



Leaping into Language!

moving from GCSE to
A Level Language study



EMC

Publications

An English and Media Centre Student Resource

Written by Dan Clayton

Edited by Andrew McCallum and Lucy Webster

Cover design: Rebecca Scambler

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English and Media Centre, 18 Compton Terrace, London, N1 2UN

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What This Pack Is and How to Use It

Are you thinking about studying English Language at A Level? The activities in this unit will give you a taste of what might be in store for you as a student of this subject and you might be surprised quite how different it is to the English you've been doing so far in your time at school.

Some of the activities ask you to step back and think about the nature of language and communication (in all its forms – not just writing), while others encourage you to try out some different ways of approaching your learning – whether that's reading, writing, discussing or listening to others. The activities will prepare you for the kinds of work you would do on an English Language A Level course and will hopefully be interesting in their own right.

Some of the activities are short, others might take a couple of sessions to complete, while others are much longer term – following a language podcast or reading a chapter in a book about language – but you'd be advised to start from the beginning as many of these activities build up in a sequence to give you a taste of different areas and a good overview of the whole course.

Leaping into Language: moving from GCSE to A Level English Language includes:

- This PDF of activities
- *emagazine* Resource Pack – Language (PDF)
- Leaping into Language audio (a zipped folder of 10 audio clips)

1. Becoming a Student of Language

What does an A Level in English Language involve and what does it mean to be a great student of English Language?

This activity will help you find out what's involved in the A Level and beyond and the ways of learning that will help you succeed in your exams and non-exam work, but more importantly than all that: how to enjoy and get the most out of the course. You might be in for a surprise or two along the way...

- Use the table below to get a sense of what might be involved in the A Level English Language course. Tick the things that sound like you might find them interesting and then tick any that you have already studied or learned about at some point in your education (whether at Primary, Secondary or just out of your own interest).
- Select three of these areas for language study that you most want to study in greater depth. Write a paragraph or two explaining what you already know (either through study or general knowledge), and a paragraph explaining what you would like to know more about and why.

What you might study	I know a bit about this but have never studied it	I've studied this	Would like to learn more about it
How children start to say their first words			
The ways in which women and men use language in similar and different ways			
Why everyone has an accent but why some accents are liked more than others			
How social media language has developed rapidly in the last couple of decades			
Where new words come from and why			
Why people in India, Nigeria, USA and New Zealand all have their own ways of speaking English			
How people in conversation interrupt and overlap with each other and how that works			
How slang develops and how it's been around for hundreds of years			
Why some words in the language are particularly offensive and make others feel angry or upset			

What you might study	I know a bit about this but have never studied it	I've studied this	Would like to learn more about it
How writers use language to persuade and influence their readers			
Why some jobs and occupations develop their own specialist vocabulary and expressions			
How people switch and shift the ways they use language in different situations and with different people			
How English has changed from something that only the common people spoke to being the language of all parts of society			

2. Leap into Language – Language Profile

One of the most interesting aspects of studying language is that you learn more about your own language use, so let's make this first task all about you...

- Create a 'language profile' of yourself by answering the following questions and then writing them up as a set of bullet points that highlight what you think are the most interesting and important aspects of the language you use:
 - What's your earliest language memory? Can you remember a nursery rhyme, song or picture book from when you were very little?
 - Have your family or extended family kept any records – video, audio, family memories – of any of your earliest words?
 - Have you kept any old school books from when you were learning to read and write?
 - Where were you born and where in the UK, or the wider world, are your family from? Go back a few generations if you like and think about any other languages that your family members might speak, or other places your family members might have lived.
 - Are there any words or expressions only you or your family use, which others don't really understand?
 - Do you or your friends at school use language in any ways that you notice as being different from other people around you? These could be other people in your year, your teachers, your family, whoever.
 - Do you listen to or watch anyone on TV, online or in films or music videos who uses language in a way that interests or annoys you?
 - Do you ever look at or hear someone else using language in a way that you find is totally new or strange to you?
 - Have your teachers or family ever talked to you about the way you speak?

One of the most useful resources for language on this course is **you**. Language is made up of so much more than the words we see printed on a page, so when you are thinking about language, come back to these ideas here to keep the range wide. We are often told there is a right way and a wrong way to use language, but the more you study about language, the more you'll realise that it's more complicated and interesting than that.

And you'll also start to build up a bigger picture of the different influences on your own language identity as this course goes on – all the factors that influence who you are linguistically and how you can choose to behave with language in different situations.

3. Which Accents?

Everyone has an accent. You might not think you do, but it's a linguistic fact. Accents are normally associated with particular regions and places but can also be linked to a person's social class – how 'posh' they sound, for example.

In this taster activity, you will access to the 10 audio clips included with this pack (LeapLangAudio.zip). Here you will find 10 examples of different people from around the British Isles reading the same bit of text.

- Listen to all 10 of them and use the map on the next page to mark where you think each speaker might be from.
- Write a quick comment (maybe just a few words) about each accent and how it sounds to you.
- Check the map (on page 41) to see if you were right about where the speakers were from.
- Now use the text of the extract (on page 9) and listen to three of the recordings (of your choice) again. Write down the numbers of the accent clips you have chosen in the relevant spaces. As you listen, use a highlighter to note the sounds that you notice as being different to how you might pronounce them.
- Think about the sounds that you have highlighted for each recording and see if you can notice any patterns in them. You might want to look back at your notes once you have done the activities in 9. 'Explore *emagazine*' and discovered a bit more about different UK and Irish accents.

Accent Response Sheet

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

Accent number:

When he woke the next morning, the streets were empty and there was no one to be seen. He left the house and looked up and down the hill but not a soul was to be found. Somewhere in the distance a single church bell tolled slowly but there was no other sound: no bird song, no hum of traffic, nothing. Starting to feel anxious now, he walked up past the farm, towards the church, along the path by the school and into the main square. The bell had stopped ringing now, but a fragile tune – perhaps played on a fiddle – had taken its place. And that’s where he saw them for the first time: a circle of children, dancing mutely, each of their faces a mask of concentration, yet somehow alive and happy.

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4. Do We Need New Words?

The English language is always generating new words. New words can be created out of nothing (**neologisms**) or be formed by using other words – or parts of words – together in new combinations (what are called **compounds** and **blends**). Sometimes initials of words in a phrase might be used (**acronyms** and **initialisms**) and you might also see parts of words being added to the front or end of another word to give it a new form (**prefixes** and **suffixes**). Most A Level English Language courses look at how and why new words are formed, but there is also debate about whether we need new words and when (or whether) they should appear in dictionaries.

- Look at the list of some of the new words that have appeared (or suddenly become much more popular) in English over the last few years.
- Have you heard of these words before? Have you used any of them? Tick the relevant columns for each word.
- Choose two words from the list that you think are an important addition to the language. Try to come up with a sentence or two explaining why they are so important.
- Then choose two words from the list that you think are pointless and insignificant. What's the problem with these words and why do you think they shouldn't be included? Again, write a sentence or two explaining your thinking.
- Are there any other new words – or new meanings for older words – that you have heard about? Perhaps you could make a note of new and interesting uses of words over the next few months.
- What are your predictions for the most popular and widely-used words for the next 12 months?
- If you are interested in looking at the history of new words and slang terms that have appeared in the language, follow some of the links on pages 30-36 but in the meantime, [this article by one of the world's most respected slang lexicographers](#) (i.e. people who compile dictionaries of slang), Jonathon Green, is a very good read:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-27405988>

Recent New Words

Word	Definition	Have heard/seen this word being used	Have used this word myself
Floss	A dance in which people twist their hips in one direction while swinging their arms in the opposite direction with the fists closed. Popularised by the game <i>Fortnite</i> .		
VAR	Video Assistant Referee. A system used in football to assist refereeing decisions.		

