English Language: Moving from GCSE to A-Level…

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| **HOW DO I KNOW IF IT IS FOR ME?** | | | |
| If you enjoyed looking at the power of language and also creating you own descriptive pieces at GCSE, than A-Level English Language is for you. At A-Level, you will be looking at the use of language in scripted texts (like GCSE), but you’ll also be looking at ‘real life’ language – the language of children, of speech, throughout history. You’ll develop an understanding of accents, dialect, sociolect, and also lingiustic theory in broadening your understanding of language as the subject of both scientific and theoretical study; and, of course, language as a living entity that evolves and shapeshifts across time and within different contexts. A-Level English Language is the perfect companion to subjects such as drama & theatre, law, history, and psychology, as well as A-Level English Literature.  Delve into some of the links shown below to get more of an understanding of what you will explore in this particular subject at A-Level. | | | |
| **WATCH** | **READ ONLINE** | **LISTEN** | **FOLLOW** |
| **Where did English come from?** [**https://youtu.be/YEaSxhcns7Y**](https://youtu.be/YEaSxhcns7Y)  **Why did English become an international language?**  [**https://youtu.be/iqDFPU9YeQM**](https://youtu.be/iqDFPU9YeQM)  **One Woman, 17 Accents** [**https://youtu.be/FyyT2jmVPAk**](https://youtu.be/FyyT2jmVPAk)  **Sexism and the English Language** [**https://youtu.be/5uaBwAe2BhY**](https://youtu.be/5uaBwAe2BhY)  **Child Language Acquisition** [**https://youtu.be/ylBQMgkHnFA**](https://youtu.be/ylBQMgkHnFA)  **‘Accentism’: The New Classism?**  [**https://youtu.be/\_8OLWDOvJ9E**](https://youtu.be/_8OLWDOvJ9E) | ***Something to ease you in? Try:***  **An introduction to studying A-Level Language**  [**https://www.superprof.co.uk/blog/learn-english-language-a-level/**](https://www.superprof.co.uk/blog/learn-english-language-a-level/)  **The writers of the Guardian talk language usage and abusage**  [**https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language**](https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language)  **A blog by an American woman living in the UK**  <https://separatedbyacommonlanguage.blogspot.com/>  ***Looking for something a little more technical? Try:***  **Regional Voices: The North-South Divide**  [**https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects/articles/regional-voices-the-north-south-divide**](https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects/articles/regional-voices-the-north-south-divide)  **The Burnley Accent**  [**https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/burnley-accent-bernadette-keelie-difficulties-single-mothers**](https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/burnley-accent-bernadette-keelie-difficulties-single-mothers)  **Minority Ethnic English**  [**https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects/articles/minority-ethnic-english**](https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects/articles/minority-ethnic-english) | **The Allusionist with Kathryn Grundy**  **(WARNING: Some adult content)**  [**https://www.theallusionist.org/listen**](https://www.theallusionist.org/listen)  **BBC Word of Mouth with Michael Rosen**  [**https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtnz**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtnz) | **(WARNING: Some adult content)**  @susie\_dent  @Dictionarycom  @aboutworldlangs  @irishpolygot  @Languagebandit |
| **WHAT IF…?** | |
| A child were left locked up in a room all of her life, with no adult interaction other than abuse? Would she learn language?  Research ‘The Feral Child Genie’.  There are articles and documentaries available online; what happened in her language development and what does this tell us about the human ability to learn and need for interaction? | |
| **WANT MORE?** | **READ AT HOME** | |
| **Visit the website for Edexcel A-Level Language (our chosen specification) for some more specific information about exams and content:**  [**https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-language-2015.html**](https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-language-2015.html) | ***\*May be a little daunting at first, but with support and classroom practice they’ll begin to become more understandable***   * David Crystal: ‘Listen to Your Child’ * Lynne Truss: ‘Eats, Shoots, and Leaves’ * Deborah Tannen: ‘You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversaation’\* * D. Forrest: ‘Inside Creative Writing: Interviews with Contemporary Writers’ | |

Component 1: Language Variation

In this section you will study the ways language varies according to the user: their age, gender, geographical background, ethnicity, occupation or status. You explore some theories about attitudes to language use, as well as some ideas about ways that meanings are implied by language use in a specific context. The first section explores the presentation of identity in modern texts, whereas the second section compares change over time.

