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VCE® Units 1 & 2

# ENGLISH Language YEAR 11

STUDY DESIGN 2024

Selina Dennis, Natalie Gleeson
Luke Francis & Anna Stewart

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# Contents

# Introduction

Insight's *English Language Year 11: VCE Units 1 & 2* is a comprehensive textbook for the VCE English Language Study Design: 2024–2028.

The VCAA has made numerous changes to the Study Design for Year 11. In Unit 1, Area of Study 2, you are introduced to a new skill requirement: conducting linguistic field work. This provides a taste of one of the potential pathways for further study in linguistics. In Unit 2, Area of Study 1, after covering a brief history of English you will study one of two modules in depth – 'Incursions' or 'Inventions'. This gives you the opportunity to explore in more detail the impact of society and culture on the English language, providing the foundations for further sociolinguistic exploration in Year 12.

This book provides core knowledge that you will use throughout your studies, with clear explanations for key concepts and metalanguage. It also includes numerous features designed to support your learning, including the following.

- Activities throughout each chapter enable you to develop your understanding of each concept. Answers to many of the activities are available online. Scan the code or click here to access the answers as well as other resources.
- Practical strategies at the end of each section provide advice on developing the skills required in English Language, such as annotating texts and writing essays.
- Chapters 1, 2 and 3 explain the specific linguistic metalanguage, including many terms that will be required knowledge throughout Units 1–4.
- Chapter 7 introduces you to linguistic field work and leads you through the collection and analysis of data, and methods for presenting your research.
- QR codes throughout the book (and web links in the digital version, which can be accessed via the code on the inside cover) give access to extensive supplementary material, including short videos, relevant websites and additional sample responses.

*English Language Year 11* is designed to help you build skills systematically and efficiently so that you can analyse texts confidently, write accurately about linguistic concepts and explore sociolinguistic topics and issues effectively. Our aim is to provide you with a toolset that will lead to success not only in Years 11 and 12, but also throughout your life as you begin to understand the power of language in our everyday interactions.

*Selina Dennis, Natalie Gleeson, Luke Francis and Anna Stewart*

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UNIT 1

# LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

## Area of Study 1: The nature and functions of language

The first three chapters of this textbook present the key knowledge, and help you to develop the required skills, for Unit 1, Area of Study 1. The English Language Study Design outlines the following key knowledge points:*

- language as a meaning-making system that can be both arbitrary and governed by conventions
- major functions that language serves when used in a given context
- the properties that distinguish human communication as unique
- the influence of register, tenor and audience
- the influence of situational and cultural contexts – including field, language mode, setting and text type – and authorial intent on language choice and preparedness
- the subsystems of language: morphology, lexicology, syntax and semantics
- introduction to the subsystems of language: phonetics and phonology, and discourse and pragmatics
- features that distinguish speech from writing, such as paralinguistics and prosodics
- metalanguage to discuss aspects of the nature and functions of human language.

Each chapter introduces the concepts and metalanguage – the precise and specific terms used for writing about language – relevant to a particular area of knowledge and understanding. Chapter 1 outlines the main functions of language, while Chapter 2 covers the factors that influence how people use language and the choices that language-users make. Chapter 3 provides detailed explanations of the language subsystems, and defines much of the metalanguage you will use throughout the English Language course.

In each chapter, definitions and explanations are followed by activities so you can apply your knowledge and practise using the metalanguage.

CHAPTER 01

# Language and its functions

In Chapter 1 we consider human language as a form of communication, and how it came to exist. Language is designed to communicate meaning, but words themselves are typically arbitrarily created – they have arisen by chance rather than by design – and are useful only because a society agrees on their use and meaning. Human communication is fascinating because it seems to be a unique construct in the animal kingdom – our ability to compose our thoughts and discuss ideas sets us apart from other life forms.

This chapter will introduce you to some of the metalanguage that you will use in English Language, and ask you to consider how words come to exist and why they take the form they do. You will consider the intent behind the creation of texts and the messages they convey, and begin to use technical language to discuss these intents scientifically and objectively.

## Key knowledge covered:

- language as a meaning-making system that can be both arbitrary and governed by conventions
- the properties that distinguish human communication as unique
- major functions that language serves when used in a given context

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Language** | A meaning-making system that allows humans to convey information to each other. It can be written, spoken or signed. In VCE English Language, we focus mainly on the written and spoken forms of language. |
| **Language functions** | The purpose of a message. Language has six functions: referential, emotive, conative, poetic, phatic and metalinguistic. These are explained on pages 5–9. |

# What is language?

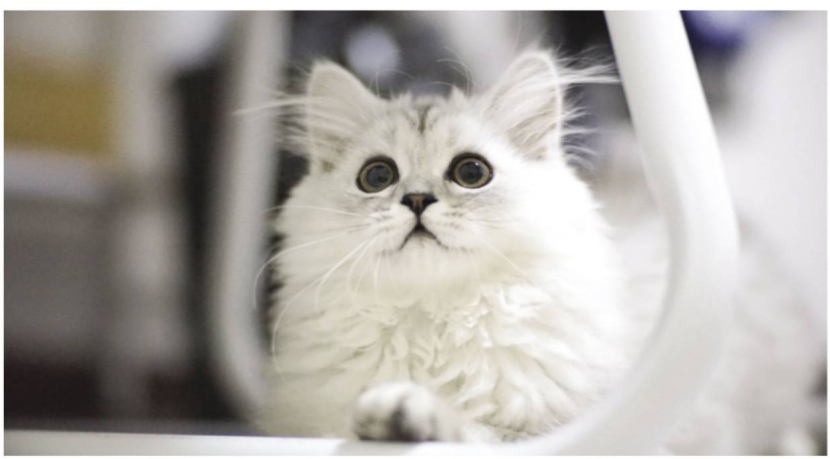
If you were asked to define 'language', how would you begin? Language is a means by which we communicate with each other, but that leads to the question, 'What is communication?' To communicate, do we need to use language or can we achieve it through other means?

In *How language works* (2006), linguist David Crystal considers how to define language. He asks us to consider body language, spoken and written language, sign language, computer language, bad language, and the languages of animals, cinema, music and love. Are these all forms of language? The word 'language' seems straightforward, but in your journey through VCE English Language you will come to appreciate the complexity of this communication system that we use every day.

## Language as a meaning-making system

Fundamentally, language is a meaning-making system that allows us to convey our thoughts, values, associations, cultural background and aspirations. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure considered language to consist of **signifiers** (e.g. the material form of words written on a page) and the **signified** (the concept associated with the words).

Consider the word 'cat'. The letters 'c', 'a' and 't' placed in a row make a word that we associate with a small, furry domesticated animal. The word 'cat' is what de Saussure calls a signifier – the physical letters used to produce the word. The mental image that the word 'cat' conjures up (a small, furry domesticated animal) is referred to as the signified. Together, the signifier and the signified comprise the **sign**. The relationship between the signifier and the signified, according to de Saussure, is arbitrary. We could just as easily have associated the sounds 't', 'a' and 'p' with our concept of a cat, and used the signifier 'tap' to describe that same animal.



Spoken and written language consists of words, and these words are assigned meanings by society and culture. Communication occurs because of the conceptual relationship between the signifier and the signified, and therefore could not exist without human cognition and understanding.

## Develop your understanding 1.1

Think of some of the recent words you have used with your friends, such as slang from social media. How do you think the signifier (word) came to relate to the signified (concept)?

Here are some terms from the late 2010s and early 2020s to start you off. One has been completed for you.

slay iykyk rizz drip

***slay:*** *This term signifies 'to do something very well' ('she slayed that') or to be cool or great ('that is slay'). This signifier likely arose because the word 'slay' also means 'to kill', and 'to kill (something)' can mean to do something particularly well.*

### The uniqueness of human language

The human ability to communicate is not unique in the animal kingdom. Other creatures can communicate a substantial amount of information for various purposes, such as to warn of danger, defend territory, find a mate, indicate emotions and share food sources. For example, a honey bee performs a dance to show the rest of the hive where to find a tasty resource. What differentiates humans is the ability to use a *language* to communicate – to compose thoughts into structured phrases, sentences and paragraphs to express concepts and ideas, particularly abstract ones.

Scan the code or click here to watch Michele Bishop's TED Talk, 'Do animals have language?'

## Develop your understanding 1.2

1 Research Nim Chimpsky, a chimpanzee used in a Columbia University study in the 1970s to see if animals could learn a human language. What were the findings? Do they affirm or refute the statement that 'no other animal has language'?

Scan the code or click here to access a written piece about Nim.

2 The ability to use a language is a distinctive feature of humankind; however, artificial intelligence (AI) systems can create fluent and coherent ad hoc responses to prompts and questions. Consider the increasing sophistication of AI systems such as ChatGPT.

a Have you ever communicated with an AI system? Consider online chat help tools and virtual assistants such as Siri and Alexa. How does communicating with these AI systems differ from communicating with a human?

b If AI can surpass general human intelligence and communicative ability in the future, do you think it is a threat to humanity?

# Major functions of language

When considering language and communication, we examine words, phrases, clauses and sentences, but these individual components alone cannot always convey meaning. We also need to consider the purpose of a message: its **function**.

Russian–American linguist Roman Jakobson determined six factors to be considered when exploring the functions of human language: **context, message, addresser, addressee, contact and code** (Jakobson 1960). While Jakobson focused on verbal communication, in VCE English Language, Jakobson's functions can be used to describe both written and spoken functions of texts.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Context** | the setting (time and place) or circumstances in which the message is communicated |
| **Message** | the message being communicated |
| **Addresser** | the person delivering the message |
| **Addressee** | the audience receiving the message |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Contact** | the means (or 'channel') through which the addresser and addressee communicate and stay in communication, e.g. face-to-face, phone, text message |
| **Code** | a system of signs (a language) common to the addresser and addressee |


Messages are shaped by context, contact and code as they travel between addresser and addressee.

Using these factors, Jakobson identified six core functions of language: **referential, emotive, conative, poetic, phatic** and **metalinguistic**.

## Referential function

One of the main functions of language, the referential function is the sharing of information with an intended audience. This information may or may not be true, but the language user presents the message as factual and objective, commonly using declarative sentences (sentences that function as a statement rather than as a question or command).

*Examples*

The sky is not blue.
Summer is when the weather is very hot.
His heart is broken.

The referential function describes a situation, whether it be literal or abstract. For example, in the sentence 'His heart is broken', the notion of a heart being broken is abstract but it is delivered as though it is a statement of fact.

See page 57 to find out more about declarative sentences.

## Emotive function

The emotive function allows users to express emotions and desires. It's sometimes referred to as the expressive function. This function usually relates to the addresser and their presentation of emotion – real or not.

*Examples*

Argh, you stepped on my toe!
That was a fantastic movie.
I'm not looking forward to my trip to the dentist.

The purest demonstration of the emotive function is shown in the first example, which begins with the highly emotive 'Argh' – an interjection.

See page 47 to find out about interjections.

## Conative function

The conative function typically involves directions, questions and commands. Messages with a conative function aim to cause the addressee (the audience) to react in some way.

*Examples*

Could you please pass the salt?

Get out!

What are your thoughts about potatoes?

Texts have a conative function if they are intended to persuade the audience, even if they don't contain a directive (instruction) clearly asking the addressee to do something. For example, the statement 'It's a bit chilly in here' could serve a referential function, but it could also be conative if the addresser is suggesting that the addressee do something about the cold, such as closing a window or door. A text that appeals to its audience to think, feel or act in a certain way has a conative function.

## Poetic function

The poetic function focuses on the formation of the message itself, rather than on the addresser or addressee. It is sometimes referred to as the aesthetic function because it concerns the beauty or wit of the text's composition.

*Examples*

Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive.
– Sir Walter Scott

Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy? – 'Bohemian Rhapsody' by Queen

*Writing tip*

In your studies, you may come across various linguistic terms, some of which are synonymous with the terms you learn in this subject. It can be helpful to know what these are; however, remember to always use the language from the Study Design in your assessment tasks (e.g. use 'emotive' and 'poetic' rather than 'expressive' and 'aesthetic' when discussing functions).

Texts with a poetic function are commonly found in poetry, song, drama and literature, but they can also exist in other contexts. For example, humorous texts that are designed to persuade (i.e. be conative) can also contain messages that are poetic, achieving humour through playful use of language. Advertising campaigns also often contain messages that have a poetic function.


## Phatic function

Texts that have a phatic function are designed to create and maintain social connections between the addresser and the addressee. These messages tend to be somewhat meaningless outside a social context and the focus is on the contact – the way the message is delivered and received. For example, when an acquaintance asks how your day has been, or if you've had a nice weekend, an honest answer is rarely expected; usually a polite, general, positive response is required.

*Examples*

Nice day, isn't it?

Hi, nice to meet you.

How are you?

Get well soon!

Phatic messages are often used to start or end conversations, as greetings or farewells. They are used in written texts as well, such as beginning a letter with 'Dear' or signing off an email with 'Kind regards'. Phatic messages also arise within a conversation if the addresser and addressee can't see each other; for instance, if the phone connection is bad, one participant might ask, 'Are you still there?'

## Metalinguistic function

A text that has a metalinguistic function describes language itself, such as using the metalanguage 'nouns' and 'vowels'.

The metalinguistic function allows speakers to check whether they have been understood or are using the right code (type of language) for the conversation. Typically, the code would be a standard language such as Australian English, but it could also be a variation that is used within a specific context, such as slang used among close friends or jargon (specialised language) in a workplace.

*Examples*

A potato cake? Is that the same as a potato scallop?

Do you understand what I'm saying?

This sentence is short.

Always capitalise proper nouns.

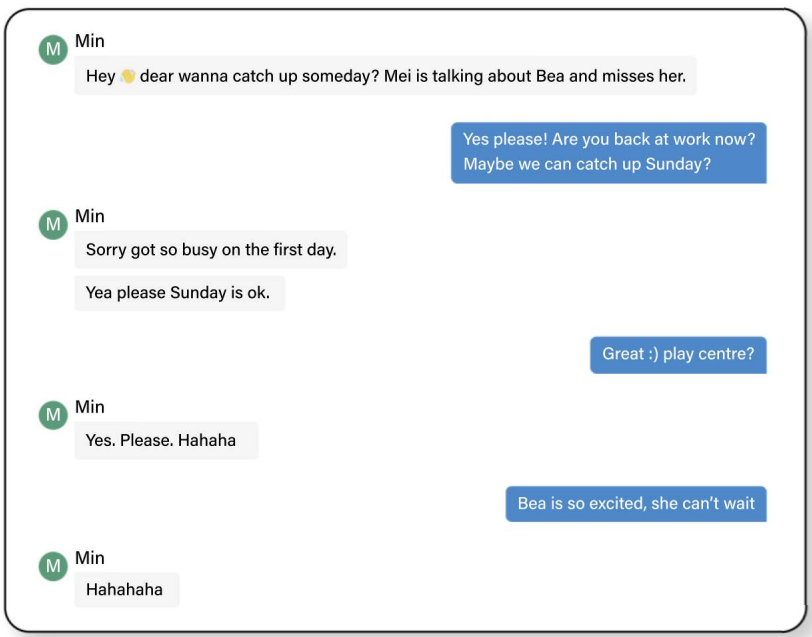
 

## Overlap of functions

When considering the functions of language, it's important to understand that a text, or a message within a text, does not exist in a vacuum. More often than not, a text will achieve multiple functions – not just one. Conative texts can often be poetic (e.g. in advertising) and emotive texts often complement phatic exchanges, such as when a relationship between people is created and maintained through gossip or by sharing opinions about a topic. When exploring a text, consider each of the functions that you can identify in it.

### *Worked example*

Consider the discussion of the possible functions within this text conversation.




The text has some informal language features: the words 'wanna' and 'Hahaha'; the waving hand emoji; and the smiley face emoticon. This indicates an emotive and phatic function to the text. The emotive function can be seen in the indication of positive feelings and emotions, such as the smiley face used by the receiver of the message and Min's spelling of laughter, 'Hahahaha'. The phatic function can be seen in the introductory greeting 'Hey ... dear', the use of 'please' by both participants, and the recipient responding with 'Great'. The text also has a conative function, as both participants negotiate to meet. While the requests are indirect and polite, there are implied directives within the conversation including Min's 'wanna catch up ...?' and the recipient's suggestion, 'play centre?'

→ Clearly states which functions the text serves, using metalanguage.

→ Explains the emotive function further by describing the type of emotions being communicated.

→ Uses short quotes from the text to justify and support the discussion.

## Develop your understanding 1.3

1 Categorise the following texts according to their function/s. Use examples from the texts to justify your categorisation. The first has been done for you.

a When we have a conversation, we usually aim to talk about the same topic as everyone else. This is called being 'on topic' and it lets others know that we are paying attention to what they are saying.

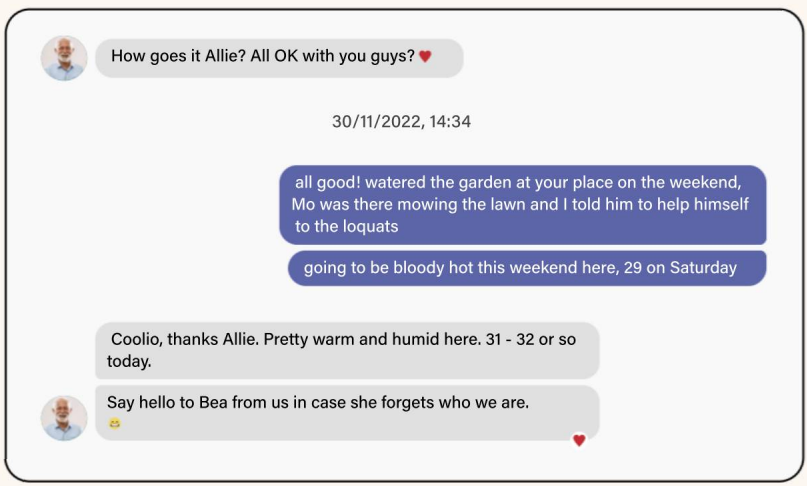
Source: adapted from *Social language skills: Conversation pack* by The Language Lady | TPT, teacherspayteachers.com

*This text has a metalinguistic function as it provides a discussion and explanation of what being 'on topic' means in the context of a conversation. This provides a definition and explanation of the language we use to talk about language.*

b The emu is iconically Australian, appearing on cans, coins, cricket bats and our national coat of arms, as well as that of the Tasmanian capital, Hobart. However, most people don't realise emus once also roamed Tasmania but are now extinct there.