Word	Definition	Have heard/seen this word being used	Have used this word myself
Gaslight	To manipulate or trick someone by pretending that they cannot trust what they see or hear until they doubt their own sanity.		
Twerving	A way of dancing that involves bending forward and shaking or thrusting your buttocks in a rhythmic motion.		
Dadbod	A term used to describe the typically flabby and unsculpted male physique that most dads have.		
Cancel culture	A way of describing the movement to 'cancel' - to publicly disapprove of and then attempt to ignore - celebrities or organisations because of their perceived immoral or unpopular actions.		
Climate strike	A protest in which people leave work, school or college when they should be attending to take part in a protest about climate change.		
Influencer	A person who uses social media to promote a particular way of life or commercial products to their online followers.		
Nonbinary	A word describing a sexual identity that does not conform to binary categories of male and female.		
Hamsterkaufing	Stockpiling food like a hamster storing food in its cheeks (from German)		
WFH	Working From Home		
Mansplaining	A patronising way of explaining something (by a man to a woman).		

5. Language Fingerprints

As you learn more about language use, you'll start to see that everybody has their own unique language style. Lots of things influence this – where we're from, how old we are, the type of work we do and our interests, our family backgrounds and our own individual personalities – but we all have what's called an **idiolect** (an individual language style). It's not quite the same as a fingerprint, but there are some similarities. And while detectives can use fingerprints to track down individuals, **forensic linguists** can also use this idea of individual language style to identify people, or aspects of a person's background.

This activity puts you in the role of a language detective trying to solve a crime. The police need your help to work out who might have sent an abusive social media message from an anonymous account to a local politician. They have three suspects in custody and your job is to offer a view on which one you think is most likely to have sent the message, based on possible language clues.

- Read **Exhibit 1**, the abusive message that the police are investigating. Is there anything that stands out in this message as being potentially interesting about how language is being used?
- **Social media messages** about the same issue which were used to identify three suspects. Read through these in turn, again making a note of anything that strikes you as interesting about how language is being used.
- Based on this small amount of data, have you got any suggestions about who might have sent the abusive message? Write a short police report explaining your thoughts. Try to pin your thinking down to specific bits of language evidence in the data.
- You can check your ideas against our suggestions on page 42.

This is a **very** simplified version of the kind of analysis forensic linguists sometimes do.

- If you want to find out more about the real work forensic linguists do in solving crimes, have a look at the link to the Tim Grant lecture on page 3 of the accompanying 'emagazine Resource Pack – Language'. You can see him [discuss aspects of forensic linguistics here](https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing/leaping-into-language-emagclips) (<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing/leaping-into-language-emagclips>).

Data sets

Exhibit 1: the abusive message

Hope your really proud of yourself for what you done but you gotta no that one day your gonna get payback!!! We have had enough of politicians like you not listening to us, you should of listened!!! Watch your back

Suspect 1's social media message

I don't like what's been happening in this area since the new housing development started. This used to be a nice place to live!!! I'm so disappointed in are local representatives for not sticking up for us!!!

Suspect 2's social media message

When are local councillors gonna realise that they should of been standing up for us and not for they're mates in the big building firms, these people are gonna make a fortune from this

Suspect 3's social media message

Your joking! Are they seriously going to build 200 new houses on the fields up by the hospital?! That is crazy. There's not enough facilities for the rest of us at the moment. Madness!!!

6. Key Events in Language History

One of the most interesting parts of any A Level English Language course is exploring how the language we use today came to be. Even now, the language is changing all the time and is used by people in the UK (and beyond) in many varied ways. From its earliest origins in the 5th Century CE, English has gone through many changes and reached many historic milestones.

- This activity asks you to create a timeline of key events in the history of English. You might not know some of the dates for these events – and that doesn't matter at this stage – but you will still be able to start sequencing some of the main developments in the language.
- You can do this activity either by writing out the events in the order you think they happened or by printing the sheet and cutting out the tiles to place in a sequence.
- If you're writing the dates, put them in a sequence on a sheet of paper, with the oldest ones on the left and the most recent on the right.
- If you're printing and cutting them out, shuffle them around and try to place them in the order that you think they occurred, with the oldest events on the left and the most recent on the right. Add tiles to your timeline one by one, thinking about where to place each one, before settling on your final timeline.
- Once you have decided on the order of events, check the answer grid on page 45.
- How accurate was your timeline? Do any of these dates surprise you?
- Why do you think some of these dates are so significant to the history of the language? Choose three key events from the timeline and try to write a sentence or two about their significance.
- If you want to find out more about some of the key events in the history of the English language, have a look at the link to the British Library timeline and the Open University *History of English in 10 Minutes*.

British Library

[English Language and Literature Timeline](http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/evolvingenglish/accessvers/index.html)

(<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/evolvingenglish/accessvers/index.html>)

Open University

[The History of English in 10 Minutes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3r9bOkYW9s)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3r9bOkYW9s>)

Events on the Language Timeline

First TV broadcast in the world	First spelling guide in UK
First printing press in the UK	First English settlement in America
First telephone call	First wood-cased pencil invented
First Bible translation in English	First newspaper printed in UK
First dictionary published in UK	Passing of Education Act that led to compulsory schooling up to age of 15
First BBC radio broadcast	Norman invasion of Britain
First Hollywood film studio built	First email sent
First SMS (text) message sent	Establishment of first university in the UK

7. Textercise

One of the things you will quickly notice about the study of language at A Level is that you don't just look at serious, weighty books. You might have studied quite a lot of literary fiction on your English courses so far and even when it hasn't been literature, it has probably been what is broadly termed 'literary non-fiction'. On an A Level English Language course, you will analyse all sorts of language. This activity gives you a taste of that and asks you to think a bit more about the language around you all the time.

- On pages 17-19 you will find eight 'texts'. These might not be the kind of texts you've analysed before, but they are all worth analysing because they have been created to communicate in some way.
- Have a quick look at each text and think about the following:
 - What they are about
 - What they might mean – the ideas, messages, opinions, personalities being expressed
 - How they use different methods of communication: design, colour, vocabulary choices, structure, style, interaction.
- Choose three texts and use the questions below to make some quick notes about how they compare in their uses of language.
- Once you've done this, think about gathering your own set of texts from the world around you. Like these texts here, your texts could be written, spoken, online, serious, silly, informative, clever and/or important. Try to find at least five interesting texts and use the same questions to help you think about them.

