available online**. Videos are particularly advantageous to a sports blog as you can include interviews with players and replays of matches.

### 2 Responses to “5 Tips on Running a Sports Blog”

**topsportphome** on March 21, 2016 6:09 am  
Don't Focus on Making Money...But no money is nothing. 😊  
Nice tips. Thanks for share

**Kuch janoo** on March 12, 2016 12:34 am  
May i use copy and paste from other site with taken permission. ?? Is it good for me..? Thank you..😊

**From ‘5 Tips on Running a Sports Blog’, by Mark Zeni,  
[dailyblogtips.com](http://dailyblogtips.com)**

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The digital world is a global world and English has the status of a global language so it is used widely online. Digital language covers many different types of communication but all use the internet to reach potentially a global audience. Email, chat rooms and forums, blogs, vlogs, SMS, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter all have specific purposes and so they have language characteristics to serve the particular purpose, just like any form of spoken or written language, but digital language tends to blur the boundaries between them. Participants tend to type in ‘chat’ rooms for example, where the term used to be used for speaking to people face-to-face.

Neologisms, new words, have been coined for digital communication and backformation has taken place almost instantaneously. ‘Google’ as the noun of an online search engine has transformed into a verb as people ‘google’ what they are looking for. Other words have been blended

(‘blog’ and ‘vlog’) while the affix /e/ (for ‘electronic’) has been widely used for digital purposes (‘email’; ‘ebanking’, ‘ebook’) as well as the prefix ‘cyber’, as in ‘cyberspace’ and ‘cybercrime’. Other lexis has broadened in meaning, such as ‘mouse’, ‘friend’, ‘troll’ and ‘tablet’. So the same processes of language change have continued with digital English. Some of these changes are apparent in the extracts with neologisms, such as ‘hashtag’, used alongside nouns which have broadened their meaning, such as ‘Twitter’, which, before digital English, described bird sounds, and ‘handles’, which, as a noun, referred to items to be moved in some way (the door handle, for example). The graphology of this blog is very similar to that of written colloquial English and does not contain the widely used /@/ and /#/ symbols on tweets and messaging. However, hyperlinks are used. These show how embedded internet language has become.

**[1]** Introduces the concept of the language matching the purpose, with point and examples.

**[2]** The student recognises and gives examples of the new lexis with details of the processes of lexical change as they apply to digital English (e.g. neologisms, blending).

**[3]** Relevant points about changes of meaning, broadening, with examples. Graphology is briefly mentioned as well as a discussion point that much of the blog does not show a significant change in language.

**[4]** The student has omitted to mention the interactive comments at the end of the text and the language features they show.

#### ACTIVITY 4

Identify the strengths and weaknesses of this response.

Then write an additional paragraph to comment on the two interactive responses at the end of the text, as omitted by the student.

#### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand significant characteristics of online and social media language		
I can explain the specific forms of language change associated with the internet and social media		
I am able to put forward discussion points about the nature of online communication amongst users and the extent to which it has affected English language		



## **Unit 7.4**

# Theories of language change

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- understand different theories which aim to explain the ways in which language changes (AO4)
- analyse and synthesise language information which shows the processes of language change (AO5)
- write effectively and accurately to explore theories of language change (AO2).

### **Before you start**

- 1 Discuss with a partner whether you have changed your language during your lifetime. For example, are there any new lexis and expressions that you use, or words that you now pronounce differently?
- 2 Discuss forms of language you see or hear online or in the media and whether you would consider adopting these forms. If so, why? If not, why not?

## Key language change theories

In the previous units in this section you have learned how English has been influenced by a variety of historical and cultural events. You have also explored how the structure and semantics of language change over time. In this unit you will review and evaluate different theories of why language changes, and will be introduced to some key language change theorists.

There are many other linguists who have put forward theories about why language changes, and you will come across them in your own research. Some of these linguists develop and provide more detail about the points raised by the theories discussed in the unit. The important and interesting thing to be aware of is that they are theories which need to be discussed, understood and then tested with the corpus of English language available.

You can find more detailed information about each theory relating to language change through your own independent research.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Change** – English and all other living languages evolve alongside the changes which occur in the lives of the speakers. There are various theories which offer reasons for the speed and the direction of language change. Speakers of a language adopt the language patterns of those with whom they come into contact, both face-to-face and digitally.

Linguists try to explain the influences which cause the learning and passing on of lexis, pronunciation and syntax. The complexity and scale of local, national and global languages means that there is unlikely to be one single reason. Consequently, several theories compete for a plausible explanation for the continuous and significant changes which have occurred and which continue to take place in the English language.

What factors do you think might influence people to change their spoken and written language?

## Functional theory (Michael Halliday)

The term ‘functional theory’, which recognises that language is used to function in everyday life, is developed from systemic functional theory, developed by the linguist Michael Halliday, who has contributed to theories of language from the late 1950s onwards.

Functional theory broadly explains language change as a tool which enables changing economic and social functions in society to be carried out. According to functional theory, language changes according to the needs of its users. Many examples exist of how social and economic changes bring about the invention and/or adaptation of new relevant words (lexis). This explains why words move in and out of a language. For example, the Industrial Revolution, which began in the early 1800s, needed ‘telegraph’, ‘chronometer’ and ‘typewriter’. In the early 1900s came ‘vinyl’, then, in the early 1960s, ‘cassette’ and ‘comptometer operator’ became widely used. You might like to research the meanings of these terms. According to functional theory, lexis is not actively discarded. It evolves until it is of no further use and is then replaced by new words needed for new technological developments.

Shortening of words and phrases also supports functional theory. Users’ common need for efficiency and speed in communication results in abbreviations, such as ‘DVD-ROM’, ‘USB’ and many others. Words can also be created to help develop a sense of identity within a particular group. This is further discussed in [Section 10](#) and includes the creation of ephemeral slang terms where a common interest or age group is reinforced. This theory broadly explains language change as a tool which enables changing economic and social functions in society to be carried out.

Halliday’s theory is less clear about reasons for the grammatical and semantic changes in formal linguistics which also take place.

### ACTIVITY 1

Work with a small group to create a list of words which you hear older generations using and which you would not consider using yourselves. Consider why, according to Halliday, these words are not useful to you.

## Cultural transmission theory

Various theorists have developed this theory, which interests population geneticists, psychologists and sociologists as well as linguists. Some important contributors have been Bandura (1977), Mackintosh (1983) and Hartl and Clark (1997), although there are many other researchers and studies.

Our culture is the sum total of ideas, customs and social behaviour of our society; all the non-biological information which we use throughout our lives (e.g. what foods to eat, the content and ideas of education, the values which we hold). Passing on information from individual to individual occurs via imitation and teaching, as well as language, and this theory explores the process of learning new information, specifically language in this case, through socialisation and engagement with others in society. It is also known as *cultural learning*.

The word ‘culture’ is the clue to the debate relating to the development and then the **transmission** of language. If language gives us a biological advantage, then it is likely we have acquired an innate ability to learn and to use it. Transmission is a one-way system in this theory as language is passed on from those living in the society to the emerging generation, and this includes the acquisition and use of language. Infants learn the language(s) of those around them and appear to be able to do so with some ease. Language learning is effective when it takes place within a shared understanding of meanings of words and their order of expression.

Language change takes place according to cultural transmission, when individuals and groups perceive a benefit in a change. This may be for status, such as a change of accent, to fit in with a group or to gain material benefit, such as a job with more money. A current example is the change occurring with the internet and associated language, where it is perceived to be of benefit to know and use this language.

However, this theory does not account for all learning, such as trial and error, and neither can it account for the variety of language which it is possible to produce. As society becomes more complex, so does the range and variety of language needed to survive and to prosper in it. It is this that drives language change according to cultural transmission theory.

### ACTIVITY 2

- 1 On your own, list words and phrases you have been taught as appropriate to use in greeting:
  - a friends
  - b family
  - c a senior person in your college.
- 2 Compare your list with a partner and note any similarities and differences.
- 3 How have these phrases been culturally transmitted to you?

## Random fluctuation theory (Charles Hockett)

The American linguist Charles Hockett suggested that language changes developed in a more random way, again through users, but this time as a reflection of the uneven use of spoken language, where people pronounce words in a particular style which spreads and becomes seen as the desirable form of discourse. Arguably, the development of Received Pronunciation, which is itself a regional accent, and, more recently, the spread of **Estuary English** in the UK, could lend support to this theory. However, it is a sweeping presumption that everyone is trying to speak in the same way and so it is regarded as too general for close analysis.

## Substratum theory

This theory appears to be a composite of ideas from various studies from the late 1960s and early 1970s, citing William Labov's study of Jewish communities in New York.

Substratum theory links language change to the spread of language and specifically, when applied to English, to the globalisation of the language as one variety of English is influenced by another through contact. For example, the word ‘like’ has been used to mean a comparison between things (e.g. ‘South African English is not *like* New Zealand English.’). However, the word has now spread throughout the English-speaking world as a filler in spoken discourse – particularly, though not exclusively, amongst teenage girls. Here is a conversation between two girls in Florida:

**A:** So like I thought we could hang out... like at the beach with Taylor

**B:** Cool ... uh... how do we get there? ... like... is your mom around to take us?

**A:** Oh, um yeah, I'll just call her

The use of the word ‘like’ has spread rapidly from its origins in American television. Similarly, the high rising intonation at the end of a spoken statement, which has traditionally been a feature of New Zealand and Australian English, is increasingly more widely heard in other English speaking areas.

Generalising from these examples, substratum theory focuses on the changes to English that result from the influence of different Englishes. This is different from borrowing, as described in [Unit 7.2](#), as the existing language is changed, not simply added to. Second-generation language speakers often alter pronunciation, and a prominent example of this comes from William Labov’s study of Jewish communities in New York, which spread to bring about the distinctive New York accent.

## Theory of lexical gaps

This is an offshoot of Halliday’s 1950s functional theory, as it deals with the need for certain lexis to emerge in order to change the stock of words in a language (and may seem rather strange, as it focuses on words which do not exist!).

The English language has a finite number of letters, a vast combination of which can form words. Think of ‘nonsense’ words, often used in advertising, or words created as part of young children’s language play. Here is an example of a dialogue between a mother and her son, Stanley, aged two and a half years:

**Mother:** Stanley, would you like a banana?

**Stanley:** No, I am not a monkey

**Mother:** Stanley would you like some yogurt?

**Stanley:** No, I am not a yogurter

In this theory, the likely sequence of English sound combinations makes some new words possible to form (e.g. ‘dribble’, which is a word, and ‘drobble’, which is not), as the sequence of letters follows a recognisable sound pattern (unlike ‘drrbbble’, for example, which would be a difficult sound combination in English). Language speakers, including English speakers, often look for innovation in their spoken and written language, hence the steady supply of neologisms which come into the language (for more about neologisms, look back to [Unit 7.2](#)).

A new word may often be a loan word from another language, and can be further modified with prefixes and suffixes. Some potential words do not come into use even though they follow a recognised pattern. For example:

Prosper	⇒	prosper-ity	used
Calm	⇒	calm-ity	not used
Dis-respect	⇒	respect	used
Dis-gruntled	⇒	gruntled	not used

### ACTIVITY 3

Read the following information on the filling of lexical gaps in New Zealand and Australian English, then complete the questions that follow.

- Advertisers are constantly looking for ways to attract consumers’ attention and the creation of neologisms is common (e.g. ‘McWhopper’ was created in New Zealand as part of an advertising campaign).
  - Australian English uses the suffix /-ie/ as an informal part of language and so has created words from lexical gaps (e.g. ‘barbie’, for barbecue; ‘mushie’, for mushroom; and ‘sunnie’, for sunglasses. ‘Selfie’ also originated in Australia and became the Oxford Dictionary Word of the Year in 2013).
- 1** Work in a small group to search for neologisms used in advertisements in your own country. What gaps in language have these new words tried to fill?

- 2** Create your own advertisement for a product (for example, a food, fashion or sports item, or a music review). Include at least two neologisms to fill lexical gaps in English usage.

## The wave model and tree model of language change

The Wave Model was originally presented by Johannes Schmidt in 1872 to replace the earlier Tree Model which has been discussed by linguists for about 150 years.

Both models focus on how new language features, such as pronunciation or lexis, spread from their original source, geographically or socially.

The tree model is based on the knowledge that the many languages in existence can be traced back to a much smaller number. Over the course of human history, tribes migrated and separated in search of more favourable conditions and, as they did so, their once common languages split into separate ones. Linguists have traced the origins of languages back as far as they can, to a common language or **protolanguage**. For instance, Latin is the protolanguage for a group, or **language family**, known as the Romance languages which includes French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan and Romanian. Further back, the common ancestor of English, German, Dutch and other Germanic languages is known as proto-Germanic. These and other languages are thought to go further back to a lost common language known as Proto-Indo-European.

The tree model assumes that languages change only by splitting from a common core and can be grouped in the same way as a family tree, as each language can be traced back to an earlier parent one. One challenge to the tree model is the process of **pidgin** and **creole** languages, where a mix of languages creates a new language rather than a new language splitting from its common parent language.

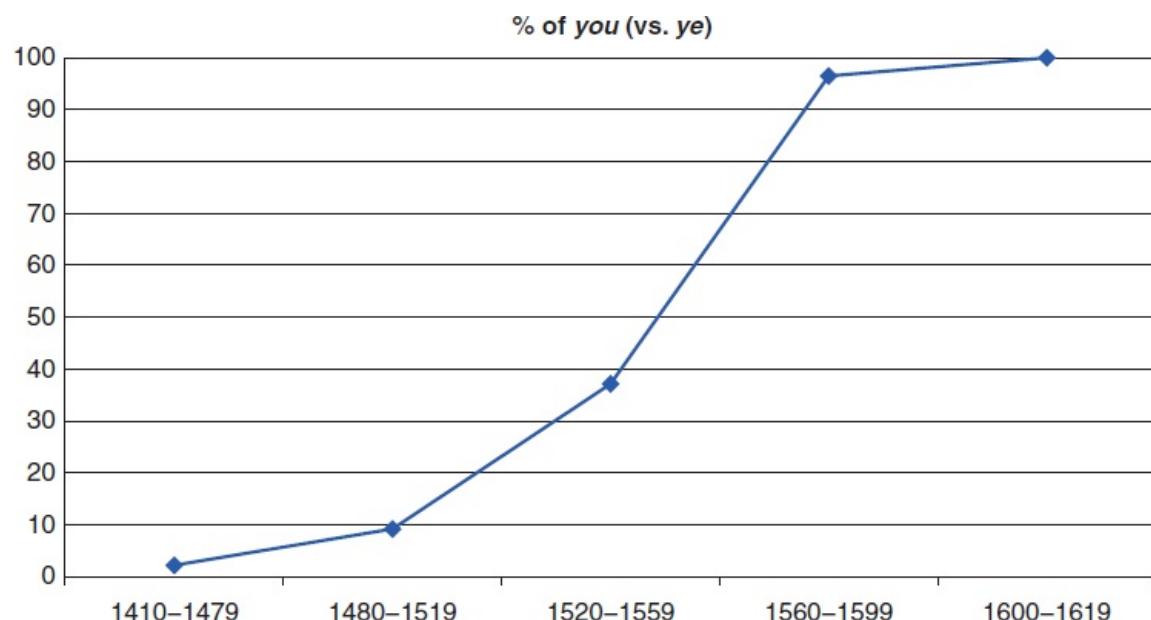
The wave model is different from the tree model by considering that language evolves from one disturbance or change and replicates the ripples from the centre of a disturbance in water. This is a useful explanation of specific language characteristics such as pronunciation. The wave model proposes that a language feature gets weaker, or is more slowly adopted, as it moves further away from the centre or origin of the language innovation, such as New York street slang.

Both the tree model and the wave model assume a steady change in language will occur over time. You will be aware, however, that mass media and particularly the internet have sped up the process of language change. For an image or link to 'go viral' means that it is shared by users, often through social media, and so any new word or phrase has the potential to have a global spread.

## E The S-curve model (Chen, 1968)

This theory suggests that any change starts in a limited way, then accelerates as more speakers adopt the change, before levelling off over time. It assumes that language change spreads out amongst a population according to the people's willingness to adopt new forms of language, such as lexical and syntactical changes.

The following graph shows the spread of the change of usage from 'ye' to 'you' according to the S-curve model, using information taken from a corpus of letters (1403–1800).



The change in usage from 'ye' to 'you' according to the S-curve model.

#### ACTIVITY 4

Explain in your own words what this graph is showing and to what extent it supports Chen's S-curve theory.

### Progress or decay? (Jean Aitchison, 1991)

Language change is inevitable and Jean Aitchison, in her book *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* (1981), taps into the linguistic debate about whether this is bound up with language progress or language decay. The following alternatives link with the opposing viewpoints of linguists:

- 1 The prescriptive approach: the view that there is a 'gold standard' of English language, which should be preserved.
- 2 The descriptive approach: the view that there is no fixed standard, and that English evolves as the product of its users.

As different varieties of English become more distinctive, this debate about standards of English is increasingly relevant. You can find out more about this debate in [Section 9](#).

#### ACTIVITY 5

Aitchison creates three interesting images to illustrate views about language decline:

- The 'damp spoon' syndrome
- The 'crumbling castle' view
- The 'infectious disease' assumption

- 1 Work in a small group to research these three perspectives. Summarise your findings
- 2 Explain your findings to those in another group, giving examples.
- 3 Use your information to discuss in class the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

### The unfolding of language

In his book, *The Unfolding of Language* (2005), Guy Deutscher explains what he calls 'the evolution of mankind's greatest invention', except he says 'it was never invented'. He frames his ideas of language change on the mind's craving for order, and the instinctive need of speakers to find regularity in language (for example, expected sound patterns). He suggests that, similar to the substratum theory, speakers often take short cuts in pronunciation, which results in language change. Interestingly, Deutscher points to a counter-effort by speakers to be innovative, expressive and to extend their range of meaning. This excess of words can be self-defeating, as too many words can devalue what is said. For Deutscher, language change results from a combination of predictable patterns and shortcuts, twinned with our efforts to be expressive and original.

#### ACTIVITY 6

Re-read the outline of each of the theories and discuss them with a partner and/or small group. The following questions will guide you:

- 1 According to each theory, what is the reason why language changes?
- 2 What evidence to support each theory can be found?
- 3 Find one further example to support each theory of language change.
- 4 Evaluate each theory's strength in explaining the reasons for language change.

#### ACTIVITY 7

- 1 Research a range of adverts for a product you are interested in and test Deutcher's theory of language change against the lexis used for the product. Assess, using evidence, the effectiveness of the lexis used in persuasion to buy products.
- 2 Look at the image of a 1920 advert for Raffles Hotel, in Singapore. With a partner, identify any lexical, syntactical and semantic features which indicate the outdated style of the advert.
- 3 Compare the Raffles advert with the lexis, syntax and semantic content of a modern hotel advert for the area where you live. What language features have changed? Have any remained the same?
- 4 Look again at the theories of language change outlined in this unit. Suggest the processes which may have taken place between the Raffles advert and the modern advert you have chosen.



A 1920's advert for Raffles Hotel, Singapore.

### ••• THINK LIKE ... AN A LEVEL ENGLISH TEACHER

Divide your class into small groups.

Each group should select one of the theories summarised in this unit. Discuss the key points, strengths and weakness of your group's chosen theory, and make brief notes about these.

Prepare and present an engaging five-minute presentation for the class which will enable them to understand and evaluate your group's chosen theory.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

Confidence level	Revisited?
------------------	------------

I understand the key theories of language change which are explained in this unit

I am able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these theories and give examples in support

# Unit 7.5

## Collecting and analysing data

### Learning objectives

***In this unit, you will:***

- carry out systematic studies using relevant data for English Language studies (AO4)
- develop the skills to analyse and synthesise language information from a variety of sources (AO5)
- learn about the guidelines which govern how research is carried out in a fair and appropriate manner (AO4)
- apply these principles to research in English Language topics (AO4).

**The Cambridge International AS & A Level course does not require you to carry out your own research project, but it is important that you are aware of the standard research techniques. This will allow you to better understand research papers that you read.**

### Before you start

- 1 Work with a partner to consider the topics you will be learning about at A Level. In what situations might you need to collect, analyse and report on data related to English Language?
- 2 Take two of these situations and discuss the possible research methods you might use to gather and analyse the data.

## Data collection for English Language

It may surprise you that there is data to be collected for English Language study. You may also be surprised that you are likely to be carrying out research, individually or as a group, and then using a reliable procedure to collate and analyse results. From these results you will have your own data to be able to draw conclusions about elements of English language.

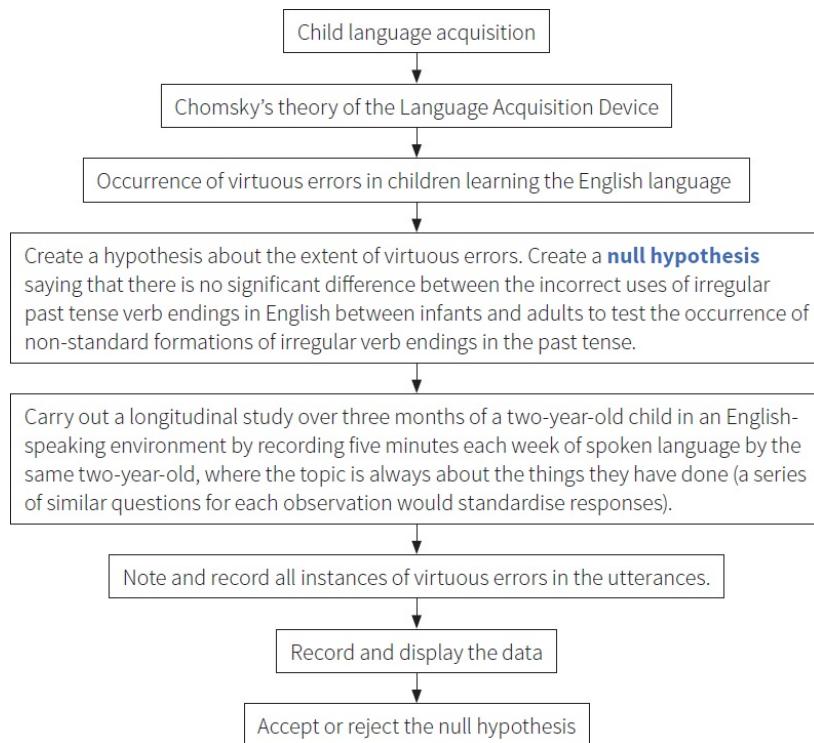
Your own research findings will be a valuable addition to your learning about existing studies as you will have original data, which may or may not have the same findings as published studies. Research techniques must follow a common investigative procedure, and you may already be familiar with the following ideas and techniques in your other studies, particularly in the Social Sciences.

The study of English involves collecting and analysing language data. For this, you should use the following established procedure for scientific research:

- formulation of a **hypothesis**
- design of the most suitable method of data collection and handling
- analysis of the data
- conclusion and evaluation
- **bibliography**.

## Focussing your area of investigation

English Language is an extensive area to study and you will have limited time in which to carry out your investigation. Narrow your focus to a particular **field of study**, such as child language acquisition, spoken language or language and gender. From the topic you have chosen, you should narrow the focus of your investigation to a specific topic from which you can create a hypothesis. An example might be:



### ACTIVITY 1

Discuss with a partner whether the following topics are suitable for A Level English Language investigation. For any suitable topics, suggest a method of investigation. Suggest why some topics are unsuitable. For example, you might think that the topic is impractical to investigate, or too general.

- analysis of one minute of a sporting commentary to assess what techniques of unscripted discourse are used
- analysis of two front-page newspapers from non-English-speaking areas of the world, to see the extent of English Language lexis
- comparison of the lyrics of two songs from different time periods to assess syntax and lexical differences
- comparison of two pieces of travel writing from different times/centuries to assess different language styles of writing
- recording two minutes of an infant's speech at monthly intervals from 18–24 months to assess language acquisition
- comparison of two cosmetic or household products, from different time periods, aimed at women to assess contrasts in the language of persuasion and any features of language and gender
- analysis of two Facebook posts – one male and one female – to assess whether there are lexical and stylistic differences between genders.

## Research topics and data sources

This section outlines the research methods you are most likely to use for working with English Language data.

Copies of spoken and written texts as they are used naturally are now stored electronically. This collection of texts is known as a **corpus** and the information stored is **corpus data**. More information on the use of corpus data is found in [Section 7](#).

The following is a list of some of the most popular topic areas for English Language research studies.

- lexis: distinctive jargon, relevant to a particular topic (e.g. sporting commentaries or professions, e.g. education)
- neologisms: new words / **acronyms**, particularly those used in social media and advertising (e.g. 'lol', 'btw', '404', 'tweet cred')
- features of style in a particular text (e.g. rhetorical questions, metaphor, puns, modification from adjectives and adverbs)
- syntax: a text's composition regarding the length and structure of sentences as well as their types (e.g. imperative, exclamative, interrogative)
- semantics: meanings associated with particular words or phrases which have generally accepted associations (e.g. 'home' does mean a living place, but it also has associations of warmth, security and belonging)
- the form and layout of the text (e.g. brochures, posters, speeches)
- unscripted discourse features including conversational features, accents and dialects, varieties of world English, and language and gender
- tracking **diachronic** changes to word meanings and their usage.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Diversity

The diversity of English offers a rich opportunity for analysis, comparison and exploration. Data relevant to English Language study must be collected and processed according to ethical guidelines, before it is analysed and presented in a systematic way. Discuss what you understand by ethical guidelines and where they should be used in the analysis of English Language data.

### ACTIVITY 2

Work with a partner to suggest possible research topics from the following sources of data:

- a social media site such as Facebook
- a copy of a local/regional newspaper and a copy of a national newspaper, both published on the same day
- an article published in a newspaper compared with the same topic viewed on a news website
- a children's TV programme
- tweets.

## Sources of data

There is a wealth of written data from such sources as advertisements, brochures, leaflets, editorials, news stories, articles, reviews, blogs, investigative journalism, letters, podcasts, (auto) biographies, children's books, diaries, essays, scripted speech and narrative/descriptive writing.

Spoken data is a very interesting source to investigate, and its recording and transcribing is essential for careful analysis. The main categories are:

- real speech (e.g. friends talking; a teacher giving a lesson; an infant/child talking to friends or to adults)
- represented speech, such as a TV or film drama or a scripted speech
- media (e.g TV; film advertisements; news)

- digital data where the boundaries between spoken and written language become blurred (e.g. social networking sites).

It is easy to gather much more spoken data than you actually need. Transcribing speech can be very time-consuming and laborious, as you should write down not only every word, but all hesitations and pauses. Just two minutes of discourse can require a lot of transcription time! If you are analysing *how* something is said, rather than *what* is said, you may need to use phonetic spelling. When you are analysing a variety of world English or a dialect, specialist books and online sources will teach you the symbols that match the sounds.

## Use of corpus linguistics

One way of analysing language is through **corpus linguistics**. This a collection of authentic texts, such as newspapers, blogs, speeches, tweets and advertisements. The common assumption is that these texts have been computerised and so are available for research investigations. Usually, the analysis is performed with the help of a computer (i.e. with specialised software) and takes into account the frequency of the particular linguistic feature being investigated. If you wanted to look at the references to 'peace' or 'joy' or 'love' used in the lyrics of your favourite singer, you could gather these all together in one file. This becomes your corpus to analyse the word frequency of the topic you have chosen. These software tools are all available online, often without cost.

## Methods of data collection

English Language investigations follow similar procedures to other systematic research. When the researcher has decided on the objective and created a hypothesis, then the most appropriate method of data collection is chosen. Invariably a **sample**, a smaller number of responses than the total, must be taken from the data available. A **random sample** ensures that every possible **respondent** has an equal chance of selection.

A Level English Language research favours the following methods of data collection:

- recording and transcribing spoken language from the original source
- collecting different texts, such as adverts and speeches, and annotating them for comparison
- searching online for the specific data needed in videos and websites
- creating a questionnaire and interviewing respondents, or allowing respondents to complete the questionnaires themselves
- observing participants, such as babies and toddlers, and conversationalists
- tracking diachronic changes (see [Unit 7.6](#)) – how word usage and meaning can change over time.

### ACTIVITY 3

Work in a small group to collect small amounts of information from:

- original discourse between two different sets of participants
- different texts of the same genre (e.g. adverts, a social media source)
- media sources, such as a sport commentary or TV drama.

## Questionnaire design

Questionnaires are a set of questions, often, but not always, containing a choice of answers that a sample of respondents will complete. The answers are then analysed for results.

Questionnaire design and asking people questions seems deceptively easy. But it is important to ensure that the respondents understand the questions and complete them honestly and according to their views. You will find a lot more information online about questionnaire design. The following points are given as general guidelines:

- The questionnaire should be simple in design, polite and friendly. It should clearly explain the aims of the survey.
- Early questions should engage the participants' interest and should be straightforward.
- Important questions requiring thought and extended answers should be in the middle of the questionnaire.
- Any questions likely to cause offence are to be avoided.
- Technical questions, if they are to be given to a non-specialist audience, are to be avoided.
- Open-ended questions, which require a lot of time to complete, should be kept to a minimum.

- ‘Loaded’ questions, which suggest the required answer to the respondents, are to be avoided.



#### ACTIVITY 4

Work with a partner to think of a topic which could be researched by a questionnaire for each of the four English Language A Level areas of study:

- English in the world
- Language and self
- Language acquisition
- Language change

#### Elements of questionnaire design and use

There is no single perfect questionnaire design, as the style of questions asked depends on the objective of the questionnaire and the type of material the researcher wishes to collect. For example, if the researcher wishes to collect descriptive information, the questions may well be **open questions**, where a free choice of answer can be given; if the researcher is collecting material where responses can be measured, then **closed questions** allow only a limited number of replies.

A well-structured questionnaire should ask questions about the research objectives. This may sound very obvious but some surveys fail to make this the focal point. Respondents should be able to understand the questions being asked and, through clear phrasing of the questionnaire, give accurate and complete information. A **pilot survey**, which tests questions and the analysis procedure, should be carried out, and any faults found in the questionnaire design and analysis should be put right before time and money are wasted on a set of questions which do not give reliable and valid results.

#### ACTIVITY 5

Read the pilot survey questions a–e, then answer the questions which follow.

- How much do you earn?
  - Do you agree or disagree with the advertiser’s untruthful claim that ‘women will be more beautiful’ after using their face cream?
  - How old are you?
  - Do you agree that synthetic personalisation in language helps media institutions reinforce their linguistic control over their audience?
- 1** Why would these questions be inappropriate where the

respondents complete the survey without an interviewer?

- 2 Rephrase each question to be more appropriate or better phrased for the respondents to answer.

## Data analysis

Your research is likely to have data which can be measured in different ways, and specialist statistical books and online tutorials will give additional information and help. The following is a list of the most likely scales of measurement you will use:

- 1 **Nominal:** data gathered which is allocated to a particular category (e.g. 'yes/no'; 'number of virtuous errors used'). (Virtuous errors are errors made by young children as they try to apply the regular rules of the language they hear around them to irregular forms – e.g. they may say 'runned' instead of the standard 'ran'. See [Unit 8.4](#)).
- 2 **Ordinal:** data which can be ranked in order (e.g. results to show which second language people spoke, where English is measured with other languages)
- 3 **Interval:** where the difference between data can be measured (e.g. temperature)
- 4 **Ratio:** similar to interval, but it must have a true zero (e.g. height)

Note: you are unlikely to need to use interval and ratio data in English Language studies.



### THINK LIKE ... A DATA COLLECTOR

You work for the government department concerned with children's health and social development in your country. Work with a partner to create five questions which could be used as part of a questionnaire survey on the language skills of preschoolers aged three to four years. The questionnaires will be distributed to parents and carers of children attending pre school institutions such as nursery and child daycare.

Using the guidelines on data collection, create five questions which will provide reliable and valid data for your department to use to promote strategies to improve children's language development.

## Ethics in research

Investigations of English Language data, just as in other disciplines, require guidelines. All research involving people (and animals) must be carried out according to internationally recognised correct practice. The benefits of gaining information and understanding in the subject must be balanced against the welfare of the participants.

The information given in this unit will allow you to proceed with confidence and integrity in your English Language investigations.

Broad ethical guidelines to ensure best research practice involve the following safeguards:

- Participants must give their informed consent for the research project. In the case of children, informed consent should be given from a responsible guardian.
- Observations of people's behaviour, including language, in a public place may imply that the people agree to being observed, although they should be informed that observation has taken place.
- Participants should not be subjected to physical and mental stress. Some infamous experiments, such as the Stanford Prison 1971 experiment in the US, caused large numbers of participants to suffer extreme stress through the cruelty in the role-playing which was required.
- There should be no deception of participants and they should not be forced to take part; participants should be free to withdraw at any time.
- Participants should be thoroughly informed and debriefed about the purpose of the investigation.
- All data must be subject to strict confidentiality.

In turn, researchers have the right to expect that participants must agree to reveal honest information about themselves that is relevant to the study.

There are also guidelines covering your role as a researcher which are summarised as follows:

- 1 All data gathered from participants should be kept confidential.
- 2 No data should be falsified.
- 3 Any references should be acknowledged and sources given in a bibliography.
- 4 No work from any other source should be copied and passed off as the researcher's own work. This is **plagiarism** which, with modern detection techniques, is quite easy to trace and results in work being destroyed, and it can also involve expulsion from the educational institution attended by the researcher.

All of these guidelines delimit the acceptable behaviour for carrying out research, and English Language research is a part of this. With this acceptable behaviour, **research ethics** must be part of the planning, the implementation and the reporting of research.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Diversity

The diversity of English offers a rich opportunity for analysis which must be carried out according to best practice and ethics. What

## ethical issues might arise in an analysis of English Language data?

Much of the research carried out in English Language topics is done through corpus linguistics, but where observations, such as children using language and the measurement of attitudes about language, are being investigated, then the welfare of the participants must be respected.

### ACTIVITY 6

How would the following fail to meet best practice in a research investigation into 'Language changes which are taking place in the digital world'? Discuss your answers with a partner.

- only sampling female respondents
- only sampling respondents aged 30 and under
- only sampling from people that you know and/or your family
- sharing the information you have received from your respondents with your friends
- trying to stop respondents who want to pull out half way through the investigation
- adding your friends as additional respondents to make up the sample.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the common process of research techniques		
I know how to carry out independent research studies for English Language data		
I am aware of ways of gathering data and analysis		
I understand the concept and use of corpus linguistics		
I can design research tools, such as questionnaires and interview schedules		
I understand the ethical research guidelines essential for investigation		
I know the rights which must be given to participants in a research study		
I understand the responsibilities of the researcher in a research study		

# Unit 7.6

## Measuring language change

### Learning objectives

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn about the techniques of measuring language change by reference to *n*-gram graphs and tables of corpus data (AO4)
- analyse and synthesise data on language change from a variety of sources (AO5)
- read a wide variety of texts on language change (AO1).

### Before you start

In small groups, discuss and write down your responses to the following questions about language features.

- 1 In what ways are words assembled and stored?
- 2 How might linguists find out about the ways in which language changes?

## Tracking language change

English language changes all the time. New words are coined as they are needed, while grammatical constructions also change. Equally, some words fall out of use or change their meaning as the context in which they are used changes. Meanwhile, new words and phrases become necessary for communication in a changing society and, increasingly, with the global nature of English language in a changing world.

Linguists study changes to language which occur over time, and this is known as diachronic linguistics. For example, 'girl' in the 13<sup>th</sup> century meant a young person of either gender. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the word had changed to its current meaning of 'female'. The study of language at a particular time, usually the present, is **synchronic linguistics**. For example, there are regional differences: in the United States, the word for a fizzy drink can be 'pop' or 'soda', while, in Britain, there are many different names for a bread roll (e.g. 'stottie', 'bap', 'bere bannock'). The diachronic and synchronic systems interlink for a systematic study of language.

Analysing any language changes would be virtually impossible without some systematic method of storage and retrieval of the language. How is language stored and classified? You may know about the functions of a dictionary and a thesaurus. In the past, these were compiled by many people who carefully wrote each word for inclusion on a small piece of paper, a citation slip, which was then filed in alphabetical order.

### ACTIVITY 1

Work in a group to research the development of dictionaries. Try to answer the following questions:

- 1 Why was the first English dictionary compiled, and by whom?
- 2 What traditional methods were used for compiling dictionaries?
- 3 For what different purposes were dictionaries compiled?
- 4 Are there any English language dictionaries specific to your country?
- 5 How are digital resources used to compile modern dictionaries?

### KEY CONCEPT

**Change** – The English language is truly dynamic. Its phonology, syntax, morphology and semantics have changed over time, and continue to change. As students of English, you will track and explain these changes, and explore the factors that drive them.

Track the etymology, or historical development, of two words which you use regularly (e.g. two nouns). Track their history by researching their origins and any changes to their spelling and meaning since their recorded origin. If possible, use a dictionary of etymology, either in book form or online, which records the origins and development of English words and phrases.

## Using corpus data

Linguistics strive to classify and clarify language. With digital advances, large collections of authentic texts, such as newspapers, brochures, broadcasts, chapters of novels and online text, are stored in databases for linguistic research. This database is a corpus, (plural corpora), a collection of language texts which provide a representative sample of the language of a particular time in the past.

A corpus is useful for linguists for the following reasons:

- It can be scrutinised for language usage in a systematic way.
- From this scrutiny, data concerning the frequency of use of specific words and the changing usage over time can be gathered. Hypotheses can be drawn up to be tested.
- Because a corpus is widely available online, it is accessible to many people conducting research projects.
- It is easier to make more generalisable claims about language use as the researcher is drawing on a much larger set of data.

A corpus must be large enough to provide a sufficient range of language for researchers. David Crystal states in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of English Language* that to answer questions about language, even a corpus of one million words is tiny.

Institutions build and maintain corpora. The storage is impressive. The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100-million-word collection of written and spoken English, covering British English of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century from a variety of genres.

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is composed of more than 560 million words taken from more than 160 000 texts and is evenly divided between spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers and academic journals. The corpus is updated each year.

### ACTIVITY 2

Work with a partner to research a corpus for your own country.

- 1 How many words are in the corpus?
- 2 How is it accessed and what is the procedure for using it?

## Word sketches

A software program analyses data and the results are then used by researchers to identify and interpret patterns of language change in real speech and language use. The software works with large samples of language, the corpora, to identify:

- words that are used frequently in a language, and those that are rare or outdated
- words that are going out of use
- new words or syntax.

This process forms the basis of learning how language works and how it changes. There are instant results concerning how a word or phrase is used in different parts of speech and what words and phrases it is frequently associated with. A **word sketch**, accessed from a corpus, shows the functions and usage of a word or phrase in a concise form. The basic word form, the stem of a word, is the **lemma**.

Instead of reviewing each individual entry in the corpus to see how a word is used, all its different grammatical uses are summarised and displayed in a chart. The chart also displays the word alongside others that it is often used with. This frequent pairing is known as a **collocation** (e.g. 'team' + 'spirit' and 'team' + 'mate'). Collocations are two or more words in a group that are used together and recognised as having a particular meaning (e.g. 'team leader', 'football team').

Another function of a corpus is to calculate a **Mutual Information Score** which shows if the two (or more) words occur together more frequently than by chance. The information is gathered electronically and the Mutual Information Score is derived from the numbers of the:

- observed frequency (the number of appearances of the two words together in a sketch)
- expected frequency (the two words appearing together if they are independent).

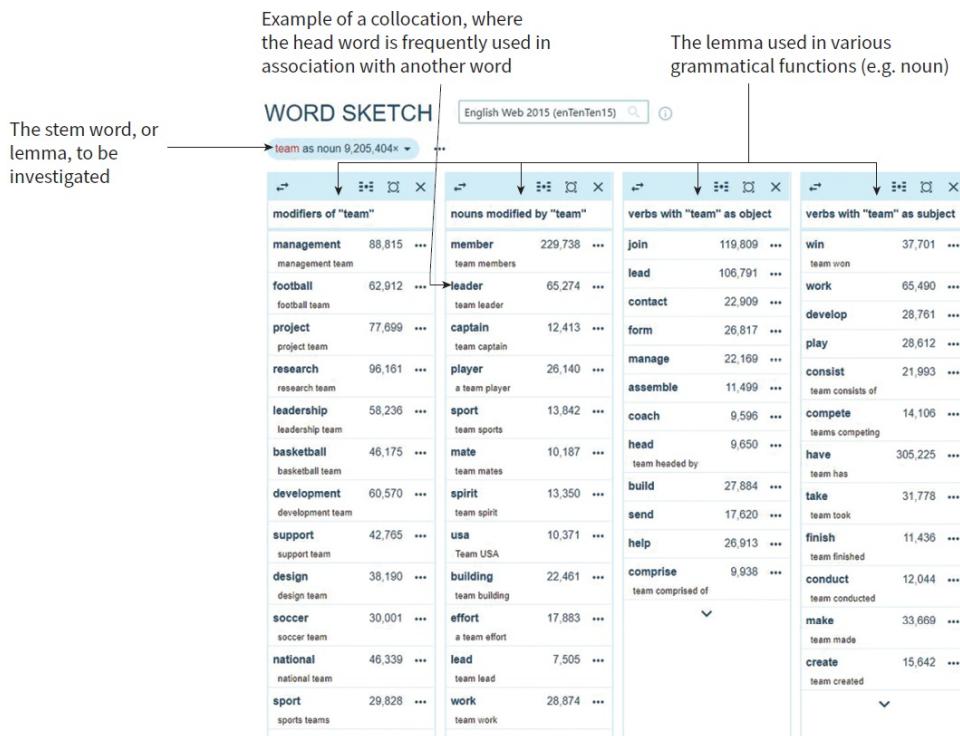
The expected frequency is subtracted from the observed frequency and divided by the total number observed to give the mutual information score.

Clicking on the + sign when accessing the corpus will create a multi-word sketch, where the word combines with more than one other word to form a recognised phrase (e.g. 'team' combined with 'lead' often gives the phrase 'lead the team').

This summary gives a picture of language as it is currently used in combination with other words and/or phrases. Because the word is used in context, it shows how its use and meaning may change over time. For example, the word ‘engine’ is more likely to be used together with ‘search’ rather than ‘steam’ in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Another example is the word ‘mangle’, which can be a noun (a traditional piece of equipment used for squeezing clothes dry between two wooden rollers) and a verb (to describe a crushing or distorting process). A word sketch of the word’s behaviour would show the greater variety of word associations with the verb, because the noun ‘mangle’ is clearly dated and is only referenced a small number of times.

The following image provides an example of a word sketch of the word ‘team’.



## Concordance programmes

The corpus data is supported by a list, called the *concordance*. A concordance is a list of unconnected lines of text identified by a **concordancer** program with the search word or phrase at the centre of each line. It shows the different ways the word is used in the stored corpus of texts. The concordance will show every instance of a specified word or phrase found in a corpus, together with the context in which it is used. This allows the pattern of use to be seen and explored and enables the researcher to define the ways in which a specific word is used in a given context. The numbers to the left are the source of each specific use of the phrase.

There can be any number of usages for a word, and the frequency of use can also be measured: the number of entries or ‘hits’ reflects how much the word or phrase is used. Words which are in frequent use will generate very many hits and concordancer programs give a selection of these hits.

Look at the following concordance diagram for the phrasal verb ‘break out’, which uses examples of the use of the search phrase ‘broke out’. A full concordance would display all the entries of the search word which are found in the corpus and therefore could show the patterns of use for the word or phrase.

## BREAK OUT: it is bad things that break out

- ... **violence** broke out...
- ... **riots** broke out... → Violence and riots are examples of collocations.

The screenshot shows a concordance search interface with the following details:

- Query:** broke, out
- Results:** 62 (0.97 per million)
- Page:** 1 of 4
- Buttons:** Go, Next, Last
- Left Column (Listed Words):** doc#1475, doc#2088, doc#4675, doc#5409, doc#6144, doc#6391, doc#6442, doc#6816, doc#9720, doc#10348 ..., doc#10541 ..., doc#10672 ..., doc#10756 ...
- Right Column (Contextual Examples):** A large block of text showing various contexts where 'broke out' is used, such as 'in tears', 'and Roper', 'James was forced to extend his contract', etc.

Annotations on the left side of the screenshot identify the components:

- The entry number for the word(s) as stored in the corpus
- The sentences in which the head word is used
- The word(s) being investigated

The words to the left and right of the key word are usually equal in length. The length of these can be altered in the concordance programme.

A researcher is likely to want to analyse patterns of use and these can be found by highlighting any number of the words following the key word entry. In this example, you will notice that 'of' is a word that frequently follows the phrase 'break out', that words and phrases can be highlighted on either side of the key word, and that other forms of the phrase can also be displayed.

Concordances provide detailed information about the current use of a word or phrase which the person searching can specify in a Corpus Query Language. However, unless summary tools are used, the thousands of examples produced can make manual processing of patterns of language use very difficult to handle.

### ACTIVITY 3

- 1 **a** Work with a partner to describe the layout of the concordance diagram.  
**b** Discuss the usefulness of information presented in this way.
- 2 Search for an online tutorial to help you develop the sequence of creating a concordance. Work in pairs to generate concordance diagrams for words which have developed or changed their meanings with the development of the internet (e.g. 'blackberry', 'net', 'mouse').

### ••• THINK LIKE ... A TRAVEL COMPANY MARKETER

You need to create a website for an interesting tourist attraction in your country, and want to make your website different from those travel companies already promoting the attraction.

- 1 Use online tutorials for guidance on how to use a concordance programme.
- 2 Use two or three adjectives which you feel would describe the tourist attraction clearly.
- 3 Search for these words in a concordance programme. This will tell you how often they are used and in what context. You may wish to adapt some information from the concordance diagram.
- 4 Write a short paragraph about the tourist attraction, incorporating the adjectives as clearly and as appropriately as possible.

## **n**-grams

**n**-grams are combinations of words and letters occurring next to each other. Applied in a corpus analysis, they identify language patterns. Used with corpus examples over time, patterns of language change start to emerge. The word ‘gram’, derives from the Greek ‘letter’, so an *n*-gram is a combination of *n* letters. In this A Level syllabus, an *n*-gram is used to refer to items containing *n* words. For example, *English* is a 1-gram, *English Language* is a 2-gram, *English Language and Literature* is a 4-gram.

Whatever the number of words required for analysis, an **n**-gram line graph tracks the frequency of words or combination of words used over time. This can be done because huge search engines, such as Google, have scanned millions of publications since the turn of the century and can access the data through search algorithms.

This provides the data showing a word or phrase’s rates of increase or decrease over time. Possible explanations about the social and economic changes which have brought about the changes can then be discussed.

For example, take the word ‘watch’ as a noun (something you use to tell the time) and ‘watch’ as a verb (something that you do). Research shows that at the beginning of the twentieth century, both forms were used equally frequently. But from the 1970s onwards, the noun was not used as much, until in the early 2000s the word was used much more as a verb. Why might the noun be decreasing in usage, relative to the verb? Think about how you check the time. Do you use a wrist watch? Your phone? The school clock? How might the change in referencing the time be linked to the decline in use of ‘a watch’?

**n**-gram graphs can be used to show changes in the use of specific words or phrases over time, using language corpus data.

You can find detailed information online about the composition and function of *n*-grams.

### ACTIVITY 4

The following information from a corpus analysis shows an *n*-gram for three collocations of the word ‘engine’. The percentages relate to the frequency of these collocations in the selected corpus.

Collocation	1850	1900	1950	2000
Steam engine	7%	4.20%	3.80%	1.9%
Combustion engine	0%	0.01%	2.5%	1.8%
Search engine	0%	0%	0%	6.1%

Write three paragraphs to explain the chart and suggest in what ways the figures show how language change is linked to social change.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the role of corpus data as a basis for the systematic study of language change		
I understand the function and presentation of word sketches and their role in measuring language change		
I understand the function and presentation of English language concordance and how it shows the use of words and phrases		
I understand the function and presentation of <b>n</b> -gram graphs and their role in measuring language change		
I can analyse and comment on information and data		

presented concerning language change and, additionally, draw on my wider knowledge of the subject to answer questions effectively

# Unit 7.7

## Practice and self-assessment

### Learning objectives

***In this unit, you will:***

- practise using the techniques of measuring language change by reference to *n*-gram graphs and tables of corpus data (AO5)
- analyse and synthesise data on language change from a variety of sources (AO5).