Source: Tristan Derham, Christopher Johnson, Matthew Fielding, https://theconversation.com/theyre-on-our-coat-of-arms-but-extinct-in-tasmania-rewilding-with-emus-will-be-good-for-the-island-states-ecosystems-197029

c




2 Seek out five texts, written or spoken, and categorise them according to their functions. Use examples from the text to justify your categorisation.

CHAPTER 02

# Constructing texts

In Chapter 2 we look at the different elements that work together to make a text. When we construct a text – whether it is written or spoken, spontaneous or planned – we make language choices to suit the occasion. For our communications to be successful, we might need to select the appropriate level of formality and adapt our language according to the relationship we have with our audience or to the place or time in which something occurs.

There are many types of influences that help to shape the way we construct texts. The influences to consider when describing the construction of texts are **register**; **tenor**; **audience**; **cultural context** – attitudes, values and beliefs; **situational context** – field, mode, setting and text type; and **authorial intent**.

Building on Chapter 1, this chapter helps you to develop skills in using metalanguage to discuss texts. You'll consider elements that contribute to a text's construction, and how speakers or writers achieve their intentions with their texts.

## Key knowledge covered:

- the influence of register, tenor and audience
- the influence of situational and cultural contexts – including field, language mode, setting and text type – and authorial intent on language choice and preparedness

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Register** | Stylistic variation of language, defined by its use. It can involve all features of language and levels of formality. |
| **Tenor** | The relationships between participants in a communicative exchange. |
| **Audience** | The intended listener/s or reader/s of a text. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cultural context** | Aspects of the context that relate to the culture in which the author/speaker and/or audience exists. These include attitudes, values and beliefs of the author/speaker and/or audience. |
| **Situational context** | Everything outside of a text that shapes the language used within the text. This includes the field, tenor, language mode, setting and text type. |
| **Field** | The subject matter under discussion. The field of a text helps to determine how specific the language will be. |
| **Language mode** | The medium of the text – whether it is written or spoken. |
| **Setting** | Where a text is placed in relation to space and time, i.e. its physical surroundings and when it occurs. |
| **Text type** | The type or nature of a text (e.g. report, article, social media post, lecture, conversation, opinion piece or performance). |
| **Authorial intent** | What an author intends to do or achieve with a text. This influences the language used as well as the text's level of preparedness. |
| **Preparedness** | The amount of preparation involved in a text's construction. Some texts, particularly spoken texts, are spontaneous – they are constructed and delivered immediately. Others are carefully prepared, edited and refined before delivery. The level of preparedness of a text can vary depending on the intent of the author and on the text's functions. |

## Register

Register describes the way in which an addresser intentionally alters their language to better suit the situation (this is also known as **use-related variation**). It can involve all features of language and levels of formality. When we communicate, there are many different registers we can use. Some are easily defined, such as the registers used by doctors or lawyers, which often involve formal language alongside jargonistic terms and phrases. For example, lawyers are using a legal register when they discuss jurisprudence (a legal system) or file a writ (formal legal document); doctors use a medical register when ordering an echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart) for a patient experiencing tachycardia (fast heart rate). However, registers are not always as straightforward as this. There are degrees of formality, from very informal to very formal, and multiple registers and aspects of registers can be merged to achieve a particular communicative purpose. Consider the example above about the medical register. While a doctor might use this register with a patient, they may use informal explanations instead or as well to make sure the patient understands the treatment and why it is necessary. This could result in a doctor using a medical register that is delivered in an informal manner.

*Example*

> Doctor: We need to do an echocardiogram, which is a scan of your ticker, to check out why it's going flat chat.
> Patient: Yeah, OK doc. How long d'ya reckon that'll take?

Registers can be described using the **semantic domain** (group of words with related meanings) from which a text's vocabulary is drawn. They can also be described in relation to the manner of delivery, in terms of the level of formality.

See page 63 to find out more about semantic domain.

### *Worked example*

Consider the following description of the register of the text below.

1 Thank you for that welcome. I'm Stan Grant. Here to give you some answers tonight: best-
2 selling author Grace Tame; independent MP for Wentworth, Allegra Spender; New South
3 Wales Treasurer, Matt Kean; republican, Olympian and former Labor Senator Nova Peris; and
4 ABC broadcaster Josh Szeps. Please make them all feel welcome.
5 If you're like me, a few of you may be tired from that stunning Socceroos win, but keep
6 watching – we're going to get to that a little bit later. And we've got a really special
7 performance as well from poet and performer Steven Oliver. That's coming up later in the
8 program.
9 Remember, you can livestream us around the country on iview and all the socials. #QandA is
10 the hashtag, so please get involved.

**Stan Grant, *Q+A*, 1 December 2022**
https://www.abc.net.au/qanda/2022-01-12/101689452

The register of this text could be described in terms of its vocabulary and its formality, as well as its syntax. It uses standard language that is grammatical, such as, 'Thank you for that welcome' (line 1), which is consistent for a spoken text that is broadcast, as there are expectations in society that people are clear and coherent when being televised. The vocabulary used, such as 'livestream', 'iview', 'socials' and 'hashtag' (lines 9 and 10), suggests a technical register as it includes internet terms, and words such as 'performance', 'poet' and 'performer' (line 7) also suggest a technical register, as these are terms relating to the performing arts. Grant's use of contractions such as 'I'm' (line 1), 'you're' (line 5), and 'we've' (line 6) is slightly informal but the register as a whole is delivered in a mostly formal manner. This is demonstrated particularly when Grant introduces the guests, as full names and descriptions of their roles or professions are given; 'best-selling author Grace Tame' (lines 1–2), and 'New South Wales Treasurer, Matt Kean' (lines 2–3) are two examples of this.

Shows an understanding of the situational and cultural context.

Further describes the technical register by specifying where the vocabulary comes from ('internet' and 'the performing arts').

## Develop your understanding 2.1

1 How would you describe the registers of the following texts? Use examples from the text to justify your description. The first has been done for you.

a Reading is one way we seek to understand our worlds. Evolutionary psychologists propose the brain is 'designed for reading', just as it is for language, facial recognition or other drives. The act of reading engages both cognitive and – especially where there's a narrative – emotional processes.

Source: Jane Turner Goldsmith, https://theconversation.com/can-reading-help-heal-us-and-process-our-emotions-or-is-that-just-a-story-we-tell-ourselves-197789

*The register of this text is technical and somewhat formal. Words and phrases such as 'evolutionary psychologists', 'brain', 'facial recognition', 'cognitive' and 'emotional processes' suggest a scientific, technical field. The formality is slightly reduced by the use of a contraction, 'there's', and direct addresses to an audience, 'we' and 'our'.*

b


c While it is true that electronic devices such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones are becoming ubiquitous in many classrooms, there is still an undeniable need for students to have neat, legible handwriting.

Source: Melanie Flower, https://www.insightpublications.com.au/improving-your-handwriting-4/

d Scan the code or click here to access the Lamb Australia ad for 2023 and describe its register.

e Scan the code or click here to access the 'Aussies Try Each Other's Hungry Jack's Breakfast Order' on Buzzfeed and describe the register of the first minute of the video. (Please note that this video includes swearing.)

# Tenor

In a text, tenor refers to the relationship between the individuals communicating with each other. This relationship, or the role each participant is playing in the exchange, shapes the language they use, often subconsciously. The relationships can be positive, negative or neutral, and may vary depending on:

- the professional roles of the participants
- the status between speakers (whether they are equal or not)
- the relationship between the participants (e.g. whether they are strangers or close friends).

The topic of conversation can also influence language choices. The language you use when speaking with a teacher about a classroom subject, for example, is likely to be more informal and positive than the language you would use with that same teacher if you were late to class and trying to explain yourself.

Many terms can be used to discuss tenor, such as referring to the level of consideration one person gives another (respectful, appreciative, polite, hostile etc.) or the amount of social distance between them. **Social distance** is the level of intimacy or remoteness between speakers, described on a scale from 'socially close' to 'socially distant'. **Status**, however, relates to power or prestige: a person's social standing or rank on a vertical scale (from high/higher to low/lower).

*Writing tip*

To describe social distance, use terms such as 'very close', 'little social distance', 'quite close', 'close', 'some social distance', 'socially distant', 'great social distance' and 'very socially distant'. Don't describe social distance in terms of height, such as 'high social distance' or 'low social distance', as the concept is more of a horizontal measurement than a vertical one.

### *Worked example*

Read the excerpt from Stan Grant's monologue from *Q+A* below and consider the following description of its tenor.

1 Thank you for that welcome. I'm Stan Grant. Here to give you some answers tonight: best-
2 selling author Grace Tame; independent MP for Wentworth, Allegra Spender; New South
3 Wales Treasurer, Matt Kean; republican, Olympian and former Labor Senator Nova Peris; and
4 ABC broadcaster Josh Szeps. Please make them all feel welcome.

**Stan Grant, *Q+A*, 1 December 2022**

https://www.abc.net.au/qanda/2022-01-12/101689452

In the role of opening the December 2022 *Q+A* episode, part of Stan Grant's responsibility is to introduce the guests. His tenor is respectful towards all of the guests, as can be seen by his references to their professions, 'Olympian and former Labor Senator' (line 3) and 'ABC broadcaster' (line 4). This suggests a positive feeling towards the guests and shows a high level of politeness. As Grant is introducing the guests, there is a suggestion that the status of the host and guests is slightly unequal; his role as host gives him higher status and indicates he has a higher level of responsibility over the other attendees. This can be seen when he directs the audience to 'please make them all feel welcome'.

Describes the tenor, and supports the description with examples from the text.

Describes how the language reflects the relationships and social statuses of the host and guests.

*Writing tip*

When writing about tenor, highlight not just the relationships between participants but also the attitudes and feelings their language expresses.

## Develop your understanding 2.2

For each of the following texts, describe a probable tenor between the participants, using examples to justify your description.

1 Scan the code or click here to access an excerpt from the ABC panel show *Question Everything* and fill in the gaps to complete the discussion of the tenor of the participants below. For the purposes of this task, the participants are the panel members participating in the conversation, not the audience.

*The participants show a _____ tenor, with _____ and _____ exchanges with each other. Blake Freeman speaks for most of the time, but the laughter of the other participants shows that they are paying attention to him. When he asks another participant to '_____', they all respond with options. Responding with smiles, _____ and _____, all participants show a _____ tenor with each other.*

2 Scan the code or click here to access an article about improving your handwriting by Melanie Flower. Use the discussion in Question 1 as a model to write a paragraph on the professional tenor between Melanie Flower and her readers.

## Audience

The audience of a text is the intended set of listeners or readers. When we construct a text, whether it be written or spoken, we have our audience in mind, and this shapes the language that we use.

Consideration of the audience is critical in achieving a text's communicative goal. For example, an advertisement targeting a particular demographic would likely use language suited to speakers from that demographic, in order to appeal to them. Using technical legal language to appeal to a target demographic of young children would be ineffective as they wouldn't understand it. Similarly, in a job interview with a corporate CEO, you'd be unlikely to use slang terms.

## Develop your understanding 2.3

For each of the following situations, identify the audience and then discuss the tenor, register and types of language that could be used in that situation. The first one has been done for you.

1 a person is in a job interview and the interviewer is a stranger

*The audience in this context would be the interviewer. The tenor between interviewer and interviewee would be professional and socially distant. There is a power difference between the participants in this context so, as well as having a distant tenor, the register would be technical and formal. Jargon from the relevant field of employment would be used, and questions and answers would focus on the responsibilities of the job as well as the professional competence of the interviewee.*

2 a person is in a job interview and the interviewer is their best friend

3 a young person bumps into an older person and knocks them to the ground

4 an elderly person bumps into a younger person and knocks them to the ground

5 a letter to the editor is published in the local newspaper

6 a big headline is printed on the front page of a statewide newspaper

# Cultural and situational context

The context of a text can be thought of in two distinct ways: the **cultural context** and the **situational context**. When discussing a text's features, it is important to consider the situational and cultural contexts in which it exists.

The cultural context of a text relates to the attitudes, values and beliefs of the author as well as their audience. These cultural factors shape the way a text is delivered. For example, someone who is passionate about conservation and the environment will construct texts on that topic in ways that highlight this passion. Similarly, a political party will make election promises that align with the party's ideologies and goals.

The situational context of a text refers to everything outside of the text that works to shape the language that is being used. This includes the field, tenor, language mode, setting and text type. Tenor has been discussed, and **field**, **language mode**, **setting** and **text type** are discussed below and on the following pages.

## Field

The field of a text describes the subject matter under discussion. It is often closely linked to semantic domain, which is how words are grouped by meaning. It can be useful to consider field when discussing register.

See page 63 to learn more about semantic domain.

The field of a text helps to determine the level of specificity in the language being used. For instance, the field of biology might include terms such as 'alleles', 'organelles' and 'mitosis', whereas the field of gaming, depending on the game, might include 'buff', 'ace' or 'crit'.

## Develop your understanding 2.4

For each of the following texts, identify at least one field. Justify your answer with examples from the text. The first has been done for you.

1 Iceland is a little country far north in the cold sea. Men found it and went there to live more than a thousand years ago. During the warm season they used to fish and make fish-oil and hunt sea-birds and gather feathers and tend their sheep and make hay. But the winters were long and dark and cold.

Source: *Viking tales* by Jennie Hall (1902), https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/24811/pg24811-images.html

*Two fields that appear in this text are the natural environment and animals. Examples include 'warm season', 'winters', 'cold sea' and 'country' for the field of natural environment; and 'fish', 'sea-birds', 'feathers' and 'sheep' for the field of animals.*

2 Now it just so happened that one of the effects of quantum mechanics was that large amounts of matter and energy could spontaneously appear, even though this rarely happened in a given volume of space.

Source: *A briefer history of time* by Eric Schulman (2004)

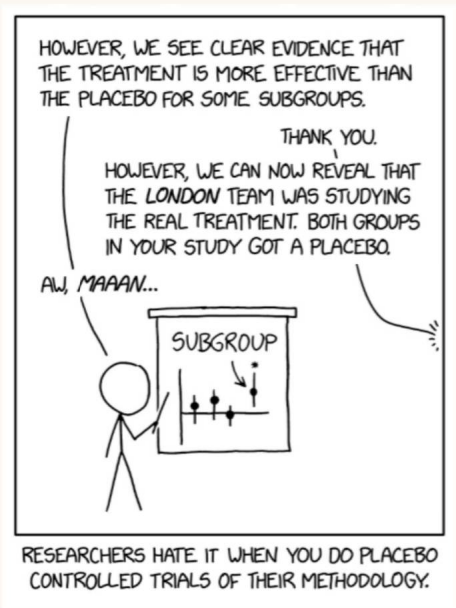
3 Music can help with the development of maths skills. By listening to musical beats your child can learn basic fractions, pattern-recognition and problem solving. Children who study music also have improved spatial intelligence and ability to form mental pictures of objects – skills that are important for more advanced mathematics.

Source: https://www.learningpotential.gov.au/articles/musical-benefits

4 In 1988 there were about sixty thousand computers connected to the Internet. Few of them were PCs. Instead, the Net was the province of mainframes, minicomputers, and professional workstations found at government offices, universities, and computer science research centers. These computers were designed to allow different people to run software on them at the same time from multiple terminals, sharing valuable processor cycles the way adjoining neighbors might share a driveway.

Source: *The future of the internet* by Jonathan L Zittrain (2008)

5




Source: XKCD comic, https://xkcd.com/2726/

## Language mode

The language mode (form) of a text has a direct effect on its structure and register. For the purposes of VCE English Language, we only consider the **written** and **spoken** modes of language. Traditionally, written texts have been viewed as being more formal, often using a standard form of language with features such as conventional spelling, punctuation and grammar. Spoken texts were viewed as having more casual language than written texts, containing long and loosely connected ideas that don't necessarily fit the grammatical definition of a 'sentence'. With the growing dominance of internet-based communication, however, these traditional boundaries between written and spoken texts are now considered simplistic.

It is therefore not always easy to distinguish modes of language without information about the situational or cultural context. A written text can be unplanned, unstructured and use informal language (e.g. a text message between friends), and a spoken text can be planned, well-structured and use standard language (e.g. a political speech). However, we can still make some assumptions about a text, based on its structure and contents.

### *Worked example*

Consider the sentence, 'Hey what's up?', and the following discussion of whether it is more likely to be spoken or written.

This sentence is likely to be spoken. The use of 'hey' as a greeting is informal, and the question 'what's up?' is also an informal greeting in Australian English. Greetings such as this may appear in written texts, but this is much rarer than their occurrence in spoken language.

Includes justification with answer.

## Develop your understanding 2.5

Decide whether each of the following sentences is more likely to be in a written or spoken language mode. Justify your choice.

1 Oi! You lot! Get out of here!

2 Netflix is a streaming service that allows subscribers to watch movies and shows.

3 No trespassers allowed.

4 All day long we seemed to dawdle through a country which was full of beauty of every kind.

5 You have a lot of explaining to do.

## Setting

When describing language and the content of a text, it's important to take into account its setting: that is, the surroundings in which the text occurs. This includes both location and time. The language used by speakers in Australia twenty or fifty years ago, for example, differs from the language we use today.