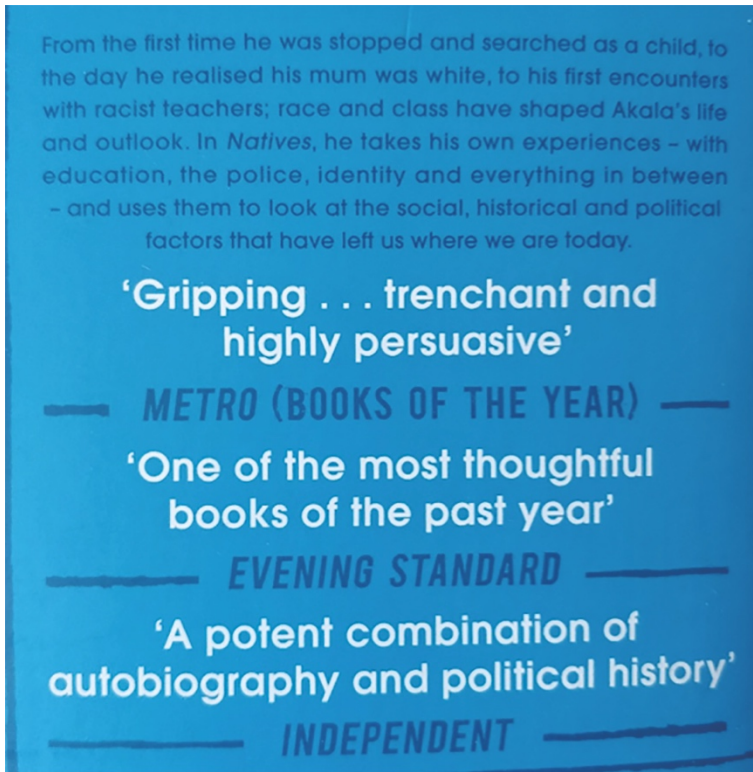
Questions to ask about your choice of texts

- What is the language in each text designed to achieve? Do you notice any differences between the three you have chosen?
- How have visual elements been used in the texts? Any differences?
- If any of the three were originally spoken, do you notice anything distinctive about them?
- How easy or difficult is it to analyse some of these texts? Does it feel like you can analyse them in the same way as a piece of literature, for example?

While analysing these types of text might be a new experience for you, the ways in which you explore and analyse them will build on things you've done before. Some of that will take you back to the work you might have done at Primary school with grammar (verbs, nouns and phrases, for example) and some will build on the work you've just been doing for GCSE.

The Texts

On tonight's show, we've got Fontaines DC live in the studio, old session tracks from The Chameleons, Ruthless Rap Assassins and Half Lazy plus all the usual mixture of weird, wonderful and just a bit wonky music from all around the world. Join me after nine tonight for the last of this week's Evening Shows.	A radio DJ presenting a trailer for a show.
 6. Serve Serve the spiced Moroccan soup in bowls with the remaining coriander sprinkled over. Dollop on some Greek yoghurt and finish with a sprinkling of dukkah. Add a sprinkle of the remaining chilli, if you want an extra kick. Enjoy!	Part of a recipe for a meal.
What refugees using our services say: "I want to say thank you and I really appreciate the effort you made towards making my life look beautiful, peaceful and secure." – Resettled refugee "Refugee Action has been amazing with us. They helped us with everything – registering our children in schools, this was a priority for us." – Dara "They help me a lot – Refugee Action is great. And I feel that they love me." – Joseph "A lot of people in this country have helped me, including Refugee Action. Now I would like to change my career and help other people." – Ade	A section of a charity leaflet from Refugee Action.
Play as a band of rebel cats trying to stop fascists from seizing control of the galaxy in this cooperative game! In the year three million, the animals of Earth's past inhabit the galaxy in advanced societies. Now, using fear and force, the regime known as the Rat Pack is sweeping into power across the planets. Together, a small group of cat rebels will try to stop these fascist forces from seizing power – while building a new galaxy where all species are free together.	A description of the boardgame, <i>Space Cats Fight Fascism</i> (TESA Collective games) on the back of the box.

 From the first time he was stopped and searched as a child, to the day he realised his mum was white, to his first encounters with racist teachers; race and class have shaped Akala's life and outlook. In <i>Natives</i>, he takes his own experiences – with education, the police, identity and everything in between – and uses them to look at the social, historical and political factors that have left us where we are today. ‘Gripping . . . trenchant and highly persuasive’ METRO (BOOKS OF THE YEAR) ‘One of the most thoughtful books of the past year’ EVENING STANDARD ‘A potent combination of autobiography and political history’ INDEPENDENT	The blurb from the back of a book (Akala's <i>Natives</i>, published by Two Roads).
 EASY OPEN: FLIP, SQUEEZE, RIP AND TIP 1 2 <i>Grain-free, Natural, Complete, Delicious</i> (GB) INGREDIENTS/COMPOSITION: FRESH TURKEY (45%), FRESH DUCK (20%), GREEN PEAS (3%), CARROTS (1%), SEAWEED EXTRACT, YUCCA EXTRACT, FRUCTOOLIGOSACCHARIDE PREBIOTICS (0.5G/KG). NUTRITIONAL ADDITIVES: VITAMINS: VITAMIN A: 2500 MG/KG; VITAMIN D3: 200 IU/KG; VITAMIN E: 30 MG/KG. TRACE ELEMENTS: POTASSIUM IODIDE 0.8 MG/KG, CUPRIC SULPHATE PENTAHYDRATE 20 MG/KG, ZINC SULPHATE MONOHYDRATE 139 MG/KG, FERROUS CARBONATE 33 MG/KG. ANALYTICAL CONSTITUENTS: CRUDE PROTEIN 10.25%, CRUDE FAT 10%, CRUDE FIBRE 0.2%, INORGANIC MATTER 4%, MOISTURE 69%. BEST BEFORE/ BATCH NUMBER: SEE BASE FRESH INGREDIENTS LOCALLY SOURCED FAMILY-FARMED TURKEY FAMILY-FARMED DUCK FRESH VEGETABLES SOURCE OF ANTIOXIDANTS	A dog food carton.
And it's controlled beautifully by Jack Harrison who beats his man and whips a ball across the face of goal. It's an inviting ball aaaaaand it's Ben White who gets on the end of it to put it past the keeper's outstretched hand. First goal of the season for the central defender and what a great team goal that was.	Part of a radio commentary on a football match.

Rapture @RaptureWitney We're all feeling a bit sad that #RSD2020 has been postponed. We thought it might cheer things up a teeny bit to share some throwback photos from past #RSD celebrations! 🥰 @RSDUK  11:27am · 18 Apr 2020 · Twitter for Android 2 Retweets 7 Likes	A tweet from a local record shop on Record Store Day.
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8. Running the Numbers

One of the most striking aspects of this course compared to GCSE English is that you might have to do some work with numbers, charts and graphs. That's because when you're analysing language, it's sometimes helpful to be able to back up a hunch about a pattern you might have spotted with some figures about how often something is actually happening. Also, you might want to observe a change in language over time, or a strength of feeling that people have to a particular language feature, so it makes sense to measure language and explore the data.

If you want to measure differences in language styles, one thing you might do is gather some data together from different sources and start to look for how many times a certain feature occurs. Let's try a simple introduction to this.

- Choose a social media or messaging app that you frequently use and look at the last ten messages you posted/sent. How many times have you:
 - a) abbreviated (or shortened) a word? For example, have you used *tomoz* for *tomorrow*, *uni* for *university*, *u* for *you*, or *bye* for *goodbye*?
 - b) used an emoji?
- Make a note of the totals for each.
- Now, have a look at ten messages you've been sent from someone else – perhaps an older family member like your dad, aunty or gran. Do the same for them and make a note of the totals.
- Do you notice any differences in the totals you have for the two sets of data?
- Are there any surprises in these totals? Did you see anything that you didn't expect to see?

