

Language Analysis – The Basics

This handout contains some essential ideas you need for analysing **written, spoken** and **multi-modal language**.

There are several areas to think about.

Audience- who is the text aimed at? When you are analysing language think about how the audience is addressed. It might be **formal** or **informal**, direct or indirect. For example, in advertising the audience is often directly addressed as you.

Purpose- what is the writer/ speaker trying to achieve through their use of language, to persuade, instruct etc.

Format- what type of writing is it? Magazine article, newspaper article, speech etc...

Mode. This refers to whether the language is written or spoken mode. You can get mixed mode texts, often referred as multi-modal, such as text messages and social media sites.

Discourse has a structure

The way that language is organised is often called **discourse structure**.

You need to look out for different features, depending on whether the discourse is spoken or written.

In written discourse, look at how a text is put together. It may be an opening section which leads the reader into the text. The following sections may develop a theme or argument. The final section may be a conclusion.

In spoken dialogue the structure can be less organised. For example, conversations are unpredictable and speakers often digress (go off the subject.) This is because conversations are usually spontaneous. Even spontaneous conversations have a structure though.

Speaker 1: Hi, how are you?

Speaker 2: Fine thanks. How are you?

The structure can be turn taking as the speakers discuss a certain topic.

You can also look at how discourse fits together. This is known as **cohesion**.

Task - collect your own examples of written, spoken and mixed mode texts.