The setting of a text can directly affect register, tenor, field and language mode. It also has a strong relationship with the situational and cultural context of a text. Consider how the language you use with your friends in a classroom discussion differs from the language you use together outside of the classroom when no adult is present.

## Develop your understanding 2.6

Discuss how the following settings could influence the register, tenor, field and/or language used. The first has been done for you.

1 the MCG during the Grand Final

*The registers used in this setting are likely to be technical and colloquial, with terms from the field of sport – Australian Rules Football, in particular. Language is likely to be informal, often highly so, with vulgarity being commonplace. The tenor of texts in this context is likely to demonstrate casual or close relationships, as a shared love of football is implied by being present at a Grand Final.*

2 the principal's office at your school

3 the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India

4 a bus travelling to a local shopping centre

5 a British royal court in the 1700s

## Text type

The language used within a text is often shaped by its text type. Is it a textbook? A news report? A social media post? An instructional video? A public speech? Each of these text types helps to shape the language choices used. A message is delivered most effectively when it suits the text type, and authors will often change their language style and register to conform to a particular text type.

When exploring a text it's important to consider the text type, to judge its contents and functions. Argumentative texts such as opinion pieces and debates, for example, typically have an emotive function as well as a conative function, as audiences are often persuaded through feelings and emotions. Instructive texts, on the other hand, such as recipes and 'how-to' videos, often have referential and conative (directive) functions, to convey instructions to their audience.

When you are describing a text type, there is no limited set of text types that you must refer to or remember. Simple descriptions are best; complex detail is not necessary.

Some examples of text types include:

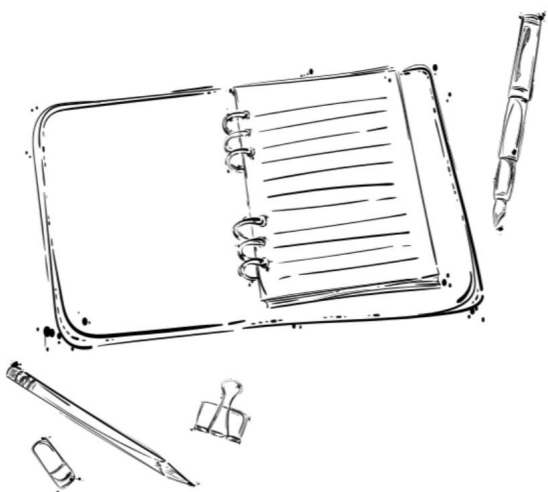
- advertisements
- cartoons
- debates
- emails
- lectures
- letters
- liturgies
- novels
- plays
- podcasts
- poems
- political commentary
- radio broadcasts
- reports

## Authorial intent

A popular idiom or saying is 'say what you mean and mean what you say'. While people don't always follow this advice, we definitely construct texts, both written and spoken, with an intention.

Authorial intent is what the author aims to do or achieve with a text. Very closely linked to the functions of a text, authorial intent influences the language that is used in a text as well as its level of **preparedness**. For example, if an author intends to persuade readers by making them feel guilty if they disagree with the contention, they might intentionally use language that is emotive and conative. This would require a greater level of preparedness than if that same author were having a verbal argument with a housemate about doing the dishes.

Consciously or not, authors of texts manipulate their language to achieve many functions and purposes. You should always consider this when exploring written and spoken texts.



## Develop your understanding 2.7

Consider the following scenarios. Describe the text likely to be used in each scenario using terms from this chapter: register, tenor, audience, situational and cultural context, field, mode, setting, text type and authorial intent. The first has been done for you.

1 an adolescent wishes to convince their parents to let them go out with friends

*The register of this text would be casual and colloquial but may be more formal than other typical exchanges between the adolescent and the parents. The tenor would be somewhat more distant than implied by the participants' actual close relationship, as the adolescent is putting themselves in a position of deference in order to achieve their purpose of going out. In this situational and cultural context, parents have the higher status (power over their children), which will affect the language the adolescent uses, perhaps showing a level of politeness that is not usual in other exchanges. The mode in this situation is more likely to be spoken than written; but if written, a text message is more likely than any other form of written text.*

2 a teacher instructs a class on how to cook potatoes

3 an influencer makes a post on a social media platform

4 a religious leader speaks in front of a crowd at their place of worship

CHAPTER
03

# Subsystems and metalanguage

In Chapter 3, you will be introduced to some of the core metalanguage that you will use throughout Units 1–4. Language can be broken up into subsystems, and this chapter outlines what is contained within the subsystems you will study: morphology; lexicology; syntax; semantics; phonetics and phonology; and discourse and pragmatics.

As you progress through this chapter, you will find that there are many connections between subsystems, and understanding some metalanguage may require knowledge of a subsystem you haven't learned yet. This interconnectedness, while potentially confusing initially, helps to make sense of language as a whole.

This chapter is not a definitive guide to the subsystems of language and it cannot cover the depth and intricacies of English as a whole. It is intended to help guide you through VCE English Language and provide a basis for your progression from Unit 1 to Unit 4. You are encouraged to 'go down the rabbit hole' and further research anything in this chapter that interests you.

## Key knowledge covered:

- the subsystems of language: morphology, lexicology, syntax and semantics
- introduction to the subsystems of language: phonetics and phonology, and discourse and pragmatics
- features that distinguish speech from writing, such as paralinguistics and prosodics
- metalanguage to discuss aspects of the nature and functions of human language

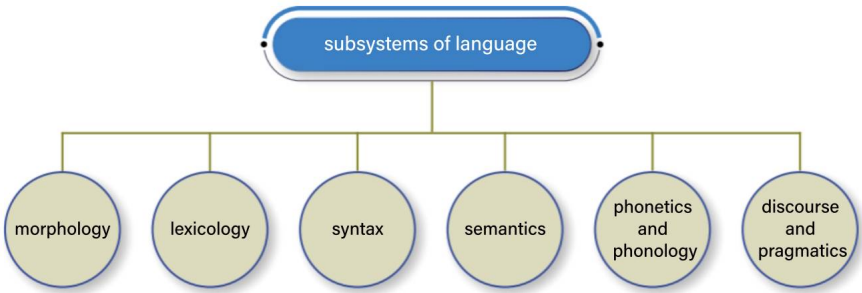
## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Morphology** | The study of words and their parts. Each word consists of one or more morphemes, which are the smallest units of meaning within a word. |
| **Root** | A single morpheme that contains the primary meaning of the word. |
| **Stem** | A word consisting of one or more morphemes that can have an affix attached to it. |
| **Lexicology** | The study of words – their form, their meaning and how they behave within language. |
| **Word class** | A group of words that behave the same as each other grammatically; also known as a part of speech. |
| **Noun** | Identifies places, people and things; or names qualities, ideas or concepts. |
| **Pronoun** | Replaces a noun phrase within a sentence. |
| **Verb** | Conveys what the subject (what the sentence is about) is doing, and can be used to indicate tense. |
| **Auxiliary verb** | Supports the main verb of a sentence. |
| **Modal verb** | Used to express the possibility, ability, intent, obligation or necessity of an action occurring. |
| **Adjective** | Provides extra information about a noun or pronoun. |
| **Adverb** | Helps to describe, modify or qualify a verb, adjective, other adverb or whole phrase or clause. Expresses elements such as time, place, manner, circumstance, cause and degree. |
| **Preposition** | Expresses a relationship between a noun phrase and another element in a sentence. |
| **Conjunction (including coordinator and subordinator)** | Links words, phrases, clauses and sentences together, enabling the formation of compound and complex sentence structures, and the demonstration of relationships between words or phrases from the same class. |
| **Determiner** | Is placed in front of a noun and helps to describe the noun. It can specify definiteness, quantity and possession. |
| **Interjection** | Expresses feelings and emotion. |
| **Function word** | A word that expresses a grammatical or structural relationship with other words in a sentence. |
| **Content word** | A word that possesses semantic content and contributes to the meaning of the sentence in which it occurs. |
| **Syntax** | The study of how words are combined into structures that communicate meaning – phrases, clauses and sentences. |
| **Phrase** | A group of one or more words that, together, form a single structural unit that conveys meaning. It does not contain both a subject and a verb. The type of phrase (noun phrase, verb phrase etc.) is named after the word class category of the word that is most important within the phrase. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Clause** | A set of words that must contain both a main noun phrase (the subject) and a main verb (part of the predicate). The predicate describes the action of the subject. |
| **Sentence** | A set of words that contains at least one subject (implicit or explicit) and at least one predicate. It can contain one or more clauses. |
| **Sentence type** | The categorisation of a sentence based on its function or purpose in communication. There are four types of sentences in English: declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamative. |
| **Sentence structure** | The way clauses are structured or joined together in a sentence. There are five sentence structures: simple, compound, complex, compound-complex and fragment. |
| **Word order** | Refers to the way words are positioned to construct phrases, clauses and sentences. |
| **Semantics** | The study of meaning – both logical meaning and lexical (dictionary) meaning; the study of understanding and meaning-making when we consider words, phrases, sentences and texts as a whole. |
| **Semantic domain** | Contains a group or range of words that have related meanings. |
| **Inference** | The process of making meaning from a text by determining information that is not explicitly present in that text. Meaning often relies on cultural or social understanding of a particular context. |
| **Phonetics** | The study of how we make speech sounds and how we classify them. Focuses on the physical properties of sounds and speech production. |
| **Phonology** | The study of the patterns that speech sounds form within a language, including how sounds are organised, and the variations that occur both within languages and between them. |
| **Prosodic features** | Elements of speech that exist outside single sounds such as vowels or consonants. The study of prosodic features involves considering the acoustic elements of our voices that affect whole sequences of syllables. In English Language, we consider five prosodic features: pitch, intonation, stress, tempo and volume. |
| **The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)** | A set of universally agreed-upon symbols that represent every sound in every language. |
| **Discourse** | Written or spoken texts that are longer than a sentence. Discourse analysis is the study of how speakers use language to structure and communicate meaning. |
| **Pragmatics** | The study of how language is used within a given context, and how context contributes to meaning. |
| **Paralinguistic features** | Features of speech such as prosodic features, vocal effects and non-verbal communication. |

# Subsystems of language

Language as a system can be broken down into parts, called subsystems. Each subsystem considers a particular aspect, or set of related aspects, of language. In VCE English Language, you will study the following subsystems: **morphology**; **lexicology**; **syntax**; **semantics**; **phonetics and phonology**; and **discourse and pragmatics**. As you progress through Units 1 to 4 you will study language, particularly English, through the lens of these subsystems.




# Morphology

Morphology is the study of words and their parts. Each word consists of one or more **morphemes**, which are the smallest units of meaning within a word. For example, the word 'cat', meaning 'furry feline', can't have any letters removed and still retain its meaning. This means that 'cat' consists of a single morpheme. The word 'cats', on the other hand, can be broken down into two morphemes: 'cat' and '-s', as '-s' is used in English at the end of words to indicate the plural form. Studying morphology can tell us a lot about a word's origin and also about its meaning. This is particularly informative when we encounter unfamiliar words.

*Tip*

Morphology comes from the Greek *morphe* meaning 'form' – so it is the study of the form, or shape, words take.

## Root and stem morphemes

The **root** of a word is a single morpheme that contains the primary meaning of the word. For example, in the word 'cats', the root would be 'cat' because, of the two morphemes, it contains the most relevant information regarding the word's primary meaning. Roots can have other morphemes attached to them, to allow the word to carry extra information. Often this is grammatical information, such as whether a word is past tense or plural.

When analysing the morphology of a word, we often remove morphemes one at a time until we're left with one morpheme – the root – that can't be broken down further. Each time a morpheme is taken away from a word, a **stem** remains. This is a part of the word that has meaning, but can consist of more than one morpheme.

Consider the word 'unbreaking'. Morphologically breaking that word down, we could remove the morpheme 'un-' resulting in the two parts – 'un-' and 'breaking'. The 'un-' can be referred to as a morpheme, but 'breaking' is not a morpheme because it hasn't been broken down into the smallest unit of meaning. It is a stem. The stem can then be broken down into a root and another morpheme – 'break' and '-ing', where 'break' is the root, and '-ing' is the morpheme attached to the root. 'Unbreaking' therefore contains three morphemes: 'un-', 'break' and '-ing'. Stems don't always have more than one morpheme – a stem can also be a root.

| un- | break | -ing |
|---|---|---|
| | root | |

## Free and bound morphemes

Morphemes can be categorised into two types: free and bound. **Free morphemes** are indivisible and can stand alone as a word. **Bound morphemes** rely on a root or stem to be used in a word. Using the previous examples, 'cat' and 'break' are both free morphemes because they can stand alone, whereas '-s', 'un-' and '-ing' are all bound morphemes. You will notice that the examples of bound morphemes are shown with hyphens. This indicates not only that they are bound morphemes, but also how they attach to the root. For example, 'un-' attaches at the front of the word, and '-s' at the end.

| un- | break | -ing |
|---|---|---|
| bound | free<br>root | bound |

## Affixes

Bound morphemes are referred to as **affixes** and are categorised based on how they attach to a root or stem. A **prefix** attaches to the front of a root or stem, whereas a **suffix** attaches to the end. In some languages there is also a type of affix called an **infix**, which is placed *inside* a root or stem. This is not a typical affix in English, but it can occur in informal Australian English, such as in profane terms like 'abso-bloody-lutely'. This is a marker of the playfulness of Australian English, which you will study in further depth in Year 12.

| un- | break | -ing |
|---|---|---|
| bound<br>prefix | free<br>root | bound<br>suffix |

As children, we play with words and create our own morphemes and affixes to create secret languages, such as Pig Latin, Double Dutch and Aigy Paigy. Research some of these languages and try to master one. Scan the code or click here to learn the rules of Double Dutch.

## Inflectional and derivational affixes

Depending on the way in which an affix changes a root or stem, it is categorised as inflectional or derivational.

An **inflectional affix** is a bound morpheme that attaches grammatical properties to a word, such as tense (in verbs), number (in nouns) or possession (in nouns and pronouns). Inflectional affixes don't affect the fundamental meaning or form of the root word.

A **derivational affix** creates or derives a new word from the root or stem that it is attached to. Rather than just being a grammatical 'helper', it adds to or changes the meaning or form of the existing word so that it no longer performs the same role. This usually means that the derived word has its own entry in a dictionary. For example, the prefix 'un-' is a derivational morpheme that changes the meaning of 'breaking' to its opposite, 'unbreaking', and the suffix '-ing' is an inflectional affix because it alters the grammatical properties of the word but does not fundamentally affect its meaning.

| un- | break | -ing |
|---|---|---|
| bound | free | bound |
| prefix | root | suffix |
| derivational | | inflectional |

Understanding word classes will help you to determine whether a morpheme is inflectional or derivational, because a derivational morpheme usually changes the word class of the stem. For example, the morpheme '-ion' can modify the verb 'situate' to become the noun, 'situation'. (Note that we remove the final 'e' from the spelling of situate. Letters can sometimes be removed when combining morphemes.) Likewise, a knowledge of morphemes is beneficial when you study word classes, as particular types of morphemes will attach to particular word classes.

→ To learn more about word classes, see pages 31–48.

The following example shows how to break up the word 'fashionistas' into its morphemes and classify each morpheme.

First, we identify the root morpheme. Remember that this is the smallest unit of meaning within the word. In this case, it's 'fashion'.

| fashion | -istas |
|---|---|

Now we need to decide whether '-istas' is a single morpheme. It seems to have a plural marking on the end (e.g. one fashionista, two fashionistas), so that can be removed, as a separate morpheme.

| fashion | -ista | -s |
|---|---|---|

Next, we categorise each of the morphemes. Only the first morpheme, 'fashion', can stand alone as a word. This makes it a free morpheme as well as the root of the word. The other two morphemes can't stand alone, so they must be affixes. They both come after the root, making them suffixes.

| fashion | -ista | -s |
|---|---|---|
| free<br>root | bound<br>suffix | bound<br>suffix |

We now need to determine whether the suffixes are derivational or inflectional. The word 'fashion' refers to something that is a current trend, whereas 'fashionista' refers to someone who promotes fashion, such as those working in the fashion industry. As 'fashion' and 'fashionista' have related but different meanings, they are thus two different words and '-ista' must be a derivational morpheme with a meaning of 'one who creates or promotes something'.

| fashion | -ista | -s |
|---|---|---|
| free<br>root | bound<br>suffix<br>derivational | bound<br>suffix |

This leaves the final suffix, '-s'. This changes the meaning of 'fashionista' to mean 'more than one fashionista'. As the plural attaches the grammatical property of 'number' to the word, it does not create a new word and the suffix '-s' must be inflectional.

| fashion | -ista | -s |
|---|---|---|
| free<br>root | bound<br>suffix<br>derivational | bound<br>suffix<br>inflectional |

## Develop your understanding 3.1

Using a table similar to the one in the example on page 30, divide the following words into free and bound morphemes. Categorise each morpheme as root or affix, and classify each affix as prefix or suffix, and derivational or inflectional.

1 baking
2 apples
3 excommunicate
4 watches
5 hare
6 impossible
7 nonsensical
8 establishment

# Lexicology

Lexicology is the study of words – their form, their meaning and how they behave within a language. In linguistics, it's the study of a language's **lexicon**: its complete set of meaningful units (one unit of meaning, usually a word, is called a **lexeme**). This means we look at how a word is used, how it interacts with other words, and what all of those words mean. You can think of it as the study of vocabulary.