Now, think about how you might explore this further.

- Can you think of a way to investigate if older people have a different messaging style to people of your age?
- What else could you look for beyond emojis and abbreviations?
- Make a note of the other language features that you might want to explore as part of this.
- What other factors might have an impact? Is there a different messaging style that women and men use? What about the topics being discussed? Could the subject matter have an effect on the style of the messages? How long are the messages?

These are all factors that you might start thinking about when you get further into the course and start collecting your own data for investigation. And while, counting how many times a language feature appears is a really helpful way of exploring language, it's always going to be important to look at what language means, who's using it and the context it appears in to really make sense of what's going on. You'll also find that as you do this in more detail, you'll need to think about the practicalities and ethics of data collection.

- For a look at how this works in practice, read two articles by the linguist Christian Ilbury in the accompanying '*emagazine* Resource Pack – Language'. Here he talks us through his PhD on the language used by a group of friends on WhatsApp and how you can carry out your own smaller scale investigations into the language used on social media.
 - 'C ya l8tr bbz' – Language, Communication and Technology (page 8)
 - Investigating Social Media (page 12)

9. Explore *emagazine*

emagazine is a magazine and website for A Level students with articles written by academics, critics, writers, teachers and students on texts and topics set for A Level – and on literature and language more generally.

If your school has a subscription and you are able to get the username and password from your teacher, log in and spend some time browsing the site, dipping into articles, then choosing one that interests you. Be aware that some of the articles are for language, others for literature.

For those of you who are not able to get hold of the logins or whose school doesn't have a subscription, we've collected together a small selection of language articles for you to browse and choose from. See the accompanying '*emagazine* Resource Pack – Language':

- Delving into the *emag* Archives: Child Language Acquisition (page 16)
- Language Variation, Accents, Attitudes and More Delving into the *emagazine* Archive (page 21)
- Around the World with *emag* – a Survey of Articles (*emagplus*) (page 26)
- Becoming an A Level Language Student – a Quick Guide (page 29)

If you are able to use the platform recommended and validated by your school to share ideas, then the activity will be most interesting and productive. If you can't, just do it on your own.

- Dip into the openings of several articles and choose the one that most immediately grabs your attention.
- Read the article and pick out three points to share. These could be ideas you find interesting, that you want to question (perhaps because you disagree, perhaps because you want to find out more), or a point you don't understand.
- Take one of the points and add your own ideas to it or write a new point of your own.
- If possible, use the platform recommended and validated by your school to share your ideas on what you noticed about the way the article is written – its organisation and development, the style, the voice and what difference that made both to your enjoyment and understanding.
- At some point before you begin your A Level course, why not have a go at writing an *emagazine* style article yourself? You could join up with a friend and arrange to be editors for each other, adding the title, standfirst (the little overview that introduces the article) and sub-heads. You might, for example, want to expand on the second activity from this pack, 'Leap into Language', and write a detailed account of your own language profile.
- If you are feeling more confident, you could plan an article on one of the following areas: new slang terms that have appeared in your lifetime, your local accent, the language used in social media messages.

10. Opinions and Arguments

Language gives rise to really strong feelings. Some people get furious about how words like ‘so’ are used to start sentences, while others get upset about ‘like’, ‘sort of’ and ‘innit’. And when you get into more sensitive areas such as race, gender, illness, disability and war, arguments really start to kick off. That’s because language is such a vital tool in expressing who we are but also how we represent others and how they feel about that. Language is rarely neutral and because we use it all the time – speaking, writing, online – we’re surrounded by it and immersed in it, so it’s always part of what we do and who we are.

Part of what you’ll do on the English Language A Level is to think about some of these opinions and views and work out what you feel about them and why. You won’t be asked to just pluck an opinion out of thin air, but to use your study of language to inform what you do and how you think. The course is designed to give you lots of ideas and evidence to base your opinions on.

You’ve not started the course yet, so it’s a bit mean to ask you to do this now, but the good thing about language is that you already know a lot about it and will perhaps have some strong opinions about it already. In this activity, you are asked to offer some views about issues related to language. You can do a version of this activity on your own, but it will be more fun and work better if you can share ideas and interact with other students via the platform recommended and validated by your school.

- Read the five statements in the table below and on a scale of 1-5 make a note of how strongly you agree (5) or disagree (1) with each. Try to write a sentence or two in the final column to explain your view.
- If you can share ideas and interact with others, check your scores and see if you have agreed with your classmates. What different views have been offered?
- Why not keep a note of your own scores and see if your views have shifted by the end of the course?

Statement	Your view 1-5 (strongly disagree =1, strongly agree =5)	Your reasons
If English changes too quickly, we won’t be able to understand each other.		
People who use slang sound stupid and uneducated and it’s best to avoid it completely.		
Some accents are just better than others; that’s a fact of life.		
There are some words that are so offensive, they should just be banned.		
When you’re communicating online, it doesn’t matter if you make mistakes or don’t follow the normal rules of grammar; as long as people can understand, that’s all that matters.		

11. Opinions in the Media

As well as debating big ideas about the English language, you'll be studying what others say about it. Language is constantly being discussed online and in the press, with opinion pieces being produced all the time. This is great news for language students, because there's a never-ending supply of material to explore. But it can also be a little tricky to keep track of.

We've chosen 5 articles for you to have a look at, to give you a taste of the kinds of arguments people have about language. Some of these are by linguists (people who study language) and others are by journalists or commentators. We're not saying we necessarily agree with the views being offered, but they will give you a sense of some of the different arguments out there.

Whenever you read an article about language, you have to have your wits about you, so before you look at these links, read the article by the linguist Lynne Murphy in *emagazine* about how to read an article about language and use the approach she suggests to assess the ideas presented, the credentials of the writers and the validity of their opinions. (See 'How to Read the News Sceptically' on page 33 of the accompanying 'emagazine Resource Pack – Language'.)

Five suggested opinion pieces:

1. [If You Can't Embrace Regional Dialect, You Can Kiss My Chuddies:](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/31/embrace-regional-dialect-kiss-chuddies-dictionary/)
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/31/embrace-regional-dialect-kiss-chuddies-dictionary/>
2. [The Ugly Rise of Accent Softening:](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/20/ugly-rise-accent-softening-people-changing-their-voices)
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/20/ugly-rise-accent-softening-people-changing-their-voices>
3. [Calling Someone a 'Gammon' Is Hate Speech:](https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/what-does-gammon-mean)
<https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/what-does-gammon-mean>
4. [Saying No To Gizit Is Plain Prejudice:](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/saying-no-to-gizit-is-plain-prejudice-8488358.html)
<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/saying-no-to-gizit-is-plain-prejudice-8488358.html>
5. [Text Speak: Language Evolution or Just Laziness?](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/9966117/Text-speak-language-evolution-or-just-laziness.html)
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/9966117/Text-speak-language-evolution-or-just-laziness.html>

And some further suggestions for keeping up to date with language stories in the media are given in 'A Level Language – Reading Around the Subject' (page 38 in the accompanying 'emagazine Resource Pack – Language').

