



Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School

Induction English Language A Level

Contents

Introduction

Recommended Reading

Investigations

Summer Work

Linguistic Frameworks

Introduction

Congratulations on choosing to study English at A Level.

You have chosen to study a course that will not only build on the skills you already have but also encourage you to think critically and prepare you for whatever your next steps happen to be.

We want all of our students to be keen linguists who start the course with an inquisitive mind to the nature of language all around them.

Prepare to think a little differently about the world!

Recommended Reading List

We study the AQA English Language course. Whilst we do not follow a textbook the following is useful when studying the course:

AS/A-Level English Language for Student Textbook, Cambridge University Press

<https://www.cambridge.org/us/education/subject/english/english-language/level/english-language/a-as-level/english-language-aqa-student-book-digital-access-2-years?isbn=9781107465589&format=DO>

Wider reading

There are a lot of books written about English Language. Some of the most accessible include:

David Crystal: *The Story of English in 100 Words*; *How Language Works*; *The English Language: A Guided Tour of the Language* (in fact, most books by this author are accessible and interesting. Have a look in your local library for them.)

Bill Bryson: *Mother Tongue*

There are also some really useful blogs to have a look at:

<https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/> - gives some interesting insights into new words and the changing uses of existing words.

<http://flashfictiononline.com/main/> - useful website for looking at short pieces of creative writing. This will prove useful as you start preparing for coursework.

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language> - interesting blog that looks at attitudes towards the ways in which language is used.

Interesting topics to get your teeth into:

The field of English Language is a wide and varied field of study and, as a result, lots of people like discussing it.

Check out Radio 4's 'Word of Mouth' programme on the BBC iPlayer:

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

In this half hourly programme, Michael Rosen discusses various sorts of language from broad areas, such as the use of slang and language linked to gender identity, to more niche areas such as the naming of diseases and clichés in football commentary.

You should also check out this playlist on Ted Talks:

https://www.ted.com/playlists/228/how_language_changes_over_time

For each of the talks, think about the following questions and then choose one of the following topics to investigate:

<p>Txtng is killing language. JK!!!</p>	<p>What are your views on the way that texting (and social media in general) has influenced language? Look at the way the speaker discusses the use of the phrase 'LOL.' How far do you agree with his assertion that the role of 'LOL' has changed? Do you still use this technique? Investigation: What are the key features of the way you use language in text messages and social media? What affects the way you use language in these situations?</p>
<p>Go ahead, make up new words!</p>	<p>How far do you agree with the idea that we are pre-programmed to apply certain grammatical rules such as plurals? According to the talk, what are the different ways of creating new words? Look at the new words that have been added to the <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (google 'new words list' and they will appear). What methods have been used? Investigation: Try to create a new word and see if you can track its usage. Think about the gap you are trying to fill and how you will get the word to spread around different speakers.</p>
<p>How language transformed humanity.</p>	<p>How essential is language to social learning? Pagel presents an argument for a global language. What are your thoughts about creating a single global language? What are the potential benefits of such a situation? What are the potential downsides to this situation? Investigation: Pagel discusses the idea that language is subversive and that there are certain words you cannot say. Discuss the words that are considered 'dangerous' or 'taboo' in modern society. How has this changed over time? Are there words that could be used 50 years ago that are considered inappropriate now? Why has this changed?</p>
<p>What our language habits reveal.</p>	<p>What are the different types of verb that Pinker discusses? Why might speakers choose to use euphemistic or metaphorical phrases for certain events or ideas? Pinker discusses the use of language to create implicature (implying meaning but not saying it directly). In what ways have you used or heard implicature in different settings or situations? Investigation: Look at different political speeches and identify how language has been used to convey or reinforce certain ideologies or values. How do politicians use implicature to affect the audience's response? What values do they assume their audiences hold?</p>

Don't kill your language!	<p>This talk is in a different language with subtitles. What were your initial responses to this? Did this make you less likely to want to engage with the talk? What do you think that reveals about the way we respond to different languages?</p> <p>To what extent do you feel that language is an important part of culture?</p> <p>What might make someone give up their native tongue in favour of a different language?</p> <p>Investigation: Research a country that has English as a primary language alongside other national languages – e.g. South Africa, Jamaica or Singapore. How does this country use English? How did English arrive in the country? What effects has English had on the native languages?</p>
What makes a word real?	<p>In your opinion, when should a word be added to the standard dictionary? What criteria do you think it should fulfil before it is added?</p> <p>Do you think any words should be banished? What criteria would a word have to fulfil in order for it to be threatened with 'banishment'?</p> <p>Can you write a definition of what makes a word real?</p> <p>Investigation: Select three new slang words that you think your English teacher <i>needs</i> to know in order to be able to communicate effectively with your age group. Prepare the dictionary definitions for your words along with examples of them in use. Justify why you have selected these words over any others.</p>
What is a snollygoster?	<p>How important is it that the debates in Parliament are available for people to read?</p> <p>How important are titles for a profession?</p> <p>To what extent do you agree with Forsyth's view that reality shapes words more than words shape reality?</p> <p>Investigation: Visit https://hansard.parliament.uk/ and look at the ways in which language is used in Parliament. Which elements of language use are particularly interesting?</p>

Summer Work

As part of your summer work, please complete the reading and activities of your linguistic booklet from your Induction lesson (also in the following pages).