### Before you start

This section has covered significant points of change in the history of the English language and the theories and ideas about the ways in which language change occurs, including current digital changes. It has introduced techniques which help to show specific changes over time.

Try to apply all these elements of language change by studying three texts taken from different time periods. Your syllabus starts with Early Modern English, so find:

- 1 a scene from a Shakespeare play (one you have studied would be helpful but it's not essential)
- 2 a poem or extract from a short story or novel written in the nineteenth century
- 3 a blog, email or other online text written during your lifetime.

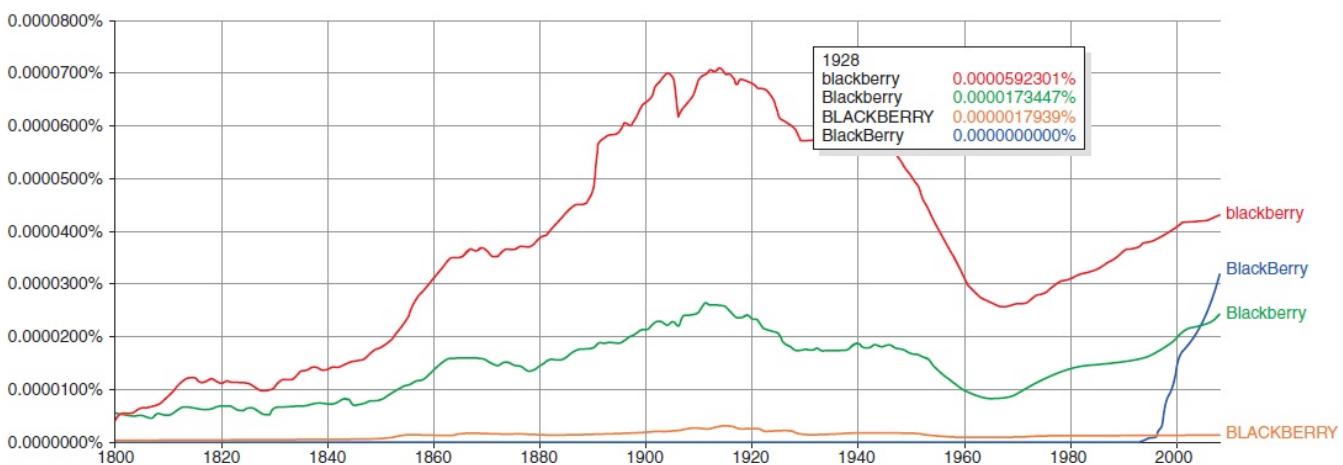
## Data-gathering and analysis

In this section on language change, you have explored how English has continually adapted to reflect changes in the social, cultural, political and technological contexts in which it has been used. In this unit, you will practise knowledge and understanding of language change through analysis of language data.

### Practice question 1

- 1 Use the following *n*-gram graph which shows the use of the different capitalisations of the word 'Blackberry' to
- i compare the pattern of use of the different capitalisations of the word
  - ii discuss the differences you see
  - iii analyse how this graph shows the change in use and meaning of the word.

(25 marks)



Comparison of the frequency of use in books over time of different capitalisations of the word 'Blackberry'.

### ACTIVITY 1

Use an online *n*-gram programme, such as the Google Books Ngram Viewer.

Follow the instructions at the top of the screen. You can insert words and phrases to generate a graph showing their usage over time, through analysis of the Google corpus.

- 1 Search for the relative frequencies for each of the following:
  - a letter, email and text message
  - b train, car, plane
  - c ledger, spreadsheet, software.
- 2 Explain the results. What do the graphs tell you about how the relative usage of these words and phrases has changed? Suggest reasons for these changes.

### Practice question 2

The Oxford Junior Dictionary has recently been removing words related to outdoor life in the British countryside, such as **cygnet**, **lark**, **mistletoe and newt**, **hazel**, **dandelion** and replacing them with lexis related to children's use of digital language eg **attachment**; **blog**, **broadband**, **chatroom**, **cut and paste**. The reasons for the changes are related to changes in children's lifestyle

and activities, which are mirrored in lexical changes. A decline in words relating to outdoor life and an increase in use related to online activities.

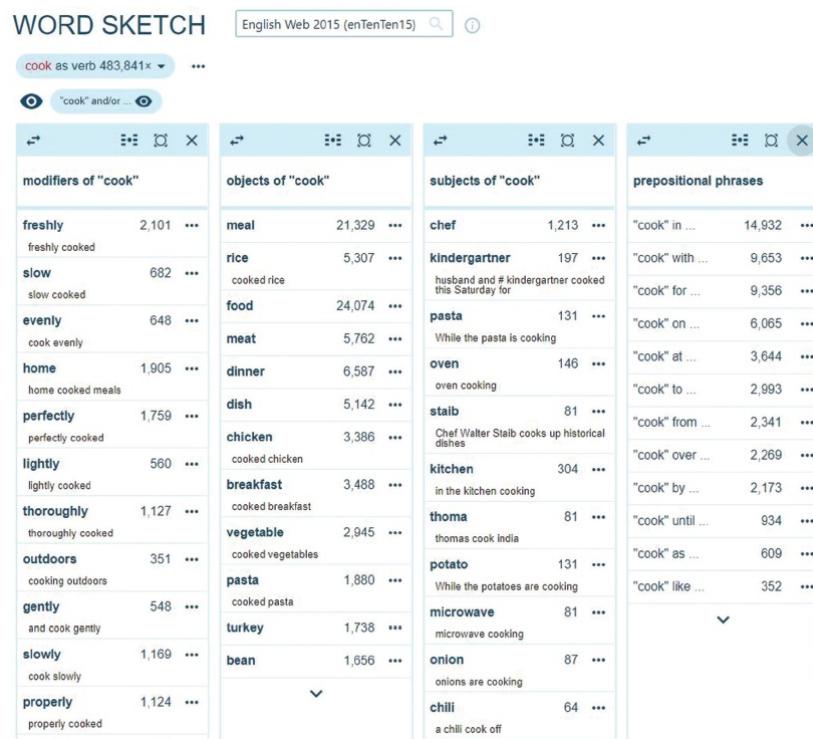
- i Test the claims of the publishers by analysing in an *n*-gram patterns of usage of at least two words from the removed and from the replaced groups. Analyse your findings and discuss in small groups whether the publisher's claims are justified.
- ii Repeat the exercise but substitute lexis from the natural environment of your own country and compare these to the digital language now appearing in the dictionary.
- iii Discuss to what extent the *n*-gram graphs of use over time are helpful in assessing changes in usage of lexis

**(25 marks)**

### Practice question 3

Look at the following word sketch showing the use of the word 'cook'. Discuss how the use of the base word – the lemma – shows the ways in which the word is used.

**(25 marks)**



### ACTIVITY 2

The following two passages are accounts of personal experiences about travel to the Hebrides, a group of islands off the north-west coast of Scotland. Text 1 is from a journal of a tour to the Hebrides by the writer James Boswell, who was accompanied by Samuel Johnson. Boswell was to write a biography of Johnson, the man who was responsible for the compilation of the first English dictionary. Text 2 is by author and news columnist Madeline Bunting, who travelled to the Hebrides over a period of years and has written extensively about the islands.

- 1 Using both texts and your wider knowledge of language change, discuss in what ways the language has changed between the two

texts.

- 2 Social change is reflected by language change. List three social changes which are apparent between the two texts.
- 3 How would a corpus analysis of these texts be helpful in commenting on language change? What specific words and phrases might you use to show changing usage?
- 4 Choose two of the words you selected in 3). Use a concordance programme and an *n*-gram graph to analyse how the changes are reflected in usage over time.

## Text 1

*Friday 20th August 1785*

The approach to Raasay was very pleasing. We saw before us a beautiful bay, well defended by a rocky coast; a good family mansion; a fine verdure about it, with a considerable number of trees; and beyond it hills and mountains in gradation of wildness. Our boatmen sung with great spirit. Dr Johnson observed, that naval musick was very ancient. As we came near the shore, the singing of our rowers was succeeded by that of reapers, who were busy at work, and who seemed to shout as much as to sing, while they worked with a bounding activity. Just as we landed, I observed a cross, or rather the ruins of one, upon a rock, which had to me a pleasing vestige of religion. I perceived a large company coming out from the house. We met them as we walked up. We were welcomed upon the green, and conducted into the house, where we were introduced to Lady Rasay, who was surrounded by a numerous family, consisting of three sons and ten daughters.

It was past six o'clock when we arrived. Some excellent brandy was served round immediately, according to the custom of the Highlands, where a dram is generally taken every day. They call it a scatch. On a side-board was placed for us, who had come off the sea, a substantial dinner, and a variety of wines. Then we had coffee and tea. I observed in the room several elegantly bound books and other marks of improved life. Soon afterwards a fiddler appeared, and a little ball began. Rasay himself danced with as much spirit as any man, and Malcolm bounded like a roe. He made much jovial noise. Dr Johnson was so delighted with this scene, that he said, 'I know not how we shall get away'. Soon after we came in, a black cock and grey hen, which had been shot, were shewn, with their feathers on, to Dr Johnson, who had never seen that species of bird before. We had a company of thirty at supper; and all was good humour and gaiety, without intemperance.

**From *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*,  
by James Boswell.**

## Text 2

### Finding peace in the wildest, most beautiful corner of Britain

The big windows of the circular stone structure look out on to the drama of Harris's west coast.

Mountains rise in the distance, with the vast sands of Northton Bay beyond the meadows. Here you can sip a cappuccino, nibbling delicious homemade cake, with binoculars to hand to watch the many birds, and the constant play of rain, rainbow and sun.

One of the first things that happens when travelling on this edge in the Western Isles – of an ocean, of a country and of a continent – is that hurrying makes no sense.

When driving, the single-track roads mean you are obliged to make

frequent pauses to allow another car to pass – always acknowledged with a wave – and slowing down is the best way to appreciate the scale and beauty of the place.

One often enjoys islands for their cosy intimacy, but to approach Harris and Lewis (the two islands actually share a land boundary) with such a preconception is a grave mistake: it is the third biggest island in the British Isles after Ireland, yet its population is only 20 000.

The wild, rugged emptiness of the place has a way of stealthily seeping into your very being.

Harris is a place of dramatic contrasts: on the west coast, white sands stretch for miles backed by dunes and machair (distinctive Hebridean turf), while the east coast is an intricate series of bays and headlands pocked with rock and loch.

You can walk for hours – often alone – across the white sand at low tide; on one occasion, I was accompanied part of the way by an otter in search of breakfast.

It was amid the dunes at Uig that, in 1831, an islander stumbled on the famous Lewis chess pieces, dating from the 12th century.

Their exquisite craftsmanship and inexplicable presence in a buried urn – the islander thought he had chanced on a gathering of fairies – evokes a Norse past of sea routes criss-crossing the Atlantic from Norway to Iceland and Ireland.

It's this sense of the past that haunts the landscapes of both Lewis and Harris. In sharp sunlight in Uig, one can see the ridges that scarify the pasture, signs of the old system of heaping up ridges of seaweed to fertilise the poor-quality soils, strangely misnamed 'lazybeds'.

**From 'Finding peace in the wildest, most beautiful corner of Britain', by Madeleine Bunting, *The Telegraph*.**

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Both travel texts, written in the first person, describe impressions of places not previously visited. So there is an emphasis on modifiers to show the character of the places: Boswell describes a 'fine verdure' while the author of Text 2 writes about 'cosy intimacy' and 'wild rugged emptiness'. The style therefore is similar but it is in the use of adjectives that semantic differences appear. Boswell's description of 'a fine verdure' and 'bounding activity' uses descriptors which are not unfamiliar in Late Modern English, but they appear formal and not appropriate for the more conversational traveller's account in Text 2 ('that hurrying makes no sense'). Though the attempts of this writer to build a sense of peace and isolation of the Outer Hebrides does result in Standard English usage and with metaphor ('the drama of Harris's west coast' and 'seeping into your being'), and frequent use of abstract nouns ('sense', 'beauty') she lifts the descriptions of location into a more atmospheric account.

The formality of Boswell's account is distinguished from the 21<sup>st</sup> century account by verbs describing thoughts and activities. A corpus analysis of 'observed' and 'perceived', when used to indicate speech and thoughts, would be helpful to add proof to the decline in usage of these items in modern usage.

Similarly, a corpus analysis of the orthographical changes from 'musick' and 'shewn' to their current spellings, would also date the change between the two spellings. The inversion of the negative 'know not' is not directly matched in the second text, which interestingly adopts a marked formal lexis ('amid the dunes') as a buildup to the drama of a significant archaeological find.

Both writers follow the informative purpose of their travel writing by the use of dialect forms of lexis particular to the Hebridean location. Boswell's 'scatch' – probably a transcribing of the word 'Scotch' from the local accent – and the second writer's geographical precision of 'machair' and 'lazybeds' bring authority and ground the text in the local vernacular.

Language change is closely bound up with the zeitgeist, the values of the time. Boswell is at pains to comment on the hospitality and civility of the wealthy family who were encountered and their 'improved life'. The Lady of the house is mentioned only in relation to the family, rather contrary to the spirit of our times. The mention of shooting birds is really only as an exhibit.

The formal 'dinner' and 'brandy' of Boswell's visit is contrasted with the Italian loan word 'cappuccino', of Late Modern English, and the delight of watching the birds instead of shooting them. The change in social system, too, appears to be reflected in the style and content of the texts, where the grand formality of an aristocratic family is sharply contrasted with the solitude of the exploratory traveller, delving back into history with the find of the Lewis Chessmen and reference to Norse mythology.

A corpus analysis of individual words and collocations would be able to plot the dates of change of usage in the tone of Boswell's accounts: 'succeeded' has a dated tone. Suggested words for n-gram analysis are, from Johnson's account, 'verdure', 'musick', 'shewn', and, from the blog, 'cappuccino', 'homemade cake', 'lazybeds'.

### ACTIVITY 3

Consider the following:

- Does the student deal with both texts in a roughly equal way?
- Are the points in the student response accompanied with relevant, concise examples?
- Does the student refer to the use of corpus analysis to aid analysis? In what ways?
- Does the student link language and social change through lexis, syntax and connotation of words and phrases?
- Could the student have explained the *n*-gram procedure in more relevant detail?

Rewrite the student's response, and improve it where necessary to produce a stronger answer.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I have a clear understanding of the significant points of change in the English Language		
I know and am able to recognise the processes whereby new words enter and leave the English Language		
I understand major theories which apply to language change and can discuss examples to evaluate each of the theories		
I can understand, interpret and explain the role of sketch engine, concordance and <i>n</i> -gram data in the analysis of language change		





## **Section 8**

### **Child language acquisition**

# **Unit 8.1**

## **Features of spoken language**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn the linguistic concepts, methods and approaches of spoken language (AO4)
- analyse and synthesise language information from a variety of spoken sources (AO5)
- learn how spoken language features reflect the purpose and relationship of the participants (AO4).

### **Before you start**

There is general agreement that speech in communication is what defines us as humans and it is a critically important part of our interaction with others. Discuss the following questions with a partner:

- 1** Why do we speak?
- 2** What do we speak about?
- 3** Why do we speak differently to different groups of people that we know?
- 4** Someone who is unable to see you will identify you by the sound of your voice. How would you describe your or your partner's voice? Deep, high-pitched, squeaky, mellow? Is describing a voice an easy thing to do? Why, or why not?

## Introduction

Before you start to look at child language acquisition, you need to know what you are expecting children to attain. [Units 8.1](#) and [8.2](#) explain the features of spoken language and conversational interaction. For the Child language acquisition section of the Language Analysis paper, you will also be expected to know how to transcribe unscripted conversation. This is covered in [Unit 8.3](#).



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Diversity

There is a diversity in the conventions of spoken and written English.

Compare a piece of written text with its spoken equivalent, such as a review of a restaurant or film, directions for travel, or an opinion of a holiday location. What differences exist between the written and spoken version in terms of lexis syntax and organisation of material?

## Features of spoken language

You have learned that speech can be represented in written form in a variety of text types, such as novels and short stories. However, the reproduction of the language of unscripted speech follows a different set of conventions which you will need to understand and respond to in your A Level studies.

Conversation is something we do, so naturally, it is easy to be *descriptive* rather than *analytical* when answering questions about spoken language. Here are some points to remember to help you avoid this:

- 1 Look at (and learn!) the features of conversation so that they become familiar to you.
- 2 When answering questions about spoken language, read each piece of written speech to understand its purpose then identify the features which will help you to support your ideas.
- 3 Explain the *effects* of the features and give an illustrated example.

Whatever your native language(s), you are already an expert in the skill of speech. You may hesitate on occasions while you think of what to say, but most of the time when you engage in conversation, especially with your friends, you are fluent. You will rarely have to stop to think about what you are going to say and how you are going to say it.

Although we may have distinctive *patterns* of speech, as explained in [Section 10](#), we all conform to certain features of unscripted speech. **Discourse** is not governed by the same rules as writing. Our discourse is in **utterances** and not sentences, and these utterances are not transcribed in the same way as written language.

Unlike the majority of what we write, which can be redrafted and polished to achieve the desired effect, most speech is spontaneous. We need strategies to make it flow as smoothly as possible, though there are times when inevitably we say the wrong thing! Public speaking, such as speeches, sermons, lectures, TV, and other spoken commentaries as well as film/play scripts, share common features with written language as they are planned and organised before their delivery. Texts, tweets and other forms of digital communication blur the boundaries between speech and writing.

[Activities 1](#) and [2](#) will help you to become aware of the physical features of your voice in speech.

### ACTIVITY 1

- 1 What clues are there in the sound of a person's voice to help estimate their age and gender?
- 2 Name the parts of your anatomy involved in speech production and explain the function of each. You may wish to consult a Biology text book.
- 3 David Crystal is an acknowledged authority on the English language, including discourse features. Search for his online lectures, which you may find it interesting and helpful, about the ways in which, and reasons why, we converse.

## The structure of unscripted conversation

Conversations take place between two or more participants. Much unscripted conversation follows recognisable conventions which we develop through early life. By now you have already become a conversational expert!

### Transcribing unscripted conversation

Transcripts are records of speech. However, they don't just record what was said but also how it was delivered. The delivery is represented by specific conventions, which are shown in the following table.

Convention	What it shows
(1)	pause in seconds
(.)	micropause (for breath)
<u>underlined</u>	stressed sound/syllable(s)
//	speech overlap
[ <i>italics</i> ]	paralinguistic features
UPPER CASE	words spoken with increased volume
↗	upward intonation
↘	downward intonation
/wiv/	phonemic representation of speech sounds
°word°	words spoken with decreased volume

These conventions are used to capture and represent spoken language on the page as accurately as possible. The standardised conventions allow for accurate representation from any transcript and ensures reliable data for analysis.

### How to transcribe speech

A transcription in linguistics is an exact record of spoken language. Writing a transcription is a painstaking process as it needs to be accurate in both the content and style of recording.

- Listen to the recording at least three times before beginning to transcribe. Each section of the conversation needs to be listened to several times. Informal discourse often has a lot of overlap of different speakers, which can be difficult to record at first.
- You should not follow the conventions of literary speech. For example, you should not include quotation marks, and new lines should not start with a capital letter.
- The speakers' names must be written in capital letters on the left hand side. Use a colon to separate the name from their utterance.
- Use conventional spelling and not phonetic spelling for representing speech.
- Where words are unclear it is convention to show this using (xxxxxx).
- When two speakers start talking at the same time, indicate this overlapping utterance with //. Some transcriptions also use brackets to show that two or more speakers are speaking at the same time.
- Only words and phrases showing a distinct change in tone need to be marked with the intonation symbols.

You will learn more about transcribing speech in [Unit 8.3](#).

### Discourse features

The following features of discourse are listed separately, but when we speak we often use several of these features at the same time. It is important to look at conversations in the context of *who* is talking and *why*, rather than simply identifying these individual features, as this helps to interpret the dynamics of the conversation.

- **Opening greetings:** Conversation openings usually have a standard form to help ease the participants into the conversations. Greetings such as 'g'day', 'howdy', 'howzit', 'hi', 'hiya', 'hello', 'good morning', 'nice day', 'how are you?' establish feelings of mutual ease. These standard greetings may be accompanied by **body language** and gestures, such as handshakes or kissing and hugging. Participants who are strangers will usually introduce themselves with their full name.
- **Turn-taking:** Conversation is usually cooperative with participants taking turns, but, quite frequently, speakers overlap. This has to be done with sensitivity as, in many cultures, interrupting is considered rude. Conversationalists have to make instant, fine judgements about when to start their turn – this may

be done hundreds of times a day in every conversation. When a conversation is not cooperative, for example in an argument, participants adopt very different strategies, often with unpleasant outcomes!

- **Adjacency pairs:** 'Statement' and 'response' form the basis of conversation. These often consist of a question/exclamation/declaration from Participant A followed by a response from Participant B and any others. The responses can be of any length and can extend to three-part exchanges where the first speaker responds and so the conversation continues. For example:

**Teacher:** What is the capital of New Zealand?

**Pupil:** Auckland (.) Miss

**Teacher:** No (.) try again (1) think hard

**Pupil:** Wellington (.) Miss

**Teacher:** Good (.) that's right

- Holding the **conversational floor**: In discourse, the person speaking is said to be holding the conversational floor. When someone is about to finish their turn we use a variety of strategies to determine who will take over, and when they will do so. For example, we can:
  - name them (e.g. 'Hasfah was there, she knows about it')
  - complete what we are saying (e.g. '...and so I got thoroughly soaked')
  - hesitate - it only takes a fractionally longer pause than usual for someone to fill the silence (In fact, silences can denote some tension in discourse)
  - use sound and body language - our voice may start to fall and we may look more closely at those who are about to take their conversational turn. In some varieties of English, such as New Zealand and Australian English, a rising tone indicates that the speaker is concluding their turn. This feature is spreading throughout the English-speaking world and is now recognised officially as *high-rising terminal*.
- Clashing: When two people start to speak at the same time the clash is acknowledged – one participant must stop while the other continues. As in other elements of conversation, **status** and context are important here. 'Managing' a conversation is related to the context and to the relative status of the speakers.
- Repairing: During the conversation, participants are constantly monitoring themselves and those to whom they are speaking. A speaker may repair what they say by correcting themselves or using phrases to acknowledge their mistake. For example: 'I mean', 'I should have said', 'no', 'that's wrong', or 'I wanted to say'. In this way there is instant updating of information and self-correction in conversation. Sometimes another participant will correct the speaker's mistake for them. For example, 'Do you mean Tuesday? You said "Thursday" earlier'.
- **Topic shift**: Conversation is dynamic and spontaneous. We talk about all sorts of things, people and ideas and these topics change frequently. Management of topic shift is most commonly achieved with expressions such as 'Oh, by the way...', or 'which reminds me...'.
- Conversation endings: Closing a conversation also has formulaic utterances with standard phrases, such as 'see you later', 'bye', and 'nice to see you', or we may make plans to be in contact again with phrases such as 'Come round sometime' or 'See you next week', which may signal a vague or more specific intention. As with other forms of conversation, body language reinforces the discourse: we may check the time, start to pack away belongings, stand up or turn away. Often, both speakers will seem to synchronise this, especially if they know each other well.

## ACTIVITY 2

Cultural differences produce a range of conversational styles in the English-speaking world.

- 1 Using specific examples, discuss the differences you observe in the conversations around you and try to evaluate their function.
- 2 Search online audio and video sources for examples of high-rising terminal if you are not familiar with this speech variety.
- 3 Many public forms of speaking are in the media and although these appear to be unscripted conversations, they take place in a fairly structured environment. Discuss with a partner why media texts, such as soaps and dramas, are presented without the non-fluency features of speech.

••• **THINK LIKE ... A FILM/TV SCRIPT WRITER**

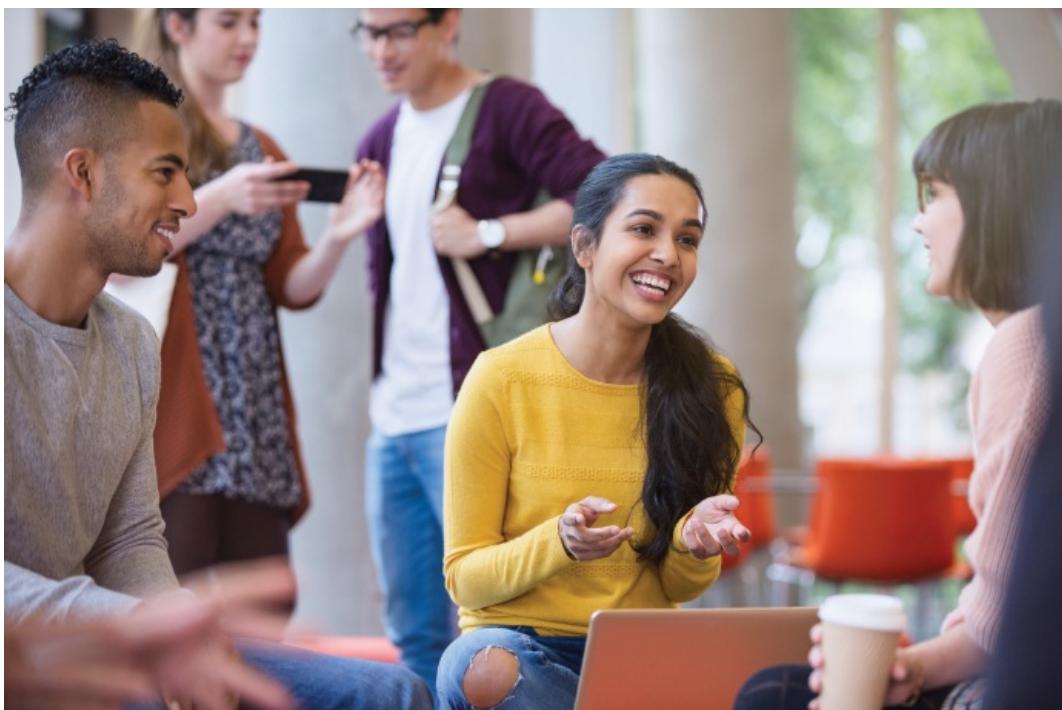
You have been commissioned to write a teen drama involving a group of college friends. Think of a storyline for the drama, then write the script for a two- to three-minute scene, in which, using some discussion, three or four of the friends try to solve a problem together. Write a commentary on the discourse features you have used and the ways you have 'tidied up' your conversation for the script.

## Prosodic and paralinguistic features

As an accomplished conversationalist you will know that what you say is only half the story: it is the way that you say it which is often key to the effectiveness of your communication with others. **Paralinguistic features** are the unspoken elements of communication such as body language, gestures and facial expressions. **Prosodic features** comprise intonation, stress, tone and speed involved in spoken language.

Paralanguistic and prosodic features add to the meaning of the total discourse, even if the speakers are not consciously aware of them. When one or more of these features is absent, as in a phone conversation, it can be difficult to interpret the speaker's intentions. The main prosodic features are as follows:

- *Tone* relates to the emotion associated with the utterance – you can generally tell whether someone is irritated, angry, happy, sad, excited or bored by the expression they use when speaking.
- *Pitch* is a musical term and, in language, it means whether the voice is high or low. It is closely associated with the sounds we make and the emotion we are feeling. For instance, we squeal excitedly in a high pitch and younger children also have high-pitched voices; characteristically, when we speak to babies we raise the pitch of our voices.
- *Volume* is the level of voice production, whether loud or soft. Everyone has their own characteristic volume level when they speak, and volume may change according to the circumstances.
- *Speed* relates to the pace at which someone speaks and again this is related to the circumstances of the social interaction. When excited or frightened, we may speak faster. Conversely, when we are uncertain, or wish to be very careful about what we are saying, we tend to speak more slowly.



### ACTIVITY 3

Answer the questions, initially on your own, then compare your answers with a partner.

- 1 On what occasions might we speak with a low-pitched voice?
- 2 Consider the circumstances which make a person raise or lower the volume of their voice when they speak. What social signals are sent by the volume of someone's voice?
- 3 To appreciate the importance of paralinguistic and prosodic features, try holding a conversation with someone else in your class, breaking conversational conventions in the following ways:
  - Avoid eye contact with the person you are speaking to.
  - Show no emotion in your facial expressions when you are speaking – no smiles or frowns.
  - Do not change the tone of your voice – speak in a monotone.
  - Do not match the tone of your voice with what you are saying.

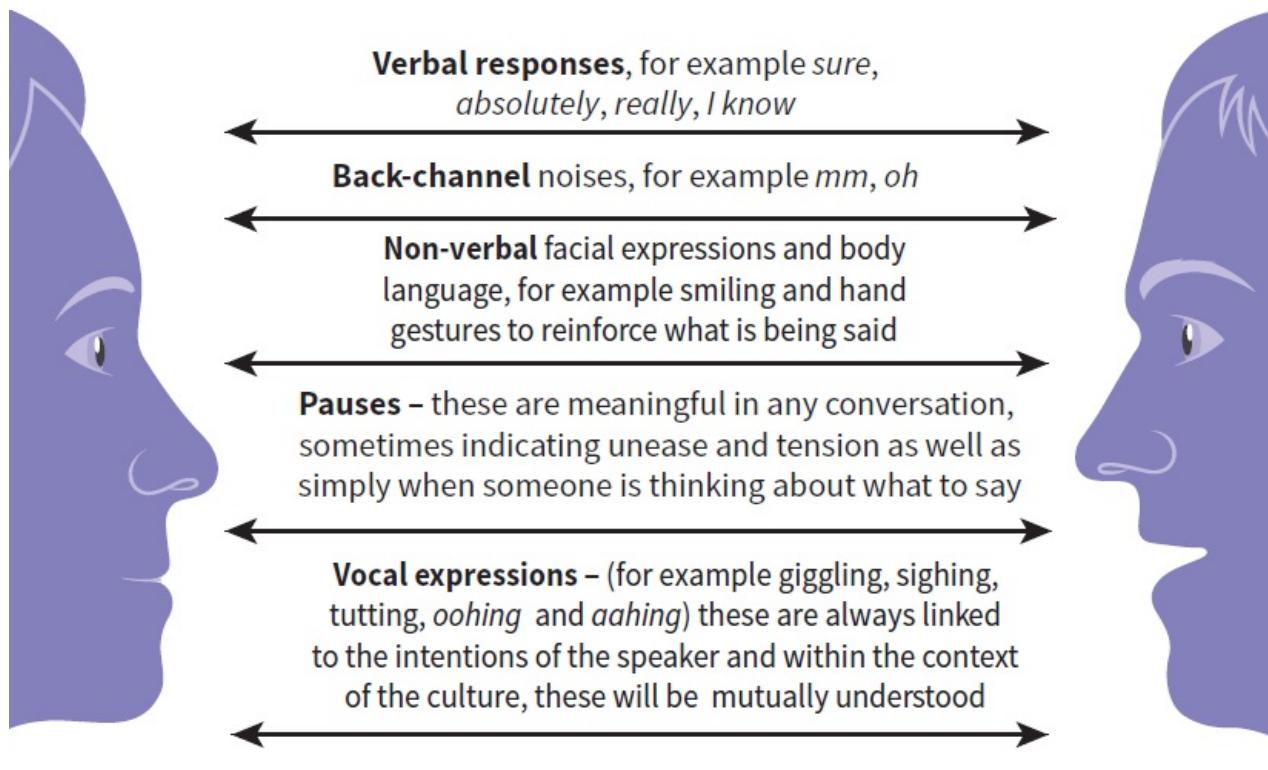
For example, try saying how much you have enjoyed something in a very flat tone.

- Change the pace at which you speak (faster, slower).

Discuss with your partner how you felt about breaking these paralinguistic conventions of conversation. How did your actions affect the listener's responses? Make an assessment, with evidence, about the importance of paralinguistic and prosodic features in discourse.

## The importance of paralinguistics

Paralinguistic features are critically important in any conversation, both for the speaker putting across their points and for the listener interpreting what is being said. The link between the two is assisted by **feedback** – signals that the listener gives to show they are following the conversation. Feedback can be expressed by any of the features shown in the following diagram:



### ••• THINK LIKE ... A HOLLYWOOD OR BOLLYWOOD SCREENPLAY WRITER

You are writing a screenplay for a family film for one of the major film studios. The director wants the scripts to be as natural, but also as professionally filmed, as possible. Write a script for one short scene from the film, in which the household members are discussing a forthcoming family celebration. You may like to view online clips for family films. Any made in your own country would be particularly useful.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I am aware that some digital forms of language blur the traditional conventions between written and spoken language		
I know and recognise features of spoken discourse		

I know and recognise paralinguistic features and I understand the importance of them in spoken discourse

## **Unit 8.2**

# **Conversational interaction**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn the linguistic concepts, methods and approaches of spoken language (AO4)
- analyse and synthesise language information from a variety of spoken sources (AO5)
- learn how spoken language features reflect the purpose and relationship of the participants (AO4).

### **Before you start**

Discuss the following questions in a small group:

- 1** How do you greet people?
- 2** When two or more people start speaking at the same time, who carries on?
- 3** In what ways can you observe uncertainty or confusion in a person's conversation?
- 4** How do people react in your culture when someone interrupts a speaker?

## Features of unscripted language

This unit follows on from [Unit 8.1](#), as it describes the most significant features of language used in conversation. Although we see a huge number of ‘tidied-up’ conversations in the media, the conventions listed here are regular features of *unscripted* language. You will recognise many of these features yourself in your everyday conversations. Every conversation is different – we are thinking on our feet! – and much of our speech, other than chatting, is transactional language which moves along the business of our lives. For example, ‘Put the rubbish out’, ‘I’d like a Thai curry please’, ‘You need to be eighteen to see this film’ (see [Unit 5.1](#) for more about transactional language).



### Regular features of unscripted language

- **Adverbs (adverbial phrases)** are words and phrases which modify, or add to, adjectives, both in written language and in speech. These words and phrases convey the attitudes and values of the speaker and intensify their feelings and opinions. ‘Really’, ‘absolutely’, ‘literally’, ‘of course’, ‘extremely’ and ‘basically’ are frequently used to add strength and colour to our utterances.
- **Back-channelling** is the term given to a noise, gesture, expression or word used by a listener to indicate that he or she is paying attention to a speaker. These items are often sounds rather than full words (e.g. ‘um’, ‘yeah’, ‘right’) and are used primarily to reassure the speaker (**S**) that the listener (**L**) is following the conversation. Sometimes, back-channel responses merge with speaking turns, though the respondent may not wish to take a turn, as seen in the following example. The brackets indicate breathing pauses.

[**S:**] I remember how bad it was when I was a kid [**L:** *oh*] my dad was working away (.) things were awful and my mum (.) it was so hard for her (.) she (.) she had to sell some jewellery belonging to my gran [**L:** *really*] to pay for my clothes and stuff [**L:** *mm*] and it was (.) must have been really difficult for her. [**L:** *awful*] I didn’t realise cos’ I was only small [**L:** *mm*]

Back-channelling is particularly important in phone calls. Without it, the call may be uncomfortable!

- **Contraction** A word or words shortened by placing an apostrophe where letters have been omitted.
- **Deixis** refers to words which locate the conversation in a particular space or context which a non-participant would not be able to make sense of. ‘This’, ‘that’, ‘these’ and ‘those’ are important in conversation as they are mutually understood between the participants. For example, ‘We’ll move this over here’, or ‘We’ll have one of these with our coffee’ is only clear to those involved in the conversation at the time.
- Discourse markers are words or phrases which mark boundaries between one bit of conversation and another, where the speaker wishes to change the subject. For example, ‘so’, ‘right’, ‘I see’, ‘well’, ‘then’, ‘fine’, ‘OK – anyway’. These can also be used to signal the conclusion of a conversation, particularly where there are no other cues. They are widely used in phone conversations.

- **Elision** is the omission of sounds or syllables which are present in the word. This can happen within a word where an unstressed syllable disappears, for example ‘frightening’ ('frɪt.tən.ɪŋ) can be spoken as ‘fright/ning’ ('frɪt.nɪŋ). It can also occur between two words, where the new form of the word can be marked with an apostrophe, for example fish ‘n’ chips. The omission of the sound is frequently, although not always, on the edge of the word.
- **Ellipsis** is the omission of a word or words in speech or writing, though the sense is still evident through the context. For example, ‘Offhome now...’ Three dots (...) in a **transcription** can indicate a silence, which is also considered to be ellipsis.
- *False starts*, when a speaker realises they have made an error and attempts to repair it through reformulation (e.g. ‘I come home/came home very quickly’) are another feature of non-fluency.
- Fixed expressions help us to maintain a shared understanding of the **culture** around us. It is difficult to always be creative in our conversations, and what we say sometimes becomes routine and repetitive. For example, ‘As a matter of fact...’, ‘In my opinion...’, ‘As far as I can see...’, ‘To be honest...’. Some of these fixed expressions are **colloquial** and clichéd (e.g. ‘driving me mad’, ‘at the end of the day’, ‘one fell swoop’, ‘an awesome time’), but they provide predictability when trying to express many different ideas.
- *Hedges and vague language* are both strategies used when we want to avoid coming to the point or say things directly, for example ‘kind of’, ‘you know what I mean’, ‘actually’, ‘basically’. These soften the force of what is said, and are useful when we want to negotiate a point of view.
- **Metalanguage** is used when a person realises that they have made an error. They will sometimes try to correct themselves using metalanguage – language which talks about language. For example, ‘I mean to say...’, ‘I should have mentioned...’. Often, the utterance is reformulated for greater clarity and repairs the conversation.
- *Modality* is often used in conjunction with hedges, and allows us to introduce different options and compromises for negotiation between participants. Some of the most common examples are ‘perhaps’, ‘probably’, ‘normally’, ‘slightly’, ‘maybe’. We can also reflect this hesitancy in the verb structure by the use of modal – or ‘helper’ – verbs. For example, ‘may’, ‘might’, ‘could’, ‘should’. (For more about modality, see **Unit 4.2**).
- *Non-fluency features* are fillers which give us time to think and/or to announce that we are going to say something when the sound is extended (e.g. ‘mmmm...’). There is a lot of non-fluency in unscripted discourse. For example, a *voiceless pause* is when there is a silence – these pauses do not have to be very long before participants perceive a break in the conversation. Try a silence of three to four seconds and see how your respondent reacts!
- Non-standard English features and forms are commonly used where a speaker struggles to phrase utterances completely. Do you know what the end of your utterance will be when you start to speak? Speech is full of constructions considered to be non-standard in writing. A common non-standard feature is the lack of agreement between subject and verb (e.g. ‘we was really tired’) or the incorrect use of tenses (e.g. ‘so I sees him yesterday’), and many utterances are unfinished:
- **Phatic communication** is the name for the polite ‘ice-breakers’ used when greeting people in order to initiate a conversation. For example ‘how are you?’. Often, both participants will say the same thing and a serious or detailed reply is not usually expected.
- *Repetition* in conversation is common for many reasons. We may deliberately repeat for emphasis, or unintentionally to gain thinking time in order to continue the conversation. We use a variety of strategies to manage a conversation, in order that it proceeds as smoothly as possible.

**S:** Are you still playing the (.) er

**L:** guitar

- *Tag questions* occur when a speaker adds a question to prompt a response from the listener. For example, ‘It’s hot in here, isn’t it?’, ‘I’m having a difficult time, aren’t I?’.
- *Vague expressions* can soften authoritative requests and maintain greater engagement between speakers. Look at the difference between ‘Can you get me a cheese sandwich?’ and ‘Can you get me a cheese sandwich or something like that?’. Expressions such as ‘sort of’, ‘kind of’, ‘around’ or ‘so’ allow the speaker and the recipient some flexibility. Vague expressions are not appropriate for travel details and other arrangements where precise information enables cooperation between speakers.



#### KEY CONCEPT

##### Diversity

There are differences in the conventions and language used for

spoken and written English. Compare the lexis and syntax of spoken and written greetings in your country.

Activity 1 focuses on a limited number of features, and does not represent a comprehensive analysis of an unscripted conversation.

## ACTIVITY 1

Read the following extract from a transcript of a conversation, referring to the transcription conventions table in [Unit 8.1](#). Describe the language features which produce the interaction between the speakers.

*Context: Interview with young Canadian, Andrew, about his first adventure on a climbing wall*

*The participants are: Interviewer (INT) and Andrew (A)*

**(.)** Where participants pause, usually just to breathe (a micro pause)  
- pauses which are longer are numbered in the brackets e.g. (1).

- Int:** Andrew are you ready for this (.) that wall looks high  
**A:** look (.) I figured that (.) I've climbed a whole bunch ladders (.) and whole bunch ropes (.) and (.) well (um.) I don't think I'm scared of heights (.) but that's high now I see it  
**Int:** you'll be fine I'm sure (.) do you have friends here (.) they'll watch (.) so you'll be fine (.) so why are you doing this  
**A:** well (.) I w(1) erm (.) as I said (.) I don't have much confidence (.) so I think I decided (.) well (.) um (.) you know what (.) I thought (.) I (.) I (.) should go for it and (.) um (.) see how it goes  
**Int:** good luck (.) you know (.) your friends want you to do this (.) really (.) I see them there  
**A:** thanks (.) I'm all set

## ACTIVITY 2

In pairs, review the following student response to [Activity 1](#). This is not a complete analysis of all the discourse features in the transcript, but a focus on the interaction between the participants. Assess the competence of this student's answer. You may wish to use the following questions as a guide.

- 1 Did the student describe and analyse the whole extract or did they concentrate only on one part?
- 2 Did the student discuss the conventions used and the effects of these on the participants?
- 3 Did the student support their comments with brief and appropriate quotations?
- 4 Did the student use appropriate language terminology and communicate their answer fluently?

## STUDENT RESPONSE

The interviewer addresses Andrew directly by name, which acts as a direct personal engagement and is likely to be the start of the interview. Further evidence that it is the start is the question concerning the activity

of the climb so that an adjacency pair of question and answer is established to continue the conversation.

The conversation extract remains focused on the climb that Andrew is about to make and his thoughts about the challenge of the high wall. Clearly, there is a second person address ‘you’ to Andrew from the interviewer who repeats a reassurance of the assertion, ‘you will be fine’, which arguably bolsters Andrew’s confidence.

Another interviewer question, ‘why are you doing this’, moves the conversation along, with the first part of an adjacency pair. Andrew does not answer directly and shows his uncertainty, with hedges and uncertainties. ‘I w(1) erm (.) as I said’ as well as the discourse marker ‘well’ clear the way for a response, albeit a hesitant one.

This extract finishes with formulaic responses for the occasion: ‘good luck’ followed by ‘thanks’, which are mutually understood and which sustain the tone of support.

### ACTIVITY 3

Read the following transcript and then write your own commentary on it, including examples of the features you have identified.

*Context and participants: Three friends are planning a holiday by rail in Europe*

**M:** male, **F1:** female, **F2:** female

**M:** this website says (.) there's a good rail service to Amsterdam and  
**F2:** really (.) I wanna go (.) heard good stuff  
**F1:** I hear (2) um, nice trains, trains with 2 levels (.) good view  
**F2:** great (.) let's look at the cost for Amsterdam Brussels, (.) try Amsterdam Paris (2) could be better  
**M:** Amsterdam Brussels it cost costs (4) 40 euros  
**F2:** that's quite a lot (.) for each, is it each  
**M:** each, cost 40 euros each we could try another time or maybe weekday (2) could be cheaper  
**F2:** look on another travel site or something (.) we could compare (.) then

//

**F2:** if we looked at one site each then maybe we could see the going rates for those train routes  
**M:** The only problem is if we do go by train is the hassle of finding the right buses and coaches and

//

**F1:** nah 'cos the train stations'll be in the city centres won't they  
**F2:** yeah that'll be fine

**Adapted from the original corpus transcripts in *Exploring Spoken English*, by Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy.**

### ACTIVITY 4

Consider how well has the student addressed the following in their response to [Activity 3](#):

- the role of each participant in planning the trip
- the extent to which each participant supports or counteracts the suggestions of the other two
- clues to the relationship/extent of understanding between the participants including their mutual understanding of the topic
- specific discourse features.

How could the student have improved any of these areas of their response?

### STUDENT RESPONSE

When people are planning and discussing informally there is often hesitation and repetition as ideas are developed. Speakers are thinking as they are speaking so may fail to finish their utterances or be interrupted by someone with a more definite point of view. Speakers often soften their utterances by using modal forms of verbs (e.g. ‘could’, ‘might’) as well as other words like ‘maybe’ or ‘quite’, which prevent the speaker from sounding too harsh and dogmatic when the project is a collaborative one.

There is repetition of key lexical words; in the sample above, the places and costs must be emphasised to move the conversation to some sort of resolution so ‘Amsterdam’, ‘Brussels’, ‘Paris’ as well as the cost must be clarified so that all speakers understand the stage of the planning. It is only when personal experience or some other definite knowledge exists, that the speakers can become more assertive. In the transcript extract, the speaker knows that the train stations will be located in the city centres, but still adds a tag question to soften this declarative utterance.

Other features of conversation are found here. The conversation is amongst friends so the register is informal and colloquial: ‘hassle’ is appropriate to describe the potential problems as is ellipsis ‘wanna’ in this context and the speaker also feels sufficiently secure with her friends to utter the dismissive and slightly scornful ‘nah’ as she seems certain of her facts.

The conversation is primarily transactional with the aim being to book a train trip for the three friends in as economical and trouble-free way as possible. Elision avoids repetition of places and travel, which are understood, however the friends must keep to their equal status by softening assertions and taking account of each others’ ideas. Vague expressions soften the imperative (‘look on another travel site or something’) while the use of tag questions (‘stations’ll be in the city centres won’t they’) gives reassurance for the plans to be adopted.

The planners are all engaged in a collaborative activity with people whom they know well, and they are using conversational strategies in order to achieve the most beneficial outcomes for the project and for the maintenance of their friendship.

**Reflection:** Compare the student’s response to your own. In what ways was your response stronger or weaker against these criteria? Rewrite your response to improve any weaker points.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you

score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I know the key features used in unscripted conversation		
I understand the strategies used by participants in conversation to help them manage their discourse		
I recognise these features and strategies in analysis and am able to explain their effects		

## **Unit 8.3**

# **Transcribing speech**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn to understand and interpret the accurate written record – the transcription – of speech (AO4)
- learn to recognise the symbols and understand the function of phonetic transcriptions (AO4)
- learn to understand the pattern of the rhythm of regular spoken English (AO4).

### **Before you start**

- 1 Within ethical guidelines, listen carefully to the patterns of conversational speech and small (micro) pauses for breath. Try to time the speech length between pauses.
- 2 Discuss with a partner any patterns you notice in people's speech segments that are unbroken by any pauses for breath. Listen very attentively to see if you hear any change in tone before people pause for breath.

## Features of transcribed speech

In the previous units in this section you have learned that speech is not governed by the same rules as writing. This also applies to the transcription, or writing down, of speech, which records the pauses and hesitations as well as the words that are spoken.

Speech **transcripts** do not follow the normal conventions of writing: speech marks are never used and other punctuation marks are used only sparingly – mainly where any confusion about meaning could occur.

## Phonetics

Phonetics is the study of speech sounds. Although language is obviously composed of sound, speech sounds only became the main focus of linguistic investigation in the 20th century. Before that, linguists were more interested in written language. Linguists now realise that studying the sounds of language helps to give a much more precise analysis of **accents**, especially in the way that they change in different conversational contexts, and that sounds are also important in the study of child language acquisition.

**Phonetic** transcripts record the sounds of a speaker according to a standard set of **phonemes** (sounds) and some transcripts also record **intonation**. Phonetic transcripts are a time-consuming but precise method of writing down spoken language.

## The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

The International Phonetic Alphabet is the standard form of transcription, created to represent the standardised sounds of spoken English. It comprises individual letters and diacritics (marks) which indicate specific pronunciations.