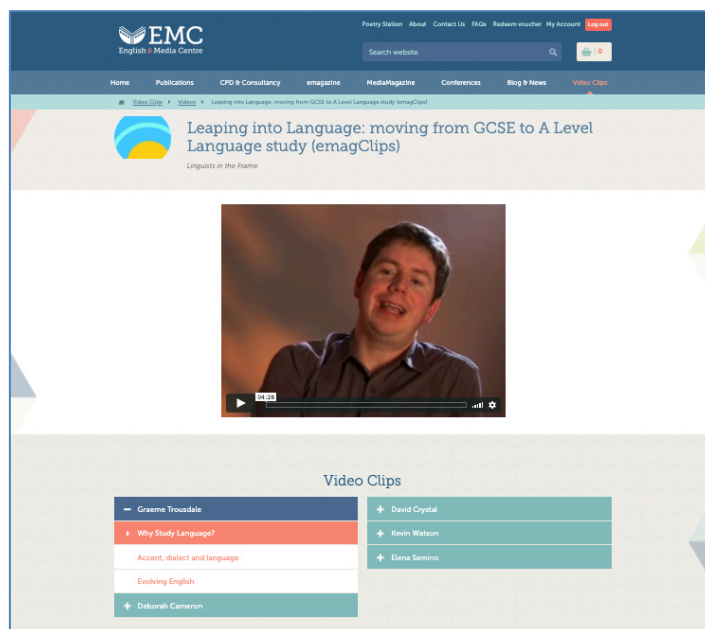
You can keep track of articles about language by following @EngLangBlog (<https://twitter.com/EngLangBlog>) on Twitter and by bookmarking your favourite articles using your preferred social media apps.

Why not keep a reading record of the articles you come across over the next few months? You could even do a top five and a bottom five of the best and worst articles about language that you've read!

12. emagClips: Linguists in the Frame

The *emagazine* website includes a collection of video interviews with leading linguists and language experts. A [taster selection from emagClips](https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing/leaping-into-language-emagclips) is available without a subscription to accompany this download.

<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing/leaping-into-language-emagclips>



- If you have found these clips interesting, have a look at one of the *emagazine* articles written by the linguists featured. (See the accompanying '*emagazine* Resource Pack – Language'.)
 - Graeme Trousdale: Accent and Dialect – Northern English (page 44)
 - Deborah Cameron: Blogging About Language (page 47)
 - David Crystal: Making a Point – The History of English Punctuation (page 50)
 - Kevin Watson: More or Less Scouse – Language Change on Merseyside (page 53)
 - Elena Semino: Metaphors for Cancer and Why They Matter (page 56)

13. A Language Diary

While the A Level English Language course will take you to new places, it also builds on things you've studied and read before. That's because it's still about English: something you've been using and learning about for years. And if you like reading novels, plays, poems and short stories, you don't have to leave them behind when you're studying English Language A Level, because all those forms use language in one way or another and they can all be part of what you study. You can also write creatively on this course.

- Think back over the last few months to the various things you might have read, watched or listened to. What have been your favourites recently? For example, you might have enjoyed the latest series of *Gogglebox*, *Killing Eve*, an interview between Cardi B and Bernie Sanders, a speech by a scientist taking about public health, a novel about a child entering a parallel universe, a series of articles on a news website about conspiracy theories and fake news, a TikTok of a woman in the USA performing different accents, a stand-up comedy show on YouTube or even a clip of a man trying to chase a bat around his kitchen while a relative shouts 'He's making a mockery out of you boy' in a strong Irish accent.
- Keep a language log where you reflect on what you have read, watched and listened to. Try to identify one or two language angles to these. Was there:
 - Something interesting about an accent being used
 - A new word or expression you heard that you hadn't come across before
 - A paragraph of writing that you thought was particularly powerful
 - An image that you were struck by
 - A plot structure or character that interested you?

One of the ways to inspire your own creativity on the course is to think about the things that have inspired you. At some point, you'll be asked to produce your own creative writing on this course and that might be an article about a language issue, an opening to a short story, a review of a gig, film or restaurant, or even the text of a speech. The more you read, listen to and think about language, the more you'll have to draw on.

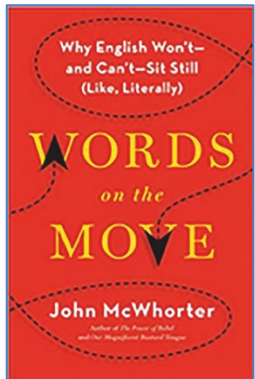
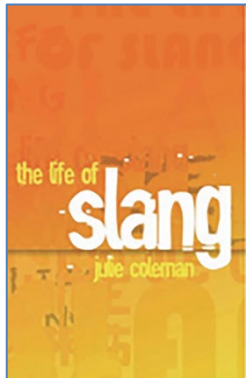
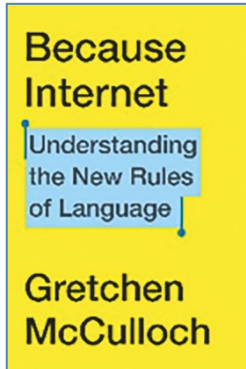
14. Language on the Page

A lot of really good books have recently been written by academic linguists and general language experts for the general public about what language is and how it works. We've suggested a few recent favourites below.

We're not expecting you to read all these books – but we won't stop you if that's what you want to do.

- Choose one or two and use the links here. Most of these will take you to the 'Look Inside' pages on Amazon which give you a sample to read, while others will take you to extracts or an Audible sample. A few take you to a review or an interview.
- Dip in and out of a few of them, looking for what they say about some of the main issues to do with English, making a note of some key quotations you could use further down the line.

Some Reading Suggestions

John McWhorter: <i>Words on the Move</i> https://preview.tinyurl.com/wordsmove	
Julie Coleman: <i>The Life of Slang</i> (Short interviews about the book) https://youtu.be/DIqk6MdLWRw https://youtu.be/HkAwIVoNUx0	
Gretchen McCulloch: <i>Because Internet</i> https://tinyurl.com/cosinternet	

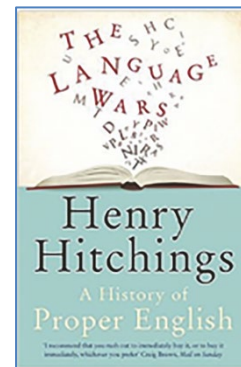
[David Shariatmadari: *Don't Believe a Word*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/notbelieve>



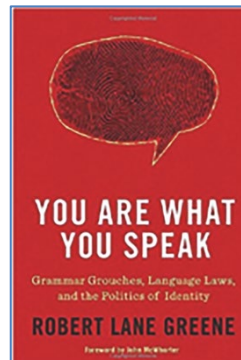
Henry Hitchings: *The Language Wars*
(A review)

See page 61 in the accompanying 'emagazine Resource Pack – Language'



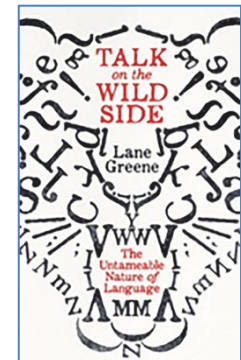
[Lane Greene: *You Are What You Speak*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/vocabsticklers>



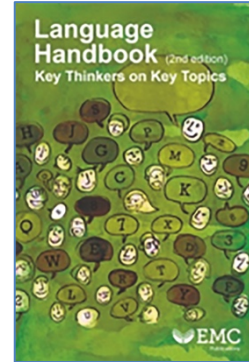
[Lane Greene: *Talk on the Wild Side*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/talkwildside>