One of the core elements when studying the lexicon is to understand how to identify which class a word belongs to (a categorisation based on how the word behaves grammatically). In English Language, we consider the word classes in the table below. Each word class is considered in detail over the following pages.

| Word class | Abbreviation |
|---|---|
| **Noun** | n |
| **Pronoun** | pn |
| **Verb** | v |
| **Auxiliary verb** | aux |
| **Modal verb** | mod |
| **Adjective** | adj |
| **Adverb** | adv |
| **Preposition** | prep |
| **Conjunction** | conj |
| **Determiner** | det |
| **Interjection** | interj |

## Nouns (n)

**Nouns** refer to names of places, people, things, qualities, ideas or concepts.

| Noun type | Examples |
|---|---|
| **Place** | beach, home, Melbourne, yard, Australia |
| **People** | mum, cousin, queen, Saleh, acrobat |
| **Thing** | apple, skateboard, cat, potato, train |
| **Quality** | courage, wisdom, awkwardness |
| **Idea** | opinion, dream, loyalty, belief |
| **Concept** | information, redemption, truth, education |

### Common nouns and proper nouns

**Common nouns** refer to things generically (e.g. 'beach', 'wisdom', 'apple'). They are written using lower-case letters, unless they appear at the start of a sentence. Common nouns can be modified by other words, such as adjectives and determiners.

To learn about adjectives and determiners, see pages 40 and 46–7 respectively.

**Proper nouns**, on the other hand, are specific rather than generic, and are always capitalised (e.g. 'Saleh', 'Australia'). Unlike common nouns, proper nouns are not usually modified by adjectives or determiners.

*Examples*

Common noun: I live in a house.
Proper noun: I live in Melbourne.

## Pronouns (pn)

**Pronouns** replace nouns and noun phrases (a group of words consisting of a noun and words that modify the noun) within a sentence. Pronouns aren't nouns themselves; they always refer to some other element, either stated or not, in a sentence. Using pronouns enables us to avoid repeating nouns, which helps us to vary our language while staying on topic. Reducing repetition can also make a text more cohesive.

In English Language, we consider the following categories of pronouns: **subject**, **object**, **reflexive**, **possessive**, **interrogative, relative** and **demonstrative**.

| Pronoun type | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Subject** | Replaces a noun or noun phrase that is in the subject position in a sentence. | I submitted the assignment.<br>They couldn't believe their ears. |
| **Object** | Replaces a noun or noun phrase that is in the object position in a sentence. | The teacher asked you a question.<br>Maeve liked it. |
| **Reflexive** | Contains the suffix '-self' or '-selves'; used to refer to another noun or pronoun in the same sentence. Can demonstrate that someone is doing something alone, without any assistance from others, and can also be used as an intensive pronoun (a pronoun that emphasises the subject of a sentence). | Cecily blamed herself for burning the cake.<br>He tied his shoelaces himself.<br>The CEO herself hosted the interview. |
| **Possessive** | Indicates possession or ownership. Unlike a possessive determiner (e.g. 'his dog', 'my pencil'), it stands on its own within a sentence and does not modify another word. | That cat is mine.<br>I found a jacket on the floor. I believe it's his. |
| **Interrogative** | Used to introduce a question. Interrogative pronouns include 'what', 'which', 'who', 'whom' and 'whose'. | Who are you?<br>Which would you like? |
| **Relative** | Helps to introduce a relative clause within a larger sentence by relating that clause to the noun that it modifies. Relative pronouns include the terms 'which', 'what', 'who', 'whom', 'whose' and 'that'.<br>→ See page 52 to learn about clauses. | The man who stole the bicycle was arrested.<br>She'll wait for the train that stops at her station. |
| **Demonstrative** | Refers to a particular place, person or thing. Replaces the entire noun or noun phrase it represents. | Do you see the potato cake he's holding? I gave him that.<br>I need to do this. |

*Tip*

Use of pronouns can help achieve a function of a text, particularly in conative and emotive texts. The use of 'we', when it refers to both an author and an audience, for example, can create a sense of inclusivity and change the tenor between participants. Audience members are more likely to listen to the author because they feel they are being included in the discussion. Compare this to the use of 'we' when it refers only to the author – this can come across as authoritative, as it excludes the audience.

## Develop your understanding 3.2

Identify the pronouns in each of the following sentences. State the pronoun type: subject, object, reflexive, possessive, interrogative, relative or demonstrative. The first has been completed for you.

1 I wish you would buy me some cake.

| | |
|---|---|
| *I* | *subject* |
| *you* | *subject* |
| *me* | *object* |

2 You are what you eat, so treat yourself to something sweet!

3 These are much nicer than those.

4 She will give the pie to them.

5 The bicycle is not his, it's ours.

### Verbs (v)

Critical in conveying information, **verbs** express actions, states or occurrences. Verbs are sometimes referred to as 'doing words', as they communicate what a subject is 'doing', but this does not really describe their full role. In English, verbs are a complex word class.

At the highest level, you can consider verbs as representing actions in relation to time – that is, **past**, **present** and **future** (marked by a modal auxiliary). Someone can have done something yesterday, be doing it right now, or be planning on doing it tomorrow. Verbal marking of time plays a critical role in almost every sentence we create.

*Tip*

For the purposes of VCE English Language, it's important to understand the tense of a sentence (past, present or future). You are not required to go into the finer details, particularly in Year 11, such as if the tense is progressive or perfect, or if the verb is a past or present participle or an infinitive.

Consider the following marking of time when the verb is matched with first-, second- and third-person pronouns.

| Point of view | Past | Present | Future |
|---|---|---|---|
| **First person** | I was | I am | I will be |
| **Second person** | you were | you are | you will be |
| **Third person** | she was<br>they were | he is<br>they are | they will be |

The verb in the table above is 'to be' which, as can be seen from these different forms (particularly in the present tense), is one of the most complex verbs in the English language. The following are all of the forms of the verb 'to be': is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been.

All of the forms of 'to be' in the table above are provided in what's called their simple form. Verbs can take four forms: **simple**, **progressive**, **perfect progressive** and **perfect**, known as aspects. The following table shows these forms for the verb 'write'.

| Tense and aspect | Example | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| **Simple present** | I write books.<br>She writes books. | a general action or truth |
| **Present progressive** | I am writing a book. | an action that is continuing now |
| **Present perfect progressive** | I have been writing a book.<br>She has been writing a book. | past action that is ongoing and has not yet been completed |
| **Present perfect** | I have written a book.<br>She has written a book. | past action that has been completed but is being commented upon in the present |
| **Simple past** | I wrote a book. | an action that was completed in the past |
| **Past progressive** | I was writing a book. | an action in the past that was a continuing action at the time being described |
| **Past perfect progressive** | I had been writing a book. | an action that was continuing up until a time in the past and is not being continued right now |
| **Past perfect** | I had written the book before I saw the cover. | past action that had occurred / been completed before another past action |
| **Simple future** | I will write a book. | a prediction or promise that the action is likely to occur in the future |

| Tense and aspect | Example | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| **Future progressive** | I will be writing a book. | an action that is likely to be continuing at a future time |
| **Future perfect progressive** | Next week, I will have been writing this book for six months. | an action that is ongoing and is likely to be completed before a future point in time or another action occurs |
| **Future perfect** | I will have written five books by the end of next year. | a future action or occurrence that is likely to happen before another future occurrence or point in time |

## Participles

A **participle** is a form of a verb that has many functions. Participles are used to construct certain tense and aspect forms, such as the present perfect 'have written' or the past progressive 'was writing'. They can also be used as adjectives to modify a noun, as in 'the swimming fish'.

*Example*

The inspiring choir is singing a new song.

In this sentence, the participle 'inspiring' is an adjective indicating that the choir makes people feel animated or excited.

*Tip*

Understanding participles will help you to detect passive voice, which you will study in Year 12.

## Infinitives

The **infinitive** form of a verb allows the verb to be used as a noun, an adjective or an adverb. Infinitives are generally formed by adding the word 'to' before the base form of the verb. We often use the infinitive to discuss actions that haven't actually occurred yet.

*Examples*

I want to go and eat potato cakes.

To boldly go where no man has gone before.

Every verb can take the infinitive form – it has no restrictions. When it appears in a sentence, the infinitive is never the main verb.

Infinitives can act to show purpose or intention ('I want to go'), to modify nouns ('I want something to eat'), as the subject of a sentence ('to go now would be silly') and after adjectives ('I'm happy to help').

## Develop your understanding 3.3

Identify the verbs in the following sentences as main, participle or infinitive, and indicate the tense of the main verb.

1 I came. I saw. I conquered.

2 The cat chased the fly.

3 Mia wants to eat seven potato cakes.

4 He likes blowing bubbles.

## Auxiliary verbs (aux, mod)

An **auxiliary verb** is a 'helping' verb – one that supports the main verb of a sentence. You've already seen some of these auxiliary verbs in the table on pages 35–6, such as 'be' and 'have'. There are two types of auxiliary verbs in English: **primary auxiliary** and **modal auxiliary**.

### Primary auxiliary verbs (aux)

Primary auxiliary verbs are usually used to construct grammatical tenses that could not otherwise be conveyed by inflectional morphemes on the main verb alone. There are three primary auxiliary verbs in English: 'be', 'have' and 'do'. These words can also act as main verbs, but when they're coupled with a main verb they act as auxiliary verbs to help the main verb show aspects of **tense**, **time** or **voice**. You will study voice in relation to verbs in Year 12.

The table below outlines the different forms primary auxiliaries can take, using the verb 'go' as the main verb.

| | To be | | To have | | To do | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Singular** | **Plural** | **Singular** | **Plural** | **Singular** | **Plural** |
| **First person** | I am going | we are going | I have gone | we have gone | I do go | we do go |
| **Second person** | you are going | you (all) are going | you have gone | you (all) have gone | you do go | you (all) do go |
| **Third person** | she/he/it is going | they are going | she/he/it has gone | they have gone | she/he/it does go | they do go |

Primary auxiliary verbs also indicate time, as shown below. They can be paired with modal auxiliaries (often 'will') to indicate future time.

| | To be | To have | To do |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Past** | was/were | had | did |
| **Present** | am/are/is | have/has | do/does |
| **Future** | will be | will have | will do |

*Examples*

I am going out.

He will have eaten his dinner by now.

She did see it.

Both 'be' and 'have' function as auxiliaries of verbs, to help indicate tense and time. The primary auxiliary 'do' does this too, but also helps indicate emphasis, imperatives (demands), interrogatives (questions) and the negative form of verbs in the simple past and present tense. In the examples above, the 'did' in 'She did see it' emphasises the act of seeing.

*Examples*

I do agree with you. (emphatic)

Do come to my party. (imperative, emphatic)

How did you get there? (interrogative)

I don't agree with you. (negative)

## Modal auxiliary verbs (mod)

Often called 'modals' for short, modal auxiliary verbs express the possibility, ability, intent, obligation or necessity of an action occurring. They modify verbs to change their **mode** – the state in which they exist. There is a fixed number of modals in English; these are shown in the following table. Each one modifies a verb to express a slightly different meaning. Those that are no longer often used in our society are marked as 'rare'.

| Modal | Negative form | Expresses |
|---|---|---|
| **Can** | cannot<br>can't | ability, permission or probability |
| **Could** | could not<br>couldn't | past ability or permission, probability or request |
| **Will** | will not<br>won't | prediction or instant decision or habit; often used to represent future time |
| **Would** | would not<br>wouldn't | past routine, preference or conditional future |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Shall** | shall not<br>shan't (rare) | promise or expectation |
| **Should** | should not<br>shouldn't | advice or obligation |
| **May** | may not<br>mayn't (rare) | possibility, permission or desire |
| **Might** | might not<br>mightn't | potential permission or low possibility |
| **Must** | must not<br>mustn't (rare) | mandate or necessity |
| **Ought (rare)** | ought not (rare)<br>oughtn't (rare) | strong advice, duty or obligation |

Modals play a significant part in the formation of a text because they fundamentally change the role of the verb to which they attach. For this reason, it is valuable to discuss the modal auxiliaries in a text when a number of them appear.

### *Worked example*

Consider the discussion of modal auxiliaries in the following text.

> This document can be used under the conditions outlined below.
> - You may copy this work for personal use.
> - If you publish a modified version of this work, you must reference the author.
> - Any new work that is derived from this work will be released under the same conditions as this document.

The text is presented as a document in the legal domain, serving a referential function to inform the reader of the conditions being imposed by the author for use of the document. The use of modal auxiliaries helps to contribute to this function by outlining for the reader what can and cannot be done with the document. One example of this is the use of the modal 'may', which gives permission for the reader to copy the work 'for personal use'. The higher level of obligation with 'must' in 'you must reference' is used to convey necessity, as it mandates that the reader acknowledge the original author if they make modifications to the work. The use of the modal 'will' in 'will be released' is somewhat forcefully predictive, as it notifies the reader of the conditions under which any future derived works can be released.

Describes how the choice of words supports the function of the text, using metalanguage.

Provides specific explanation of how the modals are used within this text.

## Develop your understanding 3.4

Read the following text then answer the questions.

> I know I shouldn't have gone into the forest. Mum said that it would be a bad idea because I didn't really know the area very well and I couldn't find my way out of a paper bag even if I tried. 'If you *can* get lost, you *will* get lost' is the other thing she always used to say. I figured she can't be right all the time ... right? But here I am, well and truly lost. I hope I find my way out before dark – it might make a good story, at least.

1 Identify all primary auxiliaries.

2 Identify all modal auxiliaries.

3 Discuss one modal auxiliary in the text. How does this modal auxiliary change the nature of the sentence in which it appears?

### Adjectives (adj)

**Adjectives** help to describe nouns by providing extra information about them.

*Examples*

The pink coat hung on the chair.

The cat is fluffy.

The cat was bigger than the dog.

It was the smallest house on the block.

## Develop your understanding 3.5

In English there are conventions about the order in which adjectives are placed when more than one is used to describe a noun. For example, an opinion (e.g. 'beautiful') must come before a size (e.g. 'big'), a shape (e.g. 'round') or a type (e.g. 'chocolate').

Consider these two sentences:

> There was a beautiful, big, round, chocolate cake on the table.

> There was a round, beautiful, chocolate, big cake on the table.

Which one seems more fluent?

Conduct internet research to explore the order of adjectives in English and other languages. Scan the code or click here for a place to start.

## Adverbs (adv)

**Adverbs** help to describe, modify or qualify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs and whole phrases or sentences. They answer questions such as 'When?', 'Where?', 'How?', 'How often?', 'How long?' and 'How much?'

Most commonly, adverbs are formed by adding an '-ly' suffix morpheme to an adjective, such as in 'quickly', 'happily' or 'frequently'. There are many adverbs that don't end with '-ly', but looking for that suffix is a quick way to recognise one. Some common adverbs that don't have a detectable suffix are 'soon', 'often', 'never', 'today', 'too' and 'very'.

*Examples*

I only left to get some ice-cream.
I would never refuse a potato cake.
He was looking lonely too.
I am very much excited about going swimming.

Adverbs can behave in various ways, expressing elements such as **time, place and manner**; **cause and effect**; **degree**; **certainty**; **frequency**; and **comment**.

| Elements | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Time, place and manner** | Involving when, where and how an action occurs. | She ate dessert after finishing her dinner. (time)<br>The teacher was waiting outside. (place)<br>Myko quickly opened his books. (manner) |
| **Cause and effect** | Providing a reason for the verb's action occurring. Usually employs **conjunctive adverbs**, which behave in the same way as conjunctions.<br>See pages 45–6 to learn about conjunctive adverbs. | Ted took the last apple; consequently, I took a cake.<br>I think, therefore I am. |
| **Degree** | Providing information about the amount, strength or intensity of something. Can increase or decrease emphasis. | He felt slightly ill.<br>I totally agree with you.<br>It was quite interesting. |
| **Certainty** | Expressing levels of doubt or confidence about something. | I was likely going to get in trouble.<br>Maybe it will rain today.<br>She was clearly angry with us. |

| Elements | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Frequency** | Describing how often (frequently) something occurs, in either **absolute** or **vague** terms. | We have weekly meetings. (absolute)<br>I occasionally eat potato cakes. (vague)<br>Never eat soggy Weet-Bix. (absolute) |
| **Comment** | Providing an opinion or a statement about something. | Apparently, they aren't together anymore.<br>It was simply the best movie I've ever seen. |

The following two types of adverbs are also useful to know.

| Type | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Interrogative** | Used to begin a question: 'when', 'where', 'how' and 'why', directly followed by the verb. | Why aren't you doing your homework?<br>Where do you think you're going?<br>How will you get there?<br>When do you need to arrive? |
| **Relative** | 'When', 'where', 'why' and sometimes 'how' are used to help introduce a subordinate clause (a clause that isn't a sentence on its own).<br>See page 52 to learn more about clauses. | We will go out when I am ready.<br>This is the hill where I fell over.<br>I'm not going to ask you why you did that.<br>I didn't think to ask how he got that open. |

## Develop your understanding 3.6

Identify the adverbs in the following sentences. Describe how they are behaving, using appropriate metalanguage. The first one has been done for you.

1 Liam slowly walked to the shops.

*'slowly': this adverb provides information about the manner in which Liam is walking.*

2 I only left after the work was done.

3 The cake was almost a failure.

4 The mouse scurried towards Reyhan; he was pretty unimpressed.

5 She worked hard; consequently, she achieved good results.

## Prepositions (prep)

Think of the word 'preposition' by splitting it into two morphemes: 'pre' and 'position'. A **preposition** expresses a relationship between a noun and another word, phrase or element in a sentence. In a way, it 'sets up' (pre) a 'position' between two elements, in relation to time, space (both conceptual and spatial) and location.

A preposition is followed by a noun phrase. The most straightforward types of prepositions are combined with noun phrases to indicate a relationship with space or time. For example, 'I will go in the morning' includes a preposition relating to time; 'The book is on my left' includes a preposition relating to space.

*Examples*

The book was written on time. (time)
The book was on the table. (location)
I leaned the book against the tree. (space – spatial)
I took the book against my mother's wishes. (space – conceptual)

There are many prepositions in English. Here's a list of some common ones.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| of | with | at | from | into | for | during | on |
| by | between | after | towards | under | out | before | in |

Multi-word prepositions include 'apart from', 'back to', 'because of', 'next to', 'by way of', 'in relation to' and 'on top of'.