You also need to create an original charity advertisement, featuring linguistic comments exploring the effect. You need to consider the Genre, (how it has been constructed), the Purpose, Mode and Audience as well as using linguistic frameworks for your analysis.

The Fundamentals of Linguistics

There are some important areas that will be the basis of your study of the language of texts taken from everyday sources. There are a number of linguistic frameworks and related concepts to come to grips with:

Linguistic Frameworks

- Lexis
- Semantics
- Grammar
- Phonetics / Phonology Pragmatics
- Discourse
- Graphology

Lexis - *The words used in text or spoken data; the words, phrases and idioms of language.*

Key Features may include:

- Choice of lexis, e.g. jargon (specialist terms), dialect, slang, colloquialisms, taboo, clichés, euphemisms, dysphemisms, archaisms (deliberate use of old fashioned terms).
- Choices indicating factors such as levels of formality and education, e.g. elevated, literate, sophisticated, Latinate, unusual and polysyllabic terms (largely a reading or writing vocabulary) as opposed to simple, every-day, vernacular and monosyllabic
- Types of word, e.g. compound, shortening, abbreviation, neologism, blend, loan word.
- Use of recurring lexis from particular lexical (semantic) fields.
- Collocations, whether common (predictable) or uncommon (deviant).
- Use of figurative language, e.g. metaphor, simile, pun, hyperbole, personification, metonymy, oxymoron.

List as many words for 'drunk' as you can, trying to cover as many different registers (levels of formality and informality). Try to think about what your parents and grandparents would say, and also think about different contexts, e.g. what would you say to a police officer

Next you need to get your words in rank order, from most formal to least. Once that's done, try applying some lexical labels to them.

Semantics - *The meaning of language. The semantics of a word is the meaning of it as given in a dictionary. The semantic meaning of a text is not always straightforward, though, because we can add layers of meaning, for example through euphemisms or dysphemisms.*

Key Features may include:

- Denotation - factual and objective meanings
- Connotation - personal and subjective meanings
- Types of meaning - positive / negative, specific / vague, literal / figurative
- Contrasts in meaning - synonym, antonym, hypernym, hyponym, homonym, homophone, homograph
- Changes in meaning - amelioration, pejoration, broadening, narrowing

A euphemism is the substitution of a polite expression for one thought to be offensive, harsh, or blunt (e.g. "spending a penny").

A dysphemism is when we use a harsh expression instead of a more neutral one (e.g. animal names when they are applied to people, such as: coot, old bat, pig, snake and bitch). We might call someone a pig when we actually mean that his table manners are not delicate!

Pick an area where euphemisms are often used (sex, death and bodily functions are the most common). Try to list five euphemisms and five dysphemisms.

Grammar - *The way individual words are structured and arranged together in sentences.*

Key features may include:

- Word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions and determiners
- Features of the verb: main and auxiliary, tense, modal auxiliaries, active and passive voice · Sentence types: declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory
- Sentence complexity: minor, simple, compound, complex, relative length · Unusual word order
- Other aspects: ellipsis, pre - and post - modification, subject / object, pronoun use, person, agreement, content and function words, noun phrase complexity
- Word structure: prefix, suffix

Word Classes

You need to know the different word classes so that you can analyse how they are used. They are the basic types of words that English has. There are eight of them:

Nouns

A noun is a naming word. It names a person, place, thing, idea, living creature, quality, or action. There are two main types of noun: proper and common. Most nouns are common nouns and they can be divided up into three categories: concrete, abstract and collective.

Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes a noun. It tells you something about the noun.

Verbs

A verb is a word which describes an action (doing something) or a state (being something). You will need to find out about main verbs, auxiliary verbs, primary verbs, modal auxiliaries, active and passive verbs.

- Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Will Shall May/Might Would Can/Could Must Should Ought to

They are not used to talk about things that definitely exist, or events that definitely happened. These meanings are sometimes divided into two groups:

DEGREES OF CERTAINTY - certainty; probability; possibility; impossibility.

OBLIGATION/FREEDOM TO ACT - permission; lack of permission; ability; obligation.

Adverbs

An adverb is a word which usually describes a verb. It tells you how something is done. It may also tell you when or where something happened. Many adverbs end in -ly.

Pronouns

A pronoun is used instead of a noun, to avoid repeating the noun. Examples: I, you, he, she, it, we, they.

Prepositions

A preposition usually comes before a noun, pronoun or noun phrase. Prepositions can relate to position. They join the noun to some other part of the sentence.