I READ	I SIT	ʊ BOOK	uː TOO	ɪə HERE	eɪ DAY		
e MEN	ə AMERICA	ɜː WORD	ɔː SORT	ʊə TOUR	ɔɪ BOY	əʊ GO	
æ CAT	ʌ BUT	ɑː PART	ɒ NOT	eə WEAR	aɪ MY	ɒʊ HOW	
p PIG	b BED	t TIME	d DO	tʃ CHURCH	dʒ JUDGE	k KILO	g GO
f FIVE	v VERY	θ THINK	ð THE	s SIX	z ZOO	ʃ SHORT	ʒ CASUAL
m MILK	n NO	ŋ SING	h HELLO	l LIVE	r READ	w WINDOW	j YES
							ʔ GLOTTAL STOP

**The International Phonetic Alphabet (Received Pronunciation).** The words below the symbols demonstrate the phonemes. For example, the symbol i represents the 'i' sound in 'sit'. The reference words are specific to an accent – in this case, Received Pronunciation.

## Symbols used in speech transcription

The symbols used in speech transcription aim to recreate the manner in which speech is delivered. We pause naturally to take a breath – these are called **micropauses** – between each group of words, known as **tone units**. Transcripts may sometimes indicate rising and falling intonation. In each tone unit, the **pitch movement** (a rise or fall in tone, or a combination of the two) takes place on the most important syllable known as the **tonic syllable**. The tonic syllable is usually a significant word near the end of the tone unit and contributes towards the pattern of English language pronunciation.

As a general rule, the tone falls when we come to the end of a statement (for example, 'He left at four o'clock') and it rises when we are uncertain or are asking a question ('Did she really ask for a pay-rise?'). High-rising terminal pronunciation rises at the end of a sentence.

## A comparison of speech and transcription

Most works of fiction contain a written representation of speech. You will notice that the way that speech is presented in a novel is very different to a transcript. For example, here is a literary representation and transcript of the same speech.

### Literary representation

'My goodness,' she cried out in dismay, "What's been going on here?

Zan looked guilty. He tried to stand in front of the mess, but his mother moved round him.

'Zan? Zan? What have you been up -'

'Nothing' he interrupted. 'Nothing.'

'You've had a party,' his mother turned to him, her eyes furious. 'I can't believe you disobeyed me.'

## Transcript

**Mother:** my goodness (1) what's been going on here? (2) zan  
(.) zan (.) what have you been up

//

**Zan:** nothing (.) nothing

**Mother:** you've had a party (1) i can't believe you disobeyed  
me

## ACTIVITY 1

Referring to the transcription conventions table in [Unit 8.1](#), use the following account to create a transcript of the reported speech. You can interpret the situation exactly as you choose. You should include all hesitations, interruptions and overlaps, as well as micropauses where you think they are most likely to occur. You do not need to annotate tonic syllables. You may make Marjani's talk quite brief.

### KEY CONCEPT

#### Diversity

The huge diversity of the English language offers many opportunities for analysis and comparison between different forms. Spoken English can be recorded and analysed in great detail according to recognised conventions. Why should linguists want to accurately write down and record the details of spoken language? What could be learned from doing this?

Marjani stood up and shouted several times for the students in her class to be quiet. She said that they were to listen carefully as she had some important news about their new college which was to be built on the campus. One or two of the students continued to speak and so Marjani interrupted their conversation to remind them that they were to listen to her.

She told them the dates for the start of the building, how many students it would accommodate and showed them some architect's plans. When she had finished her brief talk she was bombarded by several questions from the students about when the new college was likely to be finished and where they would be studying while it was being built.

## ACTIVITY 2

Take one to two minutes of a sports commentary, a TV drama or a discussion amongst your class group which you have recorded. Write

a transcript including all hesitations, interruptions, overlaps and pauses (including all micropauses, where they occur). Try to show the tonic syllables in each tone unit by capitalising the word or part of a word where they occur.

### ••• THINK LIKE ... A SPEECH THERAPIST

Discuss, in a small group, the strategies you could use to help improve the speech delivery of young people with speech impediments.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand that written and spoken English have different conventions		
I understand what a speech transcript is and why it is written		
I can identify and use the conventions and symbols for transcribing speech		
I have written an effective speech transcription		

## **Unit 8.4**

# **The main stages of early language development**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- explore the factors influencing the main stages of early development in children's language (AO4)
- develop skills to analyse and respond to quantitative data relating to the main stages of early development in children's language (AO5)
- learn new linguistic terminology and how to use it appropriately (AO4)
- write fluently and in appropriate detail about the features of language development in children of this age group (AO2).

### **Before you start**

List the differences between your speech and that of a three or four year old, considering such things as:

- 1** the kinds of words you use
- 2** the things you speak about
- 3** the people you speak to.

## The stages of language acquisition

In this unit you will explore the journey of infant and childhood language acquisition. You may be surprised at the speed at which young children learn language and become confident conversationalists. It is important to remember that not all children go through these stages at the same age, but they do go through the stages in the same sequence. Although each child will learn language at his or her own pace, the stages they go through can be predicted.

The main stages of language development are:

- 1 Before birth
- 2 The first year – the babbling stage
- 3 One to two years – the holophrastic stage
- 4 Two to three years – the telegraphic stage
- 5 Three to five years – continuing development: post-telegraphic stage

You will now explore each of these stages in more detail.

### Before birth

The acquisition of language skills is an extraordinarily complex process which linguists believe starts before birth. Several studies have shown that newborn babies recognise the language they have heard their mother speak in her later stages of pregnancy.

One study in 2013 looked at babies born in Sweden and the United States. Forty infants, under two days old and comprising equal numbers of boys and girls, were monitored by a computer. They were given pacifiers (dummies) and the researchers assessed how interested each baby was in the vowel sounds of their mother's native language and a foreign language. The study showed differences in sucking time between exposure to the native and foreign languages, showing that some differentiation had been learned while in the womb. A baby's language development starts early!



#### KEY CONCEPT

##### Change

There are complex influences on the changes which take place in the early stages of child language acquisition.

At what age do you think young children are first able to speak and be understood?

### The first year - the babbling stage

The similar pattern of language development across cultures suggests a universal sequence of events in the process of language acquisition. All new parents quickly become aware of the sounds made by their newborn infants and can begin to distinguish the reasons for different sorts of cries (for example, hunger or distress).

Recent research appears to contradict the long-held belief that the cries of newborn babies are not language-specific. A German study in 2009 found that the melodies of the newborn babies' cries followed the same intonations as the languages the babies had heard in the womb. The French babies' cries, for example, tended to end on a rising note, which is a characteristic of the French language.

The baby's first smile, at around six weeks, is accompanied by 'cooing' and repetitive sounds. The baby starts to make these sounds, known as reduplication, such as 'baba' and 'gaga', as the vocal chords develop the motor skills needed for the eventual production of speech.

This is followed, at about three to four months, by more sustained '**babbling**', where the child's sounds more closely resemble those of the language they will speak. In the babbling stage, the infant spontaneously produces unrelated sounds which prepare them for the production of words later on. The young child appears to enjoy making the sounds independently, and the sounds are similar to syllable-like sequences in the child's native language. The babbling stage continues throughout the child's first year.

At this and every stage, parents and family will help the child's development by speaking to them. Even though the baby does not understand the specific meaning of what is being said, learning about conversational skills is already taking place at this stage. This **caretaker language** initiates and teaches turn-taking, which is explained in [Unit 8.1](#). The style of caretaker language is very distinctive. It is the language used by family and friends who speak to the baby in a higher and lighter tone than normal speech and with frequent repetition of words which are important in the infant's world (e.g. 'lovely boy'; 'happy baby'; 'who's mummy's favourite girl?'). In reply, the baby can make all manner of noises including spluttering, blowing bubbles and 'raspberries' with the lips pressed together; the baby is exploring its vocal

repertoire. Babbling to its parents or carers enables the baby to develop its organs of speech production.

### ACTIVITY 1

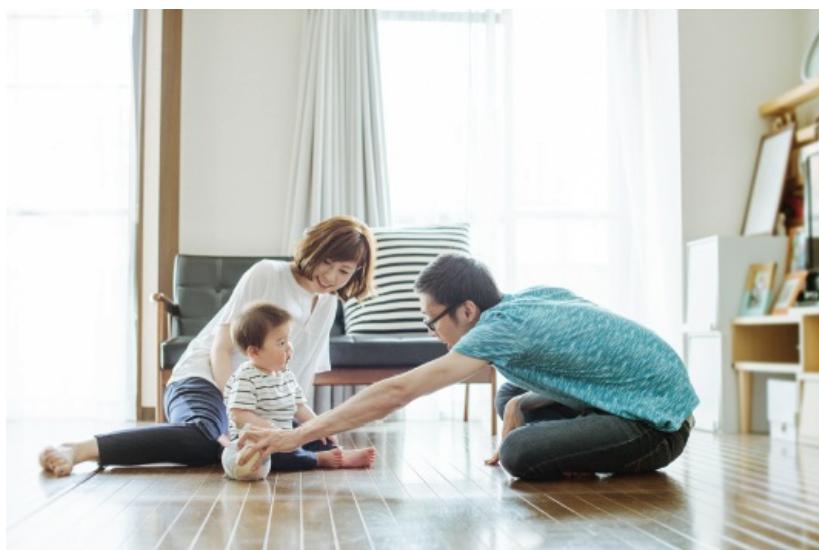
Re-read stages 1 and 2 of child language acquisition. List all the evidence which shows the importance of the very earliest periods of the infant's life for their language acquisition.

## One to two years - the holophrastic stage

This is the stage of rapid lexis acquisition and basic syntax development. A child's first words are usually spoken at about twelve months. On average, they will have gained a lexis of about 200 words before their second birthday.

The term **holophrastic** refers to the child's first attempt at grammar, where the meaning of a word may have many possibilities: 'milk', for example, may mean 'I've spilt the milk', 'I want some milk', 'you have the milk', or some similar holophrase. The word combined with gestures (e.g. waving arms or crying) facilitates understanding because the caregiver is familiar with the child.

The child becomes able to use a wider range of initial consonant sounds in their words. Consonant sounds are produced at different times, and the earliest consonant sounds pronounced in English are /m/, /h/ and /b/. Certain sounds (phonemes), arrive before others. Sounds in the earliest words include **plosive** /b/ and /p/ sounds, which require a small explosion in production (put your fingers close to your lips to say them and you will feel a small puff of air) and **nasal** /m/ and /n/ sounds, produced in the nasal area. The words spoken by very young children appear to have no meaning; they seem to babble for the pleasure of it. Their own language is limited but they have a wider understanding of what is said to them.



The following are key features of language acquisition between the ages of one and two.

- New lexical items learned are nouns, referring to people and items in the infant's world (e.g. 'mummy', 'ball', 'juice', 'milk', 'doll', 'train', 'book') as well as family names and pets.
- New words relate to personal interactions (e.g. 'bye bye', 'thank you', 'no', 'hello'), simple verbs (e.g. 'kiss', 'sit', 'drink', 'walk') as well as general conditions in their environment (e.g. 'hot', 'all', 'gone', 'more').
- The child is now more aware of the world around them. Their speech at this stage, as throughout their early childhood, links with their wants and needs, and enables the expression of emotions and naming of people and things in their world.
- The language used by young children at this stage depends on how much they are spoken to by the family around them.

The child's rate of learning is phenomenal. The *two-word stage* emerges roughly halfway through this period as the child's mastery of their language broadens and their range of expression becomes more complex. They start to use two words together (e.g. 'more milk', 'daddy juice', 'mummy sock', 'train go'). These sentences have no inflection – there are no indications of tense or person – but there is the emergence of a sequence and order of meaning. Word endings give an indication of the person speaking (e.g. 'I want'/ 'he wants'), when an action is taking place (e.g. 'I knock'/'I knocked') and belonging (e.g. 'the man's shoes')

The basic conversational pattern of discourse is established as the child begins to chatter, often to

themselves as well as to others. By the age of two the child has a working lexis and has laid the foundation for much greater conversational interaction with those around them.

### ACTIVITY 2

- a Read the following exchange which takes place outside a shop. Ben, 17 months old, has been walking behind his father and has just fallen over:
- b Read the following passage taken from a student's response to the question:

Using the exchange between Ben and his father and its context as evidence, evaluate Ben's stage of language acquisition.

(10 marks)

**Ben:** ow ow ow ow

**Father:** [still walking ahead] OW OW OW OW

**Ben:** oow ow ow ow

**Father:** ow ow ow ow [turns, goes back and picks up Ben]

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Ben is clearly upset from falling over and is shouting to gain attention with natural expressions of pain. He does not have sufficient lexis to express his injuries in any more specific ways and, as he is shouting loudly and still walking, he is unlikely to be badly hurt. He is more concerned by the need to alert his father to gain comfort and reassurance.

His father is still walking ahead and repeating Ben's sounds, which he may see as showing sympathy (these sounds are immediately repeated by Ben). Now that both child and adult are saying the same sounds, there is a distinct pattern of turn-taking which has changed the distress resulting from the fall into a pattern of mutually repeated vowel sounds, strong and monosyllabic. The language is part of the care-giving.

### ACTIVITY 3

Rewrite this response and improve the student's answer from good to excellent by considering the following:

- 1 To what extent have all points made been accompanied by brief, relevant text references?
- 2 How well does the answer analyse as well as describe the stage of Ben's language acquisition?
- 3 How much detail does the student use to show Ben's use of language and his understanding of the conventions of unscripted discourse?

## Two to three years - the telegraphic stage

During this period and from this stage onwards there is a huge increase in the lexis actively used by the child – often by as many as ten new words per week. Young children will have a lexis of about 2000 words by the age of five. Many of these words are acquired between the ages of two and three.

This **telegraphic** stage of language development takes its name from communications by telegrams, which were printed out from a telegraph machine. Telegrams were used from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century to deliver urgent national and international messages. Because they were paid for according to the number of words used, they were usually very brief. Only key information was included (e.g. 'Arriving Kuala Lumpur 9pm').

At this very early stage of language development children have to learn to express their meaning using their limited lexis. This often causes **overextension**. For example, the word 'daddy' might be applied to all men; a sibling's name may be used for other children; and words for items with distinctive properties, such as 'plate', may be used for other things sharing those properties (e.g. a wheel). This is a common feature of language acquisition at this age, as the child begins to notice more of the world around them.

The child's limited lexis may also result in **underextension**. For example, a child may use 'shoes' to mean his or her shoes, but no-one else's.

The telegraphic stage follows on from the two-word stage, when a child's utterances become longer and more grammatically complex and complete utterances emerge (although some parts may be missing). The words now have a greater purpose than simply the identification of people and objects, but are they still condensed. Look at the following examples:

*food all gone*

*mummy come home*

*we going now?*

*dada get juice*

*Asma not sharing ball*

The child is communicating much more clearly. The word order is usually straightforward with subject (e.g. 'food') and verb (e.g. 'gone'), though often omits auxiliary words (e.g. 'is'). Additional information such as prepositions (e.g. 'to', 'from', 'under', 'by'), determiners (e.g. 'the', 'a') and inflections/suffixes to show tense and person (e.g. '-ed', '-ing', '-s') are omitted in the early telegraphic stage, but appear over the next year or so.

The child is now able to produce a wider range of consonants and is likely to abbreviate longer words, and interaction with adults shows them the correct form of the utterance.

#### ACTIVITY 4

Study the following short transcript with a partner.

- 1 Describe the child's language abilities and suggest the stage of their language development.
- 2 Give evidence to show how the father's caretaker language is helping the child's language development.

**Child:** [at a station] train (.) train (.) big train

**Father:** Yes (.) up we go into this train (.) careful now (.) it will be going soon (.) see the guard is blowing his whistle

Even when children are unable to pronounce a word correctly themselves, they recognise the correct pronunciation when used by adults. Interesting research from Berko and Brown (1960) involved a child who called his plastic fish 'fis'. When the adult imitated the child's pronunciation and asked 'Is this your fis?', the child replied 'No my fis'. After this the adult said 'Is this your fish?' and the child answered 'Yes my fis'.

The child's language production – what is *said* – goes hand-in-hand with the rapid progress of their language reception – what is *understood*. The child can now understand two-clause commands, such as 'pick up teddy and bring him here please', and contrasting concepts, such as 'hot' and 'cold'. They are much more engaged in the language and activities of the household, such as meeting a visitor.



## Types of child language

Once a child starts to acquire language, they become vocal and appear to delight in their newly developed skill.

### Monologues

From about the age of two, children will often provide a running commentary about what they are doing, as they are doing it. This may extend into their imaginative play:

*Mehdi, aged two and a half, is playing with his trains:*

Train here (.) [makes train noises] no train, yes more train (.) come [drives toy train and carriages quickly along the tracks and they fall off] train – train over (.) train back (.) oh dear all fall over (.) train here (.) Thomas train (.) Gordon train (.) vroom [more train noise] go in your house trains

As the child becomes older, these short monologues become more like narratives particularly when accompanying imaginative play:

*Willow, nearly four, is playing with her dolls:*

Now time for bed (.) time to go to bed (.) come on babies time for bed (.) let's put you in the cot (.) do you want your milk now (.) that's nice drink it up (.) now to bed (.) you have to go to bed cos mummy said (.) mummy said bed (.) night night (.) sleep tight (.) night night

### Dialogues

We have seen the importance of the interaction between the infant and members of their family, particularly the caregiver. This develops from day one and is helped by the attention of the adult or older sibling to the sounds that the baby makes.



#### THINK LIKE ... A CHILDREN'S AUTHOR

You have been commissioned by a publishing company to write a children's book suitable for pre-school children in your country and in your mother tongue. The story should interest the child and stimulate shared discussion between the reader and the child. Based on your research, produce a rough draft of the first few pages of an early reading book. You could do simple sketches to show how each page would look (e.g. how you would position the text and pictures).

## Three to five years - continuing development: the post-telegraphic stage

During the post-telegraphic stage the young child acquires the skills to use language in more complex ways. They become able to sustain conversation and speak using more than one simple idea as they combine ideas by using coordinating conjunctions 'and' and 'but' as well as subordinating conjunctions, such as 'because'.

Language development continues during this stage. Along with cognitive and social development, the young child's interactions with others in their world continue to broaden.

The following language features develop very rapidly:

- connecting words (e.g. 'because', 'and', 'if')
- number words
- words connected with emotions
- family terms (e.g. 'auntie', 'brother')
- colours
- contrasting concepts (e.g. 'longer', 'bigger').

This broadening of lexis includes distinguishing **hyponyms** (words for categories of things, e.g.

'animals', 'vegetables') and **hyponyms** (words within those categories, e.g. 'cat', 'hamster', 'carrot', 'cabbage').

Young children learn thousands of new words by listening to their parents, siblings and other family members and guessing meaning from context. With a wider social network, including attending playgroup and listening to stories, children of this age understand many more words than they say. They begin to use longer words at this stage, often words of three or more syllables (e.g. 'elephant' and 'helicopter'). They often take great delight in saying new and complicated words.

Between the ages of three and five, children become increasingly competent in their communication. Their increasing knowledge of syntax and lexis seems to be accompanied by an understanding of the principles of inflection as past tenses are added as well as plurals. Children make **virtuous errors**, applying regular grammatical endings to words with irregular forms (e.g. 'runned', 'mouse's, 'goed', 'swimmed' 'wented').

A famous experiment was carried out by Jean Berko in 1958 to show the application of grammatical rules by children. A selection of young children were shown a picture of an imaginary creature which Berko called a 'wug'. Clearly, the children had not heard this name before. When they were shown a picture of two of the creatures, children were asked to complete the sentence 'There are two \_\_\_\_'. They applied the grammatical principle of adding 's' for plurals and replied 'wugs'.

Children between three and five become more fluent. They can handle greater lexical demands and are increasingly able to talk appropriately in different situations, such as family and playgroup. By this stage they are using question forms (e.g. 'Can I have one?') and negation (e.g. 'He doesn't want one.'). They are now able to use auxiliary verbs: 'do' is the first to appear, followed by 'can' and 'will'. Children may duplicate modal verbs (e.g. 'Please may can I ... ?'), which might reflect an understanding that 'may' is required for manners, while 'can' indicates the fact of being able to do something.

By this stage, children can handle more complex utterances with two or more parts. By the age of three, children understand that words often have more than one meaning and, although they inevitably mix things up, their fluency is increasing.

### ACTIVITY 5

Read the following short transcript.

Giving evidence in support of your point of view, describe the stage of language acquisition reached by Oscar.

*Oscar (aged three) and his mother have been playing a game.*

**Oscar:** mummy I winned

**Mother:** No, you won

**Oscar:** I winned mummy

**Mother:** No Oscar, you won

**Oscar:** I not one I three

The mix-up of homophones – words which sound the same – in the conversation in Activity 5 show Oscar's understanding of words which sound the same ('one'/'won') but he does not grasp that they have different meanings.

Children start to understand **idioms** – expressions with non-literal meanings. For example, in many varieties of English, the idiomatic phrase 'you're pulling my leg' has nothing to do with legs but means 'you're teasing me.' This understanding of idiomatic elements of language starts at around three years but is not fully developed until much later in the child's life.

The period from three to five years of age is a time of rapid learning and consolidation for young children. They delight in chatter and ask lots of questions. Caregivers and other adults can follow what they are saying as their conversation is generally clear in spite of errors with more complex structures.

From infancy onwards, young children are likely to experience the wider world in the form of preschool or nursery education. As well as communicating with new children and adults, they will be exposed to an extraordinary breadth of new language and conversation by playing with other children.

Generally, by the age of five, children can do the following:

- converse effortlessly in the majority of situations
- understand and articulate complex language structures and tenses

- use the conditional tense: this requires the understanding of an element of possibility or uncertainty (e.g. 'If it stops raining we could go to the park.')
- understand abstract ideas as well as idioms
- take part in conversations – though they may still only be interested in conversations about themselves!

They have come a long way from their early babbles and coos and are set to become full linguistic participants in their world.

## Question practice

Read the question and transcript extract. Then read the student response that follows.

Read the following extract. Using the information from it and your wider knowledge of the stages of language acquisition, discuss the features of Malakai's language and his conversational abilities.

*Malakai, 3 years 10 months, is talking to his grandma.*

**Malakai:** Can I buy those cars that are on TV

**Grandma:** Yes with your own money you can buy whatever you want

**Malakai:** but I don't have any money

**Grandma:** well then I suppose it means that you can't buy those cars

**Malakai:** well then you have to buy them for me

**Grandma:** but I don't have much money or a job

**Malakai:** I know I'll give you a job

**Grandma:** What's my job

**Malakai:** a driver (.) driving toys and cars

(25 marks)

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Malakai is almost four years old and he is able to have a conversation with his grandma about a topic and to follow the pattern of turn-taking. For example:

G: What's my job

M: a driver

Malakai has all the necessary lexis to talk about the items within his world – the cars – and how to get them. He is able to understand ideas of buying and working for money. He is fluent and uses the adversative conjunction ‘but’ to develop the contrary argument that he cannot buy cars, so that he is not merely copying the syntax of his grandma. He does this with ‘well’ as a marker to continue the argument.

Malakai is focused in his world and he is able to move from the actual possibilities of buying toy cars to the more imaginative areas of possibility involving his grandma driving new toys and cars. Here the idea becomes a little unclear, although it is stated confidently.

Malakai uses appropriate lexis (e.g. ‘money’, ‘job’, ‘car’) and appears to pronounce all words in a standard way. He is able to use the present tense ‘you buy them for me’, and the future, with ellipsis, ‘I’ll give you a job’. He is able to form the negative construction ‘I don’t have’ and the interrogative ‘can I buy those cars’.

Malakai is obviously speaking the same style of English as his grandma. He does seem to use her words in his replies (e.g. ‘money’, ‘buy’, ‘job’) so that, in her caretaker role, she is modelling the content and the style of their conversation.

The conversation seems calm and quite rational, even though Malakai

could be disappointed that he is unlikely to have the cars he wants.  
He seems to have the conversational skills of his chronological age range.

### ACTIVITY 6

- 1** To what extent has the student:
  - written about the conversational abilities of Malakai?
  - identified specific features of spoken language, syntax, lexis
  - explained the style of the content, the subjects discussed and the interaction between the speakers?
  - referred to their wider studies?
- 2** What were the strengths and weaknesses of this response? Which of these points could have been improved?
- 3** Write your own response to the question, bearing in mind the points you have identified in your evaluation of the student's work.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I am able to understand the sequence of early language development		
I am able to use research studies to support general ideas of early language development		
I understand the key language terms associated with early language development		
I am able to analyse the student responses to data given in this section and to link comments to features and effects of early language development		

# **Unit 8.5**

## **Language development from five to eight years**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to identify and analyse the features of language development in children aged approximately five to eight (AO4)
- use independently researched case studies and research findings to support your analysis (AO5)
- write fluently and in appropriate detail about the features of language development in children of this age group (AO2).

### **Before you start**

- 1 How did you learn to read and write?
- 2 What early children's books did you enjoy? How important were books and shared reading while you were learning to read and in your early days as an independent reader?
- 3 Which particular elements of learning to read and write in your native language were challenging? Which did you enjoy most?

Discuss your ideas with other members of your class.

## Conversational development and register

The speed of language acquisition in preschool children makes it an exciting area to explore and analyse. By the time most children are in full-time school, at around the age of five, they are able to function as independent conversationalists with others in their world.

Your own language will have developed along with all your other cognitive abilities during your time in school. In addition to speech development, you will have become skilled in reading and writing. Unlike speech, these skills are not instinctive and have to be taught. They are however, central to our measurement of an educated society.

You may find occasional overlaps between sections of this unit. This is because the stages at which language development takes place, although sequential, are approximate and may cut across different age groups.

When children go to school, they broaden their experience from familiar family routines and have to learn about what happens in the outside world, especially at school. They must develop the ability to speak appropriately to a range of people with whom they have different relationships. For example, the head teacher, classroom teacher, classroom assistants, bus drivers, dinner ladies, classmates, older and younger pupils. They learn that these different relationships are reflected in the different register or level of formality they must use in their speech. For more about register, turn back to [Unit 3.3](#).



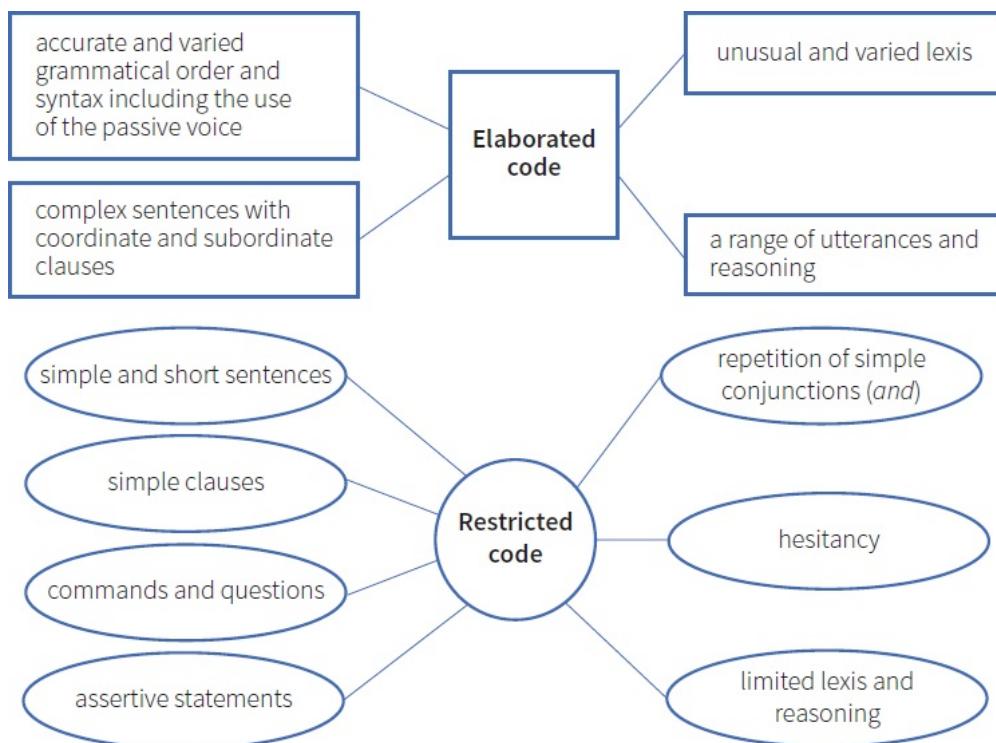
### KEY CONCEPT

#### Creativity

Young children are very creative in the ways they integrate speaking, reading and writing in language development between the ages of five and eight. How do you think that the language of children aged five to eight is distinctive?

## E Restricted and elaborated codes - a theory

Preschool children acquire speech and language in a relatively effortless way. As they enter school, they are expected to use these skills in a more complex social and academic setting. Additionally, they learn the skills of reading and writing. Many studies of early childhood development explore relationships between spoken language development, reading development and social development. One theory which links language with educational achievement is the **restricted code** and **elaborated code**, a theory by Basil Bernstein which was published in 1971.



According to Bernstein's theory, the restricted code is briefer, more condensed and is very **context-bound** so that only the immediate group are able to understand it. The elaborated code explains things more fully so that everyone can understand it. Bernstein developed this code in 1971 to try to explain the relatively poor performance on language-based subjects by some groups of economically disadvantaged children, when they achieved much higher results in maths-based topics. It is important to emphasise that the restricted code does not mean inferior language, in the same way that elaborated code does not mean complicated language. These descriptions refer to what the language is suited for and the restricted code works effectively in situations where all the relevant knowledge is shared amongst all members of the group. Bernstein argued that school language situations often required new and exploratory ideas, which cannot easily be presented by the restricted code's condensed form of language. If school children are not exposed to both forms of language, some might be placed at a disadvantage.

The restricted and elaborated codes are a theory which has been modified and challenged by subsequent studies of different levels of achievement in early childhood education. Social conditions have changed globally since Bernstein first proposed his theory but regular reports about the lack of educational attainment amongst some children suggest that the language codes could still be a contributory factor in the low levels of language proficiency for children of this age.

New Zealand studies of primary school entrants highlight the concerns around language proficiency and its critical link with academic achievement. A 2016 article in the New Zealand Herald quoted a primary school principal whose school had been concerned for a long time at students' literacy and numeracy skills as new entrants, particularly in oral language.

### ACTIVITY 1

Work in small groups to create a chart showing Bernstein's theory and its links to child language development. You might like to investigate the following points:

- the types of language considered restricted and elaborated

- the language used by educators, such as teachers and support staff in schools
- whether your group is inclined to modify Bernstein's theory and in what ways.

Search for any more recent studies which have been carried out in your country about the styles of language used to children aged between five and eight, and check for any links to their educational success.

For a very clear online review of Bernstein's theories, search for 'introduction to Basil Bernstein'.

## Language skills of children aged five to seven

- At this stage, children are good at speaking and expressing requests and ideas using connectives – words which join clauses giving additional information and reasons (e.g. ‘because’, ‘as’); these words give the linguistic freedom to express opinions and ideas.
- The beginnings of reading and writing broaden the exposure to language so that children understand the different meanings of a word and the context in which each meaning is used.
- Lexical extension includes the understanding that different words can have similar meanings (e.g. ‘unhappy’/‘sad’).
- Children begin to understand that words can be used both literally and in more imaginative ways; the child’s imagination is developing with story reading and creative writing.
- Children are able to use language for different purposes as they begin to speak more fluently; it is possible to have a sustained conversation with a five-year-old though most of it may relate to themselves and their own world.

### ACTIVITY 2

Read the following question, transcript extract and student response.

- 1 Write a response to the question based on the transcribed conversation.
- 2 In pairs, look at the student’s commentary and assess to what extent it offers comprehensive coverage of the language features in the transcribed conversation, based on those used by children aged five to seven.

Read the extract of a conversation in which five-year-old Ethan, who lives in the United States, talks about what he will let his own children do.

Using the extract and your wider knowledge of child language development, comment on the conversational skills Ethan shows.

**(25 marks)**

**Mother:** Ethan (.) what did you just tell me you were going to do when you grow up and have your own children

**Ethan:** I would let (.) whenever they want to do a paint craft (.) they could paint on the walls

**Mother:** the walls of your house

**Ethan:** aha

**Mother:** any craft they want

**Ethan:** yep

**Mother:** what else could they do to the walls if they want to

**Ethan:** (1) errm (.) they can write words for me (.)

**Mother:** that wouldn’t bother you (.) any wall in the house (.) not just the basement ...

**Ethan:** that would be fine

**Mother:** and in your bedroom

**Ethan:** no I wouldn’t allow them in my bedroom (.) but downstairs in the basement (.) or in their room (.) they could do it in their room(.) if they wanted

**Mother:** what kind of food would you feed your children

**Ethan:** (3) every child could have a different meal (.) I would let them pick out whatever they want to (.) and I would

(xxxxx) let it cook its own dinner ...

**Mother:** when would be their own bedtime

**Ethan:** (4) probably about ten o'clock

**Mother:** don't you think that's a little late

**Ethan:** (2) no (.) cos I'd let 'em play (.) cos they would probably want to play (.) at night time (.) so I would let 'em (.) if they play (.) towards ten o'clock

### STUDENT RESPONSE

This is part of an extended conversation that Ethan is having at home, where he is being asked to think hypothetically about his own future. He is confident in his answers which, although clearly unrealistic, are nonetheless clearly expressed (and in some detail, as when he is talking about allowing his children to draw on the walls). He is expressing his views in full utterances (e.g. 'that would be fine').

He gives reasons for his decisions (e.g. 'I'd let 'em play (.) cos they would probably want to play') and here, too, he is able to consider likelihood or possibilities shown in the use of the conditional tense (e.g. 'they could paint on the walls').

Ethan's lexis is varied and he is able to embellish ideas with examples, such as the different rooms of the house to be used (e.g. 'room', 'bedroom', 'basement'). He uses a modifying adjective to explain his points (e.g. 'different meal') and an adverb of time to add detail (e.g. 'whenever they want').

He is competent with the rather tricky practice in English of changing the singular ('every child') into the plural pronoun ('their'), although, interestingly, he makes the virtuous error of changing the child into the neuter ('it').

Ethan is at ease with the conversational conventions of turn-taking and is direct in disagreeing about the lateness of bedtime; he does not attempt to use any face-saving strategy. He is dealing with a projected future very much in terms of his own life now.

### ACTIVITY 3

To what extent has the student's response commented on:

- 1 Ethan's conversational skills
- 2 his lexis and the style of spoken language he uses
- 3 the concrete and the imaginative parts of his conversation?

Read the following teacher comment. Either rewrite the student's response and improve it, or write your own response, based on the points made by the teacher.

### TEACHER COMMENT

As an extract taken from a longer answer, this is a good response. The student has briefly put the conversation into the context of where and with whom it is taking place.

The imaginary scenario is commented upon with Ethan's coherent conversational abilities within the fantasy. For example, there are several comments about the language style, use of modifiers,

adverbs, and virtuous errors.

The student is aware of and uses the conditional confidently, with examples.

All language points made are exemplified.

The response could be improved to become strong by considering the following:

- more detail about the lack of fluency in some of the utterances (e.g. 'I would let (...) whenever they want to do a paint craft'), where the sequence of statements is not always logical
- more detailed background information on the very self-centred content of Ethan's conversation and the fact that it is quite haphazard in content, even when allowing for the imaginary situations
- the range of Ethan's lexis and more detail on his discourse skills
- Ethan's confidence in countering his mother's suggestion that the bedtime would be too late for the children.

#### ACTIVITY 4

Transcribe an extract from a conversation with a child aged between five and seven. You could search for an example online, or use your own example. Write an accompanying commentary, using the example provided in the student response as a model.

## Language skills acquired by children from the age of seven

A whole set of development milestones occur around the age of seven and this applies to language, too.

- Children of this age speak fluently with a wide lexis of several thousand words. Their language efforts at this time are directed mainly towards reading and writing. Unlike speaking, these are usually taught in formal education. There are several theories about the most effective way of teaching reading and writing skills.
- Speaking skills continue to develop with a mastery of humour and plays on words, which are specific to their native language(s). The child will inevitably become involved in arguments and must develop language strategies to manage these, difficult though this is.
- Children are still very self-oriented but increasingly look outwards. They are becoming aware that different styles of language are used according to the people and situations they encounter. Their grasp of abstract issues (ideas about what is good and bad, and other ethical issues) must be expressed through their language. Their spoken language may be guided at school and they will have lessons to gain more competence in their native language(s).
- Many children are brought up to speak two or more languages fluently (you may be one of them). This includes children of parents who speak different native languages and transmit this to their children. Some children may speak one language at home and another when outside. The value of speaking more than one language is becoming more important in our global society.



### THINK LIKE ... A SCHOOL TEACHER OF A CLASS OF SEVEN- TO EIGHT-YEAR-OLDS

You have some children in your class whose reading and writing skills are below the levels of achievement expected for their age. Research any language schemes which support children and enable their literacy, such as their reading age, to catch up with their chronological age.

- Work in a small group to create a chart of suggestions for improvements to these children's reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Explain the ways in which your programme will enable these children to catch up.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I know the key features of language development in children aged between five and eight years		
I know the key features of reading, writing and speaking in pupils' language development in this age group		
I know about key reference studies and theories about language development in this age group, and am able to use these as examples		

# **Unit 8.6**

## **The functions of children's language**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- understand the different social contexts in which children use language to communicate effectively (AO3)
- understand the appropriateness of language between participants in social situations (AO3)
- know the variety of functions of language (AO3)
- analyse and respond fluently to texts exploring the functions of language (AO5).

### **Before you start**

Think of the situations which you have been in when you have spoken to other people today.

- 1 Why did you speak to them? What was the purpose of your conversation?
- 2 In what ways did you communicate other than by speaking?

## Pragmatics

So far in this section, you have learnt about the language development of young children. This development underpins spoken and written skills throughout life. Communication helps us to manage our lives effectively. When we speak, we need more than technical skills in order to engage with those around us. Social context – known as pragmatics – is another important factor in communication. You will find more about pragmatics in [Unit 7.1](#).

### Appropriate contexts for children's language

We learn many of the social conventions which govern language subconsciously, for example, the most appropriate ways of speaking to different individuals in our lives, such as a grandparent or a respected member of the community. However, we may also be taught these codes. For example, many children are taught as infants to say 'please' and 'thank you' whereas other parents may not emphasise this convention so much.

#### ACTIVITY 1

You have been reflecting on the reasons why you communicate. On your own, consider the ways in which the style of your language changed according to the different situations you were in. Compare your findings with a partner, then report back to the larger group. Were there similarities in your answers? You could consider:

- your purpose in speaking
- the topics you spoke about
- your relationship with the other participant(s)
- the context of the discourse – the situation(s) in which it took place.

Pragmatics is a very broad topic and is related to other features of a society's accepted ways of communication. As with all forms of communication, what is acceptable changes between places and over time. Traditionally, students addressed their teachers either as 'Mr', 'Mrs' or 'Miss' and their family name. In many institutions teachers and students are now on first-name terms, although in other regions the formality of title and family name still remains.

In the 19th century children were expected to be 'seen and not heard', but much greater self-expression is now encouraged. In a stereotypical view held by some older British English speakers, **American English** speakers are thought to have a much greater level of friendship intimacy, such as being on first-name terms after a very brief acquaintance. English speakers do not have the 'tu/vous' distinction which French speakers use in their personal communications.

Sometimes there are times in conversation where we say the wrong thing, resulting in discomfort or disagreement. Throughout our lives, we continue to adapt, develop and change our pragmatic skills in order to avoid such situations.

#### ACTIVITY 2

- 1 To test your understanding of appropriate language for the context, look at the following statements, which could be used in discourse. With a partner, explain why these would be considered inappropriate in the context of English pragmatics.
  - *Hiya, nice to meet you. How much do you earn?*
  - *You look so much older and more wrinkled since the last time we met.*
  - *This is such a boring conversation, I'm off to find someone much more interesting.*
  - [having dinner at someone's home] *This food is disgusting – only fit for the bin.*
  - *Come on then, tell me how old you are. You look about 100.*
- 2 Using the reasons you have given in Question 1, think of at least five similar examples of communications that would be inappropriate in your own country or region. You might consider:
  - subjects of conversation thought unsuitable to discuss with

- anyone except the family or close friends
- levels of respect between different generations
- attitudes which would lower a person's **self-esteem**.



## KEY CONCEPT

### Creativity

Young people learn to adapt their language to a range of circumstances in which they communicate with others. List the different reasons why you think young people use language and the different contexts in which they use it.

## Halliday's functions of language

The linguist Michael Halliday has described language as 'the creature and creator of human society'. This sums up the importance of language, particularly in the development of young children who acquire skills they will continue to use throughout their lives.

Halliday identified seven functions of language that children need in their early years:

- 1 Instrumental** language used to fulfil a need – for example, obtaining food, drink and comfort.
- 2 Regulatory** language used to influence the behaviour of others – concerned with persuading, commanding or requesting other people to do things you want (e.g. 'Mummy get Rohan juice'; 'play with me').
- 3 Interactional** language used to develop social relationships and the process of interaction – concerned with the phatic communication of talk. This is talk which is just concerned with getting along with others and has no informative value (e.g. 'you're my friend'; 'here's my teddy'; 'shall we play pirates?'; 'Love you mummy').
- 4 Personal** language used to express the personal opinions, feelings and identity of the speaker – sometimes referred to as the 'Here I am!' function, announcing themselves to the world (e.g. 'me good girl'; 'best stripy socks'; 'tired boy').
- 5 Representational** language used to exchange, relay or request information (e.g. 'need to see Granny'; 'finished tea all gone').
- 6 Heuristic** language used to explore the world and to learn and discover – children use language to learn. This may be questions and answers, or the running commentary that frequently accompanies children's play (e.g. 'Why is that bird singing?'; 'Why is the Sun yellow?'; 'Where does the sea go?'; 'The dollies are having tea in the doll's house'; 'Suki is building trains'; 'Riya needs hat for Tigger').
- 7 Imaginative** language used to explore the imagination – may also accompany play as children create imaginary worlds, or may arise from storytelling (e.g. 'teddy's going to school'; 'farmer in his tractor driving brum brum').

Actions and events in a child's life, however routine, are often accompanied by utterances from adults and other children around them. From the age of about three onwards, young children are constantly exposed to language all around them. This is much more effective if they are active speakers and hearers in their world, rather than passive receivers of language.

Halliday's theory about the function of language is also discussed in [Unit 7.4](#).

## The influence of TV and online gaming on children's language development

Many research studies have been carried out to assess the influence of television on children's development. The key findings of these studies, which were carried out before the spread of online activities such as gaming, are summarised here. It is likely that the same points apply to online activities, too.

- TV appears to provide no educational benefits for a child under two. Time spent watching TV could be spent more productively interacting with family and other people.
- Passive TV viewing does not develop cognitive language skills which develop in the context of real life and interaction with others.
- Images presented on TV may restrict a child's imagination.
- Children who watch cartoons and entertainment television during preschool years have poorer pre-reading skills at the age of five. These skills include 'print awareness', which is the understanding that the print on a page represents words which have meaning. Children who frequently watch TV at this age are also less likely to read books and other print media.

Many studies show that the passive nature of watching TV, even if the content being watched is educational, may have negative effects on young children's language development. However, this is an area of ongoing debate. For example, it is claimed that pictures on TV may spark children's imagination. Evidence from new studies continues to become available.



### ••• THINK LIKE ... A SOCIAL WORKER

Imagine you are a social worker, involved in visiting parents of young children aged eight and under. You notice that preschool children are routinely found watching children's TV and video programmes. You are familiar with the research which says that too much exposure to TV and gaming online can have an adverse impact on children's social and educational development.

Write an informative booklet for parents to encourage them to engage more often with their children and provide other activities as alternatives to TV.

### ACTIVITY 3

For this activity, work with a partner or in small groups.

- 1 Draw up a spreadsheet of the functions of young children's language, as classified by Halliday. List each function described by

Halliday in a wide, separate column (e.g. instrumental, regulatory, heuristic).

- 2 Within ethical boundaries, watch preschool children speaking. This could be live or via online clips. Aim to gather data from ten respondents each.
- 3 Working together, categorise the data according to Halliday's functions of young children's language.
- 4 Present your findings to the class.

**Reflection:** In your Cambridge International A Level English Language course you will be asked to interpret language data. Work with a partner to evaluate the data you have gathered in Activity 3:

- 1 Where was the source of your language data? Online? Listening to children in your local area? Your neighbourhood? From relatives?
- 2 Were there equal numbers of boys and girls in your survey? Were the children of the same or different ages? Did you know all of the children in the survey equally well?
- 3 How well did you classify the spoken language according to Halliday's functions?
- 4 How easy was it to classify? Give reasons for your answer.

## Question practice

Read the following question, transcript extract and student response. Write a response to the question based on the transcribed conversation.

Read the following text, which is a transcription of Ameerah (age 4 years) talking to her aunt. They are looking at the fish in the pond in her aunt's garden.

**Ameerah:** why do fish live in water?  
is the water dirty?  
why is the water dirty?  
where does the dirt come from in the pond?  
is the water dirty for the fish?  
that fish is a pretty colour; it's not dirty

Discuss the ways in which Ameerah is using language.

(25 marks)

### STUDENT RESPONSE

At four years old, Ameerah is able to have a conversation with her aunt, a close family member. She seems comfortable and trusting, and assumes that her aunt knows the answers to her questions.

Her lexis and syntax are fluent; she is able to use the irregular 'fish' accurately, keeping the same form for singular and plural.

Her language is almost entirely in question form, arguably fulfilling her intellectual need for answers to the situation of the fish in the pond. Again, she is requesting information, such as 'why is the water dirty?', and even a refreshingly interesting perspective that the water, which is dirty, may not be the same for the fish (e.g. 'Is the water dirty for the fish?'). Overwhelmingly, these questions seem to be heuristic: Ameerah wants to learn and discover the answers which will extend her knowledge of her world. We are not given her aunt's answers. In addition, Ameerah is expressing a personal opinion (e.g. 'that fish is a pretty colour') announcing her views to the world which, in this case, is her aunt.

Ameerah's brief burst of questions still contains a variety of styles and reasons for her using her language. She is able to phrase her questions in the interrogative form and they are questions to do with the dirt of the water in a fishpond and also questions which require some explanation (e.g. 'Where does the dirt come from in the pond?'), as well as 'yes' or 'no' answers (e.g. 'Is the water dirty for the fish?')

This short extract shows that preschool children use language in a variety of ways to expand their ideas and knowledge of the world.

### ACTIVITY 4

Evaluate the student's response. Consider the following points:

- Has the student focused on Halliday's ideas of the functions of language for young children?

- 2** Has the student used succinct textual extracts to validate the points made, and followed up with some evaluative points?
- 3** Has the student brought out the variety of reasons for Ameerah's utterances?
- 4** This is a good answer but there is room for improvement. Does the student explain clearly about Halliday's classification of language? Does the student make an evaluative comment on all of the data?
- 5** In what ways does the student use Halliday's functions to explain the ways in which language is being used here?

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I can explain the concept of pragmatics		
I understand how children become aware of the need to speak appropriately in different contexts		
I can explain Halliday's functions of language		
I have used data related to language acquisition		

# Unit 8.7

## Theories of language acquisition

### Learning objectives

**In this unit, you will:**

- understand the different theories of how children learn to talk (AO4)
- evaluate the key theories of language acquisition (AO4)
- analyse and synthesise relevant case studies and research to support these theories (AO5).

### Before you start

- 1 When did you begin to talk? Ask someone in your family!
- 2 If you are bilingual, when did you begin to use both languages?
- 3 What influences have affected the way you speak now? Think about:
  - the language you speak
  - your lexis
  - the accent you speak with.

This unit explores theories about how language is acquired. You will find it helpful to gather supporting evidence and criticisms from practical observation and research to use when evaluating these theories in an essay. By now, you will have probably have collected some of your own examples of children speaking. You may find these helpful when exploring the theories discussed in the unit.



#### KEY CONCEPT

**Diversity** – There are a number of different theories to explain child language acquisition. Almost all children learn to speak at least one language. What do you think enables them to achieve this?

## Learning to speak

Language enables us to express an infinite number of ideas and utterances using a limited range of sounds. Language acquisition is a complex process and one for which there are a number of explanations. We have already examined observable events in babies and young children, but in this unit you will investigate theories about the processes which are thought to take place when children learn language. Many children learn only one native language but in other families and communities, children grow up speaking two languages (bilingual) and sometimes even more.