Be careful when identifying a word as a preposition, as many prepositions can also be used for other purposes (act in other word classes), such as adverbs, adjectives and conjunctions.

## Develop your understanding 3.7

Identify the prepositions in the following paragraph.

> Both of us had come close to being seen as we ran down the pathway, giggling away like little kids at a party. I ran to the left, Bonnie ran to the right: splitting up to increase our odds of getting away with it all. Luckily it worked and we were both on our way back to my house soon after.

## Conjunctions (conj)

**Conjunctions** link words, phrases, clauses and sentences together. They allow us to form complex ideas and sentences and also to demonstrate relationships between words or phrases from the same class. For example, in the sentence 'Lydia and Amber ate dinner', the nouns 'Lydia' and 'Amber' are joined together with the conjunction 'and', which shows that both are participating in the act of eating and that they are doing so on an equal footing.

Conjunctions are very useful when constructing longer texts, as they allow us to vary the structure of our sentences. This helps to avoid tedious short sentences as well as unnecessary repetition.

*Example*

Lishika and Emilia ate potato cakes.

Lishika ate potato cakes. Emilia ate potato cakes.

Without the use of the conjunction 'and', we have unnecessary repetition of the verb 'ate' and the noun phrase 'potato cakes'.

## Coordinators

The conjunction 'and' is an example of a **coordinator**. Coordinators help to place two or more elements side by side in a way that demonstrates equality and equivalence.

English has seven coordinators: 'for', 'and', 'nor', 'but', 'or', 'yet' and 'so'. Many people use the acronym FANBOYS to remember these.

| Coordinator | Purpose |
|---|---|
| for | indicates that a cause or reason is being provided |
| and | joins two ideas |
| nor | supplements something already negated; comes after a word, phrase or clause preceded by 'neither' |
| but | contradicts or provides some other negative contrast |
| or | indicates an alternative is being offered |
| yet | provides contradictory information or reasoning, similar to 'but' |
| so | indicates that a result is being provided; similar to 'for' |

Note that 'so' is not always a coordinator. It is often used as an adverb ('so good') and can be used as an adjective ('not so') as well as a pronoun ('do so'). It is also frequently used in spoken conversation in a non-conjunctive sense – in these cases, it is referred to as a **discourse particle** (a word or phrase that assists flow in a communication) rather than a conjunction. 'So' can also be used as a subordinator.

*Tip*

FANBOYS is a useful acronym for memory, but there's some argument as to whether all of these are coordinators or not. Scan the code or click here to find out why. For the purposes of VCE English Language, using FANBOYS to classify coordinators is acceptable.

## Subordinators

A **subordinator** links clauses and sentences to each other in a way that demonstrates a parent–child relationship. The 'parent' sentence is referred to as the **independent** clause, and the 'child' sentence as the **dependent** clause. Subordinators tie sentences together to construct more complex thoughts and ideas. They can increase cohesion and fluency in a text by helping to condense information, reduce repetition and vary sentence structure.

*Tip*

Independent clauses and dependent clauses are sometimes referred to as **main clauses** and **subordinate clauses**, respectively.

The clause that comes with the subordinator will provide more information about the parent sentence. Often this is information that's required for understanding, signalling a cause-and-effect type of relationship, or some shift in the place or time of the two sentences.

The most common subordinator in English is 'because', which signals a cause-and-effect relationship between the independent clause and the dependent clause.

*Examples*

I went out because I was bored.

I took an umbrella because it was raining.

Because it was Sunday, I slept in.

Other subordinators that act in the same way include 'since', 'as', 'though', 'due to' and 'unless'. Unlike coordinators, there are numerous subordinators in English, including the following.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| after | although | as | as if | because |
| before | even though | if | now that | supposing |
| than | until | when | while | whether or not |
| whereas | though | | | |

## Conjunctive adverbs

Like coordinators, **conjunctive adverbs** (also referred to as conjuncts) join two clauses or sentences in a way that demonstrates equality. These are often joined using a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb and a comma directly after the adverb.

Common conjunctive adverbs are listed in the table below, with their purposes and an example.

| Conjunctive adverb | Purpose | Example |
|---|---|---|
| also, furthermore, moreover, besides | addition | The work is due on Thursday; furthermore, it must be your own. |
| similarly, likewise | comparison | I really like pies; likewise, cakes are tasty, too. |
| instead, however, conversely | contrast | I don't normally eat ice-cream; however, I make an exception on hot days. |
| namely, certainly, indeed | emphasis | Cats are quite cunning; indeed, they are watching your every move. |
| accordingly, consequently, hence, thus | cause and effect | Someone broke the rules; consequently, there will be an investigation. |
| finally, next, subsequently, then | time | We have just finished conjunctions; next, we will consider determiners. |

Source: adapted from *Writing for success* (University of Minnesota, 2015)

## Develop your understanding 3.8

Identify the conjunctions in the following sentences. Classify the conjunctions as coordinators or subordinators.

1 When we went out, we took our umbrellas.

2 I hope you learned your lesson because I certainly did.

3 Aditya and Keshri came camping but forgot to bring sleeping bags.

4 Did Jill or Dylan go out last night?

5 It's not over until it's over.

## Determiners (det)

A **determiner** is a word that's placed in front of a noun and helps to clarify the noun, specify quantity or indicate possession.

Determiners can be defined as belonging to one of four categories: **articles**, **quantifiers**, **demonstratives** and **possessives**.

| Determiner | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Article** | Occurs before a noun and provides information about the specificity or definiteness of the noun. | the, a, an |
| **Quantifier** | Helps to specify the quantity of a noun within a phrase. Quantifiers tend to help answer questions such as 'How many?' or 'How much?' using a scale of reference (none, few, all). | all, a lot, many, most, much, some, several, few, a couple, one, none |
| **Demonstrative** | Indicates specific nouns in a sentence. Helps provide information about the proximity of a noun in relation to the speaker and the listener. Typically used to indicate whether a noun is near or far in distance or time. | this, that, these, those |
| **Posssessive** | Used before a noun to express ownership or possession. | my, your, her, his, its, our, their |

## Interjections (interj)

The last word class that we explore is the **interjection**. *Oh my!* The two words you just read are an example of an interjection: a word or phrase that expresses feelings, and sometimes requests or demands. They tend to be highly expressive and emotive, adding colour to our language. Interjections also include greetings and farewells as part of conversational exchanges.

This particular word class doesn't necessarily attach to other word classes in the same way that, for example, an adjective attaches to a noun, or an adverb attaches to a verb. Interjections can be integrated into a sentence or stand alone.

*Examples*

Oh no, I've dropped my potato cake!

Wow, I really messed that one up.

Oh really? I never knew that.

Hi, how are you?

It was good to see you; bye!

## How words function

Words behave in different ways within a sentence, and they all have a different job to do, based on their word class. There are two core types of words – those that provide **content** to the sentence, particularly in terms of semantic meaning, and those that **function** to help the grammar or structure of a sentence by tying all of the words together.

We can create new content words in English when we need to; the word classes that freely allow this are referred to as **open classes**. Function words, on the other hand, are restrictive and very rarely allow new words to be added to their word classes; these are referred to as **closed classes**.

| Open classes | Closed classes |
|---|---|
| nouns | pronouns |
| verbs | prepositions |
| adjectives | conjunctions |
| adverbs | determiners |
| interjections | auxiliary verbs |
| | modal verbs |

You'll notice that most closed class words don't take inflectional morphemes – only the auxiliaries (auxiliary verbs and modal verbs) do.

## Develop your understanding 3.9

Conduct internet research on each of the closed word classes to see if new terms have been added to them. Why do you think some closed word classes have gained new terms and not others? Discuss in groups or as a whole class.

Scan the code or click here to explore changes within the pronoun word class.

# Syntax

The study of how words are ordered into phrases, clauses and sentences is known as syntax. It looks at the patterns we use to organise words into structures that allow us to communicate meaning effectively.

## Phrases

A **phrase** is a single word or group of words that are related to each other and, together, form a single structural unit that conveys meaning. Phrases do not contain both a subject (a noun that controls a verb) and a verb, so they require other phrases or words to make a complete sentence. Phrases can also be contained within other phrases. In English, there are five main types of phrases (discussed on the following pages), whose names relate to the word class of the primary word (the head) within the phrase.

## Noun phrases

A **noun phrase** is a group of one or more words, and contains a noun as the head of the phrase as well as modifiers to that noun. Modifiers of a noun phrase can occur before the noun, or after the noun.

Modifiers occurring before the noun are usually determiners (including quantifiers and numbers) and adjectives that help to describe or specify the noun. Modifiers occuring after the noun can be adverb phrases, prepositional phrases or whole clauses. They also give extra meaning to help describe or specify the noun. Both types of modification are optional in a noun phrase, as they act only to provide extra information about the noun in order to help identify it.

*Examples*

The happy mouse ate the cheese. (modified with determiner and adjective)

The mouse in my pocket ate the cheese. (modified with determiner and prepositional phrase)

The mouse nearby jumped into my pocket. (modified with determiner and adverb)

The mouse who was very happy ate the cheese. (modified with determiner and relative clause)

## Verb phrases

A **verb phrase** consists of a main verb and any modifiers. These modifiers include primary and modal auxiliaries, infinitives, adverbs and adverb phrases, noun phrases acting as objects, and complements.

See pages 54–5 to learn about complements.

*Examples*

I ate a potato cake.

I am eating a potato cake.

I might have eaten a potato cake.

## Prepositional phrases

A **prepositional phrase** consists of a preposition and a noun phrase that is considered to be its object. The preposition must come before the noun phrase in a prepositional phrase.

See page 53 to learn about objects.

Prepositional phrases modify nouns, verbs or adjectives within a larger phrase, clause or sentence. When they modify a noun, they describe the noun; in these instances, they usually follow the noun. When they modify a verb or adjective they provide extra information as to where, how or when the verb or adjective is acting.

*Examples*

The cat in the hat sat on the mat. ('in the hat' modifies the noun 'cat';'on the mat' modifies the verb 'sat')

I put the potato cake in my pocket. ('in my pocket' modifies the verb 'put')

The Tardis is bigger on the inside. ('on the inside' modifies the adjective 'bigger')

Prepositional phrases are very productive in English – technically, you can layer them as much as you want!

*Example*

I placed the cake with the topper on the table in the dining room near the plate with the flowers on the side.

The more prepositional phrases there are in a sentence, the more complex the sentence is, and this can result in confusion and ambiguity.

## Adjective phrases

An **adjective phrase** consists of an adjective as its head and may include modifiers to that adjective. Usually the modifiers are other adjectives or adverbs. This type of phrase describes a noun in a sentence.

*Examples*

The very happy cat drank the warm milk.

I wore a bright pink fluffy jumper.

The fluffy jumper was bright pink.

Adjective phrases help to provide extra descriptions within a sentence and enable more profound and complex descriptions of nouns.

*Tip*

Some phrase types, such as prepositional phrases, can act in the same way as adjective phrases. In these instances, they are referred to as **adjectival phrases** rather than adjective phrases. Adjectival phrases are not required knowledge in English Language.

### Adverb phrases

An **adverb phrase** consists of an adverb as its head and may include modifiers to that adverb. This phrase can modify a verb, adjective or another adverb.

Adverb phrases help to describe elements such as time, place, manner, frequency and degree in the same way adverbs do.

*Examples*

I ate the potato cake very quickly.

I frequently eat potato cakes.

*Tip*

Make sure you understand the difference between an adverb phrase and an adverbial, which may not necessarily contain an adverb.

→ See pages 55–6 to learn more about adverbials.

## Develop your understanding 3.10

1 Identify the phrase type of each set of underlined words.

- a A strawberry is not a berry.
- b It was only a millisecond but it made the difference between second and third place.
- c Mem walked to the river and swam in its waters.
- d A hot crispy potato cake, ready right now, just for me.
- e Stelios gave gifts to all of the original attendees.
- f Isaam, for the umpteenth time today, had a cup of coffee.

2 Discuss how the use of phrases contributes to the function of the following poem.

The happy cat
The spotted frog
The silly chook
The big brown dog
The cuddly pig
The squawking bird
Are these my pets?
Oh, how absurd!

## Clauses

A **clause** is a set of phrases that must, as a minimum, contain both a **subject** and a **predicate**. This means that there needs to be a main verb (predicator) and a noun phrase (subject) that acts upon that verb. Clauses can also contain **objects**, **complements** and **adverbials**. They may form a complete sentence (independent clause) or part of a sentence (dependent clause). These two types of clauses were mentioned when we discussed subordinators on page 45.

### Subjects

The subject of a clause is the main actor that plays a role with the verb of the clause. Subjects are typically noun phrases.

*Examples*

She gave the dog a treat.

The happy vendor gave me a hot potato cake.

While a clause always needs a subject and a verb (predicator), there are some types of sentences where the subject is implicitly understood and does not need to be said. For example, 'Get the cat off the bench' does not have an explicit subject, but it is implied that the command is directed at someone (e.g. 'you').

### Predicates

A predicate consists of the main verb of a clause and all of its modifiers. It contains the whole of the clause that comes after the subject (rather than just the verb and modifiers of the verb). So a predicate might, for example, include other clauses.

*Examples*

The potato cakes were fried last Tuesday.

I gave a potato cake to the first person I saw on my way to school.

As you can see from the examples, predicates can be quite lengthy when there are embedded clauses, such as the dependent clause 'I saw on my way to school' in the second example.

When we analyse predicates, we generally split the predicate into two parts, the **predicator** and the **rest of the predicate**. The predicator is the verb and its modifiers. The rest of the predicate contains any objects, complements or adverbials that attach to the predicator.

→ See pages 54–6 to learn about complements and adverbials.

*Examples*

The potato cakes were fried last Tuesday. ('were fried' is the predicator, and 'last Tuesday' is the rest of the predicate)

I gave a potato cake to the first person I saw on my way to school. ('gave' is the predicator; 'a potato cake to the first person I saw on my way to school' is the rest of the predicate)

## Objects

The object of a clause provides further information about the subject and the verb – it gives extra information about the action. While clauses will always have a subject and a verb, they will not always have an object. There are different categories of verbs; some require one or more objects while others can have no object at all.

*Examples*

I slept soundly.

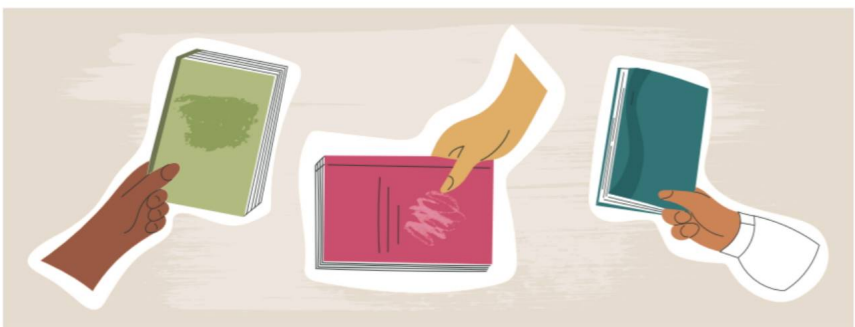
I ate the potato cake.

I gave Mary the book.

I gave the book to Mary.

In the last two examples, you'll notice that there are two objects. This is because the verb 'give' requires that something be given to someone. When this occurs, we categorise the object as being direct or indirect. The **direct object** is the noun phrase that is directly affected by the verb. In the example above, this is 'the book', because it's the book that is moving from one person to the other. The **indirect object** is the noun phrase that is indirectly affected by the verb. In the example above, it's the recipient 'Mary'. Normally, when an indirect object comes after a direct object, it is introduced using 'for' or 'to', such as in the sentences 'The teacher wrote a test for her class' and 'I gave a gift to my mum'.

Direct and indirect objects are trickier to detect when a sentence is in the passive form. You don't learn about passive structures until Year 12, but if you're interested, scan the code or click here to find out how objects behave in passive sentences.



## Develop your understanding 3.11

1 Describe the relationship between a subject and a predicate.

2 For each of the following sentences, identify the complete subject and the predicate.

- a I walked down the street.
- b They are going to eat the apple pies on Tuesday.
- c Each and every one of you is going to complete this work.
- d Aamir, Li and Joseph are building a fully functioning robot.

3 Identify the predicator in each of the following sentences.

- a Tania and Maya watched cricket last night.
- b I went up the stairs.
- c This homework is due next Monday.
- d Animals are very interesting to watch.

4 Do all verbs have objects? Why / why not?

5 Describe the difference between a direct object and an indirect object.

6 Identify the direct and indirect objects in the following sentences:

- a Aliya sold her laptop to Donna.
- b Hassan cooked dinner for his sons.
- c Paul read his daughter a story.
- d Theresa explained the theorem to her class.

### Complements

A complement is a word or set of words that is necessary to complete the meaning of a subject or a predicate. They are essential to understanding; if the complement is removed, the sentence will no longer make sense.

Complements come directly after a **copula verb** and any phrase that effectively describes or is equivalent to the subject or object. Copula verbs are special types of verbs that only appear in sentences that require complements. In English, the most common copula verb is 'be' (which can be a verb or a primary auxiliary). However, there are other verbs that can act as a copula verb, including 'seem', 'appear', 'feel', 'become', 'find' and 'grow'.

There are two main types of complement: **subject complement** and **object complement**. Subject complements complete a subject, whereas object complements complete the object.

Subject complements are typically noun phrases, adjective phrases, prepositional phrases or adverb phrases.

*Examples*

The potato cake felt hot.

My cat's name is Fearless.

The mouse was on the table.

In the above examples, 'hot' is an adjective phrase describing the subject 'the potato cake'; 'Fearless' is a noun phrase containing a proper noun equivalent to the subject; and 'on the table' describes the location of the subject using a prepositional phrase.

Object complements are any main phrases that come after an object. As with subject complements, object complements will contain a description of the object, or be equivalent to the object, and will also typically be noun phrases, adjective phrases, prepositional phrases or adverb phrases.

