A Level English Language
Summer Work 2022

The following tasks have been designed to give you an introduction to some of the types of work you will be doing in A Level English Language and provide a solid foundation for the start of your A Level Programme.

TASK 1: Language Levels Glossary Production

During the course you will be using a subject vocabulary to describe:

- some of the features of language that appears in written text,
- can be heard in spoken conversations,
- typifies the language used by children
- and can be used to describe the way different social groups use language

Some of the vocabulary may already be familiar from GCSE - but some not.   One way of building knowledge and checking understanding is to have a glossary of key terms.

Produce a word processed document with a definition and example of the following terms:

Proper noun, concrete noun, abstract noun, collective noun.

Attributive adjective, predicative adjective, superlative adjective, comparative adjective

Main lexical verb, dynamic verb, stative verb, auxiliary verb, modal auxiliary verb[1]

Adverbial phrase

Minor, Simple, Compound, Complex and compound complex sentences.

Interrogative statements, declarative statements, imperative statements, exclamatory.

Morpheme, bound morpheme, free morpheme, lexeme, phrase, clause.

Pronoun, object pronoun, subject pronoun, possessive pronoun, reflexive pronoun, relative pronoun

Preposition, prepositional phrase

No one is expecting you to have learnt these by heart and be fully confident on the first day …. although if you are then that is terrific.   These words are used to describe the language features you will encounter (which is called AO1 - or assessment objective 1) and form 27% of how the whole A level is assessed.

(PTO and read the article below before starting Task Two - feel free to annotate- highlight - make tables of word types - draw boxes around sentences to see various lengths and complexity)

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[1] If you want to accelerate your learning look up deontic, epistemic and bullomaic modalities.

Accent discrimination is alive and kicking in England, study suggests

British Academy to feature large-scale project exploring prejudice based on how people speak

Do you say bath as "barth"? Would you put a "plahster" on a cut? Does it matter if you don't? Yes, it sadly does, say academics, who argue accent-ism is alive and well in England in 2022.

A research team will next week set up shop at the British Academy's grand headquarters overlooking the Mall in London, shining light on a large-scale project exploring prejudice against northern English accents and their speakers.

On many levels the subject of how people speak is a fun one. But it is also important, researchers say, because of the "profound" negative social, economic and educational implications for speakers with denigrated accents.

"This is the prejudice that can dare speak its name," said Dr Robert McKenzie who leads the Northumbria University project. "We are not allowed to be biased in terms of gender, we are not allowed to be biased in terms of sexual orientation."

But denigrating accents is still allowed, he said. "You just have to watch an episode of The Simpsons to see the way people from the southern United States are depicted. It is surprising I think that people still get away with it."

For four years McKenzie and his team have been studying how English people evaluate northern and southern English accents. They have examined the explicit and implicit – in other words, unconscious – prejudices.

For people with strong northern accents, the conclusions are not good. "People do think that speakers in the north of England are less intelligent, less ambitious, less educated and so on, solely from the way they speak," said McKenzie.

"On the other hand, people in the south are thought to be more ambitious, more intelligent."

People in the north were also "stereotyped as being friendly, outgoing and trustworthy salt-of-the-earth folk".

McKenzie's study found big differences in the self-reported biases and implicit ones. "The negativity towards northern English speech or the northern English speaker was much more extreme, much more intense when you were looking at the implicit level.

"That tells us that at a conscious level people are less prejudiced than they once were but at an implicit level we still have those biases."

A century ago, George Bernard Shaw wrote: "It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him."

That might not quite be the case today but the prejudices remained, said McKenzie. "The north of England is becoming less stigmatised but the change is very, very slow.

"It is easy to come across as really po-faced and tell people they shouldn't be prejudiced, but it is important. We do find that children with stigmatised accents are less likely to get high marks at school. People are more likely to be found guilty in court. They are less likely to be offered a job after an interview. They are less likely to be given access to social housing.

"These things do have real-world implications."

Each year the British Academy opens its doors for a summer showcase of the research work it has funded, billed as a "free festival of ideas for curious minds".

For the past two years it has been online. This year McKenzie and his team will be one of 12 projects taking part, with visitors invited to come along and talk about their own experience of accent prejudice or take part in interactive activities.

That will include listening to northern and southern English accents and also being asked the tricky question of where the north of England, or south of England, starts.

"That should be interesting," said McKenzie. "Southern people tend to put the south as beginning just above London whereas my students in Newcastle put the south just below Middlesbrough."

He hopes politicians will come along and support the project and its campaign to have accents made a protected characteristic under the Equality Act.

"Just as people shouldn't hold gender biases or biases against fat or thin people, we shouldn't have biases against accents," said McKenzie.

McKenzie pointed to Labour's Jess Phillips as an example of a politician who experiences accent-ism.

Another, less obvious, political victim was Jacob Rees-Mogg. "A long time ago he stood for parliament in Fife, they were obviously testing him out," said McKenzie. "He said he felt he suffered at the polls because of his accent, that people wouldn't vote for him because they saw him as an outsider. So it does work both ways."

TASK 2: Textual Analysis of an Article on a Language Issue

Using your newly acquired - or refreshed - knowledge of some of the language terminology.   Produce an analysis of the article you have just read using the following question as the basis for your analysis.

How does the writer of the text use language to create meanings and representations?
If you need an organising structure:

Paragraph 1: What is the purpose of the article and how does the writer try to do this?

Paragraph 2: What is the "topic/subject" being discussed and what types of words does the writer use to create particular ideas or views about the topic [look particularly at adjective and adverb use].

Paragraph 3:   How does the writer represent themselves... What impression do you get of them ? [expert/equal to you, formal/informal, educated, personality, attitude to subject - are they impartial/biassed].   To achieve this look at sentence structures and types, the language used (lexis), any particular semantic fields[2] emerging?

Paragraph 4: How does the writer view you as the reader? Do they address you directly (look at pronoun use)? What assumptions do they make about your age, social class, gender, level of education, shared attitude - how can you tell this from the language that is used in the article?

Paragraph 5: What do they want you to do in response to the article - Is there any action? What opinion do they want you to have formed?   How have they tried to make it memorable and engaging through language? [Look perhaps at unusual word choices, similes or metaphors, sound patterning such as alliteration and how the whole article is structured.

TASK 3:   Language investigation
Select a favourite or hated accent and write a 500 word research report on what are the perceptions of that accent and how it differs from standard or non-accented English. You should consider unique words (dialect), differences in the sound of the accent (phonology) and any unusual grammatical features.

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[2] Clusters of words that seem to come from the same sort of subject area or emotions