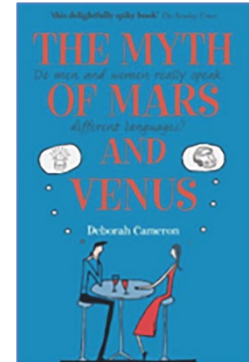
[Dan Clayton \(ed\): EMC Language Handbook \(2nd edition\): Key Thinkers on Key Topics](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/emclang>



[Deborah Cameron: The Myth of Mars and Venus](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/mythmarsvenus>



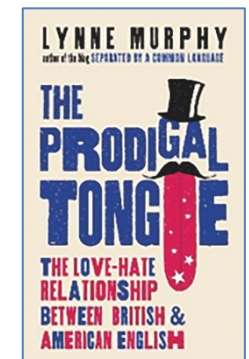
[Abby Kaplan: Women Talk More Than Men... and Other Myths About Language Explained](#)

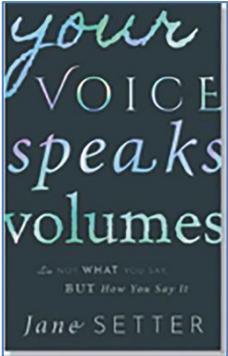
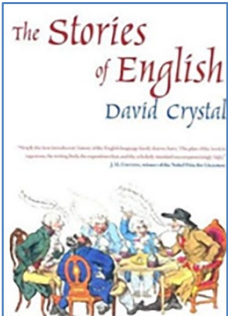
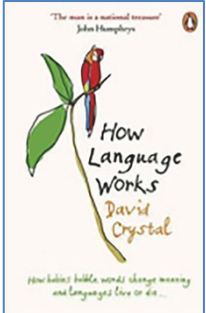
<https://tinyurl.com/womenmentalk>



[Lynne Murphy: The Prodigal Tongue](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/prodigaltalk>



<u>Jane Setter: <i>Your Voice Speaks Volumes</i></u> <u>https://tinyurl.com/voicevolumes</u>	
<u>David Crystal: <i>Stories of English</i></u> <u>https://tinyurl.com/crystalstories</u>	
<u>David Crystal: <i>How Language Works</i></u> <u>https://tinyurl.com/crystalworks</u>	

15. English Language for Your Ears

In the last few years, more and more linguists have been getting their ideas and interests out to the public through radio programmes and podcasts. In some cases, these are linked to big publishers and broadcasters (the BBC in the UK and Slate in the USA), while others are independently produced. There's now a really good range out there and plenty to choose from.

- Have a browse through the suggestions here and listen to one or two in more detail. Most of the radio programmes can be accessed directly through the link provided and the podcasts through the links or via an app like Spotify.
- If possible, use the platform recommended and validated by your school to share what you listened to with friends. Which podcast would you most recommend and why?
- Follow up the suggestions from your classmates.
- Keep listening to any of the podcasts you enjoyed (or try out some others), follow the ones you like on Instagram or Twitter and let the presenters know what you thought. Many of these podcasts will engage with their listeners and pick up ideas that you want to discuss, so get involved.

The BBC's **Word of Mouth** programme presented by Michael Rosen, has a huge archive of previous programmes all available for download. Some recent highlights have been selected for you here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtnz/episodes/player>

- [A Debate About American English](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08g5533)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08g5533>
- [Will Emoji Be the Future of English?](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08ffvp6)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08ffvp6>
- [The Language of Lying](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dfpy)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dfpy>
- [Romani Language](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00050qw)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00050qw>
- [Black British Identity and Black-related Words](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0004l93)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0004l93>
- [Solving Crime with Language](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00027n6)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00027n6>
- [Language, Gender and Trans Identities](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09r4k4l)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09r4k4l>

Lexicon Valley, presented by John McWhorter can be found here and a few particularly relevant ones have been highlighted below:

<https://slate.com/podcasts/lexicon-valley>

- [Women's Language](https://slate.com/podcasts/lexicon-valley/2020/03/vocal-frywomen-language)
<https://slate.com/podcasts/lexicon-valley/2020/03/vocal-frywomen-language>
- [Like, Sort Of...](https://slate.com/podcasts/lexicon-valley/2019/11/politeness-in-the-english-language)
<https://slate.com/podcasts/lexicon-valley/2019/11/politeness-in-the-english-language>
- [Language on the Internet](https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/07/john-mcwhorter-and-gretchen-mcculloch-on-because-internet.html)
<https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/07/john-mcwhorter-and-gretchen-mcculloch-on-because-internet.html>

The BBC's **Seriously** podcast isn't just about language but you'll find a few interesting language programmes on there, including this one featuring Susie Dent on American English:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08qxd02>

Another BBC programme, **The Verb** often has language issues up for discussion. A few selected episodes are:

- [Puns and Wordplay](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dj45)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dj45>
- [Sports Writing](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000c2ls)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000c2ls>
- [How to Write Out Sexism](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0002zyh)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0002zyh>

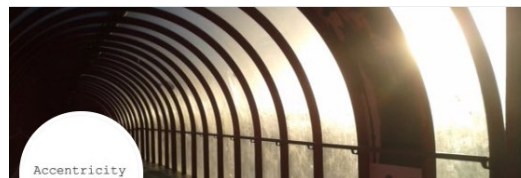
Other podcasts include the following:

[The Language Revolution](https://thelanguagerevolution.co.uk/)



<https://thelanguagerevolution.co.uk/>

[Accentricity](https://www.accentricity-podcast.com/)



<https://www.accentricity-podcast.com/>

[The Vocal Fries](https://vocalfriespod.com/)



<https://vocalfriespod.com/>

The Allusionist



<https://www.theallusionist.org/>

Lexitecture



<http://www.lexitecture.com/>

Lingthusiasm



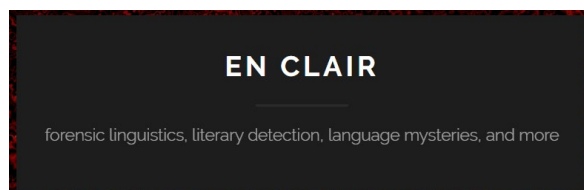
<https://lingthusiasm.com/>

Talk the Talk



<http://talkthetalkpodcast.com/>

en clair



<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/enclair/>

16. Online Resources for English Language

Many linguists and university linguistics departments have an online presence that's accessible and interesting for the general public, as well as those who are studying language at school, college or university. Along with these, you can find online resources from the BBC, British Council and British Library. A few of these have been selected for you below. They start with the most accessible and move on to ones that are a little more complex or demanding in nature. Dip into a few of these and see what you make of them. They are all interesting in different ways!

Perhaps once you have had a look at the few of them, you could write a short report on two or three that you were particularly interested in. What grabbed you? What else would you like to know more about? Were there any ideas you'd like to challenge and argue about?

British Library

- British Accents and Dialects: <https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects>
- English Language and Literature Timeline: <http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/evolvingenglish/accessvers/index.html>
- Texts in Context: <http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/texts/context.html>

The Open University has always been good for this, and recently one of their linguistics lecturers, Philip Seargeant, posted a link to a range of their online resources

- What is Language? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwG9SNeCof8>
- The History of English in 10 Minutes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3r9bOkYW9s>
- A Brief History of Emoji: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTXLuZHYf4>
- Narrative in Journalism and Politics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCP_ifjRZgA
- Filter Bubbles and Fake News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaolE1blpWk>
- Why Do We Swear? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsFm-pN_XJO

The dictionary makers (lexicographers) are also very good at making their work with the English language really accessible.