*Examples*

The comment made everyone feel awkward.

We voted Josie school captain.

She put the apple over there.

In the above examples of object complements, 'feel awkward' is an adjectival description of the object 'everyone'; 'school captain' is a noun phrase equivalent to the object 'Josie'; and 'over there' is a prepositional phrase describing the location of the object 'the apple'.

The key element of the complement is that it is required – it can never be deleted to reduce repetition or make a sentence more concise.

*Examples*

*The potato cake felt.

*My cat's name is.

*The mouse was.

*The comment made everyone.

*We voted Josie.

*She put the apple.

Without their complements, none of these examples are complete sentences on their own.

## Adverbials

Adverbials provide extra information about a verb. They often say where, when, how, or how often something occurs. Adverbials can be adverb phrases, but they can also be other phrase types, such as prepositional phrases, noun phrases or whole clauses. Unlike complements, adverbials provide optional information; they can be deleted without affecting the overall comprehensibility of the clause, and are not critical to the sentence structure.

Below is a table containing some of the most common types of adverbials.

| Type of adverbial | Example |
|---|---|
| **Place** | The cat was purring on my lap. |
| **Time** | The train will arrive in the morning. |
| **Manner** | She performed poorly. |
| **Degree** | He studied just enough to pass the exam. |
| **Probability** | Obviously a writer of this book likes potato cakes. |
| **Comparative** | We are working harder. |
| **Superlative** | Stress levels increase most often before a big life event. |

Notice that, in all of the examples above, the adverbial can be deleted without making the sentence ungrammatical or harder to understand.

### Combining clauses

When considering sentences as a whole, we often combine clauses in order to vary sentence structure, provide appropriate amounts of information, and reduce repetition. There are two main methods for combining clauses: by **subordinating** a clause when attaching it to an independent clause, and by **coordinating** a clause by attaching it to an independent clause.

See pages 44–5 to read about subordinators and coordinators.

## Develop your understanding 3.12

1 How does a complement differ from an indirect object?

2 Identify the complements in the following sentences. State whether they are subject complements or object complements.

- a She was the only person who cared.
- b Peta found the work difficult.
- c They were very understanding of the situation.
- d We became angry when we found out they had sold out of potato cakes.

3 Identify any complements and adverbials in the following sentences. There may be more than one complement and/or more than one adverbial in each sentence. Not all sentences will contain both complements and adverbials.

- a Thinking is difficult when you haven't slept enough.
- b The dog pulled all the clothes off the line very quickly.
- c Ali felt confident because the tutor explained the work in a clear manner.
- d The package arrived so quickly it felt like it was shipped before I'd ordered it.

## Sentences

Sentences can convey thoughts, ideas and statements of fact. They can be questions, commands and exclamations, but ultimately a sentence must contain at least one subject (implicit or explicit) and at least one predicate.

### Sentence types

Sentences can be categorised by how they are framed to convey meaning. This meaning is referred to as a **sentence type** that helps define its primary purpose. There are four types of sentences in English: **declarative**, **interrogative**, **imperative** and **exclamative**.

#### Declarative

A declarative sentence is framed as a statement of fact; it declares something. While the statement may not be true, the framing of the sentence implies that it is. To be identified as declarative, a sentence need not be profound or even necessarily sensible, it just needs to be framed in a way that communicates information. Declaratives are the most common type of sentence in English.

*Examples*

It is raining outside.
I like potato cakes.
The sky is the colour of rainbows.
Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

*Tip*

'Colourless green ideas sleep furiously' is a sentence made up by linguist Noam Chomsky to demonstrate that grammar in English is not related to coherence. It shows that a sentence can be grammatically correct while being complete nonsense (Chomsky 1957).

#### Interrogative

Interrogative sentences are framed in the form of questions, ending with a question mark. Whether it is rhetorical or not, if it has a question mark it's considered to be an interrogative sentence. These sentences typically begin with interrogative pronouns or auxiliary verbs.

*Examples*

Do you think it will rain tonight?
Are you sure?
Why are you going out tonight?
What are you thinking?

→ See page 33 to read about interrogative pronouns.

*Tip*

Notice that 'You're going out tonight, aren't you?' is an interrogative that doesn't begin with an interrogative pronoun or auxiliary. This type of interrogative is called a **tag question** or an **interrogative tag**.

### Imperative

Imperative sentences act as commands, instructions or requests. Most of the time, the way an imperative is framed means that the subject of the sentence is not stated; because it is likely to be the addressee, it's implied or it's understood within the context.

*Examples*

Go outside.

Eat this cake.

Cut the pie into quarters.

Minh-Quan, do your homework.

### Exclamative

Exclamative sentences express emotions such as fear, excitement or surprise. The purpose of these sentences is to add emphasis in some way.

Standard exclamative sentences are constructed using 'what' and 'how' to make an expressive statement that often ends with an exclamation point.

*Examples*

What big eyes you have!

How rude you are!

For the purposes of VCE English Language studies, exclamatives are also any other sentence that ends with an exclamation point when that sentence has the purpose of expressing an emotion of some kind.

*Examples*

Wow, look at him go!

I forgot to do my homework!

Ouch, you stepped on my foot!

*Tip*

Make sure you don't confuse the exclamative sentence type with an interjection. The interjection 'Ouch!' used on its own, for example, would not be considered an exclamative sentence as it does not contain a subject and a predicate.

### Analysing sentence types

Often you will be asked to discuss the use of sentence types within a text, or how they contribute to a function of a text. It's important to consider the role of the sentence type in relation to the text type.

For example, a recipe is an instructional text, so it will be directive in nature as its function is conative. This means that we expect to see imperative sentences within a recipe, telling readers the steps they need to complete, in the order they need to complete them. Imperative sentences such as 'dice onions finely', 'combine all ingredients' and 'bake for 45 minutes' are common in this text type. A referential text such as a reference book, designed to share information in a factual and objective manner, is likely to contain mostly declarative sentences. Emotive texts such as you might hear in sports commentaries could contain any number of sentence types, but exclamative or interrogative sentences might be expected to appear in them.

While it's difficult to categorise all texts by their likely sentence types, when you first approach a text it is useful to consider the sentence types you might expect to encounter.

## Develop your understanding 3.13

1 Categorise each of the following sentences according to sentence type.

- a What nerve he had!
- b All students must comply with the school rules.
- c Ouch, that must have been painful.
- d I'm feeling just fine, what about you?
- e Yes, you may take a break.

2 Which sentence types might you expect to see in the following types of texts? Justify your choices.

- a a letter of complaint
- b an email to your boss requesting time off for a holiday
- c an interview between two people
- d a speaker delivering one side of a debate

3 How does the following text use sentence types to help achieve its function?

> Gosh, it's hot! I knew that it was going to be warm when I booked the flight to come here on holiday, but I didn't expect it to be so humid. What was I thinking? I love a nice warm day, but this kind of heat seems to suck the breath out of you. Sometimes it feels like I'm walking through soup. I need to be more careful with my holiday choices in the future.

## Sentence structures

Just as sentences can be classified by their type, they can also be categorised by structure. There are five structures to consider: **simple**, **compound**, **complex**, **compound-complex** and **fragment**. The structure is determined by whether the sentence comprises a complete clause, how many clauses are within the sentence, and the conjunctions that join those clauses together.

### Simple sentences

Simple sentences contain a single clause that consists of a subject and a predicate. The clause contains all of the information required to convey meaning.

*Examples*

I ate the pie.

He cried.

The entire crowd of very angry people marched down the road.

*Tip*

Simple sentences aren't always short. Notice that the last example above is quite long – make sure you're looking for subjects and predicates, not length.

### Compound sentences

Compound sentences consist of two or more independent clauses that are joined together using a coordinator.

→ See page 44 to read about coordinators.

*Examples*

I ate the pie and she ate the cake.

He cried but she laughed.

We will use umbrellas and raincoats or we will all get wet.

Notice that all of the examples above contain two clauses – two sets of subjects and predicates. In the first sentence, for example, 'I' is the subject of the first clause and 'she' is the subject of the second clause. The predicates are 'ate the pie' and 'ate the cake', respectively.

### Complex sentences

A complex sentence consists of one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. The dependent clause is created by joining it to the independent clause using a subordinator.

*Examples*

I ate the pie after she ate the cake.

He cried because she laughed.

Umbrellas and raincoats will be used unless we want to get wet.

Notice how the second clause in each of the above examples is providing extra information within the context of the first clause, such as cause and effect with 'because' or changes in time with 'after'. Complex sentences don't need to be ordered in this way, but this is how they are usually formed. The clauses can be reversed, but often a comma is needed to indicate this: 'After she ate the cake, I ate the pie.'

### Compound-complex sentence

Compound-complex sentences are a combination of compound sentences and complex sentences. These sentences contain at least two independent clauses that have been joined by a coordinator and at least one dependent clause that's been joined by a subordinator.

*Examples*

Romy ate the croissant and I ate the pie after she ate the cake.

He cried because she laughed and I did too.

Umbrellas will be used or raincoats will be worn unless we want to get wet.

### Sentence fragment

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences – missing either the subject or the predicate. However, the fragment still makes sense within the text as a whole.

*Examples*

I can't even.

Eat. Sleep. Rinse. Repeat.

We often use fragments in spoken conversation.

*Example*

Speaker A: How did you sleep last night?
Speaker B: Not well.

A quick summary of the sentence structures in English is provided on the following page.

| Sentence structure | Description |
|---|---|
| **Simple** | one independent clause |
| **Compound** | two or more independent clauses joined by coordinators |
| **Complex** | one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses joined by subordinators |
| **Compound-complex** | at least three clauses, where there are at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause |
| **Fragment** | no complete clauses |

*Tip*

When determining the structure of a sentence, ensure you consider only conjunctions that join *clauses* together. Ignore conjunctions that join words or phrases, as these don't contribute to the overall sentence structure. For example, in the sentence 'Alannah and Tran ate some cake', we can ignore the conjunction 'and' as it's joining two proper nouns, not two clauses.

Scan the code or click here to view a video about determining sentence stuctures, on our webpage of further resources.

## Develop your understanding 3.14

Determine the sentence structure of each of the following sentences.

1 Hadi and I went outside because it was too hot inside.
2 There are sixty minutes in an hour and there are twenty-four hours in a day.
3 Every weekend we head to the beach.
4 Not even close.
5 I remember thinking that skinny jeans would always stay in fashion.
6 Fridays are much better than Mondays when you think about it.
7 Swimming is an enjoyable hobby of mine.
8 If the cat gets to go out, the dog does too.
9 Ramsey would have attended the party but his flight was cancelled.
10 Do the gardening now or do it tomorrow; eventually, it's going to get done.

# Semantics

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that involves the study of meaning – both logical meaning and lexical (dictionary) meaning. It looks at the processes of understanding and meaning-making involved when we consider words, phrases, sentences and texts as a whole.

In this area of study, we consider two elements of semantics: **semantic domain** and **inference**. You will learn about a third element of semantics, semantic over-generalisation, when you study first-language acquisition in Chapter 5.

## Semantic domains

A semantic domain contains a group or range of words that have related meanings. We organise words into particular domains when they have lexical relationships with each other. This tends to produce words that occur together frequently. In the semantic domain of 'snow', for example, we have words such as 'flurry', 'blizzard' and 'snowstorm'; all of these words can be used to discuss snow. This semantic domain can also include lexically related words, such as 'ski', 'downhill' and 'avalanche'.

We often use words from the same semantic domain to aid comprehension; when words are lexically related, they are more easily and quickly understood.

## Develop your understanding 3.15

For each of the following lexically related words, identify a valid semantic domain.

1 root, leaf, deciduous, annual, perennial

2 teacher, tradesperson, politician, farmer, guard

3 compose, duet, beat, harmony, finale

4 when, then, after, before, since

5 associate, relate, collaborate, partnership, participation

## Inference

When a text – its words, phrases and sentences – contains information that is not overt, we can derive meaning by **inferring** what it intends to convey, which often relies on our cultural or social understanding of a particular context.

*Example*

Speaker A: Did you finish your homework last night?
Speaker B: I fell asleep as soon as I got home.

While Speaker B doesn't seem to be answering Speaker A's question, by using inference, Speaker A can deduce that Speaker B did not finish their homework, because they fell asleep as soon as they got home. They can infer this because the attitude of Speaker B is not hostile, so their response can be presumed to be relevant to the question being asked.

Inferences can be made based on contextual clues such as the state of the world at the time something is being heard or read, our attitudes, how we feel, or our prior knowledge of a situation. Inference can allow us to detect sarcasm and understand jokes, as well as make meaning out of idiomatic expressions. As we gain competence in communication skills, we can quickly and accurately make inferences to create meaning from our everyday exchanges.

## Develop your understanding 3.16

For each of the scenarios below, identify what can be inferred about the various elements of context. The first has been done for you.

1 a teacher reprimands a student for being out of uniform

*We can infer that being in uniform is a school rule that has been made clear to the student in the past. The teacher is in a position of authority, so we can also infer that the student will show a degree of contrition. A school setting can also be inferred, as it is unlikely a teacher would reprimand a student for being out of their uniform elsewhere. We can thus also infer that the uniform is a school uniform, and not any other type of uniform. Another element we can infer is that this is likely to be a primary or secondary school setting, as tertiary institutions are culturally unlikely to require students to wear uniforms.*

2 a notification is sent to all staff members about the use of mobile phones in the workplace

3 a boss sends a message to a worker asking them to come in for an extra shift

# Phonetics and phonology

**Phonetics** is the study of how we make speech sounds and how we classify them. A person's language background is not relevant when studying phonetics, as the focus is on the physical properties of sounds and speech production. **Phonology**, on the other hand, does consider a person's language background. It's the study of the patterns that speech sounds form within a language, how sounds are organised and the variations that occur both within languages and between them.

This section provides a brief overview of phonetics and phonology, focusing on the **prosodic features** of speech and providing an introduction to the **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)**, a notation system that helps to represent meaningful sounds.

## Prosodic features

Prosody looks at the elements of speech that exist outside single sounds such as vowels or consonants; it is the study of the acoustic elements of our voices that affect whole sequences of syllables.

Five prosodic features are considered in VCE English Language: **pitch**, **intonation**, **stress**, **tempo** and **volume**. These features are properties of syllables, words and phrases, rather than individual sounds. The following explanations of prosodic features include typical transcript conventions relevant to each feature. When there are two spaced symbols, they would appear on either side of the words with the particular prosodic feature (e.g. the arrows in '↑ Hello ↑' indicate that the word 'hello' is spoken with a high pitch). When the symbol appears by itself, it occurs at the end of the utterance with the particular prosodic feature (e.g. 'Hello?' would be spoken with a questioning intonation).

### Pitch

Pitch is the relative height, ranging between high and low, of auditory sound. It is natural for the pitch of our voice to rise and become high when we are excited or scared, and be lower when we wish to sound serious or authoritative. Physiologically, pitch is determined by the speed at which our vocal folds vibrate.

→ See pages 77–83 to read about anatomy and sound production.

In a spoken text transcript, pitch is indicated using symbols as shown in the table.

| Type of pitch | Transcript term | Transcript convention |
|---|---|---|
| **High** | high pitch | ↑ ↑ |
| **Low** | low pitch | ↓ ↓ |
| **Rising** | rising pitch | / |
| **Falling** | falling pitch | \ |

## Develop your understanding 3.17

The pitch of a person's voice can influence how they are perceived. Those who speak with a higher pitch are often judged as being less authoritative, intelligent and confident. Scan the code or click here to read the article 'What's behind the obsession over whether Elizabeth Holmes intentionally lowered her voice?'

Do you judge a person based on their pitch? Would you modify the pitch of your voice in order to be viewed differently by others? Discuss in pairs and then share with the class.

## Intonation

The prosodic feature of intonation relates to the patterns of pitch variation across phrases, clauses and sentences. In fact, when we speak, we don't actually produce 'sentences' in the written sense of the word, but 'intonation units', which are units of speech that have a single intonation contour.

Intonation can affect the syntax as well as the semantics of what we say. Falling intonation can indicate surety, absoluteness and finality. Consider a caregiver saying 'that's enough' to a child with falling intonation; the child would hopefully understand that the caregiver is being serious when asking them to stop doing something and that there may be consequences if they don't. Contrastingly, if someone says 'that's enough' with rising intonation while you are pouring a drink for them, they are likely to be indicating lightheartedly that you should stop pouring. These are semantic differences that have occurred due to intonation.

Syntactically, the sentence type of an utterance can differ based on intonation. Adding a rising intonation in an intonation unit, for example, can turn almost any declarative into an interrogative.

*Examples*

You left directions.

You left directions?

Try saying these two sentences out loud. The first would be interpreted as a declarative statement of fact – that the person has left directions. The second would be delivered with rising intonation, also known as **questioning intonation** in this case, and a listener could infer that the speaker is questioning whether directions were left at all.

Many speakers in Australia and New Zealand use a particular type of intonation called **High Rising Terminal (HRT)**. This type of intonation occurs when rising intonation is used on declaratives when no question is implied. HRT is considered to be a method of engaging listeners and being inclusive.

In a spoken text transcript, intonation is typically indicated using punctuation as shown in the table.

| Type of intonation | Transcript term | Transcript convention |
|---|---|---|
| **Continuing** | continuing intonation | , |
| **Final** | final intonation | . |
| **Rising** | questioning intonation | ? |
| **Falling** | falling intonation or falling pitch | \ |

## Stress

Stress is the intensity that is placed upon a syllable within a word. The speaker may increase the length, volume or pitch of the syllable compared to its surrounding syllables, to create emphasis.

Stress can be used to alter the semantic meaning of a sentence. For example, the sentence 'I think that's my bag' can mean different things depending on which word is stressed. In the following example, each sentence includes additional information to indicate the differences in meaning.