In this unit you will be introduced to key theories which help explain children's ability to learn language. The debate continues about the relative importance of **nature** and **nurture** in language development. Another important link is between a child's language and thought. Does thinking come before the production of language? Or can we only think if we have the words to do so?

### Imitation and reinforcement

The behaviourist school of psychology was extremely influential in the early days of psychology. According to the psychologist B. F. Skinner (1957), language is acquired by **conditioning**, the process whereby the child imitates the sounds around them and receives praise and approval (e.g. 'good girl'; 'that's a clever boy'). This encourages them to repeat and develop language. The reinforcement of treats, praise and an expanding world enables the child to acquire competence in language.

#### ACTIVITY 1

Psychology and English Language are very closely linked in this unit. Carry out your own research to find out more about the important studies that gave rise to the behaviourist theory.

- 1 Research the work of Russian scientist, Ivan Pavlov, particularly his experiments with dogs relating to their learnt conditioned response.
- 2 Research the work of Skinner, who developed Pavlov's investigations and whose research led to his theories on how children acquire language.



**Ivan Pavlov watching an experiment with a dog, 1934.**

### Support and criticism of behaviourist theory

Support for the behaviourist theory is evident in that we learn to speak the language we grow up with and adopt the accents of those around us. It is therefore clear that there is a strong environmental influence in the language that we speak.

An important strength of Skinner's work is that he generated early ideas about the process of language development from which other theorists developed further ideas, including those outlined here.

However, the following arguments would suggest that behaviourist theory is unlikely to account entirely for language acquisition.

- Each child produces an infinite number of utterances, many of which they will never have heard before, so they do not imitate exactly.
- Children make virtuous errors of grammar and language which adults do not generally do (e.g. 'I rided my bike'; 'me want that'). This shows that they are applying rules which they understand, such as the '-ed' inflection of many verbs in the past form.
- Babies and children seem to pass through the same stages of language development. If this were entirely dependent on the people around them, there would probably be much more variation.
- Children correct their own language to a standard form even when adults do not correct them.
- Children can understand much more language than they are able to speak. A mother may tell her 14-month-old toddler to put their toys away – the child will understand but will not be able to answer in the same way.

### ACTIVITY 2

Work with a partner to discuss to what extent the following statements support or negate the behaviourist theory of imitation in child language acquisition. Give reasons for your answers.

- 1 Mia, aged one and raised in an English speaking home, waves at her mother and says 'mama'.
- 2 Zachary, aged four, has named his teddy 'Ned' and has invented an imaginary friend named 'Neddy'. He makes up a story about Ned and Neddy going to the park.
- 3 Erin, from Auckland, New Zealand, pronounces her meal of 'fish and chips' in a different accent from Klaudia, her Australian cousin.
- 4 Florian, aged five, proudly tells his father 'I swummed two strokes today, dad'.
- 5 At a mother and toddler play group, five of the mothers share their surprise that their 13-month-old infants all seem to understand when they are told it is time for a story, as they search for a book.
- 6 A website for baby-signing classes promotes its benefits by saying that the babies become 'confident communicators with an early understanding of language'. (Baby-signing is training infants and toddlers to communicate about their emotions, and also about objects, before they start to develop spoken language.)

### Innate language competence – the Language Acquisition Device (LAD)

The inadequacies of the imitation and reinforcement theory were criticised by the American linguist Noam Chomsky in 1965. He disagreed with the assumption that all behaviour, including that of learning language, was learnt and put forward an opposing theory. He suggested that the human brain has an innate ability to learn language – a **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)** – which allows children to develop language skills.

According to this view, all children are born with an instinct for a universal grammar, which makes them receptive to the common features of all languages. With this instinctive capacity to learn grammatical structures, young children easily pick up a language when exposed to its particular form.

Evidence for the LAD comes from the following observations:

- the stages of language development occur at roughly the same ages in most children, even though different children experience very different environments
- children's language development follows a similar pattern across cultures
- children generally acquire language skills quickly and effortlessly
- deaf children who have not been exposed to a spoken language may make up their own language
- children make virtuous errors of tenses and syntax by applying deep language structures before they are aware of the correct forms
- the subject-verb form of grammar is common to all languages and children seem to be aware of this structure even when they make up their own languages.

Chomsky's initial theory was supplemented and popularised in 1967 by the linguist Eric Lenneberg, who stated that the LAD must be activated at a *critical period* for native language acquisition to take place. The time of this period was broad, but early and mid-childhood are variously proposed. There has been a further development to broaden this to a *sensitive period* when language learning might be more successful. Again, the suggested age range is broad, but from birth to puberty is considered a sensitive time for acquisition of a native language.

However, the LAD may not be sufficient to explain language development. Linguistics author Harry Ritchie argues against Chomsky's LAD and is of the opinion that Chomsky was 'brilliant but wrong'. He cites recent evidence from neurology, genetics and linguistics, all of which points to there being no innate programming. Ritchie appears to veer towards a more Skinner-like view when he states that 'Children learn language just as they learn all their other skills, by experience'.

The following well-known studies of Jim and Genie show some of the limitations of the theory of the LAD. There have been other studies of feral children – that is, children who have lived for an extended period in isolation from other humans, or even reared by animals. There are many books and online resources from which you can learn more about these studies, and about Jim and Genie and their difficulties in acquiring language. The following are suggested guidelines.

- psychology text books, videos and websites about each child
- articles relating to language development.

### **Study 1: Jim**

Bard and Sachs (1977) studied Jim, a child of deaf parents. His parents wanted Jim to speak normally so they did not use sign language and he spent much time watching TV. In this way he heard a lot of language but did not produce any himself, and became very retarded in his speech development until he was placed with a speech therapist. According to Chomsky's theory, the LAD would have enabled Jim to speak but he failed to do so, suggesting that the LAD itself was not enough for Jim to learn to speak.

### **Study 2: Genie**

Genie was an infamous case of parental neglect. She was discovered in Los Angeles in California in 1970 at the age of 13, tied to a chair in a small room in the family home where she had been confined throughout her life. She had no language and could only grunt.

When she was in care she started by learning single words and eventually began putting two and, later, three words together in sequence, as in typical infant language acquisition. However, the rapid language development which would have been expected thereafter never materialised. Importantly, Genie never appeared able to sequence words which Chomsky felt was critical in the LAD.

Genie's unfortunate situation did prove interesting for testing theories and it would seem to support the idea of a critical period for native language acquisition. However, there are many other variables here, including the innate ability of Genie as well as the severe nature of the abuse she had received. Her case could not definitively prove or disprove the theories of an innate system for language acquisition.

## **The Language Acquisition Support System (LASS)**

Chomsky's LAD has limitations which were addressed by the linguist Jerome Bruner, in 1983, with the **Language Acquisition Support System (LASS)**.

The limitations cited by Bruner for the LAD were as follows:

- The theory takes no account of any interaction of the child with those around them. The LAD is assumed to be innate and so will develop automatically into the native language spoken around the child.
- There is no evidence of a grammar structure or language device in the brain.
- Studies of deprived and feral children have shown that language does not develop automatically in the absence of language stimulation around the child.

- The LAD implies that children play no active role in their language acquisition, but observation shows that children are active learners.
- The LAD takes no real account of the child's social world.

According to Bruner, the innate abilities of the child (the LAD) are supported and brought out by parents, family and educators.

### LASS - key points

- Parents and carers regularly interact with the child and give help in naming while they talk to him or her. This includes caretaker language, singing songs, reading and playing games with the child. The family surrounding the child will often repeat the same words and phrases. The child is actively interacting with the caregiver.
- The LASS is particularly important between the ages of two and five, when the child's language learning is most intense. This links with the idea that there is a critical period for native language learning to flourish.
- Preschool education provides a scaffold of support for the child's language development by extensive interaction with adults and other children in a variety of situations, as well as broadening the child's horizons.

#### ACTIVITY 3

Work with a partner to assess whether the following situations might support LAD, LASS, both or neither. Give reasons for your answers

- Nurideen and Sumaya are three-year-old twins who have developed a 'twin language', which only they understand, when speaking to each other.
- Keiron and Melik are both two and live in the same neighbourhood. Keiron is an only child whose mother spends a lot of time talking and reading to him. Melik is the youngest of five children and has many family members around him for most of the day. Both boys have a lexis of about 200 words.
- Benedict, aged three, spends a lot of time watching children's programmes on his tablet while his mum is busy. She believes he will pick up new language from the TV as the programmes are suitable for preschoolers.
- 'I running to meet dada', shouted Yasmeen, as she ran down the stairs.
- Alfonso, aged four, lives in New York. He loves dinosaurs and often visits the American Museum of National History with his older sister and parents. He knows the names of all the main types of dinosaurs.

### Cognitive development theories

In both the LAD and LASS theories, humans have a capacity for language development that is separate from **cognitive development** – one is not dependent on the other.

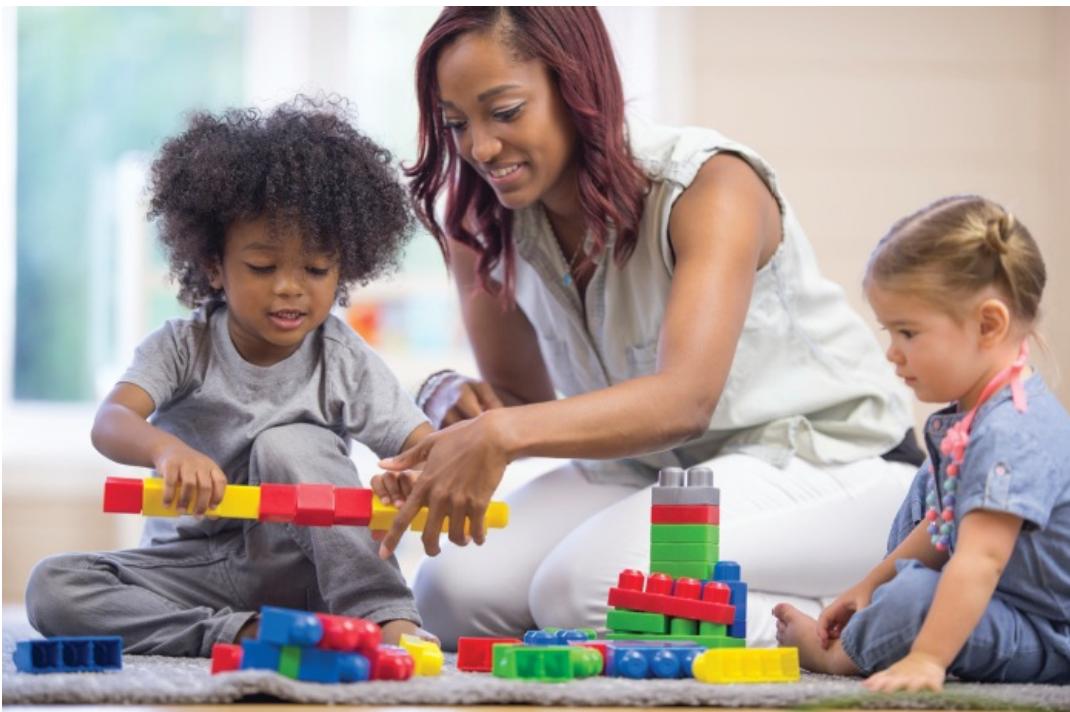
However, cognitive theories link the child's language with their cognitive development. The original and most important cognitive theorist, Jean Piaget (1896–1980), revolutionised child-development ideas with the assertion that a child was not a miniature adult in their thinking, but went through stages of increasingly complex mental development alongside their language development. Piaget believed that children are born with cognitive ability which develops along with the child and upon which all subsequent learning and knowledge is based: for Piaget, language development goes hand in hand with cognitive development. In each of the stages of the child's development, a greater level of mental ability brings about a greater understanding of language and communication. For Piaget, language does not stand alone; it is part of a child's world.

Piaget believed that children construct an understanding of the world around them and this understanding develops in four stages:

- Sensorimotor stage:** babies acquire their earliest knowledge through their physical actions and the sensations they experience. This stage lasts until about the age of two. An important feature of this stage is the development of *object permanence* for the child, where they realise that things apart from themselves have an independent existence and so have names (e.g. 'ball'; 'mummy'; 'juice'). In this way, language begins and develops quickly with the infant's increasing engagement with the

environment.

- 2 **Preoperational stage:** between the ages of two and five, young children are able to think in more definite terms and this is when language develops quickly, although the child only thinks of the world in relation to themselves (an **egocentric** perception – everything is about ‘me’).
- 3 **Concrete operational stage:** between the ages of five and eleven or twelve, the child is able to use language for situations outside their immediate experience, and is able to think more logically about specific ‘concrete’ or observable situations. One important element of this stage of cognitive development is **conservation**, when the child understands that something stays the same in quantity even if its appearance changes (e.g. transferring water between different-sized beakers).
- 4 **Formal operational stage:** the final childhood stage in cognitive theory where, from the age of about twelve, adolescents are able to understand abstract ideas and the language associated with them.



Notice that there is an integration of psychology and language in this summary of Piaget's work. Educationalists have developed school curricula and styles of learning based on his work. He was the first in his field, and his work has been extensively reworked and developed, but, essentially, his theory – that children's thinking is different from that of adults – revolutionised the field of child development throughout the world.

### Piaget's stages of development - key points

- Cognition theories form an important part of Psychology and branch out from language development. While there is almost certainly a close link between the development of cognitive understanding and language, there are other influences, too.
- More recent studies have highlighted that children progress through the cognitive stages more quickly than Piaget stated, and this is also reflected in their language development.
- Piaget's theories have had an enormous influence in the development of the curricula for primary education.

### Vygotsky's development of Piaget's ideas

Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who lived from 1896 to 1934. Vygotsky was another cognitive theorist who developed Piaget's ideas of the stages of child development. In doing so, Vygotsky challenged some of Piaget's theories by stating that social learning, particularly using language, is a stimulus to cognitive development. Piaget stressed the central importance of universal stages of child development gathered through independent experiences and active self-discovery. He felt that a child had to be ready to learn. For Vygotsky, the social interaction and guidance that a child receives determines their thinking and learning. He believed that learning could be accelerated through guidance and support.

Vygotsky's important ideas related to learning and language development include the following.

- Learning takes place by interacting with the environment.
- Learning precedes development as a child is faced with situations that are unfamiliar and out of reach of what the child currently knows. Through the support of other people and a structured or **scaffolded**

approach, the child bridges the gap between present skills and knowledge and future achievements. This gap is called the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**.

- Appropriate and well-organised instruction allows achievable goals to be attained in the ZPD and so cognitive development then takes place.
- Vygotsky emphasised the role of educators in a child's cognitive (and language) development.
- The development of Early Years learning has been influenced by Vygotsky's theories. One development relates to the interaction between teacher and learner: the **Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)** pattern of ideas, where the teacher asks the student about their ideas and/or knowledge on a subject. The student responds and then the teacher gives feedback.

Piaget believed that language development takes places as a result of cognitive development. Vygotsky believed that language development acted as a stimulus to cognitive development.

Many countries now show TV documentaries about child development – 'Child of Our Time', presented by Professor Robert Winston, is a good British example – and these have recently expanded in scope to include older children and teenagers. Try to find studies of child development from your own region.

#### ACTIVITY 4

- a The three columns contain the names, ages and characteristics of Piaget's stages of development. Match the information correctly.

Stage	Ages	Characteristics
Sensorimotor	two to five years	Understands the world through logical thinking and categories.
Concrete operational	12 years onwards	Understands the world through hypothetical thinking and scientific reasoning.
Formal operational	birth to two years	Understands the world through language and mental images.
Preoperational	5-12 years	Understands the world through senses and action.

- b Research Piaget's theories of cognition in more detail and read about the practical ways in which he measured cognitive development in children. There are many books and online resources available, including some of the fascinating studies Piaget carried out to show the patterns of children's thought.
- c New Zealand has an early childhood curriculum called Te Whāriki. This curriculum has five strands: well-being, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. Each strand has goals. Research this curriculum and then discuss with a partner which elements support Piaget's theories and which support Vygotsky's theories.

## Evaluating the theories of language acquisition

The number and complexity of language acquisition theories means that this unit can only give an outline of the key ideas in this area. All children who have the physical capability of voice production will learn to speak their native language. It is a huge achievement, as impressive as it is effortless.

The different theories of language acquisition are complex, and there is no easy way to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses. The outline of the theories in this section has provided some general principles to consider, which could provide a helpful starting point for discussions in critical essays where you are asked to compare and evaluate theories of language acquisition.

Since child language acquisition is a universal feature it should be possible to apply the theories cross-culturally. Much language acquisition research has been carried out in the USA and Europe. It would be useful for you to investigate what language acquisition studies have been carried out in your part of the world, and the extent to which these support or modify the theories discussed here.

'Give me a child for the first seven years and I will give you the man' is a quotation from the Spanish priest and theologian, St Ignatius of Loyola, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This might have been quite difficult to understand previously, but you will now have come to appreciate that all of the theories discussed in this section emphasise, to some degree, the fundamental importance of the family and wider circle in the young child's environment.

## Question practice

Read the question and transcript extract. Then read the student response that follows.

Read the transcript of Alex, aged two years and eight months, talking to his mother. Using this transcript data and your wider knowledge, discuss what support for various theories of language acquisition you can find in Alex's developing language.

(25 marks)

**Alex:** I tired (.) very tired (.) teddy tired  
**Mother:** are you tired (.) you've been a busy boy; teddy must be tired too  
**Alex:** I runned fast (.) very fast (.) teddy runned with me (.) fast (.)  
**Mother:** You ran so fast (.) you must be tired (.) you ran to the park and then mummy pushed you on the swing (.) you liked that swing didn't you (.)  
**Alex:** teddy swing (.) wheee [runs around the room swinging teddy round and round] Alex push teddy big swing (.) nana mummy  
**Mother:** Say please Alex. Say please may I have a banana  
**Alex:** pease nana mummy

### STUDENT RESPONSE

At two years and ten months, Alex should have a core lexis approaching 200 words. Here he is using his lexis to string three- and four-word utterances together. His lexis is mainly names (nouns, e.g. 'teddy', 'swing', 'mummy' and 'Alex', his name), which he recognises as part of his day-to-day life. It is interesting that he refers to himself in the third person as 'Alex' while at the same time recognising his sense of self with 'I'. He is able to order his utterances in a sequence (e.g. 'teddy swing') and uses a virtuous error with the past of the verb 'run' where he is adapting the form to the general pattern of English. This last point would support Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device as he appears to have appropriate communication skills for his age, thus following the universal time for infant language acquisition. Alex is not consistent in his use of the past tense, as when he uses the present simple 'push' for an action he has done in the past.

This goes against the behaviourist theory of language acquisition, which states that language is acquired by a stimulus and response as well as imitation. Certainly, Alex is learning to speak English, so there is some imitation there, but he has not heard the virtuous error 'runned' from any adult, so he is not learning entirely from imitation. However, Alex is learning language in the social context of his mother conversing with him. He understands the turn taking conventions of unscripted conversation:

Mother: say 'please may I have a banana'

Alex: pease nana mummy

Significantly, his mother's instructions concerning how to speak support

Bruner's Language Acquisition Support System. This development is typical of theories which are refined and developed from initial points. As well as the direct instruction given about running in the park, the mother is adding to Alex's telegraphic stage of language acquisition. She is repeating the same idea in Standard English and expanding both the syntax and the lexis.

### ACTIVITY 5

- 1 Has the student supported their points made with clear examples?
- 2 Has the student referred to all the different theories (behaviourist; innate: cognitive) of language acquisition?
- 3 To what extent has the student supplemented the information from the extract with their wider knowledge of theories of language acquisition?
- 4 How could this answer be improved to make it a strong response?



### THINK LIKE ... A SPEECH THERAPIST

Speech therapists provide support and care for children who have difficulties with language development. You are a speech therapist presented with Micha, a four-year-old boy who is not speaking. There are no physiological problems to deal with. You are about to interview his mother and father. Prepare four to five questions about the language they use with Micha and the situations (e.g. playing; reading stories) where he is encouraged to use language.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can evaluate the behaviourist theory of child development		
I can evaluate the LAD and the LASS theories of child development		
I can evaluate Piaget's cognitive development theory		
I can use appropriate case studies for each of these theories		

# Unit 8.8

## Practice and self-assessment

### Learning objectives

**In this unit, you will:**

- learn how to approach writing a good response to an A Level question on the topic of language acquisition that requires you to critically evaluate (AO2)
- learn how to analyse the data included in the question as an integral part of your essay answer (AO5).

### Before you start

- 1 What skills of language and essay writing should you demonstrate in your answer?
- 2 Look at the following table, which shows criteria for a good essay response and an excellent essay response. Think about what you have learned in this section. Where would you place yourself on this grid?

Competent essay response	Excellent essay response
Some analysis of linguistic issues.	Discriminating analysis of linguistic issues.
Some detailed exploration of the context.	Detailed and perceptive from the extract and from wider study exploration.
Some ability to convey knowledge and understanding.	Conveys knowledge and understanding fluently.

## **How would you approach an A Level English Language essay question asking you to 'discuss'?**

Cambridge International A Level English Language requires candidates to write a critical response on topics from the specification. A critical essay is an extended piece of reasoned writing through which you will explore an issue in an informed way, combining your own knowledge with independent research on the topic. You will need to evaluate the content material rather than just state facts.

### **Discussing language acquisition theories in an essay**

Some questions will be more fully answered with reference to theories (for example, of language acquisition). Any evaluation of a theory must be prefaced with a summary of its key points. Your answer should focus on a discussion of the extent to which the theory strengthens general principles. Research will usually have been carried out with some statistical levels of support for the theory and you will need to quote the main points of this research and consider both the **reliability** and the **validity** of the results. You will have familiarised yourself with both strengths and weaknesses in your preparation. Make your views clear by using clear connectives – words and phrases which signpost the building of your argument.

Of course, researchers have invested considerable time and energy into their work and you may feel that your own voice is insignificant, but your informed voice should be heard. If you live in a region significantly different from the culture in which the theory has been tested, or you know of such differences, it is important that you add your evaluative comments which could be very useful as part of a conclusion.

A critical approach is not only useful for evaluating research-based ideas but can be also applied to any essay where you are asked to assess the strength or weakness of a point of view. In response to examination command questions which require you to 'analyse' or 'discuss', you should consider these words as signposts that cause you to evaluate your material before giving your own substantiated conclusions.

Scientific studies are always developing, so it is important to assess the extent of useful research which has taken place since the theory was put forward to strengthen or perhaps weaken its original premise. Cross-cultural validity is an important factor, too, so, if you are able to cite studies carried out in a different part of the world and compare results, you will strengthen your argument.

## Planning your essay

In an exam, spend a few minutes planning the structure of your essay. Time management is crucial. Make sure you know the allocation of time for each question and don't spend longer than that on your answer: you stand a better chance of success with two reasonable essays than one very long essay followed by a much briefer and rushed one.

Make sure you get plenty of practice with writing introductions because this is where you set out your plans for your writing. There is no template for writing an effective introduction, but some helpful strategies include:

- Providing an explanation to your reader about your interpretation of key words or phrases.
- Giving an evaluative overview.
- Avoiding weak phrases which state the obvious. Avoid sentences like 'In this essay I am going to write about ...', as this is pedestrian and will fail to set you and your reader off on an interesting exploration of ideas.

## Structuring body paragraphs

Your essay plan should always include the sequence of the argument. Topic sentences to begin each paragraph should explain what follows. The topic sentence should be followed by specific details, research and theory. Connectives, as explained in [Unit 6.3](#), are helpful for organising your pattern of thought. *Firstly*, *secondly* can help to start you off. Then use pointers which build and reinforce what you have already said: *additionally*, *therefore*, *In consequence* can be used to flag up additional support, while *however*, *nevertheless*, *although* and *whereas* will introduce material to modify or refute the case you have been building up.

You should make clearly explained points which focus on the question, and avoid 'empty' words such as *cleverly*, *basically* or *of course* which do not demonstrate your learning.

## Answering the question

Avoid asking too many questions in your answer: remember that you are supposed to be answering the question! You might, however, question the topic quotation and its slant.

There will be extract-based questions which ask you to discuss characteristics evident in the extract. Invariably these will also ask you to use your broader knowledge of the topic, so try to range more widely than the given extract.

There is no need to repeat information in an essay though you may summarise key points supporting or refuting your argument in your conclusion.

Remember, when writing essays your engagement with the topic should reflect the interest, enthusiasm and hard work with which you have undertaken your programme of study. [Section 6](#) gives additional guidance on a variety of essay styles including critical and evaluative essays.

Read the following transcript of a young child speaking to her mother.  
In your answer you should:

- 1 describe the characteristics of unscripted conversation in the texts
- 2 analyse and comment on the language and style of the child's speech
- 3 discuss appropriate linguistic concepts concerned with theories of language acquisition relevant to the material.

(25 marks)

*Joelle, aged 27 months, is having a conversation with her mother while they look at a book together.*

**Joelle:** look (.) sheep in field (.)

**Mother:** yes Joelle (.) look there in the field (.) there's two lambs (.) one (.) and two (.) The mother sheep is with them and they're eating grass for their supper.

**Joelle:** eat grass (.) sheep eat (.)

**Mother:** look Joelle (.) on this page (.) here is the farmer with his

tractor

**Joelle:** a tractor (.) a tractor (.) brm brm (.) big tractor (.) field (.) sheep (.) grass (.) big tractor (.) green tractor (.)

**Mother:** that's right Joelle, the farmer is driving the tractor (.) but it's a big red tractor (.) and the sheep are in the field. Let's turn the page and see what else the farmer has on his farm (.) what can you see there (.) look

**Joelle:** [shouting] ducks ducks on pond (.) ducks on pond swim ducks

**Mother:** You and I fed the ducks on the pond last week didn't we (.) we gave them bread (.) you gave them bread and they were hungry (.) they ate it all up and said 'quack quack' thank you Joelle

**Joelle:** ducks quack quack (.) on pond big ducks on pond (.) no bread

**Mother:** you're right Joelle, the ducks in the story don't have any bread (.) do you think the farmer will give them any

Before you start to write your response:

- list the *characteristics* of conversation which are present in the discourse
- make a preparatory list of the features of Joelle's language which are characteristic of her *language acquisition*
- make a preparatory list of the features of her mother's language which are characteristic of her *caretaker language*
- look for *evidence of theories* relating to child language acquisition.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Joelle and her mother are sharing a book about a farm. In their conversation, the mother, **using caretaker language**, is building on Joelle's limited lexis and syntax by using more complex utterances, which Joelle can understand even though her own speech is more limited.

Although her lexis and syntax are limited, Joelle and her mother are aware of the conventions of unscripted discourse. **Joelle and her mother are using interactional language**, as defined by the linguist, Halliday. This is where they are developing a relationship as the child learns more about her world. **Although the turn-taking is usual in conversation, the lack of interruptions would be unusual in a more adult conversation**, when people are likely to have a sure grasp of the language. It is likely that Joelle's mother is encouraging her to speak, show knowledge of her environment and her opinions about it. She is doing this ('sheep eat'), but in a **telegraphic stage of language** where she is able to give three- or four-word utterances but is organising her syntax according to English conventions.

Joelle is able to recognise animals which may or may not be **present in her own environment**. If they are not, then she is able to understand and maybe imagine a little about the animals (e.g. they are in a field, they eat grass and are on a farm). Joelle imitates her mother with the onomatopoeic 'quack, quack'. **Joelle knows the appropriate nouns** even though she is **making virtuous errors** (e.g. 'sheeps'). Her language is moving through the telegraphic stage as she is phrasing utterances in the simple way of subject/verb (e.g. 'sheep eat') and is also using modifiers for extra description (e.g. 'big'; 'green') **Interestingly, she has an understanding of linking words and some determiners** (e.g. 'a'; 'the'). However, she is not using them all the time, showing that they have not

yet been assimilated as the appropriate forms to use. She is not yet secure with her colours.

Through talking with her mother, Joelle has a clear understanding of the conventions of turn-taking conversation and adds her comments to the more extensive ones which her mother is making. This relates to the theories of LASS, the Language Acquisition Support System developed by Bruner, when the child hears complete utterances from their own limited ones, which they can understand but not replicate. Joelle shows that she understands the much more complex discourse of her mother even though her answers are more limited and phrased in a telegraphic form.

Joelle, in this situation, is an active learner of language. She is not passively watching a screen. She is sharing language with someone whom she trusts.

**[1]** Specialist term used and understood for the support given by carers to a young child acquiring language

**[2]** Linguistic features identified and related to a theory – some development of the idea of Halliday's function of language

**[3]** Awareness of conversational conventions

**[4]** Knowledge of a stage of language acquisition and example given

**[5]** Inference of egocentric view – Piaget's cognitive development stage – stated, not developed

**[6]** Evidence of learning theory – straightforward learning of language – not developed

**[7]** Evidence of Chomsky's LAD theory, with example – stated, but the theory is not named or explored

**[8]** Some summative comments on knowledge of language progression – examples given

**[9]** Some details here on caretaker language and details of the LASS theory of language support systems for children learning language

#### TEACHER COMMENT

Some appreciation of the linguistic issues. The answer is very much rooted in the text, though there is evidence of broader knowledge. Some points have been exemplified.

All elements of the question have been addressed, with some valid points made. However, the student has neither developed nor linked them specifically to theories and stages of language acquisition. As such, it is a good but not an excellent answer.

**Reflection:** Compare your response to this question to the response written by the student. Make sure that you have developed the points you have made and linked them to theories and stages of language acquisition.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I know the detailed characteristics of the main stages of early childhood language development		
I know the detailed characteristics of language development in children aged up to eight years		
I understand the functions of young people's language		
I understand and can evaluate important theories of language acquisition		
I am able to interpret and discuss the data from transcripts of young children's conversation		



## **Section 9**

### **English in the world**

# **Unit 9.1**

## **The status of English**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- explore the reasons for the global spread of the English Language (AO4)
- learn about the role of English in global communication (AO4)
- find out about different varieties of English and their status (AO4)
- analyse ideas and information about English and the world (AO4).

### **Before you start**

In this section we shall look at the status of English in the world.

- 1** Is English your first language, your ‘mother tongue’?
- 2** What languages, other than English, are spoken in your region or country?
- 3** If languages other than English are spoken where you live, what is English used for?

## Language and communication

A language spreads by the power and influence of those who speak it, and, as communication is now a vital part of everyday life, the English language plays a significant role in world communications in the 21st century. Therefore, English can be viewed as a **global (or world) language**. Even where English is not the main language spoken, in some countries it is used as a common form of communication, the **lingua franca**.

The English language has changed and adapted in different regions, which has resulted in a different form of the language. In this section you will learn about the debates about the relative statuses of these different forms of English and whether Standard English should remain the model for others to follow.

The dominance of English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be challenged as non-native English-speaking regions gain political and economic power.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Diversity

The spread of English throughout the world, through favourable social, economic and geographical influences, has given rise to a diversity of forms of the language.

In what ways might spoken and written English be different throughout the world? Can you suggest reasons for this?

## The status of English in the world

English has developed from an Anglo-Saxon dialect, spoken in a geographically restricted area around Northern Germany, to become a language recognised and spoken throughout the world.

### The historical development of English as a global language

The numbers of people speaking English throughout the world shows the status of English as an important global language, but English as a language did not exist 1500 years ago. Its origins can be traced back to the language spoken by the Anglo-Saxon tribes from Northern Germany. These tribes brought their language with them when they settled in Britain following a series of invasions after the Romans had left in 400 AD.

The fledgling language came under threat from repeated Viking invasions along the east coast of Scotland and England between 800 and 1000 AD. The Vikings, who did not speak Anglo-Saxon but a language called Old Norse, gained power in the eastern areas of England and were spreading westwards until a victory by Alfred the Great in 878 AD saved the Anglo-Saxon language (which is also referred to as Old English).

English was not considered to have any status at all at that time. It was considered unworthy of use in any official capacity. After 1066 AD, following the Norman Invasion of England led by William the Conqueror (William I), it disappeared completely as an official language for two hundred years. Norman French became the language of government, while Anglo-Saxon was spoken only by the peasant class. English re-emerged three hundred years later as a combination of the English and French spoken at the time and bitter battles were fought between the Church, who wished to preserve Latin as the language of the Bible and church services, and those who wished to change to English. The latter group eventually won and the English language of the time became dominant in England. However, in the 16th century there were still fewer than five million English speakers in the world.

Military and commercial power then launched English beyond its national borders: the British Empire was a major factor in the spread of English. For more than 200 years, Britain, like other European countries, pursued a policy of colonialism, whereby they gained control over newly discovered lands, such as the United States, New Zealand and India. British settlers to the new colonies took their language as well as the cultural influence of their way of life.

The British Empire declined during the 20th century but the spread of English continued through the economic, political and military influence of North America. English dominated the entertainment and media industries which became increasingly important in people's lives.

More recently, with the dominance of English as the language of the internet, the language continues to be at the forefront of significant global developments.



#### English has become the dominant language of the internet.

Linguist David Crystal believes that the reason why a language is widely used is due to the power of the people who speak it. He believes that 'it's English turning up at the right time during these last four hundred years or so which has produced the enormous cultural status that it has.'

The following passage, taken from a lecture by David Crystal, is a light-hearted and very brief summary of the development of English and raises the issues of the many varieties of English which are spoken in the world.

### **Global English - or whose language is it anyway?**

In the 1500 years since the Romans left Britain the English language has shown a unique ability to absorb, evolve, invade and if we're honest, steal.

After foreign settlers got it started, it grew into a fully fledged language all of its own before leaving home and travelling the world, first by the high seas then via the high-speed broadband connection, pilfering words from over 350 languages and establishing itself as a global institution.

All this despite a written alphabet that bears no correlation to how it sounds and a highly irregular system of spelling.

Right now, about 1.5 billion people speak English: of these, about a quarter are native speakers, a quarter speak it as their second language, and half are able to ask for directions to a local swimming pool.

There's Hinglish, Chinglish, Singlish... so, in conclusion, the language has got so little to do with England these days it may well be time to stop calling it English and if someone does think up a new name for it, it should probably be in Chinese.

**Adapted from the talk 'Will English always be the global language?', by David Crystal.**

### **ACTIVITY 1**

What points does this humorous summary make about the status of the English language?

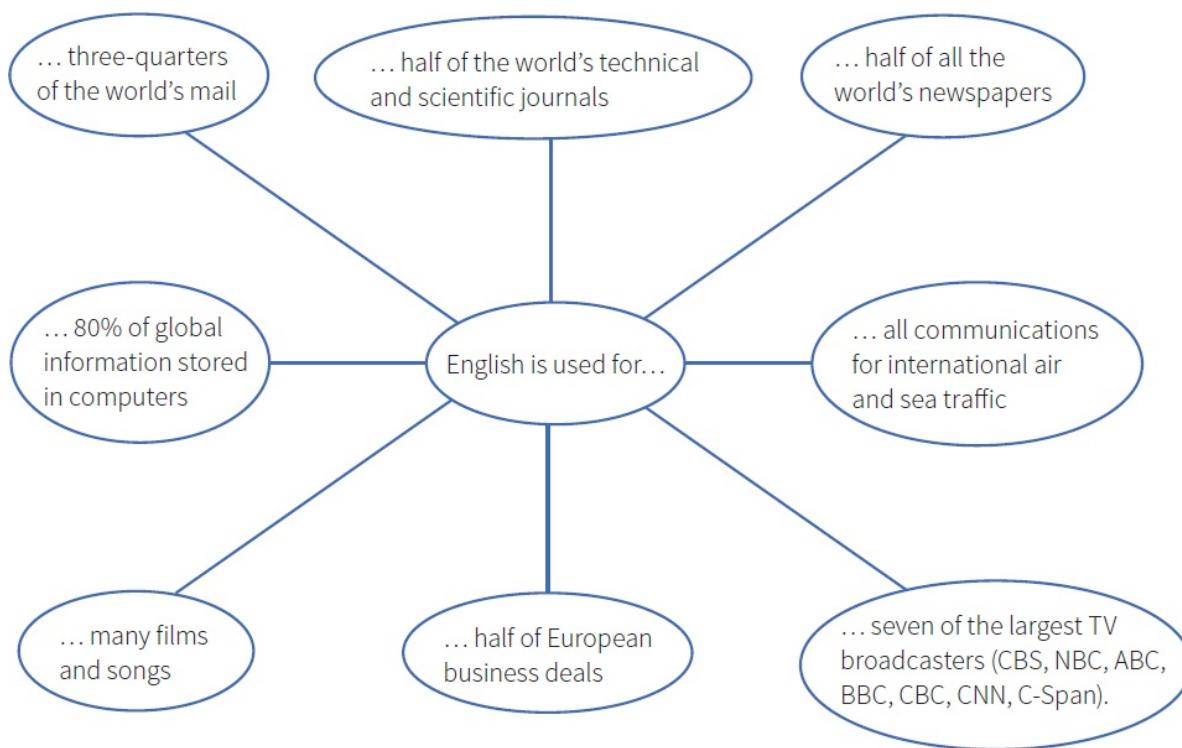
## The status of English as a global language

This section provides some of the evidence for the status of English as a world language. Your own country or region will be a good case study to compare with the statistics given here.

The following criteria are used to assess the status of a world language:

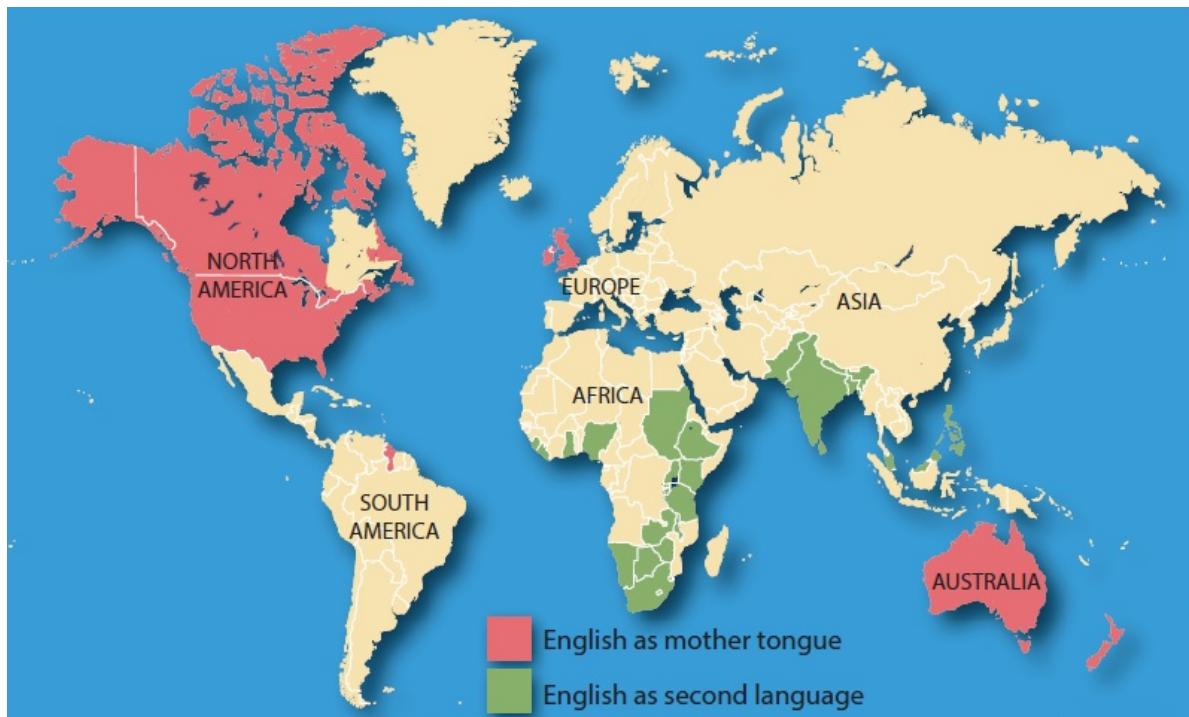
- 1 The number of first language speakers must be high. English is spoken as a first language by around 375 million and as a second language by around 750 million speakers in the world (British Council figures).
- 2 Speakers must be spread over a wide geographical area. English is spoken on all five continents.
- 3 Political and economic affairs must be stable so that the language can spread without large-scale opposition. English is the recognised language of trade, scientific research and international affairs. It is used by international organisations like the United Nations, by pilots and by air traffic controllers, by international traders and by international police agencies.

There are many countries where English is an official second language and where it operates as the language of government, higher education, international communication, science, technology and the media. All over the world, people know and use many words derived from English.



### ACTIVITY 2

- 1 Look at the world map showing the English-speaking regions of the world, both as a mother tongue and as a second language. Carry out some research to estimate the total number of speakers in these countries.
- 2
  - a Work with a partner to draw a mind map of the ways a person might benefit from speaking English.
  - b Investigate the importance of English in the area, country or region where you live, to use as a case study. Some points to consider are:
    - Is English the mother tongue? Is it an official language? Is it spoken by only those learning the language?
    - How and when do you and your community use English?
    - Does your government use English?
    - What languages other than English do people speak in your region? What is the status of these other languages in comparison with English?



## Could the status of English as a global language change?

English is currently dominant as a world language. Latin had a similar status at the time of the Roman Empire, and from this we can see that circumstances can change.

In 2006, the British Council reported that the number of people learning English was likely to increase over the next 10–15 years, rising to a peak of around two billion, after which, they predicted, there will be a decline. This prediction of decline may be premature, however. For example, at the end of the 20th century *The Economist* magazine described English as ‘impregnable [i.e. secure; unable to be beaten]; established as the world’s standard language; an intrinsic [i.e. essential] part of the global communications revolution’. However, it has since been predicted that economic growth in the next 50 years is likely to come from non-English-speaking countries in Asia, South America and the Pacific. These areas will start to generate wealth and ideas which may not be communicated in English.

Education trends in many countries suggest that languages other than English are providing competition in the school curriculum: **multilingualism** is widespread throughout the world today. There is a close link between language and power, as, currently, for example, the United States, a global superpower, has a majority of English speakers amongst its population. However, if it were to lose its global dominance and another country, such as China, for example, took its place, the status of English in the world may decline.

### ••• THINK LIKE ... AN EDUCATION MINISTER

You are the Education Minister in a country where the native language of the population is competing with English.

What strategies would you advise schools to follow to ensure that the influence of English does not diminish students' ability to communicate in their mother tongue?

## Question practice

Read the question and extracts. Then read the student response that follows.

Read the following passages, taken from an online article about the future of English as a world language.

Discuss what you judge to be the key issues raised in these extracts about the influence of English in the world. You should make reference to specific details from the extracts as well as your wider study.

(25 marks)

### Extract 1

English is the nearest thing that there has ever been to a global language. Its worldwide reach is much greater than anything achieved historically by Latin or French, and there has never been a language as widely spoken as English.

### Extract 2

The very dominance of an outside language or culture can lead to a backlash or reaction against it. People do not take kindly to having a language imposed on them, whatever advantage and value that language may bring them.

### Extract 3

The increasing proportion of the Hispanic population in the United States has already diluted the 'Englishness' of the country and there are significant areas of Spanish-speaking populations.

Their share of the population is expected to rise from 16 per cent currently to 30 per cent in 2050. Official policies of bilingualism in countries with largely minority language groups, such as Canada, Belgium, New Zealand and Switzerland, are an expensive option and often difficult to administer.

**From 'Language issues: English as a global language'.**  
[www.thehistoryofenglish.com](http://www.thehistoryofenglish.com)

### STUDENT RESPONSE

These extracts all deal with the global influence of English, since the language has spread from its original roots as British English. It is the third most spoken language after Mandarin and Spanish, however it is spoken more widely round the globe than any other language and is the major form of communication in many key areas, such as the United Nations.

The extracts state that there have been other languages, such as Latin (which was centred in Italy but spoken throughout areas of the world under Roman control) which have previously been widely spoken, but the spread of English has been far wider and is the dominant language on the internet as well as in entertainment and trade.

As English spread, it challenged native languages as it was spoken by those in power. When English became an official language of government, and therefore of authority, then many elements of people's day-to-day lives were conducted in English. In New Zealand, for example, Māori was displaced, as were the North American Indian languages. Control, through laws and customs, was exercised through

English, too, and so it benefitted people to learn and to use that language. It became the lingua franca, a common language of communication, between many groups with different local dialects.

This did not happen without conflict, as described in Extract 2, whereby people who speak a local language resent the dominant place of English in the world. As British influence declined, its place as a global superpower was taken by the USA. At the very least, the perceived arrogance of English speakers being unwilling to learn other languages suggests a superiority of English over the local language.

Finally, the extracts comment on the question of the continued expansion of English in the world. Language domination is associated with power and influence. Over the last 50 years, there has been a rise in power of non-English-speaking countries, such as China, so that the trend towards global English may be stopped or reversed.

The place of English in the world is where it is because of its contribution, over many years, to political, economic and social power.

### ACTIVITY 3

Analyse the student's response. To what extent did the student:

- evaluate the information given in the extracts
- support their answer with specific textual examples
- include additional information from their own study?

### ACTIVITY 4

Rewrite the student's response to include:

- 1 An introduction which immediately makes some purposeful and evaluative comment about the dominance of English as a world language.
- 2 A thorough evaluation of the information given in the extracts.
- 3 Clear topic sentences for each paragraph in the body of the essay. Some possible relevant topics are:
  - a the reasons for the spread of English, and the resulting conflict between languages
  - b the spread of English in a global, digital world, the role it plays in world politics and its economic influence
- 4 A brief conclusion about the status of English as a world language.

### ACTIVITY 5

- 1 This activity asks you to gather information about the past and present use and importance of English throughout the world. Select two or three of the following and give an example from each:
  - a the naming of early industrial inventions
  - b exploration, discovery and settlement of new countries
  - c the origin and development of laws
  - d the setting up of banks and financial institutions and the financial transactions which take place in English (e.g. Wall Street, the stock exchange in New York).
  - e music, film and the media industries, such as newspapers
  - f communications, such as phones; Air Traffic Control; shipping; rescue
  - g the development of the internet

- h** data and statistics showing the use of English on the internet.
- 2** Because this is such a wide topic, it would be helpful to exchange findings with others and then create a large class display showing the use of English in the world.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can explain the significant factors which led to the high profile position of English in the world		
I understand the current position of English in the world		
I can use relevant case studies and data to back up my points about the status of English in the world		
I understand current social and economic trends which could affect and change the future position of English in the world		

## **Unit 9.2**

# **Whose English is it anyway?**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- become familiar with the different levels of English language use throughout the world (AO4)
- interpret Kachru's circles model as a model of the spread of English globally (AO4)
- evaluate the differing status of Englishes throughout the world (AO5).

### **Before you start**

- 1 Where did the English language originate and in which countries is it the mother tongue?
- 2 In which countries does English serve as an official national language, alongside local languages?
- 3 Approximately how many people globally have some knowledge of the English Language?

## The spread of English

In Unit 9.1 you learnt that the number of people learning and speaking English as a second language is now much larger than the number who speak it as a mother tongue. This unit explores the different levels of English language usage across the world as well as the status and characteristics of the different Englishes. Should those who speak English as a second language therefore set the standard? Although change is happening, all varieties of English do not yet have equal status. A key issue to consider is whether there is, or should be, one 'correct' form of English which all others should be measured by or whether all varieties have equal merit.

This issue goes further than simply comparing users' level of competence in speaking and writing the language. It is central to the relative status of the different forms of English, where they are spoken and the status of local varieties in relation to the perceived correct form of the language. Linguist David Crystal feels that, by weight of numbers alone, the language produced by non-native speakers affects how the language will evolve, since contact between speakers of the same language is fundamental to how it is spoken. If we like other people, we want to sound like them (the process of **accommodation**) and in this way a common form of pronunciation and syntax develops within a community. In different areas of the English-speaking world, local accents and dialects have developed.

Classifying the origins and usage of English will help us to look at how the language has spread, and is continuing to spread, across the globe.

### ACTIVITY 1

Watch the talk by David Crystal online entitled 'Will English always be the global language?' It may be helpful to watch this first before making notes to answer the following questions. Discuss your answers with a partner.