**Section A: Language & Identity: Understanding the Construction of the Self in Written Texts**

**Activity: The Language of Killers**

Read Text A. This text is from a Bury criminal case in 2007, where a 15-year-old Michael Hamer pleaded guilty to the murder of an 11-year-old boy, Joe Geeling. The prosecution claimed that a letter, apparently written by a teacher, was faked by Michael.

* Is it convincing as the style of a teacher?

Identify:

* features of a teacher’s style of language use (word choices, level of formality, letter structure)
* features that betray a younger person’s language use (word choices, sentence structures, use of grammar)
* Can you produce a more convincing forgery of the style of a teacher? What steps do you have to take to manipulate your language to create a fake identity?

**Joseph,**

**You may have heard Year 10s have started to mentor Year 7s and they have been told to take some books to understand the diffi culties some people may be having. As you may know Michael is your mentor and will start next week.**

**Unfortunetely [sic] Michael has got some of your books, but will be unable to return them to you fortwo months due to surgery. So I have spoken to your mum and told her the situation and I have asked her if you could go with Michael to his house and collect them with the permission of your mother.**

**I have given the address to your mum and she will meet you at the house at 4.30pm tonight.**

**Sorry for the inconvenience.**

**L. Foley**

**Deputy-Headteacher**

**Do not discuss this with anyone else as this will cause confusion.**

**Thanks.**

Read the following extract from an open letter from Ian Brady, the Scottish serial killer who, along with his girlfriend Myra Hindley, tortured and killed multiple children before burying them on a Greater Manchester moor.

The letter was written to the then the home secretary, Jack Straw, in response to Hindley’s claims that Brady manipulated her into killing the children with him.

* Make notes on Brady’s style.
* Use a dictionary to find out the meaning of the words the writer uses. Also notice their etymology (originally from Old English, or Middle English from French, Latin or Greek).
* Try to express the writer’s point in Plain English.
* What different effect does the writer’s choice of words convey?
* What kind of identity is Brady trying to create and why?

**Myra and I once loved each other. We were a unified force, not two conflicting entities. The relationship was not based on the delusional concept of folie à deux, but on a conscious/subconscious emotional and psychological affinity. She regarded periodic homicide as rituals of reciprocal innervation, marriage ceremonies theoretically binding us ever closer.**

**As the records show, before we met my criminal activities had been primarily mercenary. Afterwards, a duality of motivation developed. Existential philosophy melded with the spirituality of death and became predominant. We experimented with the concept of total possibility. Instead of the requisite Lady Macbeth, I got Messalina. Apart, our futures would have taken radically divergent courses.**

**Section B: Variation Over Time: The Changing Nature of the English Language**

There are two fundamental factors to this section of the exam: understanding the changing nature of societal norms, values and attitudes and understanding the more technical changes of English Language.

Below are three texts from across history, each within the field of relationships. Annotate each text, looking for:

* Variant spellings and grammatical structures in the older texts (the oldest is like a different language!)
* Attitudes to sex, relationships, and gender
* Words you don’t recognise or understand and what you think these might have meant
* Changes in formality and register over time

**Text B:** from *Instructions to his Sonne: and to Posteritie* by Sir Walter Raleigh (published 1632, but written between 1603 and 1618)

The next, and greatest care in this life, ought to be in choice of thy Wife, and the onely danger therin is Beautie, by which all men in all Ages, wise and foolish, have beene betrayed. And though I know it vaine to use Reasons, or Arguments to dismay thee, from being captivated therewith, there being few that ever resisted the Witcherie; yet I cannot omit to warne thee, as of other things, which may be thy destruction for the present time. It is true, that every man preferreth his fantasie in that Appetite before all other worldly desires, leaving the care of Honour, credit, and safetie in respect thereof; yut remember, though these afflictions doe not last, yet the bonds of Marriage dureth to the end of thy life; and therefore better to be borne withall in a Mistris, then in a wife; for when thy humour shal change thou art yet free to chuse again (if thou give thy selfe that vaine liberty.) Remember, secondly, that if thou marry for Beauty, thou bindest thy selfe for all thy life for that which perchance will neither last nor please thee one yeere; and when thou hast it, it will bee unto thee of no price at all, for the desire dyeth when it is attayned, and the affection perisheth, when it is satisfied. Remember when thou wert a sucking Child, that thou diddest love thy Nurse, and that thou wert fond of her, after a while thou didst love thy dry Nurse, and didst forget the other, after thet thou didst also despise her; so will it be with thee in thy liking in elder yeeres; and therefore, though thou canst not forbeare to love, yet forbeare to linke, and after a while thou shalt find an alteration in thy selfe.