*Examples*

I think that's my bag. (but you may disagree)
I think that's my bag. (but I'm not entirely sure)
I think that's my bag. (not this one)
I think that's my bag. (not someone else's)
I think that's my bag. (not something else)

In a spoken text transcript, stress is typically indicated by underlining the stressed syllable or word.

| Type of stress | Transcript term | Transcript convention |
|---|---|---|
| **Stress** | stress/emphasis | word |

## Tempo

Tempo relates to the pace (speed) with which an intonation unit is delivered. It is often linked to the communication of emotion or intent within a conversational exchange. For example, someone who speaks very quickly might be in a hurry, or excited; whereas someone speaking slowly could be taking particular care to ensure that listeners can hear or absorb what they're saying.

There is no standard list of the effects changes in tempo might have, as it entirely relies on the context. If you're analysing a spoken transcript and notice changes in tempo, this is often something worth discussing in relation to the surrounding intonation units and the situational context.

In a spoken text transcript, tempo is typically indicated using musical terms.

| Type of tempo | Transcript term | Transcript convention |
|---|---|---|
| **Fast** | allegro, fast | <A A> |
| **Slow** | lento, slow | <L L> |

## Volume

Volume is the relative increase or decrease in decibels across an intonation unit. Increasing volume on a single syllable can create stress. When it occurs across a longer stretch of an intonation unit, it must be considered within the situational context.

For example, an increase in volume as it progresses across an intonation unit can create a crescendo effect, which generates excitement by helping to create suspense. A decrease in volume over an entire intonation unit, however, could indicate secrecy or the need to be circumspect.

In a spoken text transcript, volume is indicated using musical terms.

| Type of volume | Transcript term | Transcript convention |
|---|---|---|
| **Loud** | forte, loud | <F F> |
| **Especially loud** | fortissimo, very loud | <FF FF> |
| **Soft** | piano, soft | <P P> |
| **Especially soft** | pianissimo, very soft | <PP PP> |
| **Increasingly louder** | crescendo | <CRE CRE> |
| **Increasingly softer** | diminuendo | <DIM DIM> |

## Develop your understanding 3.18

1 How does prosody change the meaning of a sentence? In pairs or small groups, create some sentences and take turns modifying your prosodic features to change their meaning.

2 In a conversation, what would be some reasons that someone would speak faster than normal?

3 In what contexts would it be appropriate to make your volume softer or louder? Why?

4 Think about some of your recent interactions with others. Have there been situations where you've modified your prosody in order to achieve a purpose? Share this with the class.

### Introduction to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

When linguists began to record different languages and accents around the world, they found it difficult to represent every sound in every language using a single alphabet. Many would use their own methodology of transcribing particular sounds, such as the difference between an 'n' and an 'ng', but this created bigger issues when sharing data and information with each other. First published in 1888, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was created to solve these problems. Written and revised by the International Phonetic Association (an organisation that promotes the study of phonetics), the alphabet has developed over time.

# THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2015)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC) © 2015 IPA

| | Bilabial | Labiodental | Dental | Alveolar | Postalveolar | Retroflex | Palatal | Velar | Uvular | Pharyngeal | Glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosive | p b | | | t d | | ʈ ɖ | c ɟ | k g | q ɢ | | ʔ |
| Nasal | m | ɱ | | n | | ɳ | ɲ | ŋ | ɴ | | |
| Trill | ʙ | | | r | | | | | ʀ | | |
| Tap or Flap | | ⱱ | | ɾ | | ɽ | | | | | |
| Fricative | ɸ β | f v | θ ð | s z | ʃ ʒ | ʂ ʐ | ç ʝ | x ɣ | χ ʁ | ħ ʕ | h ɦ |
| Lateral fricative | | | | ɬ ɮ | | | | | | | |
| Approximant | | ʋ | | ɹ | | ɻ | j | ɰ | | | |
| Lateral approximant | | | | l | | ɭ | ʎ | ʟ | | | |

Symbols to the right in a cell are voiced, to the left are voiceless. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

| Clicks | Voiced implosives | Ejectives |
|---|---|---|
| ʘ Bilabial | ɓ Bilabial | ’ Examples: |
| ǀ Dental | ɗ Dental/alveolar | pʼ Bilabial |
| ǃ (Post)alveolar | ʄ Palatal | tʼ Dental/alveolar |
| ǂ Palatoalveolar | ɠ Velar | kʼ Velar |
| ǁ Alveolar lateral | ʛ Uvular | sʼ Alveolar fricative |

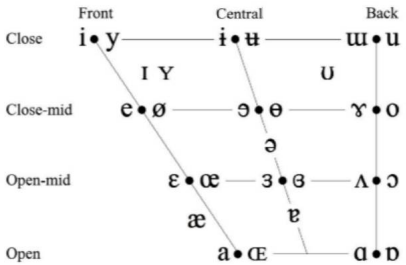
OTHER SYMBOLS

ʍ Voiceless labial-velar fricative
w Voiced labial-velar approximant
ɥ Voiced labial-palatal approximant
ʜ Voiceless epiglottal fricative
ʢ Voiced epiglottal fricative
ʡ Epiglottal plosive
ɕ ʑ Alveolo-palatal fricatives
ɺ Voiced alveolar lateral flap
ʃ͡ɧ Simultaneous ʃ and x

Affricates and double articulations can be represented by two symbols joined by a tie bar if necessary.

t͡s k͡p

VOWELS




Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

SUPRASEGMENTALS

ˈ Primary stress ˌfoʊnəˈtɪʃən
ˌ Secondary stress
ː Long eː
ˑ Half-long eˑ
˘ Extra-short ĕ
| Minor (foot) group
‖ Major (intonation) group
. Syllable break ɹi.ækt
‿ Linking (absence of a break)

TONES AND WORD ACCENTS

| LEVEL | | CONTOUR | |
|---|---|---|---|
| é or ˥ | Extra high | ě or ˩˥ | Rising |
| é ˦ | High | ê ˥˩ | Falling |
| ē ˧ | Mid | e᷌ ˦˥ | High rising |
| è ˨ | Low | e᷄ ˩˨ | Low rising |
| ȅ ˩ | Extra low | e᷅ ˩˥˧ | Rising-falling |
| ↓ Downstep | | ↗ Global rise | |
| ↑ Upstep | | ↘ Global fall | |

DIACRITICS Some diacritics may be placed above a symbol with a descender, e.g. n̥̊

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◌̥ Voiceless | n̥ d̥ | ◌̤ Breathy voiced | b̤ a̤ | ◌̪ Dental | t̪ d̪ |
| ◌̬ Voiced | s̬ t̬ | ◌̰ Creaky voiced | b̰ a̰ | ◌̺ Apical | t̺ d̺ |
| ◌ʰ Aspirated | tʰ dʰ | ◌̼ Linguolabial | t̼ d̼ | ◌̻ Laminal | t̻ d̻ |
| ◌̹ More rounded | ɔ̹ | ◌ʷ Labialized | tʷ dʷ | ◌̃ Nasalized | ẽ |
| ◌̜ Less rounded | ɔ̜ | ◌ʲ Palatalized | tʲ dʲ | ◌ⁿ Nasal release | dⁿ |
| ◌̟ Advanced | u̟ | ◌ˠ Velarized | tˠ dˠ | ◌ˡ Lateral release | dˡ |
| ◌̠ Retracted | e̠ | ◌ˤ Pharyngealized | tˤ dˤ | ◌̚ No audible release | d̚ |
| ◌̈ Centralized | ë | ~ Velarized or pharyngealized | ɫ | | |
| ◌̽ Mid-centralized | e̽ | ◌̝ Raised | e̝ ( ɹ̝ = voiced alveolar fricative) | | |
| ◌̩ Syllabic | n̩ | ◌̞ Lowered | e̞ ( β̞ = voiced bilabial approximant) | | |
| ◌̯ Non-syllabic | e̯ | ◌̘ Advanced Tongue Root | e̘ | | |
| ◌˞ Rhoticity | ɚ a˞ | ◌̙ Retracted Tongue Root | e̙ | | |

Source: IPA Chart, http://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/content/ipa-chart, available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 3.0 Unported License. Copyright © 2015 International Phonetic Association.

At first glance, the IPA seems daunting as it looks like a complex set of secret symbols, but these will make sense as you learn more about it. Many of the letters have Latin and Greek origins, but some exist only within the IPA.

Each letter represents a single unit of sound, a **phoneme**, which is the smallest distinct speech sound that can be used to create meaning within a word. For example, if you change the phoneme 'a' in 'cat' to an 'o', you create a new word, 'cot'.

The IPA also contains **diacritics**, which are special symbols that are placed above, below or next to a phoneme to indicate different variations on that phoneme. For example, a tilde (~) drawn below a phoneme indicates that a creaky voice is used when producing that sound.

In VCE English Language, our focus is on Australian English, so many of the letters and symbols in the full IPA are not needed. IPA transcription conventions for Australian vowel sounds include those published in *The pronunciation of English in Australia* (Mitchell and Delbridge 1965) and in the article 'An acoustic study of broad, general and cultivated Australian English vowels' in the *Australian Journal of Linguistics* by Harrington, Cox and Evans (1997). In VCE English Language, the Harrington, Cox and Evans transcription method is used.

In Chapter 4, you will study phonetics and phonology and the IPA in further detail.

# Discourse and pragmatics

When we look at words in terms of semantics, we study them according to meaning. When we look at words in terms of how they construct a **discourse**, we study them according to how speakers use meaning as part of a conversation. What we mean is not always what we say, and when we consider how language is used within a given context and how context contributes to meaning, we are studying **pragmatics**: how we use language naturally in order to communicate with each other. As part of this subject, you will analyse conversational transcripts and describe how people create meaning in relation to who they are, where they are, what they're doing, and what they intend to achieve.

This section provides a brief overview of discourse and pragmatics and will focus only on **paralinguistic features**. You will study pragmatics and analyse discourse in much greater depth in Units 3 and 4.

## Paralinguistic features

Paralinguistic features are features of speech that help to distinguish it from writing. These are the elements of the spoken word that are hard to transcribe, even using the IPA. As such, we need special symbols in order to transcribe them into a written form.

Some types of paralinguistic features include **vocal effects** and **non-verbal communication**.

Vocal effects such as coughs, laughter and whispering can add meaning to a conversation. Some speakers, for example, use coughing while speaking in order to convey sarcasm. Laughter within speech can indicate humour being intended by the speaker and can also act to reduce social distance and create intimacy. Whispering can be used to indicate secrecy or to demonstrate respect for others in a quiet environment such as a library.

Non-verbal communication, such as body language, gaze and gesture, can also add to a conversation. For instance, shrugging the shoulders can indicate not knowing the answer to something, and rolling the eyes can indicate annoyance or disbelief.

When not a part of a person's natural voice, creakiness and breathiness are also features that can add meaning to a conversation. For example, breathiness can add elements of sensuality when communicating. Creakiness is sometimes referred to as 'vocal fry' and can be used to make a statement sound more authoritative, in particular when it is coupled with a lowered pitch.

When exploring a discourse, it's important to consider the paralinguistic features of the text. These elements will add a layer of pragmatic understanding beyond semantic meaning.

## Develop your understanding 3.19

Describe some of the possible meanings of the following uses of paralinguistics.

1. winking
2. shaking your head back and forth
3. tapping your index finger to the side of your forehead
4. holding the palm of your hand horizontal in front of you and tilting it side to side
5. looking away from someone who is talking to you
6. staring at someone intently while remaining silent

## Understanding the metalanguage

In each chapter of this book, you are introduced to metalanguage for identifying and describing language use. It is crucial that you regularly revise the metalanguage and practise identifying language in a range of texts. One way to do this is to create a dictionary containing each new metalanguage term, using accurate definitions and annotated examples from real-life language excerpts to demonstrate your understanding of how language functions.

An example entry in a metalanguage dictionary is provided below. In this entry, the student has included a recipe as an example, and described the function of its verbs.

### METALANGUAGE DICTIONARY

**Verbs**

Verbs convey what the subject (the main noun phrase in a sentence) is doing, and can be used to indicate past, present and future tense.

**Example: Fruit smoothie recipe**

**Ingredients**

2 bananas, peeled
1 mango, peeled, pit removed
3 peaches, peeled, cut, seed removed
1 tablespoon sugar
1 cup whole milk

**Method**

1 Put the peeled and cut fruit in a blender. Cover the fruit with milk. Add the sugar.
2 Blend until perfectly smooth and no chunks are left. Serve immediately.

In this recipe, the verbs function as specific command words to convey the actions (presented as chronological steps) to be followed by the person making the smoothie.

Conveys the action to be completed. All verbs in the 'method' section indicate the present tense.

# Practising annotating texts

Knowing how to annotate texts is a crucial skill for your VCE English Language studies. In Year 11, annotating texts will help you to accurately identify language features, as well as describe their purpose. By following a methodical process that you can repeat across a range of different texts, you will develop confidence in dealing with language in a systematic and objective way. The following steps provide an example of how you might go about annotating a text.

**Step 1:** Read the text without making any notes. Take your time and, if necessary, read the text a second time to ensure you fully grasp the meaning.

**Step 2:** Identify the following factors that influence language, making notes on the text.

- function
- register
- tenor
- audience
- context
- field
- mode
- setting
- text type
- authorial intent

**Step 3:** Identify examples of language features for each of the subsystems. As a general rule, aim to identify features that you think you can explain. For example, you could identify a range of nouns in a text that come from a particular semantic domain, or perhaps recognise that the writer uses pronouns in a way that allows them to develop a close tenor with the target audience. A table of common features to consider from each subsystem is provided below.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Morphology** | roots and stems, free and bound morphemes, inflectional and derivational morphemes |
| **Lexicology** | the different word classes, function and content words |
| **Syntax** | phrases, clauses, sentences (including structure and function) |
| **Semantics** | semantic domain, inference |
| **Phonetics and phonology** | prosodic features (for spoken texts) |
| **Discourse and pragmatics** | paralinguistic features (for spoken texts) |

Initially, annotating texts can seem overwhelming, but remember that you don't need to identify every language feature. Instead, aim to identify language features that you can connect to the register, tenor, audience, context or function/s of the text. For example, you may see that declarative sentences are used to uphold the text's referential function.

Scan the code or click here to view an example of an annotated text.

UNIT 1

# LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

## Area of Study 2: Language acquisition

Chapters 4–7 focus on the knowledge and skills required for Unit 1, Area of Study 2: Language acquisition. The English Language Study Design outlines the following key knowledge points:*

- the characteristics and developmental stages for first- and additional-language learners
- the universal grammar and usage-based theories of language acquisition
- commonalities and differences between learning a language as a young child and as an adult, including first- and additional-language learning, and multilingualism
- code switching in language learning
- the subsystem of language, phonetics and phonology and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)
- the phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic development of language in children, including speech sound production
- understanding of linguistic field work, including acquiring consent
- metalanguage to discuss how language is acquired.

Each chapter introduces the concepts and metalanguage relevant to the acquisition of language. Chapter 4 covers the production of speech and the International Phonetic Alphabet, and Chapter 5 provides an introduction to language acquisition, including theories of language acquisition and the developmental stages for first- and additional-language learners. Chapter 6 examines language learning further, discussing code switching and multilingualism and the differences between learning a language as a child and as an adult. Finally, Chapter 7 guides you through the collection and analysis of linguistic data as you draw upon your knowledge of language acquisition to undertake field work.

These chapters include comprehensive coverage of the metalanguage, accompanied by worked examples, activities and bonus content to help you extend your knowledge and develop your understanding of how we acquire language.

CHAPTER 04

# Speech and the International Phonetic Alphabet

In Chapter 4, we examine phonetics and phonology in more detail and explain how speech sounds are classified. This chapter explores how the speech sound system is modified to create different sounds, paying particular attention to vowels and consonants, and examines the connected speech processes that make speech more effortless. We use the International Phonetic Alphabet along with the Harrington, Cox and Evans method of phonemic transcription of Australian English.

The knowledge and understanding of metalanguage you will acquire as you work through Chapter 4 will lay down important foundations for your study of language acquisition in later chapters.

## Key knowledge covered:

- the subsystem of language, phonetics and phonology and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Speech sound production** | The process of the production of a speech sound: an airstream starting in the lungs is pushed up through the trachea (windpipe) and passes through the oral and nasal cavities (mouth and nose). Speech sounds are modified by various speech organs. |
| **Consonants** | Sounds that are produced when airflow is obstructed or restricted in the vocal tract (the air passages in which speech is produced). |
| **Voicing** | Includes consonant sounds that are either voiced (made when the vocal folds – or vocal cords – vibrate) or voiceless (made when there is no vibration in the vocal folds). |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Place of articulation** | Physical location where a consonant sound is produced. Locations include the bilabial, dental, labiodental, alveolar, palato-alveolar, palatal, velar, glottal and labial-velar. |
| **Manner of articulation** | The way a consonant sound is made. Includes plosive, nasal, fricative, affricate, lateral and approximant. |
| **Vowels** | Sounds that are produced when airflow remains relatively unrestricted compared to consonant sounds. |
| **Height** | How high or low the tongue is in relation to the roof of the mouth when a vowel sound is produced. |
| **Backness** | The position of the tongue in relation to the back of the mouth when a vowel sound is produced. |
| **Roundedness** | Refers to the lips being rounded or unrounded when a vowel sound is produced. |
| **Connected speech processes** | Changes in pronunciation, for ease of articulation. |
| **Assimilation** | The process that occurs when a speaker makes one sound segment sound similar to an adjacent or neighbouring sound segment. |
| **Vowel reduction** | The process that occurs when a speaker reduces the quality of a vowel sound. |
| **Elision** | The process that occurs when a speaker drops a sound segment. |
| **Insertion** | The process that occurs when a speaker adds a sound where there wouldn't normally be one. |

# Using the International Phonetic Alphabet

In Year 11, you will learn how to read and transcribe the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in relation to examples of children's language and Australian English. You will be expected to be able to use the IPA chart for these transcriptions, but you are not expected to memorise the chart. For the purposes of transcription of Australian English, the Harrington, Cox and Evans (1997) method is used in this textbook.