- 1 What was the global language 1000 years ago?
- 2 Why does any language spread?
- 3 What events in history established English as a global language?
- 4 David Crystal suggests that Chinese, Arabic and Spanish could possibly become global languages. What reasons does he give for each language?
- 5 Give two to three examples of different varieties of English that Crystal gives to show the diversity of English.
- 6 Crystal suggests that a *lingua franca*, a form of English not identifiable as coming from any one geographical area, could develop. Discuss with a partner the reasons why this might happen, based on the suggestions which Crystal makes.
- 7 Write a speech to give to your class on Crystal's opinion that 'Power always drives language'. The notes you have made from his talk will help you. Research additional specific examples to support your arguments.

David Crystal is an internationally acknowledged linguist, academic and broadcaster, who has specialised in the field of language. He has written numerous books on linguistics as well as the history and development of the English language. He has recorded several online interviews where he discusses the future of English as a global language. Search on YouTube for 'David Crystal', 'Global English', and select the clip 'Global English with David Crystal' (Macmillan Education, 2009).

You can find out more about David Crystal's theories by reading his book *English as a Global Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge University Press, 2009).



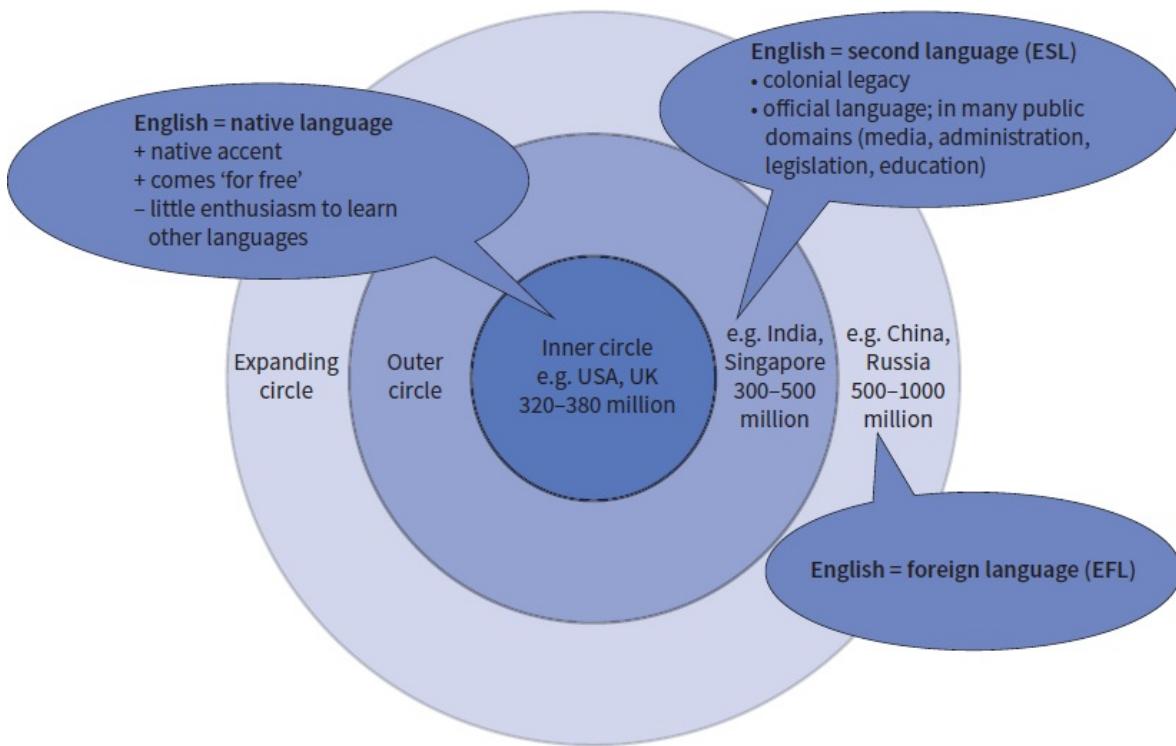
### KEY CONCEPT

**Diversity** – There is a diversity of English for communication in different regions and countries of the world. The pattern of the spread of English has led to its varied status as a first, second or foreign language throughout the world. There is an overlap of the role of English in some countries where it is used for a variety of official and unofficial purposes. Use your own experience through face-to-face contact, or go online to listen to a different variety of English from the

one you speak. List all the ways in which it is different. How easy is it for you to understand that different variety?

## The spread of English: Kachru's circles

Models are used to classify the ways English is used throughout the world. One of the most influential models was developed by the linguist Braj Kachru in 1985. **Kachru's circles model** is a model used to describe the circumstances in which English is spoken. Kachru's model consists of three circles:



**Kachru's circles model.**

### The Inner Circle

English is the native language, or mother tongue, of most people in these countries. The total number of English speakers in these regions is approximately 380 million. Other languages are spoken in these regions but English dominates communication here, and is used for all administrative and social purposes. The Inner Circle represents the traditional bases of English in regions where it is now used as a primary language: the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, English-speaking regions of Canada and South Africa, and some Caribbean territories.

### The Outer Circle

English is regarded as a second language in these regions, where much of the administration is through the medium of English, mainly as a colonial legacy, as in Asia and Africa. In these areas, English is not the native tongue, but serves as a useful common language – the *lingua franca* – between ethnic and language groups. Higher education, the legislature and judiciary, national commerce and ceremonial functions may be carried out in English. In these societies, English and other languages are likely to have equal status. This circle includes India, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Tanzania, Singapore, Kenya, and the Afrikaans-speaking regions of South Africa.

### The Expanding Circle

These are countries where English plays no historical or governmental role, but where it is nevertheless widely used as a medium of international communication. English may be employed for specific, limited purposes (usually business English and the internet). This includes much of the rest of the world's population, particularly China, Russia, Japan, most of Europe, Korea, Egypt, and Indonesia.

The learners of English in the Expanding Circle adopt some of its language features for speaking or writing but incorporate their native language, too. The word describing the language style is usually quite recognisable, for example 'Japlish' (Japanese + English); 'Chinglish' (Chinese + English).

#### ACTIVITY 2

In which countries do you think the following varieties of English have originated?

**1** Spanglish

**2** Greeklish

**3** Britalian

**4** Hinglish

**5** Singlish

**6** Japlish

**7** Hunglish

**8** Franglais

**9** Runglish

**10** Chinglish

The example of Chinglish, the mix of Chinese and English, shows a growing variety of English. In her book *Global English* (2015) Jennifer Jenkins believes that there are likely to be more Chinese speakers of English than of any other variety.

Some features of Chinglish, which only uses the present and future tense, are as follows: Chinglish prolongs some of the vowel sounds of English; the sounds of the English alphabet are changed (e.g. 'Z' becomes a 'J') in pronunciation; 'the' can be used as a filler like 'um'; actions in the past are described by adverbs (e.g. 'already'); many expressions of feeling such as surprise, disgust or anger are summarised by 'aiya'. In addition, literal translations, such as 'no noising' for 'quiet', have sometimes proved amusing.

### ACTIVITY 3

Work in a small group to find some key characteristics of a variety of English. The list in Activity 2 will help you. Consider the elements of the language adapted for the speakers' local use and the elements of Standard British English which have been changed.

Create a class poster to show the varieties.

## Language norms

Kachru's circles model is interesting, both historically and geographically, and also central to the standards or 'norms' of English, but how and from where do these language norms come? Most people have an idea of how the language should be spoken, especially in the rapidly changing modern world. The issue here is whether, with English as a global language, ideas of correctness come from one source, such as Standard British English, or whether any group speaking English across the globe can set the standards.

The most generally held view is that Kachru's circles model reflects the English language norms in the following ways:

- 1** The Inner Circle (e.g. UK, US) is *norm-providing*, which means that English language norms are developed in these countries and spread outwards.
- 2** The Outer Circle (e.g. India and Nigeria) is *norm-developing*, easily adopting and perhaps developing its own norms.
- 3** The Expanding Circle (which includes much of the rest of the world) is *norm-dependent* because it relies on the standards set by native speakers in the Inner Circle. This is a one-directional flow and learners of English as a foreign language in the Expanding Circle look to the standards set in the Inner and Outer Circles.

This model may seem very theoretical and yet it goes to the core of the dynamics of the spread and the usage of English.

### ACTIVITY 4

- 1** In a small group, discuss the following questions.

- a** In which of Kachru's circles does your variety of English belong?
- b** In what ways has the variety of English you use (for example, the lexis, spelling and syntax) been influenced by contact with other countries and their form of English? Give specific examples.
- c** How does digital language influence the variety of English you

use?

## Question practice

Read the student response to the following question:

Describe a model which explains how English has spread throughout the world. Evaluate the usefulness of this model in explaining the different Englishes.

(25 marks)

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Kachru's circles model (published in 1985) describes how English has spread throughout the world, according to the language's origins and importance.

The Inner Circle of English is found in countries where the language is the mother tongue.

These countries are the USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand and English-speaking regions of Canada and South Africa. Other languages are spoken in these countries, but English there is the 'mother tongue' and, according to Kachru, provides the standards or the 'norms' for the use of the language.

The Outer Circle is made up of countries where English was introduced where there were large numbers of non-English speakers. This was mainly as a result of colonial expansion on the part of the UK and the USA and included the countries of Malaysia, India, Singapore, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria. There, English was used to govern the countries and the important institutions, such as law and education. English is important as the lingua franca, often where other languages are used within the country.

The third circle is the Expanding Circle where there is no history of English in the culture and it is taught as a foreign language. Because it is taught, the countries in this group receive the standards of English, such as syntax and pronunciation, rather than creating them. Countries in this group include China, Japan and Brazil, and the countries of eastern Europe, such as Poland.

This is a useful model as it describes the links between the differences in the importance of English in people's daily lives. However, because of the global spread of English through the internet and social media, maybe the differences are not as clear cut as they were when Kachru developed his model, which seems to suggest that the standards of what is considered as Standard English come from the norm-providing countries. The linguist David Crystal suggests that a language spreads because the people who speak it are powerful and so others learn it believing that it will improve their lives. This has applied to the spread of English.

Kachru's circles model is useful to describe the extent of English use in different parts of the world, but it may be more flexible than the model suggests.

### ACTIVITY 5

- 1 Has the student named and described a model of the spread of English in sufficient detail?
- 2 Has the student evaluated the strengths and weakness of the

model in sufficient detail?

- 3 Has the student given specific examples to support the general points made?
- 4 Has the student structured the essay clearly with an introduction and conclusion which are relevant to the topic?



### THINK LIKE ... A UNITED NATIONS DIPLOMAT

The United Nations decides to set up a new international body, such as one concerning gender equality throughout the world. Using the information outlined in Kachru's circles model, suggest a list of points you would use to persuade the UN General Assembly that the affairs of the gender equality organisation should continue to be conducted in English.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can use Kachru's circles model to explain the different levels of use of English in the world		
I understand how the standards of English language usage are set		
I can evaluate Kachru's circles model using relevant examples		

# **Unit 9.3**

## **Varieties of English**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how the spread of English throughout the world has resulted in different varieties of English (AO4)
- explore the characteristics of different varieties of English (AO4)
- learn about the circumstances which led to the development of different varieties of English (AO4)
- analyse and debate points of view about the spread and relative status of different Englishes in the world (AO4).

### **Before you start**

- 1 Discuss how English has spread from its origins as British English, to its current world language status in the 21st century.
- 2 List some of the varieties of English found worldwide (e.g. New Zealand English).
- 3 Give reasons why you think English has spread to become a global language.

## Standard and non-standard English

The definition of Standard English is often very general and stated in comparative terms. Standard English is a form of English which has been accepted as the norm and the variety with which other forms are compared. Language researcher Paul Kerswill avoids a definition of Standard English because the idea of it as correct or 'good' English is 'closely related to the perspective of the particular language user'.

Standard English originated in the UK as the variety of English spoken in the politically and economically powerful triangle between Oxford, Cambridge and London. Over the last 200 years it has come to represent the norm of spoken and written English and, because Standard English follows the accepted constructions of the language, it is the form of English most often learnt by non-native speakers. It is generally perceived as the variety of English spoken by educated people.

It follows that **non-standard English** is any variety which is not standard English and so relates to regional varieties of the language which use forms of grammar, syntax and lexis not considered socially acceptable.

### Attitudes to non-standard English

In his classic book *A Short History of English*, H.C. Wylde, writing in 1914, informed his readers that English dialects were 'of very little importance', calling them 'quaint and eccentric'. In other words, they were not worth bothering with in serious language study. This attitude has completely changed in recent years. However, it underpins earlier linguistic beliefs that one form of English was correct and superior, and led to the notion of non-standard English. Standard English was seen as the prestige form, with non-standard dialects considered inferior.

#### ACTIVITY 1

The following are all non-standard forms of English. For each one:

- 1 identify the rule of standard English which has not been followed
- 2 rewrite the phrase in standard English.
  - a I ain't done nothing.
  - b She come here tomorrow.
  - c I dunno.
  - d It was him what did it.
  - e Yup.
  - f Did you do it? No I never.

## Accents of English

The accent most closely associated with Standard English is called Received Pronunciation (RP). Unlike other English accents, this is seen as an indicator of status rather than being linked to a specific geographical area.

RP is a recent development relative to the length of time that English has been spoken. It emerged in British *public schools* (expensive fee-paying schools) during the 19th century, when the middle and upper classes educated their children, who often became influential members of British society. It is generally the case that people who mix in the same circles tend to, consciously or unconsciously, converge in their speech patterns. RP, with its perceived high status, established itself as the prestige accent. It was also neutral – free from any regional associations – so that it was not possible to tell the geographic or social origins of the speaker.

In Britain, Standard English and RP spread quickly when the BBC (the British Broadcasting Corporation) was formed in 1922 (as the British Broadcasting Company), broadcasting radio, followed by television in 1936. RP was adopted by the BBC and for 60 years was the only accent heard on television and radio. It became 'the voice of Britain' and the establishment. This 'BBC English' has been widely parodied for sounding artificial and almost comical. Today, a much wider range of British regional accents and dialects can be heard on the BBC which reflects social change. A minority of English speakers use RP but it is generally recognised throughout the English-speaking world.



It is important to remember that there is nothing specific about RP that makes it superior to other accents: it is the attitudes of English speakers which link this way of speaking to social status. Since the 1960s there has been a greater acceptance of regional accents, which are now heard widely in the British media. In some circumstances, RP is seen as old-fashioned and pompous.

However, as regional accents have become more acceptable, they have, in fact, declined in English-speaking areas. People now travel more widely and are less likely to spend their lives in the same area. English accents will continue to change and develop and the growing numbers of non-native English speakers will contribute to this process.

The next student response is an annotated extract from a student's answer to this question on the use of non-standard English.

Read the following extract carefully. It is from the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by the American writer Mark Twain and was published in 1884. It is the story of a young boy and his struggles to fit into society. The novel contains much non-standard English. Write a commentary on the way that the lexis and syntax are used in the narrative.

**(25 marks)**

I see Jim before me, all the time; in the day, and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a-floating along, talking, and singing, and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was. And at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the only one he's got now; and then I happened to look around, and see that paper.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knew it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

'All right, then, I'll go to hell' – and tore it up.

**From *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain.**

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The young boy is remembering events with his friend, and so adopts the appropriately informal style of a young boy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which means that he uses some words which are now dated. He omits verbs (e.g. 'we a– floating'), uses the present tense for a past tense action (e.g. 'When I come to him again'), and uses a non-standard form of the past tense (e.g. 'I knowed it'). The use of the present tense could also be for immediate impact as Huckleberry Finn reminisces: 'I see Jim before me all the time'.

The boy uses dated, non-standard forms (e.g. 'a-trembling' and 'betwixt') as well as colloquial, rather vague expressions (e.g. 'such-like times').

The colloquial language reflects the young boy's speech in the syntax which is more like spoken than written (e.g. 'talking, and singing, and laughing'). At the time when the novel was written, the expression 'I'll go to hell' would have been quite shocking, seen as non-standard and definitely not accepted as Standard English in its tone.

The passage has been set to show the style and impact of non-standard English. Huckleberry Finn's memories are affectionate, vital and lively, and so the non-standard lexis and syntax are in keeping with his characterisation and persona of a young boy in the south of the USA. There is sufficient Standard English to enable the reader to follow the narrative while the local variety of English accurately reflects the context of the novel.

**[1]** Use of examples to show syntax and lexis but only a very general accompanying point that the boy is using non-standard English. The point about his background and level of education as influencing his language could be more developed

**[2]** This is a relevant comment showing the student understands that Standard English is more likely to occur in written rather than spoken language

**[3]** A relevant point about the time and place (i.e. the context) of the utterance which would provoke disapproval

**Reflection:** Work with a partner to compare your responses with the one given. The following questions will point out relevant areas to include.

- 1 Was there comment on the time and place when the language was used?
- 2 In what ways did the language reflect the character of the boy?
- 3 Was there comprehensive coverage of the lexis and syntax throughout the extract?
- 4 Did the student use appropriate language terminology and accompany each example with an evaluative comment?



### KEY CONCEPT

Diversity

The English Language exists in a variety of forms throughout the world in the 21st century, and these different varieties of English have a different status attached to them.

In what ways might the English spoken by those arriving in a newly settled country, such as the United States, be adapted and changed by generations of people who live there? Think of landscape, the flora and fauna, as well as lifestyle.

## Varieties of English

As we have considered, English is spoken throughout the world but in a variety of ways. The same words are pronounced in different ways; different words exist for the same object and the syntax, the order of speaking English, varies too.

In this section you will explore the varieties of English spoken throughout the world, and you should be able to recognise the areas where the following are spoken: 'Japlish', 'Russlisch', 'Spanglish', 'Deutschlisch'. These and other varieties of English have evolved where the standard form has merged with elements of the local language. For example, 'Deutschlisch' contains a mix of English and German lexis and syntax. There is some debate about whether these varieties can be considered a new language or an evolving dialect of English. This amalgamation of two (or more) different languages to form a new distinctive variety with native speakers is the process of **creolisation**. Traditionally, this referred to languages which emerged in the Caribbean, but the process happens worldwide. (Look back to [Unit 7.4](#), which discusses creole languages in relation to theories of language change.)

Because English is learnt around the world, it is spoken and written in a variety of ways. People in different regions of the world are creating new varieties of English which are distinctive.

The following information explores the distinctive features of South African English. You may wish to add your own area of English as an additional study.

### Case study: South African English

The provinces which make up South Africa, historically have two major divisions of language and culture – English and Afrikaans. South African English (SAE) is the dialect of English spoken by South Africans, with separate English varieties spoken by Zimbabweans, Zambians and Namibians.

The English language in South Africa dates from the arrival of the British at the Cape of Good Hope in 1795. Like other areas which became English colonies, English was introduced to South Africa by soldiers and administrators, then by missionaries and settlers. It became more established during the 19th century as a result of new British settlements in the Eastern Cape and Natal, and the subsequent rushes to the diamond and gold mines. Afrikaans is a language which emerged from the Dutch language spoken by the early Dutch settlers in South Africa.

A power struggle developed between the English-speaking settlers and those of Dutch descent, leading to the Boer War of 1899–1901. The two languages coexisted throughout the 20th century, with Afrikaans replacing English as the language of government, administration, police, and the armed forces. It was the language closely associated with the repressive system of apartheid.

However, the English language remained a major influence in business and higher education. It was also used by the African National Congress (ANC) and other liberation movements to enable communication between speakers of the country's many other languages and with the outside world. South African English was a powerful political tool: when the South African nationalist government tried to make Afrikaans a teaching language in schools in 1976, it triggered an uprising in Soweto (an abbreviation of South West Township).

This situation continues today, with many ethnic groups within South Africa seeing English as a means of advancement in society. As in many other multilingual communities, English is considered to be neutral since it ensures that no local dialect is viewed as more influential than any other.



### Characteristics of South African English

- Settlers adopted words from Dutch to describe landscape and social features unique to their new environment (e.g. ‘donga’, ‘impala’, ‘kraal’), although others were derived from Afrikaans.
- The Afrikaans language has had an enormous influence on lexis and syntax in SAE (e.g. the common use of ‘ja’ (yes)). Other borrowings from Afrikaans include ‘braai’ (barbecue), ‘lekker’ (nice, delicious) and ‘rooibos’ (red bush and now a flavour of tea).
- Many SAE words have been borrowed from the African languages of the region, including ‘tsetse’, ‘tsotsi’, ‘kgotla’ and ‘marula’. As well as lexis, speech intonation also reflects these languages.
- Words were borrowed from other settlers. For example, Malay words, such as ‘atchar’, ‘bobotie’, ‘sosatie’, ‘kaparrang’ and ‘kramat’, were introduced to SAE during the 19th century by Afrikaans speakers. These originated in the community of slaves and political exiles at the Cape, who were sent from what are now Indonesia and Malaysia during the 17th and 18th centuries.
- Some words current at the time of British settlement in South Africa are still used (e.g. ‘geyser’ (a boiler) and ‘robot’ (traffic light)).
- Different varieties of SAE exist in the same way as Standard English and are an indicator of social status.

There are many sources of information about South African English, including resources where you can listen to examples of accent and style of speech. The websites of *The Guardian* newspaper, *The Economist* magazine and the Oxford English Dictionary are particularly useful.

## ACTIVITY 2

There are a great many varieties of English, each of which has an individual history and set of circumstances surrounding its development. In pairs, or in small groups, carry out an investigation to utilise your skills as independent learners.

- 1 Choose a variety of English, other than the one you are familiar with, and trace its development and changes in the way that it has become distinctive.
- 2 Assess the extent of adaptation and incorporation of lexis from the local region and its status as a formal or informal form of communication. You should include specific examples to accompany any general points you make.
- 3 Search for spoken examples of your chosen language variety. You might carry out an online search of the British Library Sound Archive, or YouTube.
- 4 Languages constantly change and develop. Try to research and suggest ideas about current influences on the English language variety you are investigating and likely future developments.

**Reflection:** You have been independently researching a variety of English in the world. Compare your research methods and findings with a partner or another group to assess the following:

- 1 The usefulness and reliability of the sources you accessed for your information. Did you search printed text and online sources?
- 2 The information you discovered about the historical detail outlining the key features of the variety of English.
- 3 The unique variety of English you have researched:
  - a The approximate number of speakers.
  - b The importance in the society of the variety of English researched (e.g. in government and the economy of the country).
  - c The other languages which co-exist with the variety of English and the relative importance of each. For example, which language is the official language?

## Question practice

Read the following extracts from a university research paper about New Zealand English. Discuss what you feel are important issues raised here relating to the use of English in the world.

You should refer to ideas and examples from your wider study as well as to specific details from the passage.

(25 marks)

### Extract 1

Early commentaries from around 1880 focused on features of pronunciation associated with non-standard varieties of British English. From the 1900s, people began to comment on a distinctive variety of New Zealand speech. Reactions were not generally positive. School inspectors began to warn teachers against 'impure upbringing and even poor thinking' (1990: 24–25, 30).

### Extract 2

Bayard (1991) reports on a 1986 study of 86 university students who were asked to listen to a range of accents, including New Zealand and British accents, and to rate them on a scale of one to five for ten traits representing a mix of status and solidarity-related variables (pleasantness, reliability, ambition, sense of humour, leadership ability, likely income, educational level, self-confidence, intelligence, likeability and acceptability).

### Extract 3

The results showed that RP, the recognised prestige accent of British English, was the clear leader in all of the status-related variables, and that New Zealand English led only in the solidarity-related variable of 'acceptability' (Bayard 2000: 307). Gordon and Abell (1990) report on a similar study (Abell, 1980) that investigated the attitudes of high school students towards three New Zealand English accents and RP. The RP accent again ranked higher on all the status-related variables (ambition, education, reliability, intelligence, income, and occupation) and the New Zealand English accents ranked higher than RP only on the solidarity variables (friendliness and sense of humour).

### Extract 4

In interpreting these results, it is important to remember that no accent or language variety is superior to another on purely linguistic grounds.

**From 'Attitudes to NZ English', Victoria University, New Zealand.**

**Reflection:** Look at the answer you have written and consider the following questions:

- 1 This is a case study: have you shown your understanding of the specific ways in which New Zealand English developed from its arrival in the country to current research findings about its distinctiveness as a variety of English?
- 2 Have you broadened your answer to write about the ways in which English has spread throughout the world, using specific examples where possible?
- 3 Have you answered the specific command words and phrases? What do you regard as 'important issues'? 'Issues' here could include:
  - a the dominance of English in relation to other languages and dialects with which it co-exists
  - b the distinctiveness of the different varieties of English (it would be helpful to give specific words and phrases which came into the language from other sources and the reasons they were adopted)
  - c attitudes towards English use and any resistance to its use for personal, public and media purposes.

- 4 Have you balanced an analysis of the 'specific' details from the extracts (i.e. about New Zealand English) with 'ideas and examples from your wider study'?
- 5 Have you written your essay in an articulate, balanced and fluent manner?

Considering these questions, what do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of your response? Rewrite the response to improve any weak points or omissions, and produce a stronger answer.



#### **THINK LIKE ... AN 'ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE' COURSEBOOK AUTHOR**

Write approximately ten key points on the definitions and characteristics of Standard and non-standard English for English students. Ensure that each point is explained clearly and has examples.

You can give examples from the variety of Standard and non-standard English where you live.

## New Englishes and linguistic fragmentation

You know that English has spread around the world. Any language changes and develops to suit the circumstances of its society and English is no exception. So it follows that English as a world language is marked by distinctive varieties, some of which have emerged more recently than the longer-established British and American Englishes. These newer varieties are often labelled *New Englishes*, examples of which include Pakistani English, Indian English and Nigerian English. These countries have usually been exposed to some historical colonial influence by Britain or America so that English has taken root there. New Englishes can also be known as **new varieties of English (NVEs)**.

'New Englishes' is a term first coined by Platt, Weber and Ho to describe varieties of English which have developed in different countries through government administration, education and media, rather than from native language speakers. In these areas, English exists alongside other local languages and is the common medium for communication (i.e. the *lingua franca*). Importantly, each variety of New English has developed its own lexis, pronunciation and syntax.

### ACTIVITY 3

- 1** Work in a small group to select three New Englishes (for example, Indian, New Zealand, Ghanaian, Jamaican, Singaporean, Zimbabwean English).  
For each variety selected:
  - a** find out when English first arrived in the country
  - b** search online for samples of the English variety used
  - c** compile a brief dictionary of words and idioms which are characteristic of this variety of English. Give the equivalent for each one in your own variety of English.
- 2** New Zealand English has a widely recognised phrase in the country, 'yeah right', which is an expression of disbelief about something (e.g. 'I haven't checked my cell phone all day,' 'Yeah right'). Find an equivalent expression in your own English. If you are reading this in New Zealand, find an expression of similar meaning in a different variety of English.

## Linguistic fragmentation

English, in all its varieties, appears to have consolidated its position as a global language even though there are more native speakers of Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. The many varieties of English raise questions about its future. Some hold the view that English will split into mutually incomprehensible languages, as happened to Latin, with the many Latin-based languages of today.

The opposing view is that English is now cemented as the language that people wish to learn and to speak in order to fully participate in the global communication infrastructure of the 21st century.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can give definitions of Standard and non-standard English as they apply to English throughout the world		
I understand how a local variety of English developed and the characteristics of this variety of English		
I am able to compare at least two varieties of English throughout the world, in terms of their characteristics and status		
I have analysed and respond to case study material which illustrates the variety of Englishes in the world, including New Englishes		



## Unit 9.4

# British and American English

### Learning objectives

***In this unit, you will:***

- explore the social and economic forces which have led to the dominance of American English in the mother tongue (AO4)
- learn the characteristics of American English (AO4)
- analyse and comment on the contrasts between British and American English (AO4).

### Before you start

- 1 In groups, discuss the music, films, television and other forms of entertainment which you consume. List those which are from the United States and those which are from Britain. Which country's entertainment is more dominant in your life?
- 2 'England and America are two countries separated by a common language'. This quotation is attributed to the Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw. Discuss in groups what you understand by this apparently contradictory statement.

## The emergence of American English

The first European settlers in what became the United States were members of a religious sect known as the Puritans, who brought their English language with them. They landed on Plymouth Rock, New England, in 1620 AD and, over the years, were followed by many thousands more migrants who travelled across the Atlantic for a new life, often to escape religious intolerance.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Diversity

The diversity of English can be demonstrated by the differences between British and American English.

Listen to recordings of face-to-face speakers of American and British English. Try to analyse the characteristics of each variety for lexis, syntax and pronunciation. Are there differences within each of these varieties?

Like settlers and colonists in other parts of the world, the Puritans adapted and changed the variety of English they spoke, discarding words which were no longer useful or relevant to their new lifestyle and rapidly adding a store of words that were. Different landscapes, animals and food sources were a rich source of new words and expressions as the settlers spread out across the continent. Words like 'raccoon', 'squash' (for pumpkin) and 'moose' were borrowed from the many languages of the Native Americans.

There was a great deal of land on which to settle, though large parts of it were occupied by Native American tribes which all spoke separate languages. Apart from words describing the natural habitat, very few Native American words entered **American English** and references by the Europeans to describe the life of the Native Americans, such as 'pale face', 'war path' and 'Big Chief', were largely phrased in English. However, American English did adopt vast numbers of new words from Europe and beyond. The Dutch came and shared 'coleslaw' and 'cookies', the Germans bought 'pretzels' from 'delicatessens' and the Italians arrived with their 'pizzas', 'pasta', 'pepperoni' and many more.

Once independence from Britain had been gained, and as a growing powerful economic dominance in the western world emerged, Americans developed their own words to meet the needs of large-scale capitalism. Businesses became concerned about 'breakeven' and their 'bottom line', and whether they were 'blue chip' or 'white collar'. The 'commuter' needed a whole new system of 'freeways', 'subways' and 'parking lots' before new systems could be invented through 'mergers' and 'downsizing'. America became a global superpower and confidently sent some of its own English back across the Atlantic, so that the British in turn referred to 'cool movies' and 'groovy jazz'.

This borrowing of words has been continued by more recent waves of immigrants from all parts of Asia and the Pacific. As the United States continues to dominate globally, American English has become the standard means of communication throughout the world. Individuals and groups who wish to be a part of this economic success do so through the medium of English.

American and British English lexis, phrasing and pronunciation remain very different from each other, although they are largely mutually understandable. You have seen that language is constantly changing, and these two distinctive forms of English are evolving, too. While America remains a superpower with global influence, some might argue that American English could become the variety which sets the standards for the English language.



### ACTIVITY 1

- 1 Look at the following English words and divide them according to whether you think they are distinctively American English or British English.

*Attorney, biscuit, beet, meadow, janitor, tuxedo, center, cot, pacifier, yard sale, jumper, mobile phone, freeway, cell phone, elevator, maths, stroller, primary school, rubbish, candy store*

- 2 Work in pairs to find ten more words from British English and ten from American English.
- 3 Are these words likely to be understood by those using the opposite form of English? Suggest reasons for your answers based on how widely used they are and where people are likely to encounter them.

The debate about the relative importance of British English and American English is discussed in the following article, with some surprising conclusions.

#### **How is your English? Research shows Americanisms AREN'T taking over the British language**

Anyone who has ever taken a ride in an elevator or ordered a regular coffee in a fast food restaurant would be forgiven for thinking that Americanisms are taking over the English language.

But new research by linguistic experts at the British Library has found that British English is alive and well and is holding its own against its American rival.

The study has found that many British English speakers are refusing to use American pronunciations for everyday words such as schedule, patriot and advertisement.

It also discovered that British English is evolving at a faster rate than its transatlantic counterpart, meaning that in many instances it is the American speakers who are sticking to more 'traditional' speech patterns.

Jonnie Robinson, curator of sociolinguists at the British Library, said: 'British English and American English continue to be very distinct'

entities and the way both sets of speakers pronounce words continues to differ. But that doesn't mean that British English speakers are sticking with traditional pronunciations while American English speakers come up with their own alternatives. In fact, in some cases it is the other way around. British English, for whatever reason, is innovating and changing while American English remains very conservative and traditional in its speech patterns.'

As part of the study, researchers at the British Library recorded the voices of more than 10 000 English speakers from home and abroad.

The volunteers were asked to read extracts from *Mr Tickle*, one of the series of Mr Men books by Roger Hargreaves.

They were also asked to pronounce a set of six different words which included 'controversy', 'garage', 'scone', 'neither', 'attitude' and 'schedule'.

Linguists then examined the recordings made by 60 of the British and Irish participants and 60 of their counterparts from the U.S. and Canada.

**'How is your English? Research shows Americanisms AREN'T taking over the British language', by Chris Hastings, *The Daily Mail*.**

## ACTIVITY 2

The article is about the relative influence of British and American English. These two varieties are regarded as the more established varieties of English. Using your own ideas, and the article as a starter, research the relative importance of the two varieties. Discuss, in small groups, why American English may always dominate over British English, or why it may not. Then write up your findings. The following points may be relevant:

- the perceived high status and respectability associated with British RP accents
- the dominance of American film, media, music and online activities worldwide
- the global influence of multinational companies and institutions, such as the United Nations.

### THINK LIKE ... A MARKETING MANAGER FOR AN INTERNATIONAL HOTEL CHAIN

You have been commissioned to write an information pack, in English, including health and safety procedures for a chain of five-star hotels. A large number of the clientele are business executives from all areas of the globe, many of whom only speak English as a second language.

- 1 Design and write the first three pages of the pack that deals with room facilities, including the bathroom, as well as safety procedures.
- 2 Compare your pack with that of a partner and assess to what extent the style and lexis you use has been written in Standard American or Standard British English. Annotate your pages to show where you have used British or American words.

## American English within the United States

The history of North American settlement is very complex. It is a continent traditionally described as a 'melting pot' of peoples and their languages. Spanish is spoken by a large minority and more recent waves of immigration from Asia and the Pacific have resulted in the languages and culture of these regions being spoken in many major cities and large urban areas. However, in the United States, American English is the *lingua franca* which ensures a common understanding; all official government work is carried out through

the medium of American English.

American English has a variety of pronunciation and dialect forms and the North American accent is said to be a legacy of the sounds of English used in 17th-century England. It is suggested that the distinctive 'Southern drawl' comes closest to the manner of speech in England at the time of the first migration. American English also uses significantly different constructions from British English. An example of this is the American use of the simple past tense (e.g. 'She ate too much'), when a British English speaker would naturally use 'have/had' + past participle (e.g. 'She has eaten too much').

### ACTIVITY 3

Work with a partner to analyse the linguistic differences between the pairs of the following constructions. Discuss whether they are more likely to be British or American English. Explain the reasons for your answers.

- 1 Is Sean here? No, he's just left. / Is Sean here? No, he just left.
- 2 I didn't read the book yet. / I haven't read the book yet.
- 3 May I take a shower? / May I have a shower?
- 4 It's a quarter past four. / It's a quarter after four.

The following extract is from a report on a study of British students' written language and the influence of American English. Its results appear to suggest that the influence of American English is increasing amongst school children.

## Question practice

Read the following question, extract and student response.

Discuss what you think the study shows about the relative influence of American and British English. You should make reference to specific details from the information as well as including ideas and examples from your wider study.

(25 marks)

### **Unstoppable rise of American English: Study shows young Britons copying US writing style**

The future of written English will owe more to Hollywood films than Dickens or Shakespeare, if the findings of a study into children's writing are anything to go by.

The analysis of 74 000 short stories found that their written work was littered with Americanisms, exclamation marks and references to celebrities.

Researchers who looked at the entries to a national competition found they were increasingly using American words such as 'garbage', 'trash can', 'sidewalk', 'candy', 'sneakers', 'soda', 'cranky' and 'flashlight'.

The stories, written by pupils aged seven to 13, show how fairy cakes are referred to as cupcakes and a dinner jacket has become a tuxedo.

'Smart' is now often used for 'clever' and 'cranky' for 'irritable'.

Popular US fiction, such as the Twilight novels and films, is thought to be fuelling the increasing use of American vocabulary and spelling.

Modern technology was also influential. Out of almost 300 references to 'blackberry', nearly half referred to mobile phones.

Characters frequently 'googled' for information or used 'apps'.

But the researchers found a wealth of imaginative and inventive ideas.

**From 'Unstoppable rise of American English: Study shows young Britons copying US writing style', by Laura Clark, *The Daily Mail*.**

### **STUDENT RESPONSE**

The extract reports on a study of the writing of children aged 7–13 years, who were asked to write a short story. The lexis used was analysed.

The findings quoted here show that children of this age routinely use lexis associated with American rather than British English (e.g. 'sneakers', 'sidewalk' and 'candy'). Since the children were allowed a free choice of subject, it can be assumed that these words are used in their own lexis.

The words and phrases are intelligible and understood by the young writers, and are probably used alongside their British English equivalent. However, it seems that the American terminology comes more readily to mind.

The survey starts by referencing Hollywood as the Western World's hub of film-making. The saturation of all varieties of entertainment and media provision is now global so that the United States, through Hollywood, exports its version of English to a worldwide audience. There is a comparative mention of Shakespeare and Dickens, two important writers

in English literature. This reference also acknowledges the waning influence of British English by harking back to days when Britain held a central role on the world stage and these writers were universally recognised and read. Instead, Hollywood, in the United States, holds global attention.

What the article does not say, which is important about American English, is that there are significant non-English-speaking minorities within the country, notably, Spanish-speaking Hispanic groups and many Asian and Pacific communities. However, English is the official language of the United States, the lingua franca, so that the use of American English is dominant for all groups. This may change over time as the current demographic trends show that the non-native English-speaking sector of the population is growing more rapidly and will form an increasing proportion of the total.

The article also generalises about American English and British English and fails to acknowledge that both varieties contain dialects and accents which have varying levels of prestige. Received Pronunciation, or BBC English, is an accent not associated with a geographical region, rather it is taken as a sign of power and influence. Standard American English is also spoken with a variety of regional accents which carry different status.

The overall purpose of the article is to show the global dominance of American English over British English, even in Britain itself.

**[1]** Effective summary of the whole extract

**[2]** Comment shows wider knowledge that British/American versions are mutually understood

**[3]** Clear summary of the article which is part of the requirements for the question, and some additional comments to show the reasons for changes in influence

**[4]** Shows wider knowledge of the diversity of languages within the United States and draws together specific, up-to-date examples

**[5]** Points out omissions in the article which show the generalisations that have been made

#### ACTIVITY 4

In their response, has the student:

- 1 Given a clear explanation of the forces which have led to the dominance of American English? What reasons are given and how well are they supported with evidence?
- 2 Explained clearly the relative influence of American English over British English?
- 3 Referred to the material in the text and their own wider studies?
- 4 Included any irrelevant or unsubstantiated information? What material would you delete or add?

Use the comments on the response and these points to write your own excellent answer to the question.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the significant influences in the development of American English		
I know appropriate examples which show these differences		
I understand the historical, economic and social forces which have contributed to the growth in influence of American English		
I can write fluent and explanatory essays showing the differences in American and British English and the global influences which affect the usage of both varieties		

# **Unit 9.5**

## **Language dominance and language death**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- explore the stages by which dominant world languages, including English, threaten the extinction of local minority languages (AO4)
- learn about the efforts made to reinvigorate dying languages (AO4)
- learn about language death and the reasons why it happens (AO4)
- explore the debates surrounding the spread of English (AO4).

### **Before you start**

Discuss the following questions in a small group:

- 1 What languages do you know that have few speakers? Can you think of examples of languages spoken in your region?
- 2 Discuss why these languages might have relatively few speakers.
- 3 What do you think the term 'language death' means?

## Language imperialism

This unit explores the ways in which languages spread and decline. It assesses how the spread of English may have contributed to the death of other languages over the past 150 years. The number of languages spoken worldwide is expected to shrink rapidly in the coming decades, and it is claimed that less than ten per cent of the world's 6 000+ languages will still be spoken in one hundred years' time (and those could be simplified versions of what we recognise today).

So, presently, we speak a lot of different languages – more than 6 000, according to the *Ethnologue* catalogue of world languages. The same source states that 23 languages account for more than half the world's population. A number of languages are dying out so it is likely, in the future, that only the most widely spoken languages will dominate. As some languages, particularly English, become dominant in the world, they do so at the expense of local languages. These minority languages are seen as less important as means of communication and transmission of culture. The dominance of one language over another has been termed **linguistic imperialism**, a phrase introduced into modern linguistics by Robert Phillipson in his book *Linguistic Imperialism*. He describes where one language, which is English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, dominates others and, in doing so, gains control of a country's political, economic and social institutions. It is important to be concerned by this because the decline and death of a language also results in the impoverishment of the culture of those who speak it as a mother tongue.

More specifically, Phillipson argues that, starting in the 18th century, the introduction of English into a large number of non-English-speaking countries endangered the indigenous languages and ways of life. In more recent times, this push for English language throughout the world has been encouraged by extensive programmes of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). A development from this point of view argues that giving or denying access to English reinforces inequalities of opportunity within a non-English-speaking country.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Change

The increasingly dominant status of English as a world language is likely to be a contributory cause of the decline in use and death of native languages.

In what ways do you think that English could contribute to the decline and death of a native language?

Linguistic imperialism paints a bleak picture of the dominant languages of the world contributing to the death, and so the loss of significant elements of the culture, of global native languages. There is now more awareness of this danger as global organisations, such as The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural organisation (UNESCO) and other international organisations, cooperate globally to monitor the decline of native languages. Interactive technology enables speakers of endangered languages to upload their language to become part of UNESCO's 'Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger' and be under active surveillance by the United Nations organisation.

### ACTIVITY 1

- 1 Work with a partner to research the ideas of linguistic imperialism. You need to have information about the claimed unfairness of this practice and know specific examples of countries where this has taken place.
- 2 Use a large sheet of paper to draw up a chart: on one side, list the possible benefits of imposing a dominant world language on a society which has different native languages. List the drawbacks and unfairness of this on the other side.
- 3 Which side seems to have the more convincing arguments? Use this information to discuss with other groups in your class. Create a mind map with all the arguments expressed.

## Language decline or endangerment

A language dies when the people who speak it die out. The circumstances in which this happens are important factors in the continuing growth and dominance of English in the world. Before that phase happens, a language becomes endangered as the number of people who speak it as a mother tongue becomes very small.

**Language death** can be sudden and violent. Of approximately 200 languages spoken by aboriginal Australians when the Europeans arrived in the late 18th century, between 50 and 70 disappeared as a direct result of the killing of Aboriginal people or their death from diseases introduced by Europeans. On the island of Tasmania, for instance, the Aboriginal population of between 3 000 and 4 000 was hunted and wiped out within 75 years. Their languages died with them and are no longer spoken anywhere.

Other examples of language death are more gradual, as speakers drift into the use of another, more dominant language in their daily lives. This has often been a result of colonial expansion and the increasing economic importance of a dominant nation.

Around half the languages spoken in the world today are not being taught to children. When the next generation adopt another, more dominant language, these languages will die out with the last native speaker.

The following points give some useful statistics:

- Six per cent of the world's languages are spoken by 94 per cent of the world's population.
- Languages are vanishing at a fast rate. Since 1500, the world has lost around 15 per cent of the 7 000 languages we think were spoken then.
- In just the last few decades, dozens of Native American languages have died, with the same happening in Australia, South America, New Guinea, and Africa.

UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) distinguishes five levels of language endangerment, based on the extent to which language is passed on from one generation to the next:

- 1 **vulnerable:** most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g. home)
- 2 **definitely endangered:** children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
- 3 **severely endangered:** language is spoken by grandparents and older generations, and, while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
- 4 **critically endangered:** the youngest speakers are grandparents and older generations, and they speak the language only partially and infrequently
- 5 **extinct:** the language is no longer spoken

## Can language death be prevented?

Language is not just a collection of words and grammar, it is a fundamental part of the life of a people. When a language dies, a whole culture and its songs, stories, legends and sayings die with it. As the French linguist Charles Hagège writes: 'What we lose is essentially an enormous cultural heritage, the way of expressing the relationship with nature, with the world, between themselves in the framework of their families, their kin people.'

### Scottish Gaelic



If Gaelic were allowed to die out and give way to English, then, in many ways, the Gaelic culture would die with it. The British Isles were once a place of multiple languages and cultural diversity, and in order to preserve that diversity, many people believe that Gaelic should be **revitalised**.

Gaelic (pronounced 'ga-lek', not 'gay-lik') is a Celtic language that was the predominant language in Scotland. Today it is spoken only in remote areas of the northern and western Highlands. However, there are 20 000–30 000 native Gaelic speakers worldwide, while, in addition, more than 50 000 others claim to understand the language. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005 gave official recognition to the language, but it is not an official language within the United Kingdom. Scottish Gaelic is spoken:

- in Scotland, including rural areas of the Western Isles and Skye, and a few locations in the rest of the Inner Isles and the Highland mainland
- by some speakers in immigrant communities in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in Canada.

There was a time when Gaelic appeared to be heading towards extinction, with few schools teaching it and there being little interest in learning it due to English having become dominant in Great Britain. However, in the past 50 years there has been a huge resurgence of interest in the language. In 2006 a school teaching solely in Gaelic opened in Glasgow, and, in 2009, the Scottish government pledged to double the number of schools in which Gaelic is taught. Alongside this increase in teaching, there has been a large boost in spending for BBC Gaelic language broadcasting services, such as BBC Alba and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal, which has had a huge impact on the number of Gaelic speakers.

### ACTIVITY 2

- 1 In a group discuss the following quotation from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO):

*Language diversity is essential to the human heritage.*

What do you think this means? You might find it helpful to consider the following points:

- What does diversity mean? How does the term apply to languages?
- What do you feel your language gives you, other than the means to communicate your needs?
- You may speak more than one language. If so, what do you use each language for? What do you think are the benefits of being multilingual?

Does it matter if a language dies? Discuss the benefits a language gives to the community who speaks it. Give reasons for your answers.

- 2 Choose a region near you and carry out your own investigation into languages which are currently spoken there, as well as those which may have died out in the last 200 years or so. The following points may guide you.
  - Research possible reasons for the decline or death of any languages that have disappeared.
  - Investigate whether there has been a spread of English in the region.
  - If there have been any examples of language decline or even language death in your chosen region, examine whether there have been any efforts to reinstate its position in the community (e.g. Māori is now one of the official languages of New Zealand).

## Language shift

Language death is more likely to occur when the language of one group is seen as less important than a more dominant language spoken in the same region. For example, the Breton language in Brittany was perceived to be inferior to French. Until the 1950s, children speaking Breton in the classroom and even in the playground were forced to wear a clog (a very heavy wooden shoe, symbolic of their lack of education) around their necks as punishment. Similar attitudes prevailed in Wales for native Welsh speakers and in New Zealand for speakers of the Māori language.

Where one language is perceived to offer greater advantages for employment and general advancement, that language will be promoted and spoken. There may be no incentive to maintain the minority language, so it is unlikely to be taught to children. The use of the language in the community is reduced until it may only be spoken in the home and by older generations.

A minority language suffers when it is not taught in schools or used in the media or in formal administrative situations such as courts. The language becomes restricted to the home and in this way **language shift** can happen over the course of only a few generations, leading eventually to language death.

There are variations in this process, according to attitudes of the speakers and the extent of contact with other speakers of the minority language. For example, younger people may find that knowledge of the dominant language gives them an economic or social advantage while, conversely, people in rural areas may have less exposure to the dominant language and can therefore use the minority language more freely. The Māori language in New Zealand remained dominant in more inaccessible areas for many years after Māori in the cities were using English. This was especially apparent before the arrival of English-language television.

## English as an imperialist language

A national language must be recognised as a 'real' language, have a high status and facilitate its speakers in their daily lives. English, in its many forms, is spoken across the world, both as a native language and as a second language. Is it a chief cause of the death of minority languages? Is it a **killer language**? This is a key term, first coined by Anne Pakir in 1991 and developed by the UK Open University professor David Graddol in 1996. The following examples argue for and against this question.

FOR: Papua New Guinea	AGAINST:Germany
Colonisation by Britain and later Australia led to the development of a creole language (standard 'Tok Pisin') essential for native people's improved economic well-being. There was no official written language and local languages were not seen to offer any advantage so they ceased to be spoken. Tok Pisin and English became the <i>lingua franca</i> for both official and unofficial communication in the country.	German is an established written and spoken language, and Germany is part of the European Union in which much administrative business and many technological advances are conducted in English. Many Germans speak English fluently so that the two languages coexist. English words appear in the German media and in music, and are used quite widely, especially by the young.

### Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is a good example of a country in which hundreds of languages were spoken rather than written down. The ruling elite felt that multilingualism was bad for economic progress, so schooling took place through the medium of English. The pidgin language Tok Pisin was used in schools and this new language form helped to unify the people of New Guinea.

The linguist Suzanne Romaine reflected in 1992 on the past status of the different languages in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She said that 'to speak English was good; to speak Tok Pisin was bad, but to speak Tok Ples [the local language] was worst.' The people of Papua New Guinea were therefore made to feel that they and their language were inferior to the dominant language, English.

### ACTIVITY 3

- 1 Read the following views and criticisms about the ways in which English has spread around the globe at the expense of native languages, and people's resistance to this spread.
- 2 Work with a partner to draw together (to synthesise) the views. What seem to be the main reasons for resistance to the spread of English?
- 3 Write a useful summary of the attitudes about resistance to English which you could give to a younger student as 'taster' material for their A Level year. Some key points are given here.
- 4 Search online for videos by Robert Phillipson, who lectures about the harmful effects on global English on a country's education and prosperity. Other linguists see that English will continue to spread as it is deemed essential for access to opportunities.

US and UK policies to promote English teaching throughout the world are undermining multilingualism and limiting educational opportunities.

**From 'Linguistic imperialism alive and kicking', by Robert Phillipson, *The Guardian*.**

In Pakistan education officials have insisted that education should be in English as it is promoted as an 'open door' that will make everyone prosperous.

**From 'Pakistan ruined by language myth', by Zubeida Mustafa, *The Guardian*.**

After independence in Namibia, English was chosen as the official language and as the medium of education, compulsory after Grade 4. Reports suggest that allowing instruction in Namibian would benefit students who want to succeed. However, the medium of instruction in English hinders their ability to understand the subjects they are studying.

**From 'Namibia: The impact of language policy and practice on children's learning', UNICEF.**

## A plan for TESOL teaching

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, or TESOL, has been an important medium of transmitting English. On a broad level, the criticisms of language imperialism can apply here if there is not a sensitivity towards the native language of the learners and if there appears to be a pressure in education that English learning is the only way to guarantee personal success.

The selection of programmes for learners is also important. Programmes should aim for authenticity of language style; learners should expect to hear more examples of regional varieties of English than of British Standard English and Received Pronunciation.

Programmes should take account of national concerns. Standard **Anglocentric** textbooks, which relate learning English to a British context only, should be replaced by those that are more culturally sensitive. For example, in Malaysia, English books for primary schools are checked to make sure that they take account of the local culture, while, in Pakistan, the English-teaching textbooks contain chapters on 'Pakistan, my country'. So, teaching English to second language learners is not equated to the teaching of Western or other globalised values. A report on the state of English Language teaching in the Arab world, particularly in Jordan, stated that the 'inadequacy of English Language skills is one of the problems of English Language education in Jordan'.

Summarising a situation which exists in many countries, a 2016 UNESCO report, suggested, amongst other things, that 'education policies should recognise the importance of mother-tongue learning.'

### ••• THINK LIKE ... A TESOL TEACHER

Imagine you are teaching English to speakers of other languages, preparing resources for a lesson on the present tense to a group of eleven-year-olds in your country.

Write out one to two pages of your resources, making sure that they are sensitive to the culture and language of your region.

If you live in an English-speaking country, adapt the resources as a grammar revision lesson on rules for the present tense.

## Is English under threat?

It is difficult to believe that English itself may be under threat, but you have learnt that different forms of English are evolving all the time. In the USA, for example, large numbers of Hispanic immigrants continue to speak their native Spanish. This has led to a movement seeking to ensure that all Americans speak American English, which is seen to be unifying for the nation.

1000 years ago, Latin was the unifying language which fragmented into a variety of languages, such as French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian. The future status of English as a world language is unknown, but you have learnt that language use is associated with power and the view that it is beneficial to speak it. The British Empire, The Industrial Revolution, American dominance in commerce, trade and media have all driven English. The changing economic status of non-native English-speaking countries may cause a change to the status of English in the world in the years to come.

English, as it is currently spoken and written, must continue to change, but the nature of these changes has caused some alarm about the status of the language.

### ACTIVITY 4

Discuss with a partner the idea that English itself is under threat as a global language. Create a mind map listing points to support and refute the idea. Use the following as starting points, then research online videos and websites, as well as print resources, to find additional points of view.

- The internationalisation of digital forms which may produce a language form that is international rather than English-based. For example, if the focus for technological and economic growth passes from the US-Western Europe axis to Asia, especially China and the Pacific.
- The fragmentation of the different varieties of English and the extent to which they may become unintelligible to each other.
- Resistance to the perceived linguistic imperialism accompanying English and the globalised corporate values communicated through the language.

## Question practice

Use the points you have discussed to write approximately 400–500 words of an editorial/leader article for a newspaper or news website in which you raise the issue that the status of English in the world could change. Write an eye-catching headline!

(25 marks)

### STUDENT RESPONSE

#### LET'S NOT SPEAK ENGLISH ANY MORE!

A thousand years ago, Latin was the universal language spoken by people throughout the extensive Roman Empire: it was the world language. Today, very few people study it and the language has split into many distinct languages, such as French, Spanish and Italian. Observations about the spread and changes in English show that the language might be going in the same direction.

Why do we all speak a variety of English? The original spread of the language came from the military might of the British Empire, closely followed by industrialisation where new processes and inventions became part of English. American power took over from British influence during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the wealth, commerce, banking, media and leisure industries were conducted in English. Later, globalisation (through multinationals and then the internet) meant new forms of communication were generated in English.

So all of these processes encouraged the spread of learning English as a second language. People learn a second or further language if they see benefits in learning it. For the reasons given here, learning English as a second or further language is beneficial. The rapid spread of global corporations and institutions has been based on the Anglo-American world, but the balance of power is changing towards non-native English speakers, who may resist using English. Far more people now speak English as a second language than there are native speakers, and so the ownership standards of the language may be in their hands.

Resistance to the use of English may increase, especially where its spread is linked to support of western corporate values.

Finally, with the rise of so many varieties of English, such as Chinglish, Japlish, Singlish, the prospect of the repetition of Latin fragmentation may occur with English. Will we all be speaking English by the end of the century? What is certain is that the minority languages will continue to die out, leaving the major languages to compete with each other for influence.

**[1]** Historical context – gives immediate evidence of past parallel example where a world language has changed status, then links to English

**[2]** Relevant details about the reasons for the spread of English in the world – this links later with the changes which may bring about the decline of world English

**[3]** A topic sentence to sum up the reasons for the spread of English (and examples follow)

**[4]** Offers a perspective about cultural rather than just economic reasons about possible resistance to English speaking

**[5]** A general but safe prediction to conclude

**Reflection:** Compare your writing with the student response using the following criteria.

- 1** Was there relevant information about reasons for the initial spread and world usage of English?
- 2** Were reasons given for assertion about the change in the status of English?
- 3** Were the general points accompanied by specific examples?
- 4** Was the response fluent and in the appropriate style?

With reference to the criteria given, identify any weak points in your answer. Then rewrite it, to make your response stronger.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can explain the concept of language imperialism and why this can be applied to English		
I understand the processes which bring about language death		
I know the implications of language decline and death on a community		
I can use relevant and detailed case study material to support my points		

# **Unit 9.6**

## **Practice and self-assessment**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of texts (AO1)
- learn how to approach writing a good response to a Cambridge International A Level question on the topic of English in the world (AO2)
- demonstrate understanding of linguistic issues, concepts, methods and approaches (AO4).

### **Before you start**

- 1 Check that you understand the various issues in relation to the role and status of English in the world.
- 2 Ensure that you have up-to-date information and case studies to support the points you are making.

## Evaluation and discussion of English in the world

This section has explored the variety of historical and current socioeconomic factors which have established English as a world language, as well as the impact when a more dominant language or form of the language overwhelms a less influential one.

Many of the issues about English in the world are presented as ideas or discussion points which you must evaluate with well-supported case study material from your own studies.

### Guidelines for the essay

Questions relating to the topic of English in the world often ask you to analyse extracts from blogs, debates or other presentations of a point of view. Answers will be in an essay format, and should pay attention to good English and a clear structure to present the points made.

### Practice question 1

#### Step 1

Work with a partner to answer the exam-style question. The question gives a piece of writing as stimulus material.

The following extract is from an article about the globalisation of English from *Forward Thinking*, a publication of research, news and views from Philosophy, Psychology and Language scientists by The University of Edinburgh.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the article relating to the status of English in the world. You should refer to specific details from the text as well as ideas and examples from your wider study.

(25 marks)

For the past 40 years or so, scholars of language contact have been studying the emergence of 'World Englishes', both in terms of their linguistic make-up and their gradual acceptance by authorities. For example, in India, few English-medium educated speakers distinguish between 'w' and 'v' sounds, and the definite article is regularly deleted in English newspapers. These variants have become part of the accepted standard of English in that region.

Yet now it seems that younger generations may be shifting in the opposite direction and their use of English becoming less local, in response to intensified globalisation and access to English media. This is illustrated in a number of recent research papers, which claim that the youth in Singapore, India and Hong Kong can be heard producing American English features such as 'r', in words like 'car', after a vowel, like that of 'hat' in 'half', and a 'd' in the middle of 'butter'. These features are never heard in older generations of English speakers from those regions.

Increases in these sorts of American variants have already been observed in other well-established international varieties, such as New Zealand English, where the words 'trunk' and 'pants' are being adopted alongside their British counterparts 'boot' and 'trousers', but it is clear that New Zealand English speakers do not treat the American variants as external 'targets' and do not desire to sound American. Rather, the set of forms that they can choose from has increased in number. Similarly, the most recent research on the use of 'r' after a vowel in Singapore has found that this pronunciation does not correlate with the consumption of US media. 'R'-users are not expressing American affiliation. They view themselves as cosmopolitans who adopt the feature as part of a careful, serious style.

**From 'World English and globalisation', by Claire Cowie,  
[www.forwardthinking.ppls.ed.ac.uk](http://www.forwardthinking.ppls.ed.ac.uk)**

## Step 2

Read the following response written by a student and the annotations relating to the quality of the answer.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The world currently has about 6 000 languages. Throughout history, some languages have spread throughout parts of the world away from their original base, as people thought that they had an advantage by speaking a particular language. Latin, at the time of the Roman Empire, was such a language.

English has spread widely in the world from its original location in Britain to countries of the world colonised by British-speaking people, and into large areas where non-native speakers perceive there to be economic and social advantages to speak the language. Linguist David Crystal says that ‘language is power’ and so where it is an advantage to use that language, it will become dominant over local languages. In the 21st century, English is spoken by far more people as a second language than by those who speak it as a mother tongue.

The article concerns the changes which are occurring to the original form of English as the language adapts and changes to the local conditions of its users.

The article references different areas of the world where English is the dominant language. As a background to the geographical spread of English, the linguist Braj Kachru devised the circles model to explain the traditional outwards movement of the influence of English – outwards from areas such as Australia and the United States, where English is largely the mother tongue, through to countries such as India and Singapore, where the language has an official and unifying role, and then, a wider circle still, to countries where it is a foreign language, albeit one learned by a large number of people. In this model, English travels outwards from the central core of native speakers. These speakers are assumed to set the norm for the standards for speaking and writing. However, the article notes that the movement of standard setting is not all one-way, and that cross-global influences are occurring.

However, the key word is ‘globalisation’ where the article suggests that it is not enough to speak the local variety of English. India is one example quoted: younger people wish to be more fully part of what they perceive to be the powerful, prestigious variety. Today, American English holds that position, and so Indian English speakers, for example, are adjusting their pronunciation accordingly. The pronunciation of the ‘r’ after a vowel, as in ‘car’, is characteristic of American English and is now witnessed in English learners worldwide. This form of pronunciation has been heard in Singapore, India and Hong Kong. It seems that speakers strive for what is prestigious. The adoption of the sounds of Received Pronunciation (RP) and BBC English, which used to be aspired to by many as representing a high social status earlier in the 20th century, is now being repeated with the sounds of Standard American English.

A greater flexibility and expansion in the core lexis is discussed in the article. English has borrowed extensively throughout the ages, giving words of different origins, which are largely synonyms and which are equally used. For example, the Saxon ‘cow’ is similar to the French ‘boeuf/beef’. Additionally, Latin gives a triplicate of words: ‘ask’ (Old English), ‘question’ (French) and ‘interrogate’ (Latin). This gives English a large core lexis. The trends being observed in the article relate to the choices that English speakers make: British English and American English flexibility can provide ‘boot’/‘trunk’ and ‘trousers/pants’ for

speakers in other areas – in this case, New Zealanders who are observed to use the words as their need arises. This brings us back to Crystal's observation that people use language for their own ends, which largely concern ease of communication and power.

**[1]** The student has introduced information relating to the dominance and global spread of English and they touch on Kachru's circles model of the spread of different Englishes. Wider details of linguistic issues have also been given.

**[2]** The student is summarising the ideas of the article, but is adding additional relevant information. A thorough understanding is evident.

**[3]** The student comments on the direction of the spread of different English forms of pronunciation, which is stated in the article, but they do introduce and sustain the viewpoint of prestige and power for the speakers through the use of Standard American English.

**[4]** General points are supported by specific examples from the text.

**[5]** There is some detail relating to historical development of synonyms available in English.

**[6]** The answer references all parts of the text as it moves to the choices of lexis available in the different varieties of English. The student shows their wider reading by quoting the linguist David Crystal to validate their own ideas.

### Step 3

Compare the student's response with your own and consider the following points about your own work.

- 1 To what extent and in what ways did the student show their knowledge about the varieties of English in the world?
- 2 How far did the student show their knowledge of the subject by commenting on the material given in the blog?
- 3 How far and in what ways did the student synthesise the ideas given in the text, with their wider knowledge of English in the world?
- 4 To what extent did the student write in a structured way with a clear focus on the question?
- 5 To what extent did the student show their own voice in the essay?

### Step 4

Read the teacher's comments on the student response in Step 2.

#### TEACHER COMMENT

The student discusses issues relating to the spread of language in general with a relevant summary relating to the benefits of speaking a language. A historical parallel with Latin shows understanding.

Relevant historical detail shows how English spread from an original core outwards and referencing Kachru's circles model supports this idea. The beginnings of detail criticising the model are here with the idea that the spread and influences on English is not one-way only from the core to the expanding circle. This could have been developed further and linked more closely to examples as the answer requires the student to use the extract.

Relevant historical detail is given with examples on the dominance of Britain and then the USA in wealth and power.

The answer does start to comment on the issues of resistance to the spread of English and does use the passage to show that power is developing in non-native English-speaking areas of the world, and this could bring about change, particularly relating to online use.

The essay was fluently written and the points raised were structured quite clearly. This student shows a clear understanding of linguistic issues and concepts in the given text. The student also shows effective reference to a wider study of linguistic issues and concepts.

## Practice question 2

### Step 1

Work with a partner to answer the exam-style question. The question gives a piece of writing as stimulus material.

The following extracts are adapted from an online debate, which deals with the dominance of English as a global language.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised here relating to the changing importance and use of English as a world language. You should refer to specific details from the extracts as well as to ideas and examples from your wider study.

(25 marks)

### Should English be the worldwide primary language?

#### YES

There is an advantage in having only one language in the world. A very large amount of money and considerable organisation is given to providing translation services. Since English is already spoken by 1.5 billion people and dominates the internet (45 per cent of all websites) and entertainment, it makes sense to push the trend further so that one day it will be the only language and everyone will understand what is said.

English is already in the process of becoming the universal and primary world language. Cultures are not dependent on language; people's language heritage is far less important than the continuity of the world and humankind. If we are to gain more understanding of one another, we need to move towards one another and a common language will help communication much more easily. If people in different countries do not speak the same language, they can more easily become involved in arguments and misunderstandings, so a universal language would improve this.

Organisations such as the United Nations would work far better if the heads of states and the country representatives all spoke a mutual language. When multinational companies do business, it would be far easier if their Chief Executives spoke directly to each other rather than use translators, who slow down proceedings and may also not give accurate information.

#### NO

All languages are equally important and people should be able to speak their own languages instead of having to learn one common language. If people wish to trade with or travel to another country, they should learn the new language.

Languages are tied to the way humans think and this diversity should continue.

English should not be the primary language of the world, because too many people would lose their cultural identity. Language is an

important part of a culture and that's why people in minority groups are trying to save their own language.

Standardising a language worldwide is an impossible task, especially as all languages are constantly changing. This is what happened to Latin, which was a worldwide language during the time of the Roman Empire, and it eventually split into quite distinctive languages, such as French and Italian.

The world should enjoy its diversity and language is part of that diversity.

## Step 2

Read the following student responses.

### STUDENT A RESPONSE

Of the approximately 6 000 languages spoken throughout the world today, only a few have large numbers of speakers: Mandarin, Spanish, Hindi, for example, and, of course, English, which has achieved the status of a global language by meeting some key indicators. English has a large number of first language speakers; the language is spread over a wide geographical area and English is the recognised language of trade, scientific research and international institutions, such as the UN.

Additionally, it is currently the most common language on the internet.

The extracts give opposing points related to the argument that English should be the worldwide primary language. The arguments in favour centre around the need for ease of communication, including trade, between countries and multinational companies without the apparent barriers of translators. There is an assumption that, by speaking one language, all differences and disagreements would vanish. The historical and cultural perspective is minimised. English, for example, became a global language, in part through the early military power of Britain, through the establishment of an empire in many different areas of the world. Kachru's circles model offers an explanation for the spread of English, when the language has spread out from locations where it is spoken as a mother tongue, to countries where, through a colonial legacy, for example, it co-exists as a second language, and, finally, the language has spread to countries where it is learned as a foreign language.

Currently, English is spoken by more people as a second language than it is as a first language. The importance of this is that English in the 21st century appears to be spreading alongside other languages and so it may be possible to co-exist with other languages.

The spread and dominance of English has been maintained largely through the current economic strength of the United States, which is predominantly, though by no means entirely, English-speaking. Other factors also contributed, showing a complex web of influences which enabled English to act as a 'steamroller' by reducing and/or wiping out native languages. This also happened in South America, where Spanish became the dominant language at the expense of local languages, so the process of language dominance leading to language death has not been confined to English alone.

Making English the primary world language would wipe out other languages and with this would go history and culture, which are an intrinsic part of a society's cultural life.

### STUDENT B RESPONSE

This extract gives the arguments for and against English being the worldwide primary language.

If English did become the dominant language worldwide, we might all understand each other better without the need for translation, which, the extract says, costs a lot of money. The article says that it is more important to live peacefully with countries speaking different languages – to prevent wars – than to keep a people's language, and, if everyone spoke the same language, this is more likely to happen. English is already used in a lot of international situations – the United Nations, for example – and it is the world language for air traffic controllers, so it is already used worldwide. The extract supports the use of English as a primary language so that countries can trade together more easily and that would benefit all countries. These are important points. For example, English spread throughout the world because, in the 18th century, Britain started to create an empire (as other countries, like Germany and France, also did) which saw British people settle in places like New Zealand and South Africa. These countries traded with Britain and speaking the same language helped.

The argument against making English the primary language is that language is an important part of people's lifestyle and culture (for example, writings and traditions). It is not good for all these to disappear as many of them have already done. Settlers in Australia wiped out many Aboriginal languages, as those speaking them also died out. In many countries today, people are trying to protect native languages and encourage people to speak them. In New Zealand, for example, Ma-ori is one of the official languages alongside English and New Zealand Sign Language. This shows that all languages are important. Where language speakers die out, this is known as 'language death', and many languages in the world have died out. This is not good for the people and their sense of identity.

### ACTIVITY 1

- 1 Use the following criteria to assess these two responses. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each response? Which is the stronger and would be awarded higher marks? Look for evidence in each response to support your point of view.

Competent response	Excellent response
Consistent focus, with relevant form and content – material stays relevant to the topic.	Appropriate approach to task, with a sustained evaluative overview throughout.
Clear sense of voice and structure – the different sides of the discussion are covered in some detail.	All material is relevant to the discussion with many relevant examples showing the student's understanding of the language issues.
Some attempt to write about the student's wider knowledge to supplement text comment. Some relevant awareness and understanding of linguistic concepts and issues is evident.	Clear integration of the text analysis with the student's wider knowledge. Thorough awareness and understanding of linguistic issues and concepts is evident.
Clear expression with some language variety.	Clear expression and organisation of material.
Mostly technically accurate: the odd error here and there.	Confident and varied language throughout.

- 2 Write your own answer to the question, using the criteria to write

an excellent response.

**Reflection:** Swap answers with a partner to assess each other's work against the criteria. Identify any weaker points. What could you do to improve these?

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I know and understand the significant indicators which show English to be an important language throughout the world		
I understand the historical, social and economic factors which have contributed towards the global position of English in the world		
I understand the relative importance of English as it is used in different areas of the world and the links that history and economics have played to bring about these differences		
I understand and can interpret Kachru's circles model to explain the different roles that English plays in different areas of the world		
I know and can comment on the different varieties of English in the world including the distinguishing features of British and American English		
I understand the processes which result in language dominance and language death		
I am able to synthesise my knowledge of English in the world to evaluate ideas and issues which relate to English in the world.		



## Section 10

### Language and the self

# Unit 10.1

## Language and self-identity

### Learning objectives

***In this unit, you will:***

- identify the ways in which language and personal identity interact (AO4)
- explore the influence of a person's self-identity on our use of written and spoken language (AO3)
- analyse unseen texts to demonstrate how language interacts with personal identity (AO1).

### Before you start

- 1 Who are you? Try to explain what your 'self' is.
- 2 Apart from your physical body, how do you distinguish yourself from other people? You may find it helpful to construct a mind map of your own distinctive features.



#### KEY CONCEPT

##### Creativity

The creativity of the English language in its spoken and written forms is a critical part of the development and maintenance of a person's sense of self-identity.

How does your use of language contribute towards your sense of self-identity?

## The development of a sense of self

We are not born with a sense of **self**, or with any set of the values and behaviours which we display throughout our lives. It is during our **early childhood development** of our physical, linguistic, social and cognitive development that we identify ourselves as distinct from others around us.

Over time, a child learns that he or she is distinct from others around them. If you have a chance to interact with a newborn baby, you will see that they are not aware of other people. They do not respond with a smile or greeting as you might do, because you are aware that other people are separate from you.

At around two months, a baby will become responsive to others and smile back at a person who has smiled, spoken or given them some sort of personal attention. Over time, this extends to imitating the behaviours they have observed. Their behaviour changes from passive to active. Reaching out to grasp an object also shows the baby's realisation that there is an 'out there' distinct from themselves.

The infant learns that other objects, including people, have specific characteristics (for example, a shiny, red ball). In time, they learn that they themselves have distinct properties (watch an infant playing with their toes or watching a person, pet or other object). With language development, the child becomes able to distinguish their gender, age and name. These definite, concrete categories are then extended to some skills, such as favourite toys, books and people, which involve thinking. Later still, the young child is able to describe themselves in terms of their character, likes and dislikes. Later still come their judgements about behaviour and moral issues of good and bad. Our **self-identity** changes throughout our lives as it is influenced by our experiences and interaction with those around us.

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget conducted his research about the stages of development of infants and children, through which he labelled the inability of preschool children to take the perspective of others as the egocentric phase. His work has since been modified from his early experiments and investigations. Nevertheless, his ideas remain significant for the study of the development of the concept of self in children and their use of language. You will find more on Piaget's research about cognitive development in [Section 8](#).

Cognitive development is about the development of information processing skills in the brain. These concern processing information, memory, perception and learning language. Cognitive and physical, or motor, developments are thought to be linked, and are dealt with in more detail in neuroscientific and psychology textbooks and websites.

Self-identity is a vital part of who we are and how we interact with others throughout our lives. We can have different elements which make up our sense of self. The sociologist Antony Giddens stresses its importance to everything we do and the people we meet each day. He says 'What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity (in the 21st century) – and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour'.

The development of the self starts from the earliest days of life and continues to adapt and change as we do. In this section you will explore the many ways in which our sense of self is influenced by the language we use and the people we engage with during our life.

### ACTIVITY 1

Using the following summary of the development of self-identity as a starting point, answer the following questions.

- 1 List the ways in which a young child becomes aware of their self-identity. Some guiding points to help you are:
  - verbal and non-verbal language used by carers of young children
  - important people, places and situations where the young child gains confidence and a sense of self
  - the cognitive (thought) stages of development which the growing child goes through in their development of self
- 2 Construct a mind map to show the ways you feel that your sense of self is influenced by individuals and groups in your society.



## The influence of language on self-identity

We now move from the general idea of the self to the importance of language in the development of 'self identity', which is the subject of this section. Firstly, the idea of 'self' covers a variety of identities which make us individual. We are born as male or female, we assume specific national identities (e.g. Indian or South African) and perhaps more specific tribal or regional identities, and we have identities as members of a religious and/or family group, a school and work group, as well as many more. Language plays a part in all of these identities.

What role does language play in our sense of self-identity? Here are some key points.

- Your voice is one instantly recognisable part of you. Your individual speech pattern is known as your **idiolect**.
- The form of language you speak, which is similar to that spoken in your geographical area or social group, is your **sociolect**.
- The influences of your gender, age, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, family and friends, education, work and social patterns are all linked in with the language you use to live your life and maintain your self-identity. You will see that some parts of your life are more significant to your sense of self at certain times. As an adolescent, you may be forming new identities and relationships where common speech patterns help reinforce solidarity. Language may be important to maintain group identity, such as where a minority language is threatened (e.g. Māori in New Zealand).

Most of our lives are spent in the company of other people. Four hundred years ago, the English poet, John Donne, wrote a work of prose called 'Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions.' One of the devotions contained the line 'No man is an island' and he emphasised the close links between ourselves and other people in society. Donne described how we are affected by the attitudes and behaviour of others. You might like to read the whole devotion to see how the poet develops his argument by using the geographical imagery of an island and a continent.

Discourse is an important part of our lives and therefore the language and strategies we adopt have a considerable influence on our sense of self. People adopt strategies to manage conversations in as harmonious a way as possible. Two important language features are conversational maxims and the conversational face.

## Conversational maxims

Whenever you speak, your intention is to make sense to your listeners according to the rules and conventions of the language. You may have many different purposes when speaking – you may wish to inform, question, greet, perform, gossip and many more – but all of these purposes have conventions which need to be followed. Underlying all of the purposes for speaking is the **cooperative principle** that people wish to express relevant information in a clear manner. Hearing may not quite be the same as listening. You have probably experienced a situation where what you said has not been received in quite the way that you intended.

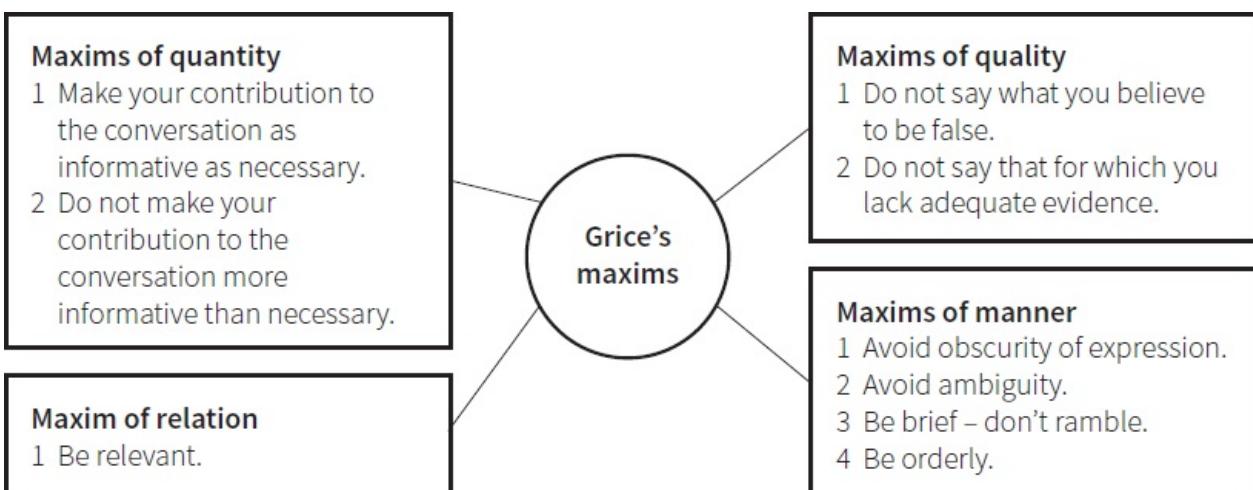


### KEY CONCEPT

#### Audience

Speakers learn to adopt and respond to conversational strategies to accommodate to their audience. What strategies do you use to make sure that you are understood when conversing with others?

The philosopher Paul Grice established in 1975 the guideline principles which are generally adopted in conversation. These are maxims and not rules, since they are broken in almost every conversation, but they do provide a general framework for managing conversation.



### ACTIVITY 2

In small groups, answer the following questions. Try to give specific examples to support your general points.

- 1 Discuss each of Grice's maxims and how it is used in conversation.
- 2 Are there other maxims you think should be included? Justify your opinion.
- 3 Listen to or access unscripted conversation on TV and/or online. For example, you could watch formal interviews where public figures are challenged, talk shows, comedy shows and documentaries as different types of discourse situations. Analyse closely where the maxims are followed and where they are not. What are the results when they are not followed?
- 4 In a group, select two to three different comedy clips. Verbal humour is often based on conversational dysfunction, where people intentionally or unintentionally misinterpret what another person has said. Analyse in what ways the conversation is not working well and why. To what extent does the confusion and breakdown result from ignoring Grice's maxims?

Be aware: You may find that some older comedy shows have content that would be considered inappropriate today.



Amy and Sheldon in conversation in *The Big Bang Theory*, an American sitcom.

## Conversational face

Central to the overarching principle of conversational cooperation is the notion of **conversational face** – each speaker's sense of his or her own linguistic image and worth. The theory of face was initiated by Erving Goffman in 1967 and developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in 1987. You can research the theory in more detail by searching texts online. Potentially every conversation could impose upon, and even threaten, this sense of face. The effect is to make speakers feel intimidated, ignored or ridiculed rather than supported and included.

Strategies to manage **face-threatening acts** help in all manner of conversational situations. Speakers may use **positive politeness** by being complimentary to the person they are speaking to before starting a potentially face-threatening act. Such strategies are used to make the listener feel good about themselves, their interests or possessions, and are frequently used in situations where the speakers know each other fairly well. For example. 'You look great/sad, can I help?' 'Would you be so kind as to pass me the sugar?'. Alternatively, **negative politeness** may be used to mitigate a request or situation by the speaker, which they wish to impose and which would potentially restrict the freedom of someone else in the conversation. For example, 'You wouldn't be able to pass me the sugar, would you?'. In both of these circumstances the speaker expects the listener will comply with their request.

Disagreements are an inevitable part of discourse and the management of differences of opinion is closely related to face-saving strategies. Observe how, when people disagree, the word 'no' is used less often than 'yes but'. Why might that approach be more successful? The **adversative conjunction** 'but' qualifies or changes what has just been said in some way, while 'however' and 'not exactly' operate in the same way.

An important feature in any conversation is the relative power and influence of the participants, and you will explore this idea of status further during your A Level English Language studies. For now, you should be aware that in all manner of formal and informal situations, conversational success is more likely to occur where strategies which take account of the relative status of each participant are employed.

### ACTIVITY 3

- 1 What strategies have been used in each of the following utterances? Suggest why each might be successful in achieving its purpose.

*Excuse me sir, would you mind moving up a little so that I can have a seat?*

*Could you please shut the window just a fraction? It seems quite chilly in here.*

*Please may I borrow your pen?*

*Can you tell me the time?*

*You haven't got \$2 I could borrow have you? I'll pay you back tomorrow.*

*Please be quiet - the baby has just gone to sleep.*

*Silence in the library.*

*The management requires all employees to wear hard hats.*

- 2 Discuss what positive and negative strategies to save conversational face are used in your own culture. Which do you feel are most effective and why?

### ACTIVITY 4

- 1 Work with a partner to make a presentation showing the ways in which your language is affected by the people around you. Give as many specific examples as possible. This will form a basis for the following units.
- 2 Stories and films often deal with people who are castaways or living in isolation.
  - a Discuss what qualities a person should possess to be a castaway and survive alone with an uncertain prospect of rescue.
  - b In what ways might their isolation affect their sense of self-

### ••• THINK LIKE ... AN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Educational psychologists specialise in treating childhood psychological conditions. They work in schools and other educational institutions and their work can involve dealing with children who suffer from low self-esteem and other problems of identity. Often, these children are reluctant to speak and can be withdrawn. An educational psychologist normally works with a child and their family.

Consider how you would apply your knowledge of the development of self-identity to help a primary school-aged child to use language more freely and become more confident about themselves. Create an interview schedule with about ten questions for the child. You might consider the following ideas to get started, and then you could continue with specific examples.

- find out the things they enjoy, their interests and hobbies
- find out what they are good at, inside and outside the classroom
- find out information about their family
- find out about their fears and worries
- set them goals.

## Question practice

Read the following question and transcript. The transcript has been taken from a recording of a father and his 18-month-old son in a playground.

The little boy is climbing up a spiral tower. The father is standing by his son throughout with his hands on, or close, to the boy's body to prevent a fall. At one point, the child has his back to his father as he changes direction during the climb.

Write a response to explain how the father is using spoken discourse and body language to develop his son's self-identity.

(25 marks)

**Father:** watch what you're doing (.) hand up here (.) now (.) your foot on that bar (.) great (.) that's good (.) great (.) now work your way round this way (.) I got hold of you (.) good (.) now grab the bar (.) good (.) now step on the next bar (.) great stuff (.) you're nearly there (.) good boy (1) hey you made it (.) yeah (.) excellent [clapping] good job Quinn (.) you did it (.) you've made the top step. [father raises hands in the air in triumph]

**Quinn:** step [running on platform at the top of the tower]

### ACTIVITY 5

- 1 Read the following student response to the exam-style question and then answer the following questions.
  - a Evaluate the sample response, using the following criteria:
    - Does the answer contain specific language features, with an example, and describe their impact on the little boy's self-identity?
    - Does the answer contain examples of non-verbal features and their impact?
    - Does the answer link the importance of language with self-identity?
  - b Compare the student's response with your own. Which do you think is more successful? What were the strengths and weaknesses of your work? Rewrite your answer, based on the criteria given above, and improve any weak points.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The father is standing close to his son, reinforcing the child's sense of security as he steps higher on to the tower. The father uses positive directives (e.g. 'hand up here') to guide his son continually for the next stage of his climb. The little boy is facing a challenge but the mix of these commands and praise (e.g. 'great stuff') ensures that he can be guided in this new experience and achieve his goal of climbing to the top of the playground tower.

The father adopts a running commentary. He pauses only for breath, so that there is no period of silence for the child where they might feel on their own; particularly when he cannot see his father, the voice maintains

the security of his knowledge that his father is still guiding him.

The father's congratulations (e.g. 'yeah', 'you did it'), shows that the adult sees this as a valuable and worthwhile achievement. The father continually personalises his son ('you') and, when the son has succeeded, he can feel confident in his success through his father's delighted response.

Quinn has limited verbal skills but he repeats an important part of the directions ('step'), as he has now the confidence to run along the tower.

This experience reinforces the child's belief that he is able to succeed. The father cares and shows involvement in the activity as he has his hands close to his son in case he slips. His encouraging language transmits helpful guidance to the little boy, enabling him to succeed. Quinn has had a positive experience for his sense of self which has involved much verbal encouragement.

Now try another exam-style question.

Read the two extracts that follow and, using information from the extracts as well as your wider knowledge, explain how language makes a positive contribution to the development of self-identity in young children.

(25 marks)

### Extract 1

By three years of age, children understand that they are in certain categories which distinguish them from others. They know their age, their gender and some physical things about themselves, such as their height relative to others (e.g. 'shorter than mummy'). From about the age of four, they can describe themselves as having simple emotions as well as likes and dislikes.

### Extract 2

If a parent fails to attach to a child, the child can experience intense anxiety and fear, for example, if a parent ignores an infant when they cry or, in more severe circumstances, ignores their emotional needs for soothing, nurturance and security. Studies show that carers who were more responsive to their children had more obedient children.

**Reflection:** This essay question asked you to draw together your knowledge of the ways in which self-identity develops in early childhood. You need to refer both to stimulus material and your wider knowledge and understanding of the topic. Work with a partner and compare your essay responses.

Think about:

- 1 the extent to which you supported and/or challenged the viewpoints expressed in the extracts
- 2 the way you structured your argument throughout the essay
- 3 the relevance and depth of the material you used to back up your arguments.

Find at least one part of the essay where you feel you wrote well and one part which you feel needed improvement. Work together to suggest possible ways you could achieve this.

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	<b>Confidence level</b>	<b>Revisited?</b>
I understand the meanings of 'self' and 'self-identity'		
I am able to reference Piaget's studies and information on cognitive development studies and theories about the development of self		
I understand the ways in which language contributes in the development of a sense of self		
I can identify the use of the conversational maxims in discourse		
I understand the concept of conversational face and the use of positive and negative politeness strategies		
I have worked independently to source further information about the development of the self in a young child		

## Unit 10.2

# Theories of language and self-identity

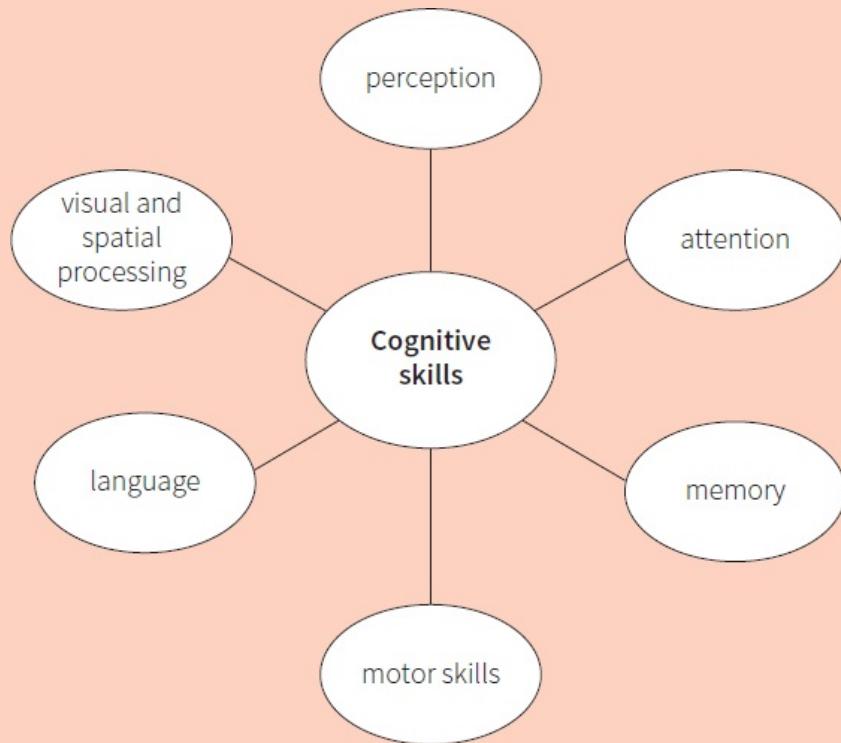
### Learning objectives

**In this unit, you will:**

- learn about and critically evaluate different theories of the acquisition of self-identity through cognitive development (AO4)
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of theories relating to the degree to which language is innate, learned or both (AO4)
- synthesise relevant material into a coherent and fluently written essay on this topic (AO2).

### Before you start

- 1 Look at the diagram showing a person's cognitive skills. Work with a partner to consider which of these skills would be needed to carry out the following tasks.
  - reading this page in your text book
  - making your journey to and from school/college
  - sending a text message
  - eating a meal with your family.



- 2 After you have listed the cognitive skills needed, add any necessary social skills and knowledge for each task. Consider the role of language in each task.



#### KEY TERMS

**Cognitive skills:** brain skills which are needed to perform any mental and physical task. They are concerned with mechanisms of carrying out these tasks, rather than with any knowledge. Cognitive abilities are: perception, attention, memory, motor skills, language and thought; visual and spatial processing.

**Perception:** recognition and interpretation through the senses.

**Attention:** being able to concentrate on a particular mental or

physical task and sustaining that concentration over other distractions in the environment.

**Memory:** the storage and retrieval of information in the brain. Memory is divided into *short-term memory* (the ability to actively retain a small amount of information) and *long Term memory* (where information is stored for an indefinite period of time and can be retrieved).

**Motor skills:** the ability to move the body and to manipulate objects

**Language:** the skill which changes sounds into words to be spoken

**Visual and spatial processing:** the ability to understand relationships between objects and to visualise images and ideas in the imagination

## Theories of language and self-identity

The tasks you have just completed required you to know about cognitive abilities, such as perception, which are generally studied by psychologists. You will find further information in textbooks, on websites and in online videos. There is currently much interest in people sharpening their cognitive abilities through brain-training exercises.

We all live in a world with many other people and social groups. They play an important role in communicating with us, defining our self-identity. This unit will focus on the key theories about language and its part in establishing and maintaining this identity.

There is considerable overlap here with the theories and ideas of child language acquisition outlined in [Unit 8.7](#). Child language acquisition theories concern the ways in which a young child learns the complex procedure of speech (of whatever language is learned). The theories of language and self-identity are about how the language that is learned and used becomes a meaningful part of a person's ideas about themselves and in relation to other people. In English, there are a lot of phrases which reflect people's ideas about themselves (e.g. 'self-image', 'self-esteem', 'self worth', 'self regard', 'self respect').

This unit will explain ideas about how the mechanics of learning language become bound up with a person's understanding about themselves as an individual.

The main theories about the cognitive abilities involved in creating language are summarised as follows.

- Historical background: Philosophers used to think that language acquisition was part of a person's general ability to reason. They had no awareness of cognitive abilities. Descartes, a French Philosopher (1596–1650), thought that 'it requires very little reason to be able to speak.'
- Using the brain to make meaning of the language learned: Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, linguists realised that learning a language was not just learning names of objects and ideas, but it involved knowledge of how to put meaning on the words and phrases learned. Language is immensely complicated and so linguists suggested that cognitive skills involving the brain develop alongside the lexis and grammar of a language learned.
- Behaviourism: Acquisition of the sense of self takes place alongside the acquisition of language. Further information can be found in [Section 8](#). Behaviourism theories began in 1914 and stated that the development of the mind, and also language, sprang directly from the child's observation and imitation of those in the world around them. According to behaviourists, all thoughts and emotions are explained in terms of encouraging desired behaviour (e.g. speaking and discouraging unwanted traits). John Watson's research, in 1913, was developed by B.F. Skinner whose book *Behaviour of Organisms* was published in 1938 and explored the ideas described here.
- Empiricism: A theory which also states that our sense of self-identity and our knowledge of language come through our senses and experiences, and not through any reasoning or logical argument. The theory was advanced by John Locke who published a book in 1690 which argued that the mind at birth was a 'clean slate' on which all experiences developed. He denied that humans had any innate ideas and he believed that ideas of the self, and also of language, came through experience. This understanding of gaining knowledge through experience became the basis of the scientific approach.
- Innatism: This theory puts forward the idea that there is something special about the human brain which enables it to master the complexities of language. That the mind is born with ideas goes against the 'blank slate' or *tabula rasa* theory. Traditionally, innatism refers to the philosophy of Plato (a Greek philosopher living from 427–347 BCE) and Descartes (a French mathematician and philosopher, 1596–1650 AD) who believed that ideas were in the mind at birth and given by a supreme being.
- Nativism: A theory, based in innatism, with the view that the individual is born with genetic abilities which include the development of language. Noam Chomsky has been the leading proponent of the view that the Language Acquisition Device (see [Unit 8.7](#)) enables the initial development of language which then interacts with an individual's childhood experiences within a society to produce both language and a sense of self.

### ACTIVITY 1

This introduction has outlined the names and brief ideas about theories of language and the development of self-identity, but you need more information. As far as it is possible to do so, arrange yourselves into groups of three for each group to:

- 1 research one of the following theories: empiricism; behaviourism; innatism/nativism; finding out about more about the key ideas of each theory.
- 2 research at least one or two points to support each theory and one or two points against.

- 3** give a short presentation on the key points for your chosen theory, giving at least one point to support it and one against.

### ••• THINK LIKE ... A SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Your task is to boost the self-esteem of your new class of 11-year-olds as they settle into a large school.

Read them the extract on the next page from the children's book 'Alice in Wonderland', published in 1865 by Lewis Carroll, a British author, and ask them to answer the caterpillar's questions by describing who they are in as many different ways as they can think of and the social groups they feel they belong to.

A spider diagram would be a good way of representing the different ways they see themselves as individual.

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the **hookah** out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

'Who are *you*?' said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I – I hardly know, sir, just at present – at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'

'What do you mean by *that*?' said the Caterpillar sternly. 'Explain yourself!'

'I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, sir' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'

'I don't see,' said the Caterpillar.

**From Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll.**

**hookah:** a type of long pipe

## Question practice

Answer the following question, then compare your answer with the student response.

Using your knowledge of the way that language contributes to a sense of self-identity, discuss contrasting theories about how this occurs. The following short discussion points may be helpful as starting points.

- a An online video on 'How to teach a toddler to talk' summarises the following conditions as the best to encourage toddlers to speak:  
*a speech intensive environment; simple word combinations; meaningful conversation.*
- b An online child development video states that 'Interaction with caregivers is the most significant influence on a child's developing language and self-identity'.

**(25 marks)**

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Child development specialists appear to be united on the importance of sustained interaction, between the young child and the carers, for language development and a positive sense of self-identity to take place. Initially, the infant's world centres around family and friends who provide the meaningful conversation at a level the child can understand. Actively talking, reading to the child as well as giving the child an opportunity to be part of general conversation, enables the cognitive processes of language development to take place. The importance of these factors is highlighted in the extracts.

It is in the processing of the complexities of language that contrasting theories emerge. The earliest comments about the skills involved can be summed up by Descartes who thought that 'it requires very little reason to be able to speak'. The investigations of Psychology placed the processes of acquiring language firmly in the environment with the behaviourist theory which attributes all thought and the idea of 'mind' to how a person behaves. Behaviourism was first brought to prominence by John Watson in 1914 and developed by Skinner. A child's behaviour, including a sense of self-identity, is a product of desired behaviour being reinforced. A child copies an utterance in the language heard around them. They are given smiles and praise which leads to the repetition of this behaviour and broadening of lexis. Conversely, unwanted behaviour, such as language sounds which are not understood as part of the mother tongue, is extinguished. All behaviour is learned through interaction with the environment.

Behaviourists reinforced the empiricist, or 'blank slate' theory, developed by John Locke in the 17th century, in which the language skills of the infant were formed purely through environmental influences. Although environmental theories do accept the existence of emotions these are not studied and measured.

Supporting the environmental approach is its ability to be scientifically measured and therefore produce evidence that infants learn the language(s) of those they hear around them. However, the fact that each person speaks in an infinite number of ways never before heard does cast doubt on that approach as a complete explanation.

The innate theory of language and self identity was largely developed in the 1960s by Chomsky with the belief that children are born with an

inherited ability – a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) – to learn any human language. This allows an infant to apply the innate structures to their own language and, in applying these structures, to make virtuous errors as they try to apply the rules to irregular constructions. In the case of English, for example, they may say ‘I rided my bike’. It is through this LAD that children are generally able to become fluent language-speakers by the age of seven or eight years. Critics say that no neural evidence for the LAD has ever been discovered and that learning could generally be to do with interaction with other people in the way suggested by the extracts.

The link between language development and self esteem has been made in research studies. In their 1999 article ‘The behaviour and self-esteem of children with specific speech and language difficulties’, authors G. Lindsay and J. Dockrell looked at children with specific speech and language difficulties and found some association with low self-esteem in interacting with social groups. Other research studies, such as that performed by Henri Tajfel in 1979, developed the social identity theory whereby a person’s sense of who they are is based on their group membership.

While the two quotations are united in the importance of language development, there continues to be debate as to the relative importance of innate ability to learn language or the influence of the environment in achieving language.

## ACTIVITY 2

Evaluate the student’s response using the following criteria.