- **The Oxford Dictionary** blog: <https://public.oed.com/blog/>
- **Macmillan Dictionary** blog: <http://www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/>
- Australia's **Macquarie Dictionary** blog: <https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/blog/>
- The US's **Merriam-Webster Dictionary**: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Queen Mary University London (QMUL)

Resources aimed at students, teachers and the general public on accent attitudes, changing language in the UK and lots more.

- Accent Bias in Britain Project: <https://accentbiasbritain.org/>
- Teach Real English Resources: <http://www.teachrealenglish.org/>

University of York

Lots of very useful resources on aspects of language use and how people feel about it

- The York English Language Toolkit: <https://englishlanguagetoolkit.york.ac.uk/>

University College London (UCL)

Helping you understand what grammar is and how it works.

- Englicious Grammar Resources: <http://englicious.org/>

Lancaster University

- Corpus-based teaching resources that explain how you can use technology and digital databases to track changes and variations in English:
<http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/bnclab/search?display=resources>

Tony Thorne's *Language and Innovation* pages

- Tony Thorne is a linguist at King's College London who collects and tracks slang usage, among other things: <https://language-and-innovation.com/>

Deborah Cameron's *A feminist guide to language blog*

- Deborah Cameron is one of the country's leading experts on language and gender and her blog is funny, thought-provoking and insightful: <https://debuk.wordpress.com/>

17. Experience a University-style Lecture

OK... so you're thinking of heading into an A Level rather than a degree but it's always interesting to see what's further down the path, should you choose to take it. As more and more universities provide material online and reach out beyond their own students to the wider community, you will find lots of interesting and accessible resources available, including lectures and MOOCs (interactive, self-taught online courses).

Some lectures and talks have been chosen to give you a taste of a few interesting areas.

- Watch a few minutes of these and choose a couple to watch all the way through. Don't worry about making notes at this stage; just follow the line of argument and think about the ideas being offered.
- Once you have listened to a couple of lectures, try to jot down a few notes at the end. What were the key ideas? Did you understand the arguments being made? Were there any things you weren't sure about and might need to look up?
- If you can, arrange with a classmate to listen to the same lecture and swap notes via the platform recommended and validated by your school. Sometimes, two of us can listen to the same lecture and come away with very different ideas or see a different importance to the points being made.
- Many of the links from the TED talks offer suggestions for other language-based lectures. Follow a few of those links and keep a note of which of these you found interesting, and some key ideas from them. Many of these could come in useful later on in the course.

emagClips

- Professor Tim grant on Forensic Linguistics

<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing/leaping-into-language-emagclips>

TED Talks

- Lera Boroditsky on the links between language and thought
https://www.ted.com/talks/lera_boroditsky_how_language_shapes_the_way_we_think
- John McWhorter on digital language and texting
https://www.ted.com/talks/john_mcwhorter_txtng_is_killing_language_jk
- Deb Roy on children's language development
https://www.ted.com/talks/deb_roy_the_birth_of_a_word
- Anne Curzan on what makes a word 'real'
https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_curzan_what_makes_a_word_real
- Erin McKean on making up new words
https://www.ted.com/talks/erin_mckean_go_ahead_make_up_new_words
- Claire Bower on where English comes from
https://www.ted.com/talks/claire_bower_where_did_english_come_from
- John McWhorter on made-up languages in sci-fi and fantasy
https://www.ted.com/talks/john_mcwhorter_are_elvish_klingon_dothraki_and_na_vi_real_languages

And others

David Crystal interviewed by Cambridge University Press

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59GMlpAdVok>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8jofTbIxM>

Online Courses

If you are feeling like you really want to immerse yourself in some language study over the next few months (And why not?) **Future Learn** have a selection of online courses you can sign up for, including some excellent ones on Language and Linguistics. Here are a few we would recommend:

- Understanding English Dictionaries
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/understanding-dictionaries>
- An Introduction to Sociolinguistics: Accents, Attitudes and Identity
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/accents-attitudes-and-identity-an-introduction-to-sociolinguistics>
- Introduction to Intercultural Studies: Language and Culture
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/intercultural-studies-language-culture>

18. Big Questions

Linguists are always asking questions about the nature of language and exploring how it's used. In *emagazine* we have interviewed a number of linguists and language experts about the work they've been doing and the questions they think need answering. Here are a few extracts that we think you'll find interesting.

Perhaps you could come up with your own questions for linguists. Make a note of any of the big questions (or even little questions!) about language that you want to ask and send them to us at the @EngLangBlog Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/EngLangBlog>) – we can then put them to our panel of experts.

David Shariatmadari, Guardian writer and editor and author of *Don't Believe a Word: The Surprising Truth About Language*.

emagazine: What's so great about Linguistics? Would you encourage A Level students to study it?

Linguistics is really cool! If you like learning quirky facts about language, then look no further. It can be quite technical, but there's a lot of fun too. If you've ever asked any of the big questions about language – what makes languages different? What makes them the same? Does the language you speak shape your thought? Why are words the way they are? – then I think you should seriously consider studying Linguistics.

emagazine 87, February 2020

Devayani Sharma, Professor of Linguistics, Queen Mary University London and co-investigator on the Accent Bias in Britain project.

emagazine: Why is accent bias a problem? If we like one accent over another is that necessarily a problem?

All humans have biases – simplified ways of thinking when we need to process our thoughts quickly. Accent is no exception: we all have automatic associations with accents, and we might use those to make snap judgments about a person's social background. These automatic stereotypes and preferences — whether positive, negative, or neutral — are referred to as accent bias. Such biases are a natural and universal part of human cognition. We can't process our complex social world without sometimes relying on fast judgements.

But when we rely on these simple stereotypes to judge unrelated traits, like intelligence or competence or trustworthiness, our cultural baggage becomes discriminatory. Accent bias becomes accent discrimination.

The accent we grew up with is unrelated to the knowledge and expertise that we might acquire. If we judge people by their accent, we risk discriminating against well-qualified people because of their social background. Often those people already face other forms of discrimination, so this is a serious problem for social justice.

emagplus for magazine 87, February 2020

Henry Hitchings, author of *The Language Wars* and *The Secret Life of Words*.

emagazine: Is there a danger of the English language spiralling out of control at an ever greater speed because of technology? Should we be worried?

I don't believe it's going to spiral out of control. I do think, though, that changes - not just linguistic ones, but social ones also - are happening rapidly, and, while there are countless ways in which technological innovation benefits us, there are costs involved that we haven't yet fully understood. If we take the internet, for instance, it's prompting changes in the ways we think about a lot of important issues - for instance, community, privacy, ownership, authorship and sex. Some of those changes are positive, but others aren't. We should be concerned about the sheer speed of change, definitely. I say 'concerned' rather than 'worried' because worrying achieves nothing; we have to engage with these matters, rather than fretting about them.

emagazine 53, September 2011

John McWhorter, Professor of Linguistics at Columbia University, language podcaster and author of several books on language.

emagazine: Is there a political element to your work as a linguist? Is linguistics a scientific, neutral discipline, or is there room for bringing to bear one's own political and social beliefs?