**Text A:** From *Your Pocket Guide to Sex* by Nick Fisher (1994)

Maybe you’re already having sex which is perfect. It might be so brilliant, that you just haven’t got time to read this book. Fair enough. Good on you.

But most of us aren’t having perfect sex. Most of us have got questions we’d like to ask or problems we’d like to share, but are reticent, because we don’t know what’s acceptable. Or we’re just plain embarrassed.

Your Pocket Guide to Sex tries to prod around in the areas people have difficulty with. It tries to explain a range of facts, explode a bundle of myths, give useful contacts, describe what safer sex is and even dig up a laugh or two’s worth of sexual trivia.

There are quotes from people who’ve been there, done that, there are comments from seasoned celebrities and there’s even some assorted nonsense about what we used to think, do and feel about sex in Ancient Times.

There are lots of things we didn’t include. For example, there’s no a–z of 101 new sexual positions. This is a book about getting to know yourself, your partners and safely enjoying and experimenting with the sex that you do have.

**Text C:** from a letter written by Margaret Paston to her husband John in 1441, right at the start of the early modern English period

To my ryth reuerent and worscheful husbond John Paston. Ryth reuerent and worscheful husbond, I recomaunde me to yow, desyryng hertyly to here of yowre wylfare, thankyng yow for þe tokyn þat ye sent me be Edmunde Perys, preyng yow to wete þat my modyr sent to my fadyr to London for a govne cloth of mvstyrddevyllers to make of a govne for me; and he tolde my modyr and me wanne he was comme hom þat he cargeyt yow to bey it aftyr þat he were come ovte of London. I pre yow, yf it be not bowt, þat ye wyl wechesaf to by it and send yt hom as sone as ye may, for I haue no govne to werre þis wyntyr but my blake and my grene a Lyere, and þat ys so comerus þat I ham wery to wer yt.

Component 2: Child Language Acquisition

In this component you will study the ways that children develop speech and writing, considering to what extent this is innate (biological) and to what extent it is learned. You will develop an understanding of sound patterns in speech, of the acquisition of words and grammar, and of the theoretical principles underpinning the debates around language development.

**Activity: A Theoretical Debate**

There are four main branches of theory on child language acquisition, captured succinctly below. Look at the examples of data and information underneath – which aspects of data do you think would support/challenge each theory? Ultimately, what does the data lead you to think about the theories and the ways in which language is acquired?

**BEHAVIOURISM**

**Language is LEARNED – all children learn language through copying the adults around them**

**NATIVISM**

**Language is INNATE – there is something within us biologically that enables us to acquire language**

**INTERACTIONISM**

**Language is CAUGHT – through social interaction with others & the need to converse; the desire for interaction drives language acquisition**

**COGNITIVE**

**Language is A DISPLAY OF A CHILD’S MENTAL CAPACITY – once a child can rationalise/make sense of an idea, they can articulate it**

* Child: (trying to open a clip) How did you unsqueezed *(has the child ever heard this word before…?)* it?
* ***Some normal babies produce no words until they are at least two years old. This must mean we aren’t all the same…***
* Adult: Say ‘nobody likes me’.

Child: Nobody don’t like me.

*(above dialogue repeated six times)*

Adult: Now listen carefully. Say ‘nobody LIKES me’.

Child: Oh…Nobody don’t LIKES me *(even when the adult shows the child how to do it, they can’t quite get there… why are they using the extra ‘s’?)*

* ***At birth any child can learn a language fluently. The fact that we only learn the language(s) we are exposed to says something about the influence of our environment?***
* Child: pot-potat-

Adult: potatoes?

Child: potatoes *(here, the adult’s support enables the child to acquire language)*

* ***All children learn to speak within a few years unless brain damaged. Does this mean there IS something about our brains being biologically hardwired to acquire language…?***

Component 3: Investigating Language

In this component you will be given five subtopics released by the Exam board in the December of Y13. You will choose one of the five and begin to research and compile data in this area, ready to answer two questions about it in the exam. Below are the topics and the subtopics by year: pick three of those that interest you most and follow the links to engage with some of the academic ideas surrounding your chosen topic.