- 1** Was reference made to the two quotes given in the question?
- 2** Were the different theories explained along with their strengths and weaknesses?
- 3** Were research studies used to support these?
- 4** How well was the essay structured? Consider the following:
  - a** Was there a concise introduction explaining the focus of the question?
  - b** Did each of the paragraphs have a topic sentence which set out the content to be discussed? Were each of the points made supported by relevant examples or ideas?
  - c** Was there a concise conclusion which finished the essay with an idea or point of argument for reflection?
  - d** Was there a clear link made between language and the sense of self?

What were the strong and weak areas of this student’s response?  
Rewrite it, using the criteria given, to improve the response and help the student achieve a higher mark.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can explain the key theories emphasising the role of the environment in the development of language and self		
I can explain the key theories emphasising innate abilities in the learning of language		

I can use evidence for and against each of the key theories of language and self-identity		
I have written an essay explaining the relative importance of innate and environmental factors in creating self-identity		

# **Unit 10.3**

## **Language and thought**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- understand linguistic issues, concepts, methods and approaches relating to language and thought (AO4)
- read and show understanding of a wide variety of texts which discuss the relationship between language and thought (AO1).

### **Before you start**

- 1 Discuss your response to the following questions, which are concerned with the relationship between language and thought.
  - a How do we think?
  - b Do we think in sentences?
  - c Do we need a language to think?
- 2 Observe a baby, or watch a video online, and consider whether babies have thoughts before they can speak. Briefly present your thoughts to a small group or the class so that ideas can be compared.

## Language and thought in developing self-identity

Much of our everyday lives involve using language. We are most aware of language when we are speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, our cognitive skills process and store information that helps us to create and maintain our sense of who we are. These stored ideas and memories are part of our thoughts and we use this selected information to interpret the language, actions and attitudes of other people. This behaviour between ourselves and others helps to build the blocks of our own sense of self. It also builds our relationships with other individuals and groups in the local, national and global world we live in.

It is not just the actions but the many different and changing strands of our culture, our value systems and our interaction, which make language and thought such an important part of our sense of self.

Theories about language and thought take different perspectives:

- rational thinking would seem to involve an element of language by which to organise the information we are presented with in our daily lives
- some linguists believe that language and thought are two separate and independent entities, with thought coming first, then language as the vehicle for expressing it
- both language and thought are essential to interact with the very many individuals and groups we come into contact with.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Creativity

We use language in a very creative way as each utterance (spoken) and text (written) is usually unique. This has an important relationship to and influence on the way we think. Create a mind map which shows your own thinking about how you think. Where relevant, insert the influence of language.

Compare your mind map with those of others to show different views on the processes of thought.

The relationship between language and thought has direct implications for individuals in the way that they relate to social groups around them. There are, unfortunately, many examples where discrimination voiced against a nation, an ethnic group or any other distinctive social group leads to their being labelled and, ultimately, unfairly treated.

### ACTIVITY 1

Work in small groups to discuss the ways that the language used might influence a person's thinking in the following situations.

- 1 An advert for a new toothpaste claims that it has been 'scientifically tested to remove 93% of all bacteria on teeth'.
- 2 A news website headline describes the arrival of summer tourists on a remote Pacific island as 'an invasion'.
- 3 A list of recommended foods describes quinoa as a 'super food'.
- 4 A website for parents of young children states that the 'first word often appears around 12 months'. Your infant cousin is nearly 16 months old and has not said a word.
- 5 To help manage the cost of your lawyer's fees, the lawyer says she will do some of your work 'pro bono'. You do not understand Latin. How does the lawyer's use of legal jargon affect your response to her?

## Theories of language and thought

Every person uses language in a new way each time they speak, yet most linguists agree that the culture of a society, including its lifestyle, traditions and innovations, shape the way we think and so, to some extent, these influences shape the way we talk. It is the strength of these influences which produces the different theories relating to the link between language and thought.

### The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

In 1929, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf developed their own hypothesis about language and thought, which became more widely discussed in the 1950s. The hypothesis supported the view that the words and grammar of a language directly shape the thoughts of its speakers. Sapir and Whorf supported the idea of language shaping the ways in which a person forms a view of the world. A well-known example is that English has one word for 'snow', whereas the Inuit tribes of the Arctic have three words for its different properties. It would follow from this that the Inuit people can think in a more subtle way about snow because their language contains more distinguishing forms of that particular weather condition, and this was one of the examples adopted by the hypothesis.

Overall, the ideas relating to the link between language and thought are as follows:

- Language determines the way we think. A society is confined by its language. The words we use directly frame our thoughts. This is known as **linguistic determinism**.
- The opposite of linguistic determinism is the idea that the language which is used only reflects the thoughts of its speakers, so language influences people's views of their world but does not determine it. This is known as **linguistic reflectionism**.
- A general overall idea is **linguistic relativity**, which states that the structure of a language does affect the speaker's world. This idea was arrived at through a study of the lexis and syntax available in different languages.

### Criticisms of the Sapir-Whorf language and thought hypothesis

There are many criticisms of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that arise from the way in which the data was collected and conclusions reached:

- Whorf gave examples of language differences relating to concepts of time, space and lifestyle. For example, he compared the English language with the languages of American Indians. For instance, he believed that the Hopi Indians did not think, through their different uses of tenses, of time in terms of past, present and future, but his reasoning was later shown to be flawed as the Hopi Indians did have a concept of time, based on future and non-future tenses.
- The Boas-Jakobson principle, developed in the late 1950s, is arguably a possible replacement for the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Sapir and Whorf thought that language acted like a prison, restricting the speakers' abilities to reason and understand. The Boas-Jakobson principle states that, in theory, every thought can be expressed in every language but that languages differ in the types of information they require speakers to mention when they use the language. For example, English is not as specific about stating the gender of things as French is, but some languages, such as Hungarian, Finnish and Vietnamese, do not mark masculine and feminine genders at all – there is no 'he' or 'she' for example. These and other language ideas are explained by Guy Deutcher in the book *Through the Looking Glass: Why the world looks different in other languages* (2011).

The sinister point of view that totalitarian systems might use language to restrict thought was demonstrated by the author George Orwell in his novel *1984*, written in 1948. The fictional society described in the novel is very tightly controlled and is reinforced by the official language of 'Newspeak'. The lexis of this language is limited. In the novel, no one can rebel against the rulers as there are no words to express dissatisfaction. 'Bad', for example, has been removed and replaced with 'ungood'. This is a clear case, albeit a fictional one, of language controlling the thoughts of the speakers.

#### ACTIVITY 2

- 1 In pairs write:
  - a definition of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
  - a brief explanation of how the Boas-Jakobson principle is different.
- 2 Compare your definitions with those of others in the class to achieve a clear understanding of these ideas about language and thought.

The theory of universalism, ideas of which were circulated in the 1960s, suggests that language is a reflection of human thoughts and that all languages are similar with shared patterns and concepts. The anthropologist Rik Pinxten has developed this idea more recently and published it in 2011. These beliefs come from the idea that all humans share the same cognitive processes, such as memory and perception, which are reflected in every language so that ideas can be translated easily between different languages. Good evidence in support of this is that all languages have nouns and verbs and, if they are spoken, have vowels and consonants. Various research studies supporting the similarity of language thought processes have centred on different societies' perception of colour and the extent to which they are similar.

### ACTIVITY 3

Work in a small group to decide whether the following statements support language determinism or universalism.

- 1 All languages have verbs.
- 2 Arabic has at least 11 words for love and each of them conveys a different stage in the process of falling in love.
- 3 The philosopher Wittgenstein said in 1922 that 'the limits of my language mean the limit of my world'.
- 4 All spoken languages have consonants and vowels.
- 5 Observation of infants shows that they have thoughts long before they develop speech.

## Language and social equality

The ideas about the influence of language on people's thoughts are relevant to behaviour. If people believe members of other social groups to be inferior, they may use inappropriate or negative language to express these thoughts.

Here are some recent examples of language changes which have reinforced greater social equality for various groups.



- **Gender:** Traditional words for employment imply that only men can do certain jobs (e.g. 'policeman', 'fireman'). These words have been neutralised to make them applicable to all (e.g. 'police officer', 'firefighter').
- **Comedy:** Certain types of comedy are now not acceptable, such as personal or derogatory comments at the expense of people's physical appearance (e.g. their size and shape).
- **Ethnicity:** Politically correct language combats many unpleasant racist slurs and insults. In many countries it is illegal to use racist language, gestures and acts.
- **Workplace changes:** The increasing number of women in senior roles in workplaces throughout the world breaks down the assumption that the boss will always be a 'he' and that the secretary or personal assistant will be a 'she'.

- **Age:** In the European Union and other places, it is illegal to discriminate in terms of age and this is usually taken to mean older people. There is anecdotal evidence that older women in particular are subject to ageist discrimination. Changing attitudes about ageing have made people aware of words that reinforce **stereotypes** (e.g. ‘decrepit,’ ‘senile’) and the need to avoid mentioning age unless it is actually relevant. Terms like ‘elderly’, ‘aged’, ‘old’ and ‘geriatric’ are increasingly replaced by ‘older person’, ‘senior citizens’ or ‘seniors’.
- **Disability:** Laws against disability discrimination aim to remove the belief that people are defined by their disability. For instance, the term ‘handicapped’ has generally been replaced by the term ‘disabled’. A United States government paper states that the term ‘disabled’ is less desirable than ‘people with disabilities’ because the former implies that a person’s disability is the whole person rather than just one of many personal characteristics. In Australia, the government-led National Disability Strategy has, as one of its core principles, the inclusion and participation in everyday life of people living with a disability.
- **Religious beliefs:** These can be respected in language usage. In a multi-faith society, for example, the term ‘Christian name’ does not apply to all religions and so would be replaced by ‘first name’ or ‘personal name’.

**Political correctness** (PC) has worthy intentions of treating all people equally. However, some PC language has been ridiculed for being over-sensitive. The term itself has acquired negative connotations. Extreme examples appear to attempt to allow for all group sensitivities. For instance, it has been suggested that the UK city of Manchester should change its name to ‘Personchester’, while a person without hair should be referred to as ‘follicly challenged’ instead of ‘bald’.

There are concerns that policing and controlling language denies freedom of speech, and that certain powerful groups are adopting dictatorial methods. However, if people are brought up to treat others respectfully, then, hopefully, this will bring about a more tolerant society.



#### THINK LIKE ... A WRITER OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL READING SCHEME

You are writing a series of books for young readers and you are aware of their developing lexis. You feel strongly that their books should contain politically correct language.

Write about 250 words of a new story (or you might like to adapt a traditional fairy tale or child’s story popular in your country) in which you should use language which breaks traditional gender, ethnic and disability stereotypes.

#### ACTIVITY 4

- 1 Give a politically correct alternative for each of the following and explain why the original word may be considered unacceptable.
  - lady doctor
  - air hostess
  - one-man show
  - a short fat man
  - man-made.
- 2 *‘The struggle to be ‘politically correct’ has made people impatient and oversensitive to what they and others say. It has created a society that walks on eggshells and that has problems talking to each other for fear of causing offence.’*

Work with a partner to create a chart containing evidence to support and to oppose this statement. Evaluate which viewpoint seems to have the stronger arguments.
- 3 Use the points you have discussed to write a short discursive essay on the protection which politically correct language offers individuals and groups, balanced against the dangers of some repression of language.

## Question practice

Read the following two student responses, which contain extracts from answers to this question on language and thought.

Linguists debate about the influence of thought on the way a person uses language. Clearly explain the different viewpoints.

(15 marks)

### STUDENT A RESPONSE

There are many different theories about language and thought. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that a person's thoughts, and so their actions, are directly influenced by their language as they can only think about the ideas which they can express in their language. This can have an influence on peoples' attitudes to other individuals and other groups. For example, if the language description for certain jobs (e.g. 'fireman', 'chairman') refers only to 'man' in the name of the job, then there could be the idea that only men are suitable for these jobs. The Sapir-Whorf theory was mainly based on studies of American Indian languages, the Hopi language in particular. It was claimed that these people had no language to indicate time, but later studies found that the research was flawed.

A theory against this is the universalism theory which suggests there is a common way of thinking for all languages and that ideas can be translated freely between different languages.

There is a midway point between these two extremes which says that people's thoughts can be influenced but not controlled by language.

So, overall the debate relates to whether thought controls language or language controls thought.

### STUDENT B RESPONSE

When people use sexist, racist and politically incorrect language, there are different schools of thought concerning the extent to which these undesirable language features control the thoughts of their speakers.

The most extreme theory, which claims that language directly determines the thoughts of the speakers, since they can have no concept of something which they cannot name, is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which was developed over a period of time in the early 20th century. This was based on studies of the language concepts of American Indian languages, particularly the Hopi language, which Sapir and Whorf claimed to contain no adverbs of time, such as 'before' and 'after'. Since there appeared to be a lack of this class of words, no thinking was possible about the concepts that they represent. This was later proved to be incorrect.

A more moderate version is the relativist position of language and thought which is that people rely on language to form ideas. Language is an influence but not a controller of thoughts.

At the other extreme, the universalism theory states that all languages share a common way of thinking as they share the same building blocks, such as nouns and verbs, and, also, that all languages express essential

ideas. Translations of ideas and information take place on a daily basis. Additionally, language reflects what people think, so that, for example, there are racist terms because people think that way. This could also apply to language and other forms of social equality, such as gender.

### ACTIVITY 5

Assess the two student responses to decide which is good and which is weaker. Use the following criteria to help you. A good response should include the following:

- concise information about the nature of the debate of the influence of language on thought
- an outline of the theories explaining the different levels of control of language over thought
- examples to support the theories
- well-structured points.

Now write your own response to the question.

**Reflection:** Assess your response against the criteria for a good response. Have you met all the criteria?

### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can explain the key theories related to language and thought		
I am able to provide information about the key theorists and give examples of their research		
I understand the debates surrounding theories of language and thought		
I have synthesised this information in practice questions		

# **Unit 10.4**

## **Language and social identity**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- explore the ways in which language influences personal identity (AO4)
- analyse unseen texts which discuss the influence of language on a sense of personal identity (AO1).

### **Before you start**

- 1 Discuss in a small group how your use of language is influenced by different social situations (for example, in a lesson, using a social network site or visiting an elderly relative). Think of other situations and the language you use.
- 2 Why do you vary the style of language you use in these situations and how have you learned to do it?

## Social groups and self-identity

All through our lives, the image we have about ourselves is influenced and altered by the individuals, social groups and situations we encounter. Language is an integral part of that process.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Text and context

The context of a person's social identity is closely bound up with their language (text) in all areas of their life.

Create a mind map with 'My Social Identity' in the middle. Complete this by listing all the physical, emotional, social and intellectual elements of yourself. Beside each one, comment on the contribution made to it by language.

When we use language, it is for a purpose. For example, to greet someone, to post a message via social media, to shout support for a sports team, or to worship. The way in which we use language is directly linked to the context. Networks and groups in society provide a complex web of formal and informal interactions for the individual who feels part of them. There may be defined rules for belonging to some groups, for instance, such as being in an A Level English Language class at a college. Membership may depend on location, such as a neighbourhood group, or upon skills achieved, for example, an under-15 school sports team. Membership may also be fluid, such as in friendship groups, and it may be local or global, as with social media messaging.

The language used by group members can influence an individual's sense of self as they aim to make their speech more like that of the majority in the group. This is explained by communication accommodation theory (CAT), which was developed by Howard Giles in 1973. This theory argues that when people interact they adjust their speech, their vocal patterns and their gestures to accommodate others.

CAT explores the idea that, as individuals, we do not like to appear different from those we spend time with, so we 'accommodate', or change, our language to become more like theirs. A very obvious example in the English-speaking world is found in regional accents, when people who do not speak as the majority do may try to alter their accents. Since spoken language is a way of expressing group membership, people may adopt **convergence** to use language in a similar way to others in the group. However, we may wish to highlight differences and so consciously adopt **divergence** and make our language distinctively different from those around us. An example could be when a different form of address (e.g. first name versus family name and title) may signify a difference in status between an employer and the employees.



### ACTIVITY 1

Based on your knowledge of CAT, discuss with a partner the following example of the influence of a group's language on social identity. Then make notes on your response.

*Karen is a doctor practising in the city of Bath in the south of England. She grew up in Barnsley, an urban area in the north of England where the accent is very different. (You can find examples of these different accents online)*

**Karen:** When I was ten I moved with my parents and little sister from Barnsley to Oxford as my father had a new job. I didn't realise I had any sort of accent at all until I started school the following week. All my classmates laughed at me. It took me two weeks to learn to talk like they did and in about a month I had lost all traces of my Barnsley accent.

## Speech communities

From what you have learnt about English in the world and language change in [Sections 7](#) and [8](#), you will know that there are many varieties of the English language. These have evolved through complex historical and social factors and are continuing to change the forms of English in use across the world.

You will also know from the previous units in this section that each person has an idiolect, which is their individual style of using language. Additionally, a person will share some common speech features, their sociolect, with people around them. They are likely to speak with the same accent and use the lexis and syntax of their work and the social and leisure groups that they come into contact with. The differences in accents and dialects within a language invariably produce reactions from those who do not speak in the same way. Experiments have shown that young children are more likely to accept toys from people who speak their native language, while older children are more likely to choose native speakers as friends. There seems to be an evolutionary trait to trust those who speak in the same way as we do, with various degrees of trust given to those who speak differently.

Most people have regional features in their speech and this gives rise to stereotypes related to speech styles. All dialects and accents are equally correct – they only differ because of their social significance. Peter Trudgill's 1974 survey of speech variations in the city of Norwich in the UK found that different social groups and women spoke the more prestigious Standard English rather than the local variety. You can investigate Trudgill's study further in written and online texts as well as in the section on research studies later in this unit.

You will now explore the dynamics between the languages of different social groups and the impact these have on an individual's identity.

## Language groups and social stratification

Almost all societies have some form of group classification, or stratification, whereby some groups have greater access to a more favourable lifestyle than others. In the past, slavery and feudalism denied some social groups permanent equality. Today, the caste system, dividing Hindus into four main categories, can still be observed in many Hindu societies despite the system having been outlawed.

In many societies, inequalities of social and economic status give some groups more prestige than others and a social class system develops. The origins of social class are complex. You can investigate these independently, but, in the context of self-identity, awareness of social class is central to many people's image of themselves. The social stratification in any society is often linked to the **linguistic prestige** of different groups within it.

- The attitude of many in the US towards the varied non-English-speaking population is an interesting one because the settlement and growth of the US was founded on the Latin motto 'e pluribus unum' (one out of many), and this included the speaking of English to help unify the various immigrant arrivals. Today, there are large areas of the US where many languages other than English are spoken and there is much debate about the possible exclusion from opportunities for those non-English speaking groups. According to a 2015 statistic published in the Washington Times, 21 per cent of US residents speak a language other than English at home.
- In California, 43.9 per cent of children of primary and secondary school age speak a language other than English at home. In Texas it is 36.2 per cent, and, in Nevada, 32.9 per cent.

**From 'English isn't main language at home for 21 percent in America', by Stephen Dinan, *The Washington Times*.**

### ACTIVITY 2

Who do you think you are? Read the following statements. For each one, discuss with a partner how language influences personal identity. Then compare your views with others in the class.

- 1 The English actor Christopher Eccleston recently played the title role in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with the Royal Shakespeare Company. He believes he has previously been overlooked for major Shakespearean roles because of his northern English accent. He said 'You don't hear many accents like me, and it's discrimination and I loathe it'.
- 2 In many schools, including those online, students address their teachers by their first name rather than by 'Mrs', 'Ms' or 'Mr'. As a class group, including your teacher, discuss the idea that this style of address is not just about lexical choice but about the relationship and status between students and teachers.
- 3 In India, parents are strongly encouraged to use their mother tongue with newborn children and toddlers. They fear that English-speaking families might stop using native languages.



#### THINK LIKE ... A SCHOOL BOARD OFFICIAL

You want to develop a programme in your area of the world for primary school children who are not first-language English speakers. The aim is to integrate these children more fully with their English-speaking classmates. Your school's policy is to teach through the medium of English.

Work with a small group to devise an activity which would enable the non-English-speaking children to improve their English and become more integrated into the school as well as their local community. The

following questions should help:

- How would you work with these children? How would you include their families?
- What resources would you need? How would you use these resources with the children?
- To what extent would you use the English-speaking classmates of your group? And the teacher(s)?
- How would you give respect to the native languages spoken by the children?

Social class is a much-discussed subject in British society. While it exists to some degree in other English-speaking societies, traditional class distinctions are arguably outdated in modern Britain. The British welfare state, with its universal health and education provision, has helped to blur earlier, sharp class divisions as it did in other English-speaking parts of the world. The Digital Revolution and the development of new technological skills has produced a class of affluent people that cuts across traditional class barriers. However, social anthropologist Kate Fox, in her book *Watching the English* (2014), asserts that 'class pervades all aspects of English life and culture'.

In other English speaking countries, such as New Zealand and parts of South Africa, different access to important opportunities, such as education and employment, has also produced distinctions of social class.

## Research studies on language and social class

You may think that many assertions are made about social class without systematic backup from research studies. However, there are key studies on the language of speech patterns and social class from which conclusions can be drawn:

**William Labov 1966, New York Study:** Labov researched the pronunciation of a separate consonant /r/ after a vowel, which produces a distinctive sound, often heard in the accents of Scotland, Ireland and much of North America. You can hear the pronunciation in online videos. At the time, speaking with this style of accent connoted prestige. Those respondents in what were classified as 'working class' and 'lower middle class' groups were more likely to change the way they spoke to reflect what they felt was the 'right' way of pronunciation.

**Peter Trudgill 1974, Norwich, UK Study:** Trudgill investigated a similar indicator of language and social class and found that working-class women were more aware of the more prestigious form of pronunciation.

**The Great British Class Survey:** In 2011, the BBC carried out a survey of 161 400 respondents. You can research its detailed findings independently. An important result was that the concepts of upper, middle and working class in modern Britain, often satirised in comedy shows, are outdated. However, clear divisions still exist, based on wealth and access to technical knowledge.

**E Basil Bernstein 1971, Restricted and elaborated codes** – Bernstein's theory related to the language skills of early years primary school children. The theory is explained in [Unit 8.5](#). After reading about the theory, you could research government programmes in your country that target parents and children living in deprived areas, and which aim to support children's learning skills. Some examples of these are Sure Start in the UK and Strong Start BC in British Columbia, Canada. UNICEF is an international non-governmental organisation that aims to support children around the world and produces reports into education. You could explore some of its reports on early childhood care and education in different regions.

### ACTIVITY 3

Read the following extracts about language and a sense of identity and answer the question:

Discuss what you feel to be important issues raised in the extracts about language and social identity. You should make reference to specific details from the texts as well as your wider study.

(25 marks)

When planning your response to the question consider the following:

- You are asked to look at important issues raised in the extracts, so to begin by identifying the idea(s) of each extract would be a good way to start. The first extract deals with identity loss and gain when the children of a family are taught a different language. You can explain each idea, using relevant examples from your studies.
- Move on to the knowledge you have gained from your wider study using relevant examples from relevant studies:
  - i the sense of self-identity gained through belonging to a variety of social groups in a person's life
  - ii stereotypes, prestige, accent and sociolect as contributors to social inequalities in society, with case studies in support
  - iii how changes in your own and in other societies are interacting with language changes.

### Extract 1

A *New York Times* article about immigrant parents whose children were learning English reported on their sense of pride mixed with a sense of loss. Their sense of loss concerned the change of family values that often went with their children's adoption of another language.

### **Extract 2**

A publication on language and identity explores the idea that, in addition to the social identities we are born with, such as gender, household income and ethnicity, we also acquire a second layer of group membership from the communities that we become part of, such as school and the workplace. All these groups are important in the development of our social identities as they have distinct types of communication patterns and language styles.

### **Extract 3**

An American sociolinguistics website states that we use language to send other people messages about who we are and that we are often judged as people by what we say and how we say it; even by a single word!

## Standard and non-standard English

You will know from your studies of language change that the ways in which English is spoken and written is never static. Neither are people's attitudes towards what counts as appropriateness in language. The debate is relevant to the language of self-identity as it influences the ways that people speak and write English and the status which that gives them.

The prescriptivist view is that the rules of English grammar are laid down and must be followed at all times. This was influential in earlier times and was reinforced by dictionaries and grammar books stating rules for English usage. Fowler's 1926 *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* gave much detail about how English was to be used, for instance. There has been a shift to the descriptivist view that there is no single correct standard by which others are judged but that certain language registers are appropriate for different types of language use. More details about the prescriptivist and descriptivist views of English usage can be found in [Unit 7.2](#).

There are many different contexts for language use but we can identify the following main categories:

- 1 formal: where recognised, Standard English is followed in both speech and writing
- 2 colloquial/casual: the everyday language used in both speech and writing
- 3 slang/non-standard: situations which demand that a more basic and very informal variety of English is used. Slang is used much more widely in spoken than in written language.
- 4 frozen language: language which is unchanging and full of archaisms, which are words and phrases used in earlier times but no longer in use. This form of language is also referenced in the study of language change.

### ACTIVITY 4

- 1 Using these four broad divisions, consider what type of language register would be most appropriate to use for the following situations.
  - the American Declaration of Independence
  - two friends meeting in a café
  - an English Language textbook
  - New Zealanders watching their national rugby team, the All Blacks, play Australia
  - a recipe
  - a music video
  - a technical training manual
  - a TV game show
  - posting on Facebook
  - a Bollywood movie
  - a job interview
  - a vlog.
- 2 Discuss the reasons for your choice with a partner. Use your reasons to write a clear explanation, with examples, of why appropriateness in language is important in written and spoken expression. Complete this written work individually.

## Slang

Slang is unusual, direct and sometimes offensive language which is not regarded as standard. It may not be considered polite. Slang words are constantly changing and can become dated very quickly.

What is forbidden can sometimes be tempting and this also applies to language. What is considered 'bad' (i.e. insulting or forbidden) language is purely a guideline adopted by those within a particular group or community. Most cultures have some form of insult directed against another person or group's self-identity (the Romans are said to have had 800!).

Slang originating in one area can spread very rapidly, something greatly aided now by global links. The following slang phrases originated in New York City but have spread throughout the United States and beyond:

- 'schlep' – a tedious trip
- 'bagel and a schmear' – bagel and cream cheese
- 'uptown' – travelling north in New York City

- ‘bananas’ – crazy

Here are some more examples of slang words that have come into English from around the world: ‘chai’, ‘arvo’.

Are these words known in your region?

As with slang, insults change with social values. 50 years ago, many parts of the world were much more sensitive to religious insults, but used many racial terms which are not tolerated now. Your own society may have experienced similar changes. As we have established, language is closely related to social values and self-identity.

Slang however, is an identity marker for groups and is directly relevant to a person’s self-identity. It marks out its users as a group who wish to set themselves apart and excludes non-users. When a particular new expression starts to be used by the majority of a population, it ceases to be slang and becomes part of the language.

You are unlikely to be asked to write exclusively about bad language and slang. However, you need to be able to discuss those areas of language which, for whatever reason, are not considered acceptable. It is worth remembering that most of these words and phrases will slip quietly out of usage, to be studied with interest by future English students!

### ACTIVITY 5

Try asking older family members and friends which slang expressions they remember using when they were your age. How would you feel about using these expressions amongst your friends? Why?

## Jargon

Jargon is another form of non-standard English because it is often not part of mainstream usage. It relates most frequently to technical words and phrases used by specialist groups, or by professionals, such as doctors and lawyers. In some extreme cases, it may become almost unintelligible, and examples of over-wordy official documents often make the headlines. However, jargon can be similar to slang when restricted to a certain group. Its use ensures mutual and precise understanding between group members and so becomes another linguistic element in relation to self-identity.

### ACTIVITY 6

- 1 Research the language used by a distinctive group (for example, doctors, teachers or online gamers). Identify and present a list of terms which they might use when communicating with members of their own group.
- 2 Select a group to which you belong, either formally or informally. Think of jargon which you share with other members of that group. Create a short presentation to show the role that this language plays in maintaining a sense of group identity. What might be the impact of this jargon on others outside the group?

**Reflection:** Activity 6 related to jargon and required you to research in different ways.

- 1 In the first activity you needed to research and synthesise unfamiliar information. Work with a partner to answer the following questions:
  - a From what sources did you gather your information?
  - b How did you select the specific language data which was relevant?
  - c How did you check for the reliability of the language data?
  - d How did you organise the data for the presentation?
  - e How useful do you feel your language data is in terms of language and self-identity?
- 2 The second activity required you to source and select language data which you yourself use. Work with a partner to answer the following questions:
  - a Did your personal involvement with the language data make it more or less difficult to collect? Give reasons for your answer.
  - b Did you need anyone else in the group to support your findings?
  - c How did you check for the reliability of the language data?
  - d How did you organise the data for the presentation?

- e** Assess to what extent you feel that the language of your social group contributes to your sense of self-identity.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I can explain the ideas of convergence and divergence in the language used by social groups		
I understand how the language of social groups may have different linguistic prestige		
I can discuss the inequalities that exist between social groups using supporting case studies		
I understand the difference between Standard and non-standard English and their influence on self-identity		

# **Unit 10.5**

## **Teenage and gender group identity**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn about the distinctive language styles of teenage and gender social groups (AO4)
- make a balanced appraisal of the style of the language of social groups using research studies and evidence from the students' own experiences (AO4)
- respond fluently and in appropriate detail to questions about the style of the language of social groups using research studies and evidence from students' own experience (AO4).

### **Before you start**

- 1 A 'social group' is a group of people who interact with each other on a regular basis and share some common interests and characteristics. Some are permanent and others are temporary in their formation. List the social groups you belong to.
- 2 Explain the concept of a 'teenager'. Try to enlarge the definition from simply that of an age group of 13 to 19 years. Think about features which distinguish this group. Relate to lifestyles in your own country as well as globally.

## Teenage language

As teenagers you may think you receive a very bad press! The media often represent teenagers as an inarticulate group who express themselves largely through social media, and perceive them as being chained to their cell phones using ‘text speak’. This section offers a more balanced approach to the ways in which teenagers use language. The following points summarise positive and negative features of teenage language.

- Teenagers are early adopters of popular culture, including style, fashion, music, new technology and language. Teenagers are innovators of language and this is an important feature of their conversational styles.
- Teenagers talk a lot! Their world is bursting with activity which needs to be communicated and, in the digital age, instantaneous transfer of this information is critical to them. Skype, Facebook, SMS, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Instagram are just some of today’s popular methods of social networking and which increasingly blur the boundaries between written and spoken language. Teenagers’ language may be unclear or even incomprehensible to those outside their group.
- A criticism of teenagers and their language use is that they may actually reduce their language from a lexis of several thousand words acquired in childhood. Teenage language has often been associated with lowered standards, as defined by older generations who often fail to understand teenage use of **patois**. In fact, with the medium of the internet, teenagers may share different language styles which were not available to their parents and grandparents.
- Teenage language acquisition is clearly not about learning language. It is about learning to adapt and use language in adult situations. Teenagers, more than adults, may live in contrasting language worlds of formal Standard English and the language of their own social groups.
- Teenagers can create their own online virtual lives with games and activities that they themselves choose and control. These often have their own lexis which is shared and understood by participants. Online digital communication is immediate and global: it is generated by the user themselves. For example, gaming advertisement videos posted on YouTube encourage teenagers to ‘create your own avatar or build your own medieval kingdom while you chat and hang out with friends.’ The use of jargon and colloquial phrasing sometimes leads to bad or abusive language.

By contrast, the style of traditional education may demand the use of more Standard English. Successful students have to demonstrate that they are able to write and express themselves appropriately. The majority of teenagers successfully **code switch** between different language styles. It is those who will not or cannot switch, and are therefore perceived as inarticulate, who become the object of negative media attention.

### ACTIVITY 1

Answer the following questions individually, then compare your answers with a partner. Make summary notes for reference.

- 1 Do you think the summary list of features is a fair representation of your written, spoken and online language? Discuss the list in small groups and add anything you feel applies to you and your friends.
- 2 Think about your own personal communications. List the digital forms of communication you use. With whom do you communicate and how frequently?
- 3 To what extent do you code switch when you move from digital conversations with your peer group to face-to-face communication with the broader community, such as older family members, teachers and employers? List the types of lexical and syntactical changes you make, and the reasons why.
- 4 What are the challenges faced by teenagers who must code switch frequently on a daily basis?

## How is teenage slang developing?

In [Unit 10.4](#) you learned about slang and how this form of language is undergoing constant and rapid change, with new forms emerging and words appearing and falling out of use. Particular forms of slang are used by teenagers and teenage slang can be a very lively form of expression!

### ACTIVITY 2

- 1** Work in a small group to write down a list of teenage slang which is used in your country or region.
- Plan your work in the following stages:
- think of particular words and phrases which you hear teenagers use
  - list approximately 20 of these on a spreadsheet or questionnaire, in a form which is suitable to show to other people in an interview.
- 2** You will use the list of teenage slang expressions you have put together to ask respondents how they would use the words and phrases. Make sure you have a category for 'I do not know this term'.
- 3** Find ten respondents per interviewer (it would be helpful to have five teenage respondents and five respondents aged 40+).
- 4** Collate the responses to see whether your words and phrases are only understood by the teenage group.

It is important to balance the use of teenage slang and innovation in language with the ability of teenagers to use Standard English.



## Question practice

Read the question and the student response which follows.

Read the following extract, taken from Malala Yousafzai's speech at the United Nations. Malala was shot in the head by the Taliban in Pakistan for championing girls' rights to education.

Write a commentary on the language style used by Malala, and its suitability in this speech.

Dear Friends, on the 9th of October 2012, the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead. They shot my friends too. They thought that the bullets would silence us. But they failed. And then, out of that silence, came thousands of voices. The terrorists thought that they would change our aims and stop our ambitions but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born. I am the same Malala. My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same. My dreams are the same.

Dear sisters and brothers, I am not against anyone. Neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group. I am here to speak up for the right of education of every child. I want education for the sons and the daughters of all the extremists especially the Taliban.

I do not even hate the Taliban who shot me. Even if there is a gun in my hand and he stands in front of me. I would not shoot him. This is the compassion that I have learnt from Muhammad – the prophet of mercy, Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha. This is the legacy of change that I have inherited from Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. This is the philosophy of non-violence that I have learnt from Gandhi-ji, Bacha Khan and Mother Teresa. And this is the forgiveness that I have learnt from my mother and father. This is what my soul is telling me, be peaceful and love everyone. Dear sisters and brothers, we realise the importance of light when we see darkness. We realise the importance of our voice when we are silenced. In the same way, when we were in Swat, the north of Pakistan, we realised the importance of pens and books when we saw the guns.

**Transcript of speech to the United Nations General Assembly, by Malala Yousafzai, 2013.**

### STUDENT RESPONSE

Clearly the person, the forum and the context of the speech are highly individual and unlikely to be replicated by other teenagers; thus this is atypical teenage language. Malala Yousafzai survived a shooting and, following her recovery, has become a well-known international figure and peace campaigner. In this extract, she is speaking to United Nations delegates about the need for reconciliation and also the importance of education for girls. The content is serious and worthy of global attention; as such, Malala is speaking in a global forum.

Her sustained use of a formal language register supports the serious purpose and passion of her speech. This is spoken language but her speech is very likely to have been planned and so replicates a written style of discursive expression (e.g. 'weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born.'). The utterance is balanced by contrasting groups of three abstract nouns and the metaphor of death and

then birth.

Malala's language is personal ('I am not against anyone') but she broadens her personal feelings with references to her knowledge of world religions: 'This is the compassion that I have learnt from Muhammad – the prophet of mercy, Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha' as well as important influential figures, such as Ghandi and Mother Teresa. In this respect, she is competent and assured in speaking in Standard English.

### ACTIVITY 3

The task was to assess, in the extract given, the success of a teenager switching to an appropriate form of language for the context. Evaluate the student's response using the following criteria.

- 1** To what extent did the response:
  - a** explain the context and purpose of the extract?
  - b** outline, with textual examples, the language style(s) adopted by the speaker?
  - c** assess the extent of the speaker's appropriate use of language in the context of the speech?
- 2** Write your own commentary in response to the question. Use these criteria to write a good answer.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Diversity

The English language exists in a range of competing and overlapping forms at any given moment. English written style and spoken expression are significant to the sense of self as created and maintained by diverse social groups.

Discuss the ways in which you feel your gender and your age group affect your social identity.



### THINK LIKE ... A CAREERS ADVISOR FOR A LEVEL STUDENTS

Your 16- and 17-year-old students are constantly using the teenage slang of your country. They are about to apply for university or for jobs. Prepare a role play to show them the importance of code switching in an interview for a university place or for employment.

## Language and gender

The topic of gender and language covers a range of issues including:

- the language used to refer to males and females
- perceived differences in the language used by each gender.

As in other areas of language study, gender issues are part of our cultural fabric. In 1963, a United States federal law enshrined the rule of equal pay for equal work. Other societies have followed suit. Before that, women were automatically paid less and, for long periods in history, girls grew up with many more restrictions on their educational and career prospects than boys. In many societies today, equal opportunities are enshrined in law.

There are very specific and traditional contrasts of language used to describe male and female and the lack of equal status between them. Examples include:

- 'master' and 'mistress', 'hen' and 'rooster', 'actor' and 'actress'
- the grammatical maxim that males dominate in writing, thus always the reference to 'he' before 'she'
- the male gender name being used as the norm (as in 'mankind')
- the pronoun 'he' being applied to both genders.

### ACTIVITY 4

The traditional linguistic differences between the male and female gender are narrowing, with greater equality for females in evidence. Advertisements from earlier times show that women were usually perceived as passive and only important in relation to a man, usually their husband.

- 1 Work in a small group to analyse the language of advertisements such as the one below to show how women have been represented in relation to men.
- 2 Find a current advertisement from your own country. Work with a partner to draw up a mind map headed 'Linguistic changes – the representation of women.' Make sure you also give specific examples.
- 3 Working with a partner, create a mind map to show the language styles of teenage social groups in your country and region. You might want to do some research to add teenage language from other parts of the world.
- 4 Draw up a list of any differences between male and female use of language which you have observed in your own country, or from mass media worldwide.

"The Kenwood you bought me prepared this wonderful meal"



WITH A KENWOOD in the kitchen, cooking becomes a new thrill: meals a new adventure—and what a proud possession for every modern housewife! At the flick of a switch, the Kenwood becomes your Chef! It will do 101 jobs in the kitchen which save you time and trouble in cooking preparation—and makes so many appetizing dishes possible which would otherwise rarely reach the table!

at the touch of a switch it . . .  
mixes • minces • whips  
creams • grinds • mashes  
beats • peels • blends  
purees • juices

**Kenwood**  
"YOUR SERVANT MADAM!"

Write now for the Illustrated booklet, containing full details of this amazing machine, its 101 exciting recipes; and for the name of your nearest stockist from Kenwood Ltd., 100, Dept. P, 24, North Audley Street, London, W.I.

*The World's Most Versatile Kitchen Help*

## Differences in male and female language

Traditionally there has been an assumption that males and females hold different types of conversation. There has been a stereotype that women are passive listeners whose lightweight discourse is described as 'gossip', while men have been thought to deal with more weighty and serious matters in debate and discussion.

There is also a perceived conversational contrast of input from males and females. Men are seen to interrupt and to 'hold the conversational floor' more than women. This perception has led to some interesting experiments in measuring the extent of equality in conversation between the genders.

An important study from the mid-1970s used a small sample of conversations recorded by Don Zimmerman and Candace West at the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California. The subjects of the recording were white, middle-class and under 35. They reported that, in 11 out of 31 conversations between men and women, men used 46 interruptions, but women only two.

Changes over time, as well as cultural changes, would suggest a different outcome today. The perceived dominance of males in mixed communities has been a concern in many educational institutions. There is a continuing debate about the benefits of single-sex education. Even mixed high schools have experimented in separating some curriculum subjects, particularly the sciences, by gender. Increasingly, in societies where the genders and ethnic groups are approaching equality, the stereotype of male dominance is seen as outdated.

Differences in language and gender in the globalised world of **computer-mediated communication** (CMC) have produced research to claim that women use online language typified by friendliness and a lack of hostility. This contrasts with men, who use a style characterised by hostility and sarcasm. Other studies, however, suggest that women use the hostile online language typically associated with males, and are more aggressive users of language than men in CMC.

### Male and female conversation

Traditionally, girls have been brought up to be much more compliant than boys; in the past, a girl who engaged in a great deal of physical activity was labelled a 'tomboy'. This more conformist attitude extended to speech. Females are almost universally responsible for childrearing and are expected to display a model of correct behaviour to their children, which includes speech and conversational patterns.

#### ACTIVITY 5

Consider some of the lexis used here to describe the ways in which people speak:

*debate, chat, gossip, discuss, converse, communicate*

Different lexis has been stereotypically applied to the conversational styles of men and women. You may be familiar with anecdotal stereotypes about the quality and quantity of female language. In this section, you will focus on the contrasts in language and information which studies have revealed.

Social psychologists suggest that 'gossip' is an evolutionary strategy to forge friendships and keep up to date, which may have provided an advantage in an uncertain world. As such, gossip would be of equal advantage to both men and women.

Researchers have found that men gossip just as much as women. Men were also found to be no more likely than women to discuss 'weighty' and important matters, such as the state of the economy and the meaning of life, except for when women are present. Gossip in single-sex conversations takes up roughly the same amount of time with one very interesting difference – that men talk about themselves a lot more than women do! Deborah Tannen, an American professor of Linguistics, developed the research, following on from earlier work by Robin Lakoff, who initiated studies on gender and language. New Zealand studies on the use of expletives in male and female conversation as well as Indian studies on miscommunication between males and females are just two more of a number of research studies on gender styles in conversation.

Research studies have shown the following characteristics of male and female language:

- Men are less likely to give supportive feedback such as 'really', 'yeah' and 'mm', and are less likely to cooperate in turn-taking. This and other conversational features are explained in [Unit 8.1](#).
- Women's conversation is the reverse: they tend to be conversationally more cooperative, giving feedback, using tag questions and modal verbs more frequently to suggest possibilities or alternatives, whereas men tend to use assertions and commands.
- Women tend to do the 'hard work' in keeping a conversation going by asking questions and continuing conversations. Robin Lakoff (1975) identified the 'politeness principle' in women's conversation stating

that women use politeness strategies more frequently, such as 'please' and 'thanks'.

- There is evidence that the lexical choices of women tend to be more evaluative and descriptive (e.g. 'lovely', 'wonderful', 'delightful') as well as showing increased use of adverbs of degree to embellish what is being said (e.g. 'very', 'really').
- Traditionally, men's language has been considered coarser than women's. Women consistently use more standard forms of language while men are more likely to use grammatically incorrect forms.

## The genderlect theory

Deborah Tannen is a distinguished American academic in the field of linguistics. She has written extensively on gender differences in the conversational style of men and women, beginning in 1990, with her research 'You just don't understand; men and women in conversation'. Her findings are closely linked to the status and roles of the participants in the Western societies in which she has carried out her research. Tannen's work was a development of earlier studies by John Gumperz, who examined differences of speech styles in different cultures. Tannen contrasts the discourse of men and women in Western societies, attributing the first characteristic in each pair as male and the second as female using the following styles:

- status vs support
- independence vs intimacy
- advice vs understanding
- information vs feelings
- orders vs proposals
- conflict vs compromise

Tannen's research on conversational styles showed that men's conversation tended to be about the giving and receiving of information in cultures where men wish to be seen to act independently and to put across to others their status and security to act in that way. Consequently, their conversations are often assertive with no strategies to avoid conflict.

Tannen found that women's conversation was more to do with building and reinforcing cooperative relationships and all the negotiating strategies which go with this, such as compromising over differences of opinion, using polite forms of address and building relationships through discourse.

All of this paints a rather dismal picture of inarticulate male speech, which is clearly not the case. In fact, more recent studies have not shown the expected degree of difference between men and women, with many adolescent girls using non-standard language as well as a level of assertiveness traditionally associated with male language. Men, too, may not need to display such domineering conversational practice as the changing gender roles in society lead to greater equality in language.

### ACTIVITY 6

- 1 Look at Deborah Tannen's list of contrasting discourse styles and work with a partner to think of specific examples of conversation to match one of the pairs listed above.
- 2 You may live in a very different society to that researched by Tannen. Using the descriptors given, discuss, using evidence, how far these labels apply in the region where you live. Investigate whether any research has been done to answer this. You might want to set up a controlled experiment of your own.
- 3 Take extracts from social media sites to test to what extent the claims of contrasting language styles of the assumed gender of the participants conforms to Tannen's research findings listed in this unit.
- 4 Do you recognise these gender distinctions in conversation from your own experience? Discuss with other members of the class. If you perceive big differences, can you explain why?
- 5 Listen to unscripted and scripted conversations and assess to what extent you observe the patterns from Tannen's research results. You can listen to family and friends whom you see in your daily life, or you can observe TV and online conversations to reflect on the conversations in which you take part. You should follow ethical guidelines and you need only listen to the conversations for a few minutes.

## Other theories of gender and language

Further theories have been put forward regarding the language of gender and self identity. Two are listed here, which you might like to research independently.

- 1 Standpoint theory - Harding and Wood:** this theory suggests that studies about women, including their language, should be practised from the point of view of women. Standpoint theory suggests that, in most societies, women's lives and experiences are significantly different from those of men and so women have a different type of knowledge, which may not be given equal status to that of men. A criticism of this is that women's lives may themselves be as different from each other as the gender differences.
- 2 The muted group theory - Cheris Kramarae:** this theory suggests that certain minorities in a society have much less power than others and, as a consequence of this lack of power, they are silenced as no one wishes to listen to them. In many societies, women are dominated by male status and power. They are the ones whose voices are heard.

## Question practice

Write a response to the following question:

Using the short extracts as a starting point and your wider knowledge, discuss in what ways language and gender contribute to a sense of self identity.

(25 marks)

Read the student response and, using the criteria given, compare the two responses.

### Extract 1

Some acts of the British Parliament:

1553 – It was agreed that it was more natural for the man to come before the woman.

1746 – John Kirkby wrote ‘Eighty Eight Grammatical Rules’. Rule 21 said that the male gender was ‘more comprehensive’ than the female.

1850 – Act of Parliament was passed that stated that ‘he’ should be used for both sexes.

### Extract 2

Research studies have suggested that men and women’s discourse has different purposes.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

Many features contribute to a person’s sense of self. Gender is a lifelong framework to a person’s identity. Everyone is born into a specific time, place and society with certain values and practices and the treatment of people according to gender has been a part of all societies’ practices.

The historical power given to males by Acts passed in the British Parliament illustrates the unequal perception of the different genders. The 1553 Act, for example, agreed that it was more natural for men to come before women. When the American Constitution was written in 1787, women had no rights, as they were chattels, owned by fathers and then husbands. New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the right to vote and recently the country was ranked ninth in the world by the United Nations for gender equality. These examples are relevant to the language used to reflect equality of opportunity and status for women.

The ideas enshrined in the British Acts of Parliament listed in the extracts are now considered unequal, but there is still a residue of lexis in English which reflects this inequality. Language pairs – male and female – often have different connotations: while ‘steward’ reflects power and control, ‘stewardess’ has the meaning of someone in an assistant role. It has become outdated in the 21st century and has been replaced by the gender-neutral ‘flight attendant’. Many other job titles, such as ‘chairman’ and ‘fireman’ have also been replaced with more gender-neutral terms, like ‘chair person’ and ‘firefighter’. So, the language change helps to ensure equal opportunities, irrespective of gender.

Male dominance throughout history seems to reinforce theories about

language, gender and self-identity. Both the standpoint theory of Sandra Harding and the muted group theory of Cheris Kramarae suggest that the male-dominated social, political and economic perspectives of societies mute the voice and interests of women, though, arguably, societies are changing to represent male and female interests more equally. The language of advertising reflects the condescending attitudes towards the self-identity of women in the 1950s, for example. An advert for Alcoa Aluminium bottle cap for sauce has a headline ‘You mean a woman can open it?’ While an advert for washing powder states ‘Married? No reason to neglect stockings! Husbands admire wives who keep their stockings perfect’. The language of these adverts position a woman as passive and only visible in relation to men – usually their husband: ‘Husbands admire a woman who can open it.’ This is a direct language link to a sense of self-identity as being recognised as inferior to the power of a man.