Linguistics is, in many of its facets, highly sociopolitical. One mission of linguistics, which I applaud, is helping the public to understand that it doesn't make scientific sense to suppose that most people speak their native language 'badly.' As an outgrowth of that, I would venture that the subfield of sociolinguistics tilts significantly towards exploring the speech of the disempowered - there is only so much explicit interest in how affluent, straight white men talk! My own work as a linguist is sociopolitical where I write on Black English for the general public; that, however, is not what I usually work on in the academic sense. Most of my academic linguistic work is just geeky exploration of issues relating to how language changes and how languages come together in the structural sense, with the social part marginal. I adapt as I need to.

emagazine 79, February 2018

David Crystal, Professor of Linguistics, author of too many books on language to count and all-round language guru.

emagazine: What do you predict or anticipate to be the biggest new developments of the English language over the next few decades?

It's never possible to predict the future, when it comes to language. Who would have thought, a year ago, that 2020's 'words of the year' were going to be words like *self-isolate* and *lockdown*? Or, a decade ago, that there would be a new suffix in *English*, -exit? These are tiny details, but the same applies to bigger issues. Language reflects society, so any question about the future of language is actually a question about the way society (in the broadest sense, including politics, economics, religion, culture...) is going to change.

emagazine 89, forthcoming September 2020

19. The Future of English

So, this is the end of the *Leaping Into Language* pack. We hope you have found it a useful introduction to some of the things you could be doing on the A Level English Language course and have had a good chance to see what the course has to offer. Before you go, there are one or two final things for you to do.

- English is ever-changing; it doesn't stay the same for very long, but somehow we still share it as a common language that can unite us (and occasionally divide us). What do you think might happen to English in the future? Below you'll see three predictions for the future of English. Have a think about each one: how likely are they to happen, do you think? Write a sentence or two in response to each and then come back to your predictions once you are well into your course next year, or even at the very end, before your final exams. How have your predictions held up? Remember too that **you** are part of the future of English: it's the speakers and writers of English who shape its use so you will have a part to play in how it develops, and this course might just have a lasting impact on you as well.

Prediction	Your Ideas
Technology will advance so quickly in the next five to ten years that it won't matter which languages we speak because translation apps will allow us to talk to everybody in any language.	
The English language will continue to take over the world, spreading everywhere and leading to it becoming the shared language of nearly everyone. But we will all speak English with American accents.	
The English language will change so quickly and in such different ways that it will break into new separate languages, just like Latin turned into Italian, Spanish and French in centuries gone by.	



Leaping into Language!

ANSWERS



2. Which Accents? Answers



5. Language Fingerprints – Answers

The Forensic Linguistics Debriefing

What did you make of the messages in the **Language Fingerprints** activity and who did you suspect might have been the person who sent the message?

There's some reasonable evidence available in just the short amount of data we gave you, but if you were dealing with this in real life, you'd need a lot more. Forensic linguists usually work with much larger data sets and use a whole range of approaches to what's called 'comparative authorship analysis' (which is what we're doing here, in a very simplified form), but this isn't real and no one is really going to prison.

So where do we start with the evidence? The first thing is probably to have a look at the threatening message and identify any interesting linguistic features that stand out as being potentially significant. What we can then do is start looking for matches in the suspects' data.

Exhibit 1: The Abusive Message

Hope your really proud of yourself for what you done but you gotta no that one day your gonna get payback!!! We have had enough of politicians like you not listening to us, you should of listened!!! Watch your back

- What do you notice here?

There are a few things that might be interesting:

- Misspelling of *your* (*you're*) twice – quite common in online speech and texting, especially for **homophones** (words that sound the same but are spelt differently)
- Misspelling of *no* (*know*) – again it's a homophone
- Use of *what you done* rather than the more standard *what you have done* or *what you did*
- Use of *should of* rather than *should have* or *should've* – seen a lot in online language and similar to a homophone in some ways
- Two examples (*gotta* and *gonna*) where a form of **elision** is used (running two words together into a single one) – very common in speech and seen online quite a lot too
- Uses *!!!* twice
- Comma splice – uses a comma where a sentence break, like a full-stop might have been used (or a colon, semi-colon, dash or ...) in this construction (underlined): *We have had enough of politicians like you not listening to us, you should of listened!!!*
- No end punctuation
- Uses a lot of second person address (*you, your*)

Now let's see if we can identify anything interesting in the suspects' messages. The more points of similarity we find, the higher the likelihood it was them.

Suspect 1's Social Media Message

I don't like what's been happening in this area since the new housing development started. This used to be a nice place to live!!! I'm so disappointed in are local representatives for not sticking up for us!!!

Points of similarity

- Uses !!! twice
- *Are* used instead of *our* (a homophone)

Where is it different?

- Uses end punctuation and avoids comma splices
- Largely first-person (*I* and *us*)

Suspect 2's Social Media Message

When are local councillors gonna realise that they should of been standing up for us and not for they're mates in the big building firms, these people are gonna make a fortune from this

Points of similarity

- Uses *gonna* twice
- Uses *should of been*
- Uses *they're* instead of *their* – a homophone
- Uses a comma splice: mates in the big building firms, these people
- Doesn't use end punctuation (A ? could go where the comma is used and a full-stop at the end of the whole message)

Where is it different?

- No appearance of !!!
- No second person address

Suspect 3's Social Media Message

Your joking! Are they seriously going to build 200 new houses on the fields up by the hospital?! That is crazy. There's not enough facilities for the rest of us at the moment. Madness!!!

Points of similarity

- Uses *your* rather than *you're*
- Uses !!!

Where is it different?

- Uses !!!, !, ?! and a full-stop – some mixture of end punctuation
- Where *gonna* could have appeared, they have used *going to*
- Some quite short sentences compared to the first piece of evidence.

On balance, **Suspect 2** is the most likely match. While there are some differences, there are more similarities than the others. There's use of second person address in the threatening message and not in the other evidence, but then if you're threatening someone you might tend to address them directly. Of course, if people are posting messages online, not only can they hide their identity, they can also pretend to be someone else in their language style. There are quite a lot of features in the threatening message and some of those might have been deliberately inserted to hide the sender's real style!

If you're interested in reading more about forensic linguistics, Nicci MacLeod's chapter in the *EMC Language Handbook* gives you a great introduction.

The Aston Institute For Forensic Linguistics (at Aston University) is the UK's leading centre for this kind of work and can be found here <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/lss/research/lss-research/forensic-linguistics> while its director Tim Grant has spoken at the *emagazine* English Language conference. His emagClips can be found here <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing/leaping-into-language-emagclips> and you can watch one of his longer lectures here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0r32PDyV9wU>

John Olsson's website is also very interesting and tells you more about him and his work: <https://www.thetext.co.uk/>

6. Language Timeline

First TV broadcast in the world 1927	First spelling guide in UK 1582
First printing press in the UK 1476	First English settlement in America 1607
First telephone call 1876	First wood-cased pencil invented 1564
First Bible translation in English 1526	First newspaper printed in UK 1665
First dictionary published in UK 1604	Passing of Education Act that led to compulsory schooling up to age of 15 1944
First BBC radio broadcast 1922	Norman invasion of Britain 1066
First Hollywood film studio built 1911	First email sent 1971
First SMS (text) message sent 1992	Establishment of first university in the UK 1167