**2020**

* GLOBAL ENGLISH: Kenyan English

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233675936_Grammatical_features_of_Kenyan_English_and_the_extent_of_their_acceptability>

* GENDER: Scripted Conversation of All-Male Conversation

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312191227\_Gender\_differences\_reflected\_

in\_friends’\_conversation\_Diiscourse\_analysis\_of\_dialogues\_from\_the\_TV\_series\_Coupling/download

* JOURNALISM: War Reportage

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_correspondent#History>

* POWER: Motivational Speaking

<https://www.forbes.com/forbes-life-magazine/2003/1110/070.html>

* REGIONAL VARIATION: Anglo-Cornish Over Time

<https://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects/BBC-Voices/021MC1190X0010XX-0201V0>

2019

* GLOBAL ENGLISH: Pacific creoles

[*https://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/index.html*](https://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/index.html)

* JOURNALISM: Broadcast Interviews on Current Affairs

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>

* POWER: Language of School Behaviour Management

<http://supportivebehaviourmanagement.weebly.com/language-of-choice.html>

* REGIONAL VARIATION: Newcastle English

<http://research.ncl.ac.uk/decte/toon/index.html>

2018

* GLOBAL ENGLISH: Caribbean English

<https://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/case-studies/minority-ethnic/caribbean/>

* GENDER: Women Sharing Personal Information

<https://www.academia.edu/3500356/Gender_Identities_and_Discourse>

* JOURNALISM: Newsletter Journalism

https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/report-uk-media-outlets-are-not-making-the-mostof-

email-newsletters-for-audience-engagement/s2/a604015/

* POWER: Charity Advertising

https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/sep/29/poverty-porncharity-

adverts-emotional-fundraising

* REGIONAL VARIATION: Scottish English

<http://www.scots-online.org/>

**FOR A LITTLE TASTER…**

1. Pick one of the subtopics from above (one with easy to find data is best at this point, such as children’s advertising or sports journalism) and gather 3-5 examples of data (‘data’ means an example of a text that uses language to present the subtopic).
2. Read each and find patterns in representation and in language use (for example, you might find that children’s advertising adheres to stereotypes such as little princesses or brave soldiers…). Try to gather examples from across time and across different publications (for sport, consider a football commentary versus an article about the representation of women in sport). Draw conclusions about the presentation of your subtopic more generally, writing these up in paragraph form and embedding examples of language into your answer.

Component 4: NEA

Your non-examined assessment – or coursework – component consists of three pieces of writing, each 1000 words long: two 1000 word pieces of original writing and one 1000 word commentary, where you analyse your use of language in each. You can write anything you like with your teacher’s approval.

**Activity: Every Story Has a Beginning**

This is a fiction task, but don’t forget you can write non-fiction, too.

Take a look at these famous openings and annotate them: what makes them so unusual and effective? What do you like/consider to be important in the writer’s style? Then, create your own 50 word openings for each task. How can you craft your language effectively to engage your audience straight away?

One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug. He lay on his armour-hard back and saw, as he lifted his head up a little, his brown, arched abdomen divided up into rigid bow-like sections. From this height the blanket, just about ready to slide off completely, could hardly stay in place. His numerous legs, pitifully thin in comparison to the rest of his circumference, flickered helplessly before his eyes.

**OVER TO YOU**

**Write the first 50 words to a story centred on the scenarios below. Pick at least four that appeal to you, or design your own:**

* The moment a soldier is hit by a bullet on the battlefield
* Waking up as a prisoner in solitary confinement
* The moment an Olympian wins at their chosen sport
* A character’s first day at a new school – but they hide a secret
* A story set 100 years from now that focuses on the impact of climate change
* The moment a poor family realises they’ve lost their winning lottery ticket
* An adult re-telling of a popular fairy tale
* The moment a patient in a hospital receives a terminal diagnosis

It was a pleasure to burn.

It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history. With his symbolic helmet numbered 451 on his stolid head, and his eyes all orange flame with the thought of what came next, he flicked the igniter and the house jumped up in a gorging fire that burned the evening sky red and yellow and black. He strode in a swarm of fireflies. He wanted above all, like the old joke, to shove a marshmallow on a stick in the furnace, while the flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and lawn of the house. While the books went up in sparkling whirls and blew away on a wind turned dark with burning.

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.

Gestures are all that I have; sometimes they must be grand in nature. And while I occasionally step over the line and into the world of the melodramatic, it is what I must do in order to communicate clearly and effectively. In order to make my point understood without question. I have no words I can rely on because, much to my dismay, my tongue was designed long and flat and loose, and therefore, is a horribly ineffective tool for pushing food around my mouth while chewing, and an even less effective tool for making clever and complicated polysyllabic sounds that can be linked together to form sentences. And that’s why I’m here now waiting for Denny to come home - he should be here soon - lying on the cool tiles of the kitchen floor in a puddle of my own urine.