Tannen’s research on discourse between males and females shows the contrasting aims of conversation as reflected in different styles. She pairs these contrasting aims: status versus support; information versus feelings – the first descriptor in the pair being that of male conversation. The research and subsequent studies showed that men converse using imperatives (e.g. ‘put the box over there’), independent actions without consultation (e.g. ‘we’ll eat at this place’) and generally use conversation to build status. However, much of this research, even the subsequent studies, was completed quite a long time ago and it could be argued that, in the digital age, with computer-mediated communication, the language styles of men and women are becoming much closer.

There are other influences on a person’s sense of self-identity, such as the social groups they belong to, but the fact that we use language for almost the entirety of our lives means that the way in which language is used to reflect gender is significant to our sense of self-identity.

**Reflection:** Evaluate either your own answer or the answer written by the student using the following criteria.

How far does the response:

- 1 outline the area of self identity to be discussed in the essay? Are these clearly explained?
- 2 deal with the brief extracts? Are they used as a basis for more theories and examples?
- 3 give both extracts equal treatment in terms of discussion and evidence?
- 4 focus on language of gender and self-identity? Does the information used show a good understanding of language issues?
- 5 provide analysis and commentary on the topic as well as description?

Are the responses written in clear Standard English?

Rewrite the response to improve any weak points from these criteria.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you’ve learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I am able to identify different styles and patterns of teenage language and understand that teenagers often use distinctive patterns of speech		
I understand the concept of code switching in the context of teenage language		
I understand the key differences between male and female		

language

I can support or refute comments about genderlect with case studies and independent research

# **Unit 10.6**

## **The language of inclusion and exclusion**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- identify the ways in which language operates to include and exclude social groups (AO4).

### **Before you start**

- 1 The following are slang phrases which are shared amongst social groups. Assuming you are unfamiliar with these terms, discuss with a partner how you would feel if you were amongst a group of people using them and you didn't understand their meaning.
  - Bo Jio (Singaporean slang).
  - Gwash (Zimbabwean slang).
  - Bajá un cambio! (Argentinian slang).
- 2 Make a list of words you use which your friends understand but would exclude other people such as older relatives or teachers. Why do you choose to use these words?

## National and international exclusion

In this unit you will explore situations where language contributes to the **inclusion** or **exclusion** of certain groups in society. Language is linked to politics and social concerns, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and religion within a country or community where information and opportunities may be granted or denied.

There are many examples in history where the language spoken by individuals and social groups has resulted in unequal treatment. Jamaican immigrants arriving in Britain in the 1950s found that their style of spoken English was not readily understood by British people. The difference in spoken English often reinforced differences between immigrant and resident communities. Studies of young male gang members in New York showed that although they spoke fluently among their peers, they often failed at school where a different style of English was spoken.

The language you use and the groups of people with whom you speak are an important part of your self-identity. Group inclusion and exclusion is relevant here as this has often been linked to the power and influence of dominant groups in society. Here are several important examples of social groups who have experienced inequality through language differences. Remember, these case studies are only very brief accounts of complex events. You can find out more about these and other examples through your own independent research.

### England

When William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066, Norman French became the official language, replacing the language spoken by the defeated Anglo-Saxons. For two hundred years, French was the language of the aristocracy and the powerful in England, while the peasants continued to speak Old English. However, the two languages gradually merged into important components of present-day English.

### Language and religion

The violence of the actions taken to exclude some controlling groups, and the significance played by language in this process, should not be underestimated. Religious groups have often experienced this extreme control. For example, the Roman Catholic Church fiercely opposed the first translations of the Bible into English from Latin, which appeared in England in the 1300s. Many people were burned as heretics because of their wish to worship in English. The language elected by a group for their religious worship was so important for their self-identity that it literally became a matter of life and death.

### South America

Under Spain's colonial rule, Spanish replaced Quechua and other Amerindian languages in much of South America, while Portuguese became the official language of Brazil. While the Amerindian languages are still spoken today, Spanish and Portuguese are the main languages spoken throughout the continent.

### New Zealand

Colonisation wiped out many languages. British colonisation of the Indian subcontinent, parts of South-East Asia, North America and Australasia led to the imposition of English onto the newly-colonised populations. Where the minority languages, such as Māori in New Zealand, survived, official attitudes and policy discouraged their use. Children were forbidden from speaking Māori in schools, for instance, as it was seen as irrelevant to economic advancement, with the view that English needed to replace it. Concern from all groups in New Zealand has reversed this policy, and Māori is now one of the country's official languages. A policy of encouragement and inclusion has transformed what had become a minority native language into a mainstream component of the nation's culture.

### North America

Forced transport of groups, such as the slave trade between Africa and the United States, had a huge impact on language. Africans who were transported to work as slaves on the plantations of the southern United States spoke a variety of languages and were totally excluded from any rights in their new environment. The slave owners feared rebellion and adopted a policy of mixing different language groups. The impact of this deprivation was the emergence of a functional mix of lexis and syntax, known as 'pidgin'. In time, this basic language developed more complex grammatical structures to form a fully functioning creole language. The partial fusion and adaptation of the many languages of New Guinea are other examples of the language process of pidgin and creolisation. To find out more about pidgin and creole, look back to [Unit 7.4](#).

The power of language to include those suffering exclusion is well exemplified in the 1960s United States civil rights movement. Although this was a protracted struggle, it is undeniable that significant advances were made through speeches made by civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King.



**Speeches made by leaders such as Martin Luther King helped to advance the African-American civil rights movement.**

### **South Africa**

Under the South African apartheid regime, the controlling white government proposed that black children should be taught in Afrikaans, one of the native languages. This was unpopular and sparked riots in 1976 as these groups saw education in English as an advantage which was being denied to them.

## Language and negative stereotypes

As well as being a factor in direct exclusion as described, language is an integral part of stereotyping. A stereotype is a broad generalisation about one group by another and the judgements and labels associated with stereotyping are frequently negative. In Nazi Germany, for instance, negative stereotyping of Jewish people was reinforced by official policy, with terrible consequences.



### KEY CONCEPT

#### Audience

English language exists in many forms.

List the ways in which you have freedom to use your own language in your own country or region. Think about face-to-face discourse and communication through mass media, such as print and social media. Are there any limitations to using your language?

In South Africa, during the era of apartheid, and in the United States before civil rights reform, negative stereotyping in society resulted in huge racial inequalities.

### ACTIVITY 1

- 1** **a** Discuss in a group why language is so important to the power and control of a country. Think about the motives of those who are in control and the attitudes of those who are denied the freedom to speak their native language. Provide specific case studies of past and present examples.  
**b** Write up your discussion as a discursive essay, entitled 'The links between language and power'. Make sure that you include your own independently researched examples.
- 2** **a** In small groups, discuss the following statement:  
*It is easier to run a country when all the population speaks the same language; the use of a different language by certain groups may cause harmful disagreements.*  
**b** Create a mind map to record all points you can think of for and against this point of view.  
**c** Hold a class debate, using the points from your mind maps.
- 3** Independent research: use local, national print and online resources to find out about instances where language has been used to exclude certain groups in your own part of the world and the responses to this situation.

## Inclusion and exclusion of social groups

There are countless social groups in any society where face-to-face or online language is the medium through which members of these groups interact. The shared interests of the social group ensure its continuation. All groups, whether online forums on any subject, fansites, or sports and music groups, operate to benefit their members and provide a sense of inclusion. With this inclusion comes a sense of belonging and status for the participants.



### KEY CONCEPT

**Audience** – The language used by certain groups can generate feelings of inclusion and exclusion. Members of such groups need to, consciously or unconsciously, anticipate and respond to their audience with appropriate language forms.

Discuss the style of language you use when you are communicating with others in a group you are a part of. Consider:

- the language which only group members are likely to understand
- factors other than language which are likely to exclude non-members
- the part language plays in your membership of the group.

## Online social groups - case study of fansites

The origin of 'fan' is an abbreviation of the word 'fanatic', which has a very different emphasis compared to the word 'fan' (an enthusiastic follower), and which does have some link to the excesses of some fans' behaviour. The world of TV and film has always generated fans, and has done so since the earliest days of Hollywood, when they were depicted as hysterical screaming girls, but now anybody can be a fan and it can be an important part of a person's life. Fan clubs and fan magazines have existed for a long time, but the internet has enabled global communities to flourish. Almost all films and their stars have some level of online following, and international sport coverage and large film and TV franchises have the largest online interest groups. Their shared interests are reflected in the use of language appropriate for their community.

All fan groups and websites have common characteristics. They:

- Provide a forum for sharing interests and ideas, where specialist knowledge gives status to group members. Fans of TV shows and book series, for example, not only know the twists and turns of the stories but may also have extensive background knowledge.
- Allow people with a very specific interest to meet like-minded people.
- Share a common language and jargon which gives linguistic cohesion to the group. Non-members are excluded by their ignorance of specific terms and often not allowed to post messages, for instance. Membership and language are important discriminators.

Fan groups are bound together by the continuing spin-offs from the books and film, for which merchandise is available for sale. Fan art and fan fiction further reinforce solidarity and group interests. The boundaries between fiction and real life are frequently crossed, when the original narrative is developed and actors in role can meet their fans.

Additionally, English-speaking websites have a global spread and fan groups develop sites for other regions.

The following quotations are taken from the Harry Potter [SnitchSeeker.com](http://SnitchSeeker.com) fan website.

### Notices

Established in 2002, SnitchSeeker is a Harry Potter fansite, forum, and news site with a large member base and an active and welcoming community. Most of our discussions and activities focus on J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books and movies and our members are passionate about them. Here on SS there are various places for discussing almost any Harry Potter topic that appeals to our members. Perhaps you want to talk about your all-time favorite Harry Potter character, or share what flavor of Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans you would most like to try? You can do that right here on SS.

Welcome to snitchseeker

**Yesterday at 3:14pm**

You can find me here mostly in the School RPG, the ministry RPG as well as the WWW forums. That however doesn't mean I don't visit other forums. In the School RPG I play a Slytherin girl named Cassia and she's going to be a sixth year soon! Oh and as for the house, I am a Slytherin in pottermore, too! So it's not only an IC thing. Slytherin is my favorite house, next to it comes Gryffindor. Of course I do like all the four houses.

### **Yesterday at 4:23pm**

[my favourite character?] Voldemort. Hehe kiiiidding. =3 You know that's a tough one. As much as I'd like to say George or Fred I couldn't because I'm not like them. xD I'd saaaay Remus Lupin.



**The actors in the Harry Potter series of films.**

### **ACTIVITY 2**

- 1** Look at the extracts from the Harry Potter [SnitchSeeker.com](#) fansite. To what extent do you think the material would be understandable to non-members? Identify any jargon words and phrases which would not make sense and would therefore exclude someone who was not a fan.
- 2** Research a fansite for a book, TV show or film of your choice. What jargon is used that would be understandable to website members but not outsiders?
- 3** Explain, with examples that you have researched, how fansites give status to their members and reinforce the solidarity and mutual support of the fan group.

### **Interviews**

The relationship between a star and his or her fans is another medium in which a community of shared values develops, and inclusive language is a part of this. Stars want to maintain the links with their fan base and the shared interests between them are reflected in the language used. Interviews are supplemented by posts, online forums and tweets, all of which use specific language references to the films or books and are, of course, mutually understood by the fans.

### **ACTIVITY 3**

- 1** Explain the role that language plays in a relationship between a star and their fans.
- 2** Find an online interview with a popular film star, singer or sports personality and analyse the language. Discuss whether the

language has any elements of exclusion for those who are not part of the fan base.

- 3** Research a social group for an activity you are interested in. One line of inquiry would be to look at some written text and/or online chat to see to what extent the material would be understood by someone outside the group. Consider the extent of jargon which requires understanding by group members, and the sense of identity provided by the group through shared interests and activities achieved through the vehicle of language.



### THINK LIKE ... THE EDITOR OF AN ONLINE COMMUNITY

You are the editor of an online community such as a fansite, music, sports or gaming. Choose whichever interests you most, or think of your own.

The online community could be a fansite, music, sports or gaming community - you choose. You want to create a sense of community amongst your members with a blog designed specifically for the group's interests. Plan and write the first 200-300 words.

## Question practice

From 1963 to 1964, Nelson Mandela and several other leaders of the African National Congress were on trial at Pretoria's Supreme Court (known as the Rivonia Trial). They would later receive life sentences. A short extract from Mandela's statement on 20th April 1964, made at the opening of the case for the defence, follows.

Read the text of Nelson Mandela's speech carefully and analyse the language used. How does the language include the black population of South Africa as equal citizens?

Consider the following:

- The methods Mandela uses to include all racial groups
- The effects of imagery and rhetorical techniques to emphasise the importance and urgency of the need for racial equality.

Africans want to be paid a living wage. Africans want to perform work which they are capable of doing, and not work which the government declares them to be capable of. We want to be allowed to live where we obtain work, and not be endorsed out of an area because we were not born there. We want to be allowed to own land in places where we work, and not to be obliged to live in rented houses which we can never call our own. Africans want to be part of the general population, and not confined to living in our ghettos. African men want to have their wives and children to live with them where they work, and not be forced into an unnatural existence in men's hostels. Our women want to be with their menfolk and not be left permanently widowed in the reserves. We want to be allowed out after eleven o'clock at night and not to be confined to our rooms like little children. We want to be allowed to travel in our own country and to seek work where we want to and not where the Labour Bureau tells us to. We want a just share in the whole of South Africa; we want security and a stake in society.

Above all, My Lord, we want equal political rights, because without them our disabilities will be permanent. I know this sounds revolutionary to the whites in this country, because the majority of voters will be Africans. This makes the white man fear democracy.

But this fear cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the only solution which will guarantee racial harmony and freedom for all. It is not true that the enfranchisement of all will result in racial domination. Political division, based on colour, is entirely artificial and, when it disappears, so will the domination of one colour group by another. The ANC has spent half a century fighting against racialism. When it triumphs as certainly it must, it will not change that policy. This then is what the ANC is fighting for. Our struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by our own suffering and our own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live. During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, My Lord, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

**Excerpt from Nelson Mandela's statement from the dock at the opening of the defence case in the Rivonia Trial, 20th April 1964.**

Now read the student response that follows.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

The context of Mandela's speech is from the perspective of an activist with the goal of racial equality, a goal he has been pursuing at considerable personal cost and for which he was to receive a life sentence. The purpose of this speech is to present, in the strongest possible terms, the existing inequalities springing from race.

Mandela is an African and so he belongs to the group for whom he is fighting. The use of the inclusive personal plural pronouns 'we' and 'our' reinforce the solidarity of the group. These pronouns are extensively repeated throughout his speech in a variety of situations for which Mandela is asserting the need for equality (e.g. 'to own land in places where we work'; 'travel to our own country'). These statements seem essential elements of a civilised life which should be accorded to everyone in society irrespective of their race.

Additionally, Mandela highlights the injustices which only apply to the African race and for this he specifies the distinctiveness of that racial group's needs, the needs which the white population have and arguably take for granted. To achieve this, he gives the racial group the noun 'African' and the separate third person pronoun 'their' to show the particular set of unfair circumstances which apply to this group.

Mandela juxtaposes the dignity and relatively impersonal abstract nouns 'security' and 'harmony', which are valued by all races, with more emotive lexis, emphasising the personal sadness endured by those living in an unequal community (e.g. 'widowed in the reserves'; 'like little children'). The fact that the women have husbands who are forbidden to live with them adds a poignancy, which is made worse by it being unnecessary and only a product of the unequal system. The potential ease with which the unfair system can be reversed is dealt with by Mandela's use of a coordinating sentence which links cause and effect with simplicity: 'Political division based on colour is entirely artificial and, when it disappears so will the domination of one group by another'.

Mandela's clarity extends to the surety of the outcome, when he says that, under a new racially equal system, Africans will dominate, one of a number of assertions which use high modality (e.g. 'will be'). His continued reference to African and non-African reactions ensures that he places a continuing emphasis on language which includes all racial groups.

Mandela varies his plain speaking about the current situation and desired outcome with rhetorical devices to add to the weight and importance of what must happen. Sustained repetition of the proper noun 'African'(s)', use of emotive metaphor with the lexical field of death (e.g. 'widowed') and similes (e.g. 'like little children') reinforce the indignities suffered by Africans only. The use of parallel constructions beginning with 'I' marks Mandela's personal commitment and passion for his cause. The link he makes between himself and a higher spiritual authority (e.g. 'My Lord') ensures that the cause for which he is on trial has the gravest of outcomes.

The entire extract is framed around language which pleads for justice to enable African and white citizens to enjoy a racially equal society.

#### ACTIVITY 4

- 1 Look carefully at the question set for the student, which is in two parts. Has the student answered both parts in approximately the same amount of detail?
- 2 What methods has the student used to analyse the language to include all racial groups?
- 3 Has the student validated points made with a specific example

and a commentary on the effects achieved?

- 4 Has the student structured the essay with an introduction, developed set of points and conclusion?
- 5 Compare your answers to the previous four questions with the teacher's comments that follow. Did you come to the same conclusions?

#### TEACHER COMMENT

This is a high-level response. The student has set the speech in context and is aware of the appropriately formal register used.

The answer has a focused analysis of language with proficient appreciation of the conventions of a formal speech.

Correct language terminology has been used – not just the labelling of language, but there are many effects of the language features, with relevant examples, taken from throughout the passage.

The answer focuses on the extract with reference to the language used to include and to exclude. It is written in Standard English and structured clearly with guiding topic sentences to indicate the content of each paragraph and the contribution it makes to the overall argument.

#### Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the concepts of inclusion and exclusion and how they relate to language and self-identity		
I can use case studies, both past and present, as examples of where groups have been treated unequally because of their language		
I am able to use language to structure coherent answers relating to language used for inclusion and exclusion		

# **Unit 10.7**

## **Speech sounds and accents**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn about the physiology of speech production (AO4)
- explore the ways in which speech sounds and accents can influence self-identity (AO4)
- analyse texts linked to the ways speech sounds and accents can influence personal identity (AO1).

### **Before you start**

- 1 What organs in your body are involved in producing speech sounds?
- 2 What descriptors do you use to describe the sound of someone's speech?
- 3 What clues about a person can be picked up from listening to their voice alone?

## **Accent**

Accent is a significant feature of spoken English in any English-speaking part of the world. The huge number of sounds that you produce during the course of a day are almost all used in the production of speech. You can cough, giggle, snort and laugh, but you are constantly re-forming your speech organs to communicate with others through language.

English is spoken in very many different ways and these variations in speech produce a variety of accents. In many parts of the English-speaking world, the accent spoken is closely associated with social class and prestige.

## Speech sound production

Speech is the primary medium of language. Speech sounds are produced as we breathe out. The column of air that we exhale is modified as it leaves the lungs, past the glottis in the throat and through the mouth or nose. It is given voice (noise) by the vocal chords in the glottis, and individual sounds are shaped by the mouth and the tongue.

- Vowels are sounds made with no restriction of air through the mouth – the different sounds are formed by the shape made by the mouth.
- Consonants are sounds made with some restriction to the airflow (for example, by the tongue, teeth or lips).

Our alphabet has no single letter for spelling some consonant sounds, for example *ch* as in ‘chain’ or *th* as in ‘thin’ and *ng* as in ‘sing’.



### KEY CONCEPT

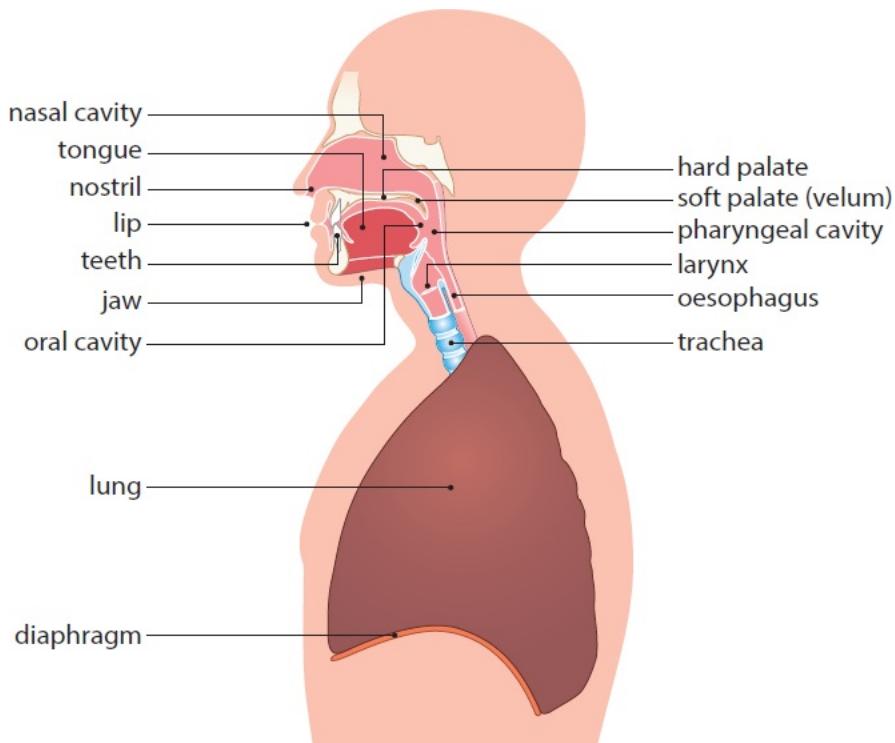
#### Diversity

Individual, group and national English speakers provide a wide range of speech sounds and accents which contribute to a sense of personal identity.

- 1 In what ways might their accent affect an individual’s sense of personal identity?
- 2 What part does your accent play in your self-identity?

There are 21 consonant letters in the written alphabet (B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, T, V, W, X, Y, Z), and there are 24 consonant sounds in most English accents ... Because of the erratic history of English spelling, there is no neat one-to-one correlation between letters and sounds.

From *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, by David Crystal.



The parts of the human anatomy used for speech production.

## The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

As you learnt in [Unit 8.3](#), the purpose of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is to provide a means of accurately transcribing the sounds of speech independent of any language. The IPA is used in some foreign language textbooks and phrase books to transcribe the sounds of languages which are written with non-Latin alphabets. It is also used by non-native speakers of English when learning to speak English. You will see in the following table that the symbols are not all recognisable letters, as in the English alphabet. The symbols created can replicate the sounds which are not accurately represented by single letters, such as the symbol /θ/ for /th/.

The phonetic alphabet is invaluable in helping you to clarify the exact sounds of pronunciation. It is not examined specifically at A Level, and so you do not need to learn it. However, you should be aware that this alphabet provides the definitive description of speech sounds and is an important reference tool in spoken language.

<b>I</b> READ	<b>I</b> SIT	<b>ʊ</b> BOOK	<b>uː</b> TOO	<b>ɪə</b> HERE	<b>eɪ</b> DAY		
e MEN	ə AMERICA	ɜː WORD	ɔː SORT	ʊə TOUR	ɔɪ BOY	əʊ GO	
æ CAT	ʌ BUT	ɑː PART	ɒ NOT	eə WEAR	aɪ MY	ɒʊ HOW	
p PIG	b BED	t TIME	d DO	tʃ CHURCH	dʒ JUDGE	k KILO	g GO
f FIVE	v VERY	θ THINK	ð THE	s SIX	z ZOO	ʃ SHORT	ʒ CASUAL
m MILK	n NO	ŋ SING	h HELLO	l LIVE	r READ	w WINDOW	j YES
							ʔ GLOTTAL STOP

#### The International Phonetic Alphabet (Received Pronunciation).

#### ACTIVITY 1

- 1 Draw diagrams to explain the ways in which we produce the different consonant sounds.
- 2 Select ten words and, with the help of the IPA, write them out using the correct phonetic symbols. You could start by writing your name.
- 3 How many different accents are there in your class? Ask your fellow students to say the same word and use the IPA to show how they pronounce it. Try to represent the sounds as precisely as possible.

## The sounds of speech - accent

The means of voice production is universal in human beings. It is the sound, stress and intonation which produce the wide variety of accents in the English language. Accent refers only to the way a word is pronounced and the huge variety in ways of speaking which exist in English.

Apart from Received Pronunciation (RP), accents may associate a person with a certain geographical region. RP itself is an accent with a high social status rather than being linked to a specific geographical location. If an accent is very different from RP it is said to be 'broad' and of a correspondingly lower status. RP is explained in [Unit 9.3](#).

Accents change far more quickly over time than the spellings of written language change. For this reason, many English words are not spelt in the way that they are pronounced. Nearly all students of English experience difficulties in spelling correctly, as there are many irregularities and inconsistencies. For example:

- words with the same pronunciation are spelled differently (e.g. 'write', 'right', 'rite')
- words with the same spelling are pronounced differently (e.g. 'invalid', 'invalid', 'refuse', 'refuse')
- many words have silent letters (e.g. 'climb', 'knight', 'ballet')
- words may diverge with the English/American system of spelling (e.g. 'plough'/'plow', 'neighbour'/'neighbor', 'programme'/'program').

## Accent and status

It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him.

**Taken from the preface to the play *Pygmalion*, by George Bernard Shaw.**

Certain accents and dialects carry more prestige. Traditionally, in the UK, broader regional accents have been associated with lower socioeconomic groups of people who have fewer formal qualifications. In previous generations, many people did not travel extensively and were therefore heavily influenced by their local culture and speech. Today, globalisation has changed this situation throughout the world. Higher socioeconomic groups have professional jobs as a result of higher qualifications, and are more mobile, both geographically and socially. This generalisation is true for all areas of the English-speaking world.

There is some debate about how far this situation has changed in recent generations, but, with a far greater ethnic mix and much wider travel for work and leisure, a greater mix of accents can now be heard in urban areas. In the English-speaking world there may still be perceived advantages in speaking RP and some people will consciously modify their accents to speak in this way for professional or social reasons. However, some have moved away from RP towards a non-standard accent, such as Estuary English, which has become widely established in the UK from its origins around the London area.

The United States is said to have no prestige dialect, though, in practice, the General American accent is more widely spoken in public forums than pronounced regional accents.

You can remind yourself about accents by looking back to [Unit 9.3](#).

### ACTIVITY 2

Using the information in the unit and your wider knowledge of accents, write two to three paragraphs explaining the ways in which speech sounds and accents contribute to a person's sense of self-identity.

A recent phenomenon has been the association of certain accents with particular personal qualities. Business communication over the telephone from global call centres, for instance, has given rise to stereotypes of speakers with particular accents. For example, there is a completely unfounded assumption that accents from rural areas indicate that the speaker is of low intelligence.

The following article, based on recent research in the UK, comments on the different perceptions of accents within Britain.

#### **Yorkshire named top twang as Brummie brogue comes bottom**

Silence could well be golden for ambitious **Brummies** after research found people with the distinctive nasal Birmingham accent were seen as stupid while those with a **Yorkshire** twang were considered clever.

The study into dialect and perceived intelligence found that people who said nothing at all were regarded as more intelligent than those with a Brummie accent.

This is despite a general trend in which regional dialects have become more respectable. The Yorkshire accent is rated as the most intelligent sounding, beating Received Pronunciation, the accent of royalty and **public school** alumni, for the first time. [...] Times have changed since the days when Received Pronunciation, also known as the Queen's English, was seen as the language of the elite.

'Thirty years ago ten per cent of the population went to university', said Dr Workman, who led the study. 'If someone had RP you'd probably think they had gone to university. Today, 44 per cent of young people go to university. I think there's been a shift in what we expect from somebody who is educated. There's been this change from elite education to mass education'. Workman added that while

RP was once ubiquitous on the BBC, nowadays many broadcasters have regional accents. RP was now widely regarded as 'dull and boring', he added.

**Adapted from 'Yorkshire named top twang as Brummie brogue comes bottom', by David Batty, *The Guardian*.**

**Brummie:** the slang name given to people who live in the English city of Birmingham

**Yorkshire:** a large county in northern England

**public school:** (in Britain) expensive, prestigious private school

### ACTIVITY 3

Discuss the following topics in a small group. Save a list of the opinions expressed and apply them to the importance of speech sounds and accents to social identity.

- 1 To what extent are you influenced in a positive or negative way by different accents? Can you explain why?
- 2 Discuss why different accents may have stereotypes attached to them.
- 3 A variety of English accents are now heard throughout English-speaking areas. Do you feel that there are differences in status amongst these accents? If so, what do you think has been the reason for these differences?

## Question practice

Read the following article about accent neutralisation in Indian call centres. Use the information in it, and your wider knowledge of language and social identity, to explain the reasons why Indian call-centre workers are changing their accent. Do you agree with what they are being asked to do? Give reasons for your answer.

(25 marks)

### Accent neutralisation and a crisis of identity in India's call centres



The demand for a neutral global accent in the call-centre industry is seeing Indian workers stripped of their mother tongue.

Initially, workers in the Indian call-centre industry were trained in specifically American and British accents, but the preference is increasingly toward a 'neutral' global accent, as it allows workers to be shifted around to serve various markets without additional training.

The demand for globalised speech has led to the creation of specialised institutes for accent neutralisation. 'Those with extremely good skills don't want to [work in call centres],' says Kiran Desai, a veteran accent trainer. 'What you get is a lot of people who don't speak very well and aren't from the best schools', she adds, in a crisp British-Indian accent.

Schools do not concentrate on phonetics enough 'and so they pick up sounds from their mother tongue. We teach them to get rid of mother-tongue influence [...]' The complete programme, Desai says, takes three to four weeks to take hold, in places such as Bombay and Pune, but can last up to two to three months in the south.

For Desai, these are purely technical issues; she is adamant that these practices do not lead to a 'loss of culture.' [...] Yet Desai says, uncomprehendingly, that there is sometimes resistance to training: 'They say, "I'm an Indian and I speak fairly well. Why do I need to change?" I don't know why [they object].'

**Adapted from 'Accent neutralisation and a crisis of identity in India's call centres', by Shehzad Nadeem, *The Guardian*.**

A good response to this question will:

- 1 describe the specific issue of Indian workers being trained not to speak in the style of their mother tongue

- 2 explain the reasons for this linguistic change and the response of the call-centre workers
- 3 discuss the importance of language and speech styles to the individual sense of self and to cultural social identity
- 4 illustrate the points made with past and present case studies
- 5 conclude with a personal opinion about the change of accent for training, giving clear reasons for the views you hold and linking them closely to your work on language and social identity.

**Reflection:** Working with a partner to evaluate your responses, consider:

- 1 How far have you followed the guidelines listed?
- 2 Have you written a clear introduction outlining your strategies for responding to the command words of the essay title?
- 3 How far you have written about the issues of Indian workers being trained not to speak in their mother tongue and the possible conflict of self-identity for them?
- 4 Have you provided examples and other case studies, if possible including relevant information from your own country?
- 5 Did you focus on self-identity as it links to speech sounds and accents?
- 6 Have you written in Standard English?
- 7 Have you concluded with a brief overview and ensuring that your voice – your opinion – is backed up with ideas and evidence?

## Continuing changes of speech sounds

Towards the middle of the 19th century, many members of the newly emergent middle class felt the need to shore up their status by taking elocution lessons and learning to speak in RP, to establish their position of respectability. Voice coaches still exist but are unlikely to instil the ‘cut-glass’ tones of years ago.

The accents of English are changing through the voices of the millions worldwide who speak the language with varying degrees of fluency. It is therefore likely that the status of these accents will vary and will affect the social fabric of the English-speaking community.

### THINK LIKE ... A CALL-CENTRE MANAGER

Imagine you are the manager of a call centre receiving calls from people worldwide. Write the first five points of a training manual giving guidelines to your staff about the style of speech they should use when taking calls, with the reasons why they are being asked to do this.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand the mechanisms involved in the production of speech sounds		
I understand the significance of RP and geographical varieties of accent which exist in the English-speaking world		
I can back up my knowledge of accents and prestige with appropriate case studies		

# **Unit 10.8**

## **Practice and self-assessment**

### **Learning objectives**

***In this unit, you will:***

- learn how to write an excellent response to a Cambridge International A Level question on the topic of language and the self that requires you to analyse ideas and show your knowledge of the subject (AO2)
- demonstrate understanding of linguistic issues, concepts, methods and approaches (AO4)
- write effectively, creatively, accurately and appropriately for a range of audiences and purposes (AO2).

### **Before you start**

Work with a partner to go through [Units 10.1–10.7](#). For each unit, write down the contribution that language makes to the particular area(s) of self-identity under discussion.

## Essay-writing guidelines and practice

The following table gives the criteria for a competent essay and an excellent essay.

Competent	Excellent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear, structured response.</li><li>• Steady and mainly focused awareness of the language topic.</li><li>• Identifies appropriate language features, theories and ideas within the essay.</li><li>• Competence in fusing the specific demands of the question with the wider language topic.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fluent, perceptive response.</li><li>• Discriminating and highly informed appreciation of the language topic.</li><li>• Embeds quotations and references concisely and fluently.</li><li>• Seamless fusion of the specific demands of the question with the wider language topic.</li></ul>

The essay question and guidance that follow will aim to help you write stronger essays.

Read the question which follows and follow the guidelines beneath.

The following is an extract taken from a report on an experiment by Elizabeth Loftus and John Palmer (1974) which involved changing the verb describing a traffic accident and recording the participants' responses after they had seen a video of the crash.

The main focus question was, 'How fast were the two cars going when they ----- each other?' The missing verb could be any of the following: *smashed, collided, bumped, hit or contacted*.

The participants responded as follows:

Verb	Mean estimate of speed (miles per hour)
Smashed	40.8
Collided	39.3
Bumped	38.1
Hit	34.0
Contacted	31.8

With reference to this data showing the findings of the experiment and your wider knowledge of the subject, discuss the different ideas and theories of the influence of language on thought.

**(25 marks)**

Remember the following key points:

- Note down the key command words in the task and make sure you are clear what part of the language and the self section you are being asked about. It is language and thought. You know that there are different theories about the extent of influence of language on thought, so you need to know what each one suggests. A brief introduction explaining that there are differences of opinion about the extent of influence of language on thought, with named theories, will show your knowledge immediately.
- Re-read the data to find a pattern or trend. Link this to the views of different theories. State the pattern and describe what you see. Then relate your finding to the theory which believes that language has an influence on thought. Write in some detail about the evidence collected. You could then critically appraise the hypothesis.
- Write about other theories which contradict the hypothesis you have just put forward. This shows your wider knowledge. Remember, you are asked to discuss and not just describe. You should write about strengths and weaknesses of each idea.
- The specific study, as well as the theories, will form the body of your essay. It is good practice to begin each paragraph with a topic sentence which states what theory or point of view you are writing about. Information and evaluation then follow in each paragraph.
- Conclude your essay with a reference back to the command words and/or the specific study quoted in the question. 'Data', 'wider knowledge', 'language and thought', and 'discuss' are the command words

here. In any topic in which there is debate and different theories exist, your conclusion should recognise the differences of opinion. Your informed personal voice can be heard, too, as part of a conclusion which evaluates theories and research on language and thought.

## Practice question

**Step 1** Plan and write a response to the following question:

Discuss the view that language is central to the construction of self-identity.

(25 marks)

After you have written your own response, read the student response and the annotations that follow.

### STUDENT RESPONSE

If something is ‘constructed’, it is built up and this is what happens to a person’s sense of self throughout their lives. From the time a baby starts to realise that they are separate from others, they begin to interact with them. As soon as they are able to, they use language to create a sense of their own identity; they know that they are ‘me’ as opposed to ‘you’ or ‘them’. Throughout a person’s life, this distinctive sense of self is closely bound up with language. Different ideas and theories exist about how important language is to a person’s sense of self. Psychological influences are also thought to contribute to self-identity.

Different theories exist about the cognitive skills which help a child form a sense of self-identity. The Swiss Psychologist Piaget pioneered research about the development of a young child’s thinking, including the important stage from four to seven years, which he labelled ‘egocentric’.

The child thinks that they are the centre of the world and so the acquisition of language skills, helped by family and friends who use a simplified form of conversation called caretaker language, helps the child see themselves as distinct from others. These are the beginnings of self-identity.

The family is the first social group a child meets, and from them they learn their mother tongue(s) to express their likes and dislikes as well as how to use language for social and instrumental reasons. Everyone is born into specific groups – ethnicity, or gender for example. As they grow older, they become part of other groups to do with work, play and interests. It seems to be human nature to want to be like others in the groups. This extends to using language. Giles, in his Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) developed the idea that people adjust their behaviour to be more like others in the groups they associate with and this extends to language. In spoken language, people modify their accents, their lexis and style of speaking. As well as modifying their accents to be like others in the group, people in a country, such as Britain or the US, are aware that some accents have greater prestige than others. Received Pronunciation and Standard American English are different sorts of accents, but they are associated with higher authority or status, so that people may adopt these accents for these reasons.

Teenagers are a particular group whose distinctive use of language is seen to foster a sense of self-identity. Their language is often used to exclude others, notably older family and adults who may impose on the social group and who need to be excluded. The language generated from online and social media sites is common to all slang or new words – they come and go very quickly, which is itself a marker of group inclusion or exclusion.

A very different, historical example about how language can influence a

sense of self-identity is when, in England, people were put to death for wanting to worship in English rather than in Latin. This is a very clear case of language being important to a sense of self.

An important idea is the debate concerning people's sense of self; whether their thoughts are entirely determined by the language they speak (the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) or whether their language reflects ideas which exist.

Developing and maintaining a sense of self lasts throughout a person's life. It seems clear that the influence of language plays an important part in this lifelong process.

**[1]** Attempt to immediately engage with the question by linking a key word in the question ('constructed') with the language focus

**[2]** Interaction is a general point, not developed though examples of 'me' and 'you' are relevant

**[3]** General statement only. The comment about the variety of theories is valid but descriptive and leads into the body of the essay

**[4]** Inclusion of a named theory and its originator. Some relevant detail not significantly developed to the question

**[5]** Appropriate terminology but no example - brief effects stated

**[6]** Reasonably competent appraisal of social groups and language - theory and theorist - though no specific examples given

**[7]** Close link with identity and language with examples

**[8]** Another relevant point for the question, though reasonably briefly dealt with and underdeveloped. No examples given of teenage slang

**[9]** Valid new section and theory very briefly described. No development with examples as to why the theory developed - essentially descriptive

**[10]** Brief summative overview with the beginnings of a voice/point of view

#### TEACHER COMMENT

There is a focus on the question with appropriate content in support. Theories and studies are discussed, but examples are not always included, so the analysis is at times uneven. There is a confidence in answering the question and a range of points is covered. The essay is written in a reasonably fluent and controlled manner. This would achieve a mark for a competent standard but no higher.

**Reflection:** Compare your response with that of the student.

- 1 Did you cover a variety of theories and ideas, each with an explanation of their contribution to the importance of language to self-identity? Did you give examples for each theory?
- 2 Did you select your information to relate to language, from the very large pool of information relating to self-identity?
- 3 Did you write a focused introduction explaining the structure of the essay? Did you make some immediate comment about the influence of language which showed specific knowledge rather than bland comments which merely repeated the question?
- 4 Did you write a succinct conclusion and did you show your own voice and informed point of view on the topic?

Using the annotations and comments on the student's response, identify any weaknesses in your own answer. Then rewrite your answer to improve the weaker areas and produce a successful essay. You should write between 800 and 900 words.

## What does an excellent response look like?

So far in this unit you've seen an example of a good response. Now look at the following response, which is an example of an excellent response.

Evaluate the idea that a person's sense of linguistic identity is completely determined by the social groups they belong to.

(25 marks)

### STUDENT RESPONSE

A person's sense of self is intrinsic to their ability to function. The term 'sense of self' may be defined as the knowledge, traits and ideas defining and separating an individual from all other people. A person's linguistic sense of self is essential to their own reasoning and cognitive powers as well as their written and spoken communication with others. This essay aims to assess the contribution that language makes to a person's sense of identity in relation to the interlocking social groups they interact with and belong to. Groups and the context in which they operate, provide a complex web of formal and informal interaction within a society. There may be defined rules for belonging to a group, or the group may depend on location, skills, interests and preferences. Social groups may be lifelong, such as family, or short-lived, such as a class. However, irrespective of their duration, language is important for the communication amongst the members.

Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory strongly supports the idea that an individual's language style is influenced by the social groups with whom they mix, for example their style of speech, the vocabulary they use and their accent. The theory suggests that, in general, linguistic differences are minimised by the process of convergence, whereby a person consciously blends their language style with the group.

Convergence can create a sociolect, where a style of spoken language is shared amongst a particular group, for example in the United States names for carbonated drinks vary by region: on the northeastern coast it is called 'soda' while in the mid-west it is mainly called 'pop'. Arguably, accent is a much more significant test of convergence, where incomers may consciously change their accent to be more like their new neighbours. Linguistic identity may also be determined in the opposite way, if an individual consciously seeks to become linguistically different from their social group, such as the practice of a manager being called by his surname instead of his first name. In this way, the language used helps to reinforce status. The British Library website asserts that no two individuals speak identically and even within the same community, there are variations according to a person's age, gender, ethnicity and social and educational background.

Linguistic identity and its connection to gender is relevant in this discussion. Zimmerman and West recorded a small sample of male and female conversations and found that men were more likely to interrupt than women. Subsequent research has shown that women are conversationally more cooperative and tend to keep a conversation going by asking questions, while men hold the conversational floor. Lakoff (1975) identified the 'politeness' principle: the 'please' and 'thank you' more traditionally associated with women; however, these studies are dated, as are possibly their findings. More recent studies on computer-mediated conversation have produced contrasting findings about the

comparative hostility or friendliness typified by females and males online. This challenges the statement that gender as a group completely determines linguistic identity.

All people belong to an intersecting network of many social groups and linguistic identity may well affect behaviour and relationships. Language is in a constant process of change and young people, teenagers in particular, are early adaptors who use rapidly changing slang. Recent studies of inner-city London teenage slang show that new words are constantly emerging; for example ‘bluds’ are friends; ‘nang’ means good. Other inner city locations will have different words and phrases but these will serve the same function of including group members and excluding others. Slang is ephemeral and so these will be replaced over time. Social media such as Instagram and Facebook, like any other social groups, have forms and conventions such as gifs and hashtags, which are instantly recognisable by their users, who in a globalised world are likely to be from a range of ethnic and religious groups. Research has found, contrary to possible expectations, that the colloquial language of social networking sites has given rise to a resurgence of regional dialects, as people converse in the colloquialisms of their region. The word ‘scran’ meaning food, previously restricted to the Liverpool area, has gone global which shows the rapidly changing language of groups. This process of inclusion and exclusion does support the proposition that a person’s linguistic identity is affected by the groups to which they belong.

The debate therefore centres around the notion that an individual’s linguistic identity is ‘completely determined’ by the social groups. Arguably the family is the earliest and most enduring social group to which an individual belongs. Child language acquisition appears to follow regular stages but the style of language acquired is also part of the debate. A longstanding principle developed by Bernstein in the 1960s suggests that the socioeconomic circumstances of the family group affects the type of language learned by the child; Bernstein divided the styles into Restricted Code with short simple discourse and limited vocabulary and reasoning and the Elaborated Code, which provides a wider range of linguistic and cognitive skills. Social conditions have changed and socioeconomic groups are arguably more fluid. Nonetheless the language styles of the family as nurturing language are still recognised as an important influence on an individual.

Each individual is part of a unique network of social groups. Communication with others is a basic requirement of group membership, however transitory or permanent these may be. The digital world and social media have added another dimension to social groups, but whether face to face, restricted in number, transient or the reverse, the language used by an individual to engage with others in these groups contributes to acceptance and inclusion and therefore impacts on and affects their linguistic identity.

#### TEACHER COMMENT

Engaged and very focused analysis of language question. Detailed and insightful exploration of the effects and qualities conveyed by language issues. All points are accompanied by relevant research and/or language examples. A sense of debate. An awareness that not all areas can be addressed; the ability to convey knowledge and understanding in a comparative, sustained, consistent and fluent manner.

#### ACTIVITY 1

Review this student response against the table of criteria at the start of the unit. Can you see how this response demonstrates the criteria for an excellent response? Try to find at least one example for each statement.

## Self-assessment checklist

Reflect on what you've learnt in this unit and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If you score below 3, revisit that section. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

	Confidence level	Revisited?
I understand strategies for planning and writing a critically evaluative essay		
I know the essay-writing strategies which must be in place for an excellent answer		
I have practiced the skills for a successful Cambridge International A Level-standard essay		

# Reference table of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) phonemic symbols (Received Pronunciation) and transcription key

1 Consonants of English		2 Pure vowels of English	
/f/	<u>fat</u> , <u>rough</u>	/i:/	<u>beat</u> , <u>keep</u>
/v/	<u>very</u> , <u>village</u> , <u>love</u>	/ɪ/	<u>bit</u> , <u>tip</u> , <u>busy</u>
/θ/	<u>theatre</u> , <u>thank</u> , <u>athlete</u>	/e/	<u>bet</u> , <u>many</u>
/ð/	<u>this</u> , <u>them</u> , <u>with</u> , <u>either</u>	/æ/	<u>bat</u>
/s/	<u>sing</u> , <u>thinks</u> , <u>losses</u>	/ʌ/	<u>cup</u> , <u>son</u> , <u>blood</u>
/z/	<u>zoo</u> , <u>beds</u> , <u>easy</u>	/a:/	<u>car</u> , <u>heart</u> , <u>calm</u> , <u>aunt</u>
/ʃ/	<u>sugar</u> , <u>bush</u>	/ɒ/	<u>pot</u> , <u>want</u>
/ʒ/	<u>pleasure</u> , <u>beige</u>	/ɔ:/	<u>port</u> , <u>saw</u> , <u>talk</u>
/h/	<u>high</u> , <u>hit</u> , <u>behind</u>	/ə/	<u>about</u> , <u>sudden</u>
/p/	<u>pit</u> , <u>top</u>	/ɜ:/	<u>word</u> , <u>bird</u>
/t/	<u>tip</u> , <u>pot</u> , <u>steep</u>	/ʊ/	<u>book</u> , <u>wood</u> , <u>put</u>
/k/	<u>keep</u> , <u>tick</u> , <u>scare</u>	/u:/	<u>food</u> , <u>soup</u> , <u>rude</u>
/b/	<u>bad</u> , <u>rub</u>		
/d/	<u>bad</u> , <u>dim</u>	3 Diphthongs of English	
/g/	<u>gun</u> , <u>big</u>		
/tʃ/	<u>church</u> , <u>lunch</u>	/eɪ/	<u>late</u> , <u>day</u> , <u>great</u>
/dʒ/	<u>judge</u> , <u>gin</u> , <u>jury</u>	/aɪ/	<u>time</u> , <u>high</u> , <u>die</u>
/m/	<u>mad</u> , <u>jam</u> , <u>small</u>	/ɔɪ/	<u>boy</u> , <u>noise</u>
/n/	<u>man</u> , <u>no</u> , <u>snow</u>	/aʊ/	<u>cow</u> , <u>house</u> , <u>town</u>
/ŋ/	<u>singer</u> , <u>long</u>	/əʊ/	<u>boat</u> , <u>home</u> , <u>know</u>
/l/	<u>loud</u> , <u>kill</u> , <u>play</u>	/ɪə/	<u>ear</u> , <u>here</u>
/j/	<u>you</u> , <u>beyond</u>	/eə/	<u>air</u> , <u>care</u> , <u>chair</u>
/w/	<u>one</u> , <u>when</u> , <u>sweet</u>	/ʊə/	<u>cure</u> , <u>jury</u>
/r/	<u>rim</u> , <u>bread</u>		
/ɹ/	<u>uh-oh</u>		

## Transcription key

(1) = pause in seconds

(.) = micropause

underlined = stressed sound/syllable(s)

// = speech overlap

[italics] = paralinguistic features

UPPER CASE = words spoken with increased volume

↗ = upward intonation

↘ = downward intonation

/wɪv/ = phonemic representation of speech sounds

°word° = words spoken with decreased volume

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# CAMBRIDGE

## UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108455824](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108455824)

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First published 2014

Second edition 2019

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-108-45582-4 Paperback

ISBN 978-1-108-45583-1 Cambridge Elevate edition (2 years)

ISBN 978-1-108-45584-8 Digital edition

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