Examples: on, in, by, with, under, through, at.

Conjunctions (connectives)

A conjunction joins two words, phrases or sentences together. Examples: but, so, and, or.

Determiners

These words come before nouns and refer to them directly. The most common determiner, the, is called the definite article. The indefinite article is a/an.

Sentence Types

There are four sentence types in English. The first sentence type is the most common:

Declarative

A declarative sentence "declares" or states a fact, arrangement or opinion. Declarative sentences can be either positive or negative. A declarative sentence ends with a full stop.

Examples: 'I'll meet you at the train station.' 'The sun rises in the East.'

Imperative

The imperative commands (or sometimes requests). The imperative has no subject as 'you' is the implied subject. The imperative form ends with either a full stop or an exclamation mark.

Examples: 'Open the door.' 'Finish your homework!' 'Pick up that mess!'

Interrogative

The interrogative asks a question. The interrogative form ends with a question mark.

Examples: 'How long have you lived in France?' 'When does the bus leave?' 'Do you enjoy listening to classical music?'

Exclamatory

The exclamatory form emphasises a statement (either declarative or imperative) with an exclamation mark.

Examples: 'Hurry up!' 'That sounds fantastic!' 'I can't believe you said that!'

Read a passage and label all the grammatical terms you can.

Phonetics / Phonology

Phonetics is the study of the sounds made by speakers. You will need to know that a phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a language and that each phoneme has its own phonetic symbol.

Phonology is the use of vocal elements to add extra force to what is being said.

Key Features may include:

- Characteristics of normal spoken delivery, e.g. volume, stress, pitch, intonation, (pitch pattern or melody), tempo, silent pauses, voiced pauses (fillers, e.g. 'er', 'erm'), alliteration, assonance. These are called prosodic features.
- Elision (partial loss of sounds from words in connected speech, indicated through spelling), e.g. I'm, can't, 'cos, fish 'n' chips, livin', cuppa tea).
- Phonology can even be a characteristic of written English as well as spoken and can be spotted in certain patterns. You will be used to this with the poems that you studied for GCSE, but remember that we are not just thinking about poems anymore. The patterns can include: rhyme, onomatopoeia, rhythm, assonance.
- Significant aspects of accent, indicated by means of deviant spelling, e.g. West Lancashire 'th'reet mon' ('the right man'), Somerset 'zo I zaid' ('so I said').

Write some headlines for a tabloid newspaper which use phonological devices for effect. Your subjects can be "real", or based on current affairs or celebrity gossip.

Pragmatics

The study of the meanings people are really trying to communicate. For example, "How lovely to see you" can convey different meanings: the speaker is genuinely pleased to see the other person; the speaker is being sarcastic and would prefer not to see the other person; there might be an element of malice because of their appalling dress sense!

Key Features may include:

- Specific features of turns in speech, e.g. utterance length, speech acts, indirectives, backtracking, repairing, forms (terms) of address, repetition, reformulation, minimal responses, backchannelling, hedging, mitigating devices.
- Recognition of function (force) where different from grammatical form, e.g. use of grammatical declarative to ask question or of interrogative to command.
- Grice's co-operative principle and four maxims.
- Politeness and face (positive v. negative), face-threatening act.
- Recognition of cultural allusions.

Write a conversation which has layers of meaning in addition to the semantic meanings.

Discourse

(i) Longer stretches of text, looking particularly at aspects of cohesion (the way different parts of a text are connected through either grammar or lexis).

(ii) The way texts create identities for particular individuals, groups or institutions e.g. the discourse of law, politics, the media.

Key Features may include:

- The written genre
- The context of a conversation e.g. an unequal encounter or a peer group chat · The speakers' roles
- In a written text, the point of view: perspective and voice
- Management by speakers of turn-taking and topics, openings and closings · Register (topic, level of formality and tone), register switching
- External coherence established through consistent reference to the real world · Intertextuality
- Use by speakers of frames (scripts or norms of interaction), discourse markers, adjacency pairs, interruptions and overlaps

Take a text you have found and annotate using (i) and (ii) above as your guide.

Graphology

The visual appearance of language.

Key Features may include:

- Nature of characters, e.g. handwritten or printed, plain or ornamental, upper or lower case.
- Font type e.g. Arial, Parisian BT, Times New Roman.
- Font style e.g. standard, emboldened, italic.
- Font size (measured in points – 72 points to the inch, e.g. eight point, ten point, twelve point).
- The concept of the grapheme, the fundamental unit in written language such as letters of the alphabet, numbers, punctuation marks.
- Organisation of text, e.g. headings, columns, bullet points, numeration, borders, boxes, paragraph size, line spacing, use of white space.
- Other aspects, e.g. use of colour, logos, drawings, photographs, captions, diagrams, charts.

A key word to learn: semiotics. It is the study of how we read signs.

Find a leaflet, poster or blog and analyse its graphological features.