

English Language A level

Bridging Unit



Welcome to English Language A level!

There are three tasks in this booklet based on what you will begin to learn in Term 1 of your study of English Language A level.

Bridging Work Part 1 – Paper 1

A significant focus in English Language is on analysing a broad range of different texts. A text analysis is your interpretation of its meaning. The language features in the text act as a form of evidence for your reading, so the more examples you can give, the better.

One aspect of text analysis is representation – how something appears to be rather than how it really is.

Language Levels

The Language Levels underpin all the work we do in the A level.

In order to study language we need to separate it into different parts. Together, they can be used to look at a text at a holistic level, as well as being able to zoom in on specific aspects of language and explore the meanings and representations it offers.

Language Level	
Phonetics, phonology and prosodics	How speech sounds and effects are articulated and analysed.
Lexis and semantics	The vocabulary of English, including social and historical variation.
Grammar	The structural patterns and shapes of English at sentence, clause, phrase, and word level.
Pragmatics	The contextual aspects of language use.
Discourse	Extended stretches of communication occurring in different genres, modes and contexts.
Graphology	The visual aspects of textual design and appearance.

We need to use a much more specific and technical academic approach to texts. At GCSE, you may have become familiar with some terminology such as noun, verb, adjective and so on. At A level, you will learn terminology in much the same way, but in depth and with more precision and complexity.

In order to learn terminology, we will take a range of approaches in class and for homework:

- Learn through practice in class
- Revise by making revision materials
- Quiz in class
- Apply to texts in class and at home.

TASK 1:

In order to have a flying start to your A level study, we would like you to learn the following more technical terminology. You will be tested on this terminology in a Baseline quiz early in the term.

- 1. Find definitions and examples for each of the terms**
- 2. Make flashcards for each term, with examples on the back and a definition**

Term	Definition	Example
Tense		
Noun		
Proper noun		
Abstract noun		
Common noun		
Concrete noun		
Collective noun		
Verb		
Adverb		
An adverb of manner		
An adverb of time		
An adverb of frequency		
Adjective		
Preposition		
Connective		
Determiner		
Interjection		
Passive voice		
Active voice		
1 st person		
3 rd person		
4 categories of grammatical construction		
Simple		

Compound		
Complex		
Minor		
4 categories of purpose		
Exclamative		
Interrogative		
Imperative		
declarative		

Bridging Work Part 2 – Paper 2

Another part of your A level course will be to study theory and concepts related to language varieties in the world around you.

You will study, over the two years:

- Language and social groups (sociolect)
- Language and gender
- Language and dialects
- Language and ethnolects
- Language and occupation
- World Englishes
- Language Change
- Child Language Development (Paper 1)

This will be assessed on Paper 2 with a range of types of questions:

- A discursive, evaluative essay
- A comparison of two articles about one of the issues
- An opinion article from a newspaper about one of the language issues

TASK 2

Read and annotate the article from The Guardian, which is about how individuals use language, thinking about what the article says about

- **how language is used by individuals**
- **the impact language has on individuals**

TASK 3

On the second copy of the article, highlight or annotate as many of the linguistic terms that you learnt in task 1 as you can. Can you comment on how these features create the meanings you found in Task 2? Can you spot any other devices/features use in this article and annotate them?

TASK 4

Make a list of any ‘familect’ words and phrases in your family.

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2013/jul/19/mind-your-language-family-slang>

Speaking it in the family

Harriet Powney

Familects - home dialects in which words are given private meanings - reveal that everyone has a creative and playful linguistic story

Hearing a couple I know ask each other to pass the "splinkers" - their word for sweeteners - reminded me of the English Project's collection of family slang, [Kitchen Table Lingo](#), the blurb of which asks: "Does it sometimes seem like your family speaks its own language? Whether it's a slip of the tongue that becomes a permanent part of the family vernacular or a word invented when all others fail, Kitchen Table Lingo is part of what makes our language so rich and creative. After all, what other language has 57 words for the TV remote control?"

David Crystal, who wrote the book's afterword, expanded on what he described as these dialects of the home, or familects, in his [blog](#): "The book has collected a fascinating group of the private and personal word-creations that are found in every household and in every social group, but which never get into the dictionary ... Everyone has been a word-coiner at some time or other - if not around the kitchen table, then in the garden, bedroom, office, or pub. The words in this book are the tip of an unexplored linguistic iceberg."

If, as is often suggested, the use of jargon confirms its speakers' insider status, I suspect family words serve a similar function. Unlike jargon, however, family words are usually playful, creating both a sense of belonging and somewhere to let your hair down. Although that doesn't mean serious territorial issues aren't at stake. A friend reported how his girlfriend's use of his best friend's nickname for him, in front of the friend, was met with a chilly silence broken only by the rustle of passing tumbleweed.

The BBC's [Today programme](#), which asked whether any of its listeners' examples of kitchen table lingo should enter the English lexicon, in some ways missed the point. Family words are closer to shibboleths than they are to the witty neologisms in books such as Rich Hall's [Sniglets](#) or Douglas Adams's and John Lloyd's [The Meaning of Liff](#), however funny these may be. (And some of their suggestions, such as: "doork, a person who pushes on a door marked 'pull'," or "Shoeburyness, the vague uncomfortable feeling you get when sitting on a seat that is still warm from somebody else's bottom," are very funny indeed.)

Although family words are often funny, they're also shorthand for moments from a shared past and as such carry an emotional resonance. One friend wrote: "Our family word for a No 2 was 'a packet'. It gave me a real sense of belonging when I heard it used by my cousin's grown-up daughter. I'd only met her a few times but I reckon if you and your distant relatives share the word for 'poo' it means something! I've been meaning to ask my mum if she learned it from her mum. The answer can only be yes."

In another friend's house "Geoffrey's" means it's time to get ready for dinner. It's a long story that I won't recount, but it's known to most branches of his wife's family and helps keep alive the memory of an uncle who's no longer with them. Indeed, relationships often involve learning each other's family shorthand and creating a new, joint one. I still remember the jolt I felt, after a long relationship ended, when I went to use one of "our" words to someone new but realised it had been emptied of meaning.

In a process known as relexicalisation, kitchen table lingo generally uses the same grammar as English but a different vocabulary, the creation of which falls into clear categories. Children's coinings are one of the most popular - a friend's family still use "foo foos" (her brother's word for shoes) and everyone in my family understands "bontoo" (my brother's word for broken) or "bubs" (sorry, we're back to poo again). Luckily this only exists in the plural, which prevents any confusion with my partner's dad's use of "bub" as in "All right, bub?"

Other categories include malapropisms or mispronunciations ("desecrated coconut", "Neolopitan ice-cream") or particularly boring objects, which brings us back to those 57 words for the remote control ("hoofa doofa", "doojie" or "pogger" are just three). Then there are things that are difficult to define or lack a word. I can't imagine how I managed before I adopted a friend's "poggle" (a verb or a noun) for any remnants of lunch that remain stuck to your jumper.

When I asked friends for examples for this post, I was impressed by how many they came up with and loved hearing the stories behind them. If, for David Crystal, familects confirm his belief that everyone has a linguistic story to tell, then they also illustrate how playful, creative and emotional that linguistic story, and our relationship with language, can be.

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