

Welcome to A level English Language at Woodhouse College

## Introducing Linguistics – Exploring language in the world around you

*Aim: In order to prepare yourself for A level study, we would like you to explore some of the issues surrounding language use that we discuss on the course. You will see what kinds of research and wider reading is expected of you as an A level student.*

### Task One: Attitudes to language in the press

  Read the following media articles about attitudes towards language and grammar.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2630067/school-sacks-member-of-staff-for-correcting-a-pupils-bad-grammar-on-twitter/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/nov/01/resistance-to-changes-in-grammar-is-futile-say-researchers>

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20170904-how-americanisms-are-killing-the-english-language?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>

 How should we 'read' media in the modern age? We are all aware of the influence of fake news and the concept of bias in reporting. How do you work out what is real news and what is opinion or lies? Watch the following clips to help you:

<https://schools.firstnews.co.uk/blog/fake-news/bias-in-the-press/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z63wwty>

 Can you find some more articles on the topic of attitudes towards language use from British newspaper websites? Pick one to look at in detail. Does it seem to be biased in any way? If so, what uses of language suggest this?

 **Print out or save this article and make notes on your findings.** Add these documents to your new language folder.

### Task Two: Topical language issues

**A successful A level English Language student knows that in order to be able to understand and analyse a broad range of written and spoken texts, they need to be inquisitive about the world around them and watch, listen and read widely.**

 Dip into some of the suggested websites and podcasts linked to below. These are the kinds of wider sources that an enquiring A level language student should be exploring. Keep a record of anything you listen to.

**Ted talks:** There's always something interesting to listen to. Here are a few talks on linguistics to give you an understanding of this subject:

- [https://www.ted.com/talks/lera\\_boroditsky\\_how\\_language\\_shapes\\_the\\_way\\_we\\_think](https://www.ted.com/talks/lera_boroditsky_how_language_shapes_the_way_we_think)
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_peterson\\_why\\_language\\_is\\_humanity\\_s\\_greatest\\_invention](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_peterson_why_language_is_humanity_s_greatest_invention) (This talk is written by the man who invented Dothraki – if you'd like to invent your own language, try this website for advice on getting started: <https://conlang.org/> )

**Word of Mouth:** A radio programme that's also available as a podcast. Presented by Michael Rosen (yes, we're going on a bear hunt...), each episode explores a different issue around language use. Here are two episodes that might interest you:

- Lying. Why do we lie? How do we lie? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dfpy>
- Me, myself and AI - the language of AI <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b0pw1w>

**The Media Show:** A radio programme that's also available as a podcast. It explores how the media operates and how current issues are being presented in the media.

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00dv9hq/episodes/downloads>

**The Allusionist:** a podcast that explores issues related to language and the use of language. Here are a few episodes that you might find interesting to start with:

- 'In character'. As technology is globalised, how do languages such as Chinese contend with obstacles like alphabetisation, Romanisation and standardisation? [Allusionist 153. In Character — The Allusionist](#)
- 'The Tiffany problem'. The name Tiffany has been around for some 800 years. But you can't name a character in a historical novel 'Tiffany', because people don't believe the name is old. [Allusionist 155. The Tiffany Problem — The Allusionist](#)

**The Vocal Fries:** the podcast about linguistic discrimination. Here's a few episodes to start with:

- 'All Your Meme Are Belong To Us'. Explores intertextuality, memes, and the tropes embedded in internet memes. [All Your Meme Are Belong To Us from The Vocal Fries on RadioPublic](#)
- 'Snap, Crackle, K-Pop'. Explores K-Pop, semiotics and cultural appropriation. [Snap, Crackle, K-Pop from The Vocal Fries on RadioPublic](#)



**Write a review** of one of the podcasts or TedTalks that you listened to (no more than 200 words). Consider the following prompts:

- Would you recommend this to another student? Why?
- 3 key fact nuggets – what were the three most interesting or significant bits of information you learned from this podcast/talk?
- What did you notice about the style of presentation and delivery? How clear was the presenter/s' language? How did they try to engage the listener?
- Would you listen to more podcasts/talks by this person or team? Why?

Stretch yourself: extension fiction reading

Here is a list of fiction books that contain storylines about language or examples of language variation. You may wish to read one over the holidays.

1. **1984** – George Orwell
2. **A Clockwork Orange** - Anthony Burgess
3. **The Color Purple** – Alice Walker
4. **Trainspotting** – Irvine Welsh
5. **The Handmaid's Tale** – Margaret Atwood
6. **Never Let Me Go** – Kazuo Ishiguro
7. **Beowulf** (try to read an edition with the Anglo-Saxon next to the modern English version)