## Transcribing sounds

There are two methods for transcribing sounds into IPA: the **phonemic method** and the **phonetic method**.

Transcribing phonemically is referred to as broad transcription and it involves using a single symbol to represent each unique sound within a language. This is the method commonly used in dictionaries, as it represents the abstract sounds within that language rather than any particular individual's pronunciation.

Phonemic transcriptions are represented by bracketing the transcription using slashes. For example, using the Harrington, Cox and Evans method of transcription, the word 'church' would be phonemically written as /ʧɜːʧ/and 'spit' would be /spɪt/.

Phonetic transcriptions (narrow transcription), on the other hand, involve transcribing a speech sound exactly as it is uttered, including all individual variations, based on the context. For example, some phonemes (single units of sound) may be breathy or not, depending on the surrounding sounds. If you hold your hand in front of your mouth and say 'spit' and then 'pit': you should feel a puff of air when you say 'pit' that you don't feel when you say 'spit'. This is because the /p/ phoneme is phonetically [p] in 'spit' but [pʰ] in 'pit'. The 'h' diacritic represents the puff of air you feel and is referred to as aspiration. Phonetic transcriptions are transcribed using square brackets, as you will see later in this section.

See pages 64–70 to learn about phonetics and phonology.

*Tip*

We only transcribe what we hear, which will often not match the spelling of a word. Double letters, for example, are transcribed as single phonemes unless the letter is explicitly pronounced twice. We would transcribe 'settle' as [setəl], for example, and not [settəl]. In comparison, in the word 'bookkeeper' sometimes both [k] sounds are articulated, depending on the speaker – [bʊkkiːpə].

# Speech sound production

To produce speech sounds in English, air is expelled from the lungs, passes through the vocal folds and goes out through the mouth and/or nose. Different sounds are made when the airflow is modified.

Single speech sounds are referred to as phonemes, and there are two main categories of phonemes: **consonants** and **vowels**.

## Consonant sounds

Consider what happens to airflow when you articulate (utter or pronounce) the vowel 'a' compared with when you articulate the consonant 'p'. Try saying the vowel 'o' compared with the consonant 't'. As you articulate the vowel phonemes, there will be minimal obstruction to airflow, whereas articulating the consonant phonemes requires some sort of obstruction.

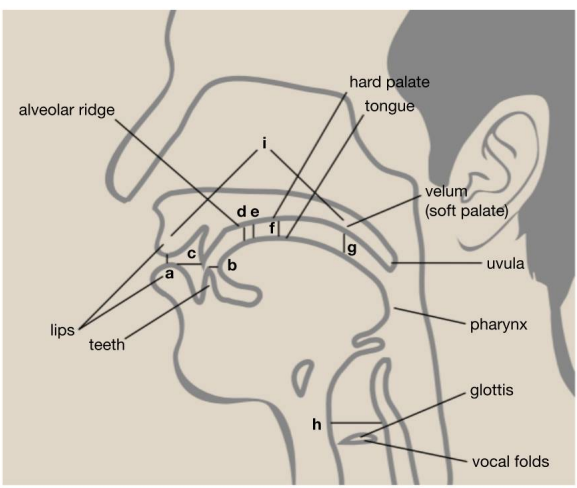
Consonants are produced when airflow is obstructed or restricted through the vocal tract. They are described according to the **place** and **manner of articulation**, and whether the phonemes are **voiced** or **voiceless**.

## Place of articulation

Several **articulators** are involved in the production of consonants: **lips**, **teeth**, **alveolar ridge** (the bony ridge behind the upper front teeth), **tongue**, **hard palate** (the bony roof of the mouth), **velum** (soft palate – the fleshy part of the roof of the back of the mouth), **uvula** (the small, cone-shaped projection at the back of the soft palate), **pharynx** (the area behind the tongue and soft palate), **vocal folds** (or vocal cords, located in the larynx or voice box) and **glottis** (the opening between the vocal folds).

A place of articulation is the point at which an obstruction occurs and the consonant phoneme is produced. Usually this point is one of the fixed structures of the oral cavity (e.g. hard palate) and the **constriction** takes place when the articulator (usually the tongue) moves to that location to obstruct the airflow. The nine places of articulation for consonants in English are listed below.

- **bilabial**: both lips are used to articulate sounds, e.g. /m/, /b/
- **dental**: the tip of the tongue and both upper and lower teeth are used, e.g. /θ/ as in 'thin', /ð/ as in 'this'
- **labiodental**: the upper teeth and lower lip are used, e.g. /v/, /f/
- **alveolar**: the tip or blade of the tongue comes into contact with the alveolar ridge, the area between the upper teeth and the hard palate, e.g. /n/, /s/, /z/
- **palato-alveolar**: the tongue comes into contact with the back of the alveolar ridge, e.g. /ʃ/ as in 'ship', /ʒ/ as in 'leisure'
- **palatal**: the tongue comes into contact with the hard palate, e.g. /j/ as in 'you'
- **velar**: the back of the tongue comes into contact with the soft palate, e.g. /k/, /g/
- **glottal**: airflow is obstructed in the glottis, e.g. /h/
- **labial-velar**: a sound is made by simultaneous articulation at the lips (labial-) and the velum (soft part of the roof of the mouth, -velar), e.g. /w/




**a** bilabial
**b** dental
**c** labiodental
**d** alveolar
**e** palato-alveolar
**f** palatal
**g** velar
**h** glottal
**i** labial-velar

### Manner of articulation

Manner of articulation describes the way a consonant is made. This involves either a complete, partial, narrow or intermittent constriction of the articulators.

- **plosive**: a complete stop or closure and then an explosion of air, e.g. /b/, /p/
- **nasal**: a complete closure at some point in the mouth and lower soft palate so air escapes through the naval cavity, e.g. /m/, /n/
- **fricative**: a narrowing between articulators creates friction as air passes, e.g. /f/, /z/
- **affricate**: begins like a plosive but transitions into a fricative upon release, e.g. /ʧ/, /ʤ/
- **lateral**: air passes round the side of the tongue, e.g. /l/
- **approximant**: very little obstruction, sometimes referred to as semivowels, e.g. /w/, /ɹ/

*Tip*

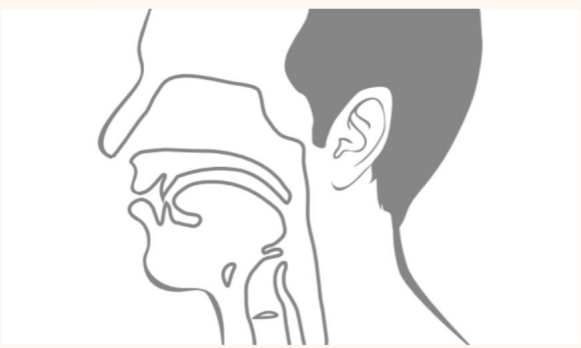
To identify the manner and placement of articulation of various sounds, try placing one hand at the base of your neck and the other in front of your mouth. When you articulate phonemes, can you feel your vocal folds vibrating through your hand near your neck? Which articulators are engaged? Notice what happens to your tongue as you say a phoneme sound. Using your hands will help you tune in to how and where a sound is produced.

## Develop your understanding 4.1

Label the following vocal tract features on the diagram below:

1 the places of articulation (bilabial, dental, labiodental, alveolar, palato-alveolar, palatal, velar, glottal and labial-velar)

2 the articulators (lips, teeth, alveolar ridge, tongue, hard palate, velum (soft palate), uvula, pharynx, vocal folds and glottis)



## Voice

Consonants in English will fit into one of two categories: voiced or voiceless. These phonemes are described according to how the vocal folds respond when a speech sound is made.

- **Voiced phonemes** are made when the vocal folds vibrate, e.g. /v/, /d/ and /b/
- **Voiceless phonemes** are made when there is no vibration in the vocal folds, e.g. /t/, /s/ and /f/

The table below lists the consonants used in Australian English. Where there is more than one entry in a table cell, the phonemes on the right are voiced and the phonemes on the left are voiceless. Phonemes alone in a cell are voiced, except /h/, which is voiceless.

| | Bilabial | Labial-velar | Labio-dental | Dental | Alveolar | Palato-alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Plosive** | p b | | | | t d | | | k g | |
| **Nasal** | m | | | | n | | | ŋ | |
| **Fricative** | | | f v | θ ð | s z | ʃ ʒ | | | h |
| **Affricate** | | | | | ʧ ʤ | | | | |
| **Lateral** | | | | | l | | | | |
| **Approximant** | | w | | | ɹ | | j | | |

The table below shows how to pronounce each of the consonants in Australian English.

| Plosives | | Nasals | | Fricatives | | Affricates | | Laterals | | Approximates | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| /p/ | pit | /m/ | mit | /f/ | fat | /ʧ/ | chill | /l/ | lip | /w/ | whip |
| /b/ | bit | /n/ | nit | /v/ | vat | /ʤ/ | Jill | | | /ɹ/ | rip |
| /t/ | tip | /ŋ/ | sing | /θ/ | thick | | | | | /j/ | yip |
| /d/ | dip | | | /ð/ | this | | | | | | |
| /k/ | could | | | /s/ | sip | | | | | | |
| /g/ | good | | | /z/ | zip | | | | | | |
| | | | | /ʃ/ | shimmer | | | | | | |
| | | | | /ʒ/ | vision | | | | | | |
| | | | | /h/ | hit | | | | | | |

### Naming consonants

When we name consonants, the voicing is described first, the place of articulation second and the manner of articulation third. For example, 'a voiceless alveolar fricative' describes the /s/ phoneme; 'a voiced bilabial plosive' describes the /b/ phoneme. When a sound appears across multiple places of articulation, you should choose the place that most accurately reflects the speaker's pronunciation. The phonemes /t/ and /d/, for example, can be produced with the tongue touching the teeth (dental), the tongue touching the alveolar ridge just behind the teeth (alveolar) or the tongue touching just behind the alveolar ridge (palato-alveolar).

## Vowel sounds

Vowels are produced when airflow remains relatively unrestricted compared to consonants. They are voiced phonemes, produced with vibration of the vocal folds. Vowels are classified according to the **positioning of the tongue** and the **degree of lip rounding**.

### Tongue position

**Vertical tongue position** refers to how high or low the tongue is when a vowel is produced.

| Position | Description |
|---|---|
| **close** | the tongue is close to the roof of the mouth |
| **close-mid** | the tongue is between the middle of the mouth and the roof of the mouth |
| **mid** | the tongue is in the middle of the mouth |
| **open-mid** | the tongue is lower than the middle of the mouth |
| **open** | the tongue is low |

**Horizontal tongue position** refers to where the tongue is positioned when a vowel is produced. As it refers to the tongue's position in relation to the back of the mouth, this aspect is also referred to as **backness**.

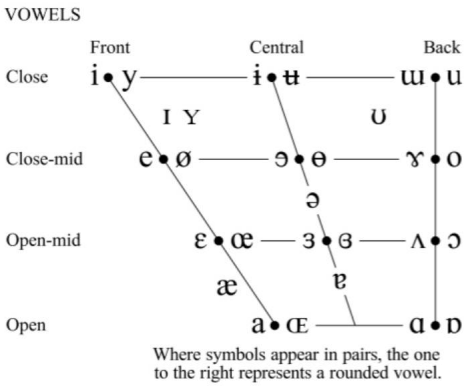
| Position | Description |
|---|---|
| **front** | the tongue is at the front of the mouth |
| **central** | the tongue is in the middle of the mouth |
| **back** | the tongue is at the back of the mouth |

Some vowels don't fit neatly into these tongue positions; these are described using the term **near** along with the name of the position closest to where the vowel is produced. For example, the vowel /æ/ in 'cat' (/kæt/) has a near open-mid front position, and the vowel /ʊ/ in 'put' (/pʊt/) has a close near back position.

## Lip rounding

Whether the lips are rounded or unrounded varies in the production of a vowel. Consider what happens to your lips when you say the word 'choose' compared with when you say the word 'breeze.' Your lips become rounded as you articulate the /ʉ/ vowel phoneme in 'choose' (/tʃʉz/) whereas your lips are unrounded when you articulate the /iː/ vowel phoneme in 'breeze' (/bɹiːz/).

The vowel chart below is included on the International Phonetic Alphabet Chart. It illustrates the height, backness and rounding of vowels. Using it will help you gain a better understanding of how vowel sounds are classified.




Source: IPA Chart, http://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/content/ipa-chart, available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 3.0 Unported License.
Copyright © 2015 International Phonetic Association.

## Types of vowels

| Vowel type | Explanation | Example |
|---|---|---|
| **Monophthong** | Occurs when a single vowel phoneme is produced in a syllable. Often described as a 'pure vowel' sound. There is no gliding like there is in a diphthong. | Say the words 'ten' and 'fool' and listen to the articulation of the single vowel phonemes. |
| **Diphthong** | Occurs when articulators glide from one position to another in the production of the vowel sound. | Say the words 'coin' and 'scout' and listen to the gliding vowels. When gliding, your mouth will move to reposition itself to articulate the second vowel sound. |
| **Schwa** | A vowel that is very short or reduced when articulated; always unstressed; represented by /ə/. | Say the first sound /ə/ in 'above' and the first vowel in 'balloon'. |

The vowel sounds in Australian English can be viewed in the table below.

| Monophthongs | | Diphthongs | |
|---|---|---|---|
| /iː/ | peat | /æɪ/ | hay |
| /ɪ/ | pit | /ɑe/ | high |
| /eː/ | pair | /oɪ/ | hoy |
| /e/ | pet | /æɔ/ | how |
| /æ/ | pat | /əʉ/ | no |
| /eː/ | part | /ɪə/ | here |
| /e/ | putt | /ʊə/ | tour (sometimes) |
| /ɔ/ | pot | | |
| /oː/ | port | | |
| /ʊ/ | put | | |
| /ʉː/ | boot | | |
| /ɜː/ | pert | | |
| /ə/ (called a schwa) | apart | | |

Scan the code or click here to access audio of the Australian vowel phonemes.

*Tip*

Sounds change across time, particularly vowels. The table above shows 'tour' as being pronounced [tʊə] (to-uh). This is not always the case in Australian English – you will also hear it pronounced [toː] (rhyming with 'four'). Similarly, 'hair' used to be pronounced more like [heːə] (he-uh) than the current [heː]. You'll learn more about vowel changes in English across time in Unit 2.

## Naming vowels

When we name vowels, the vertical tongue position is described first, the horizontal tongue position second and the lip roundedness third. The /e/ phoneme, for example, is described as a close-mid front unrounded vowel, and the /ɐ/ phoneme is described as a near open central unrounded vowel.

# Develop your understanding 4.2

1 Classify each of the following consonant sounds according to whether they are voiced or voiceless, and the place and manner of articulation. The first one has been completed for you as an example.

| Consonant sound | /b/ as in 'boat' | /m/ as in 'mint' | /d/ as in 'day' | /t/ as in 'talk' | /z/ as in 'zone' | /s/ as in 'song' | /n/ as in 'nose' |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Voiced/ voiceless** | voiced | | | | | | |
| **Place of articulation** | bilabial | | | | | | |
| **Manner of articulation** | plosive | | | | | | |

2 Classify each of the vowel sounds according to tongue position and lip rounding. The first one has been completed for you as an example.

| Vowel sound | /ɪ/ as in 'hid' | /æ/ as in 'bat' | /ə/ as in 'about' | /ʊ/ as in 'put' | /e/ as in 'bet' | /ɔ/ as in 'cloth' |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Vertical tongue position (close, close-mid, mid, open-mid, open)** | close | | | | | |
| **Horizontal tongue position (front, central, back)** | front | | | | | |
| **Rounded/ unrounded** | unrounded | | | | | |

3 Using your full name, create a diagram or table that illustrates the consonant and vowel sounds that are articulated when your name is spoken. Present your diagram or table to your class. Include the following information: voice, place and manner of articulation, tongue position and lip rounding. An example has been provided on the next page. Note that the double 't' in Pitt is represented as a single phoneme – this is because we don't pronounce two /t/ sounds when we say it.

| | B | R | A | D | | P | I | TT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **IPA** | [b] | [ɹ] | [æ] | [d] | | [p] | [ɪ] | [t] |
| **Voice** | voiced | voiced | n/a | voiced | | voiceless | n/a | voiceless |
| **Place** | bilabial | palato-alveolar | n/a | alveolar | | bilabial | n/a | alveolar |
| **Manner** | plosive | approxi-mant | n/a | plosive | | plosive | n/a | plosive |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Vertical tongue position** | n/a | n/a | near open or near open-mid | n/a | | n/a | Near close or near close-mid | n/a |
| **Horizontal tongue position** | n/a | n/a | front | n/a | | n/a | front | n/a |
| **Rounded/ unrounded** | n/a | n/a | un-rounded | n/a | | n/a | un-rounded | n/a |

# Connected speech processes

Imagine what you would sound like if you articulated every sound in a word, across an entire sentence. Speaking like this would not only be hard work, it would also sound unnatural. When we speak naturally, we tend to connect sounds together, making them easier to say. There are four connected speech processes: **assimilation**, **vowel reduction**, **elision** and **insertion**.

## Assimilation

Assimilation is a connected speech process that occurs when speakers make one sound segment sound similar to a neighbouring one. Consider how you would say the following sentence, as naturally as possible: 'I like a Vegemite sandwich'. Let's focus on what happens when you say the word 'sandwich'. Firstly, you probably drop the /d/ consonant sound, [sænwɪʧ] ('sanwich'). If you pronounce the word 'sandwich' the way many people do, it probably sounds more like [sæmwɪʧ] ('samwich'). This is because the alveolar nasal /n/ sound assimilates to the labial-velar /w/ sound by changing the alveolar to a bilabial /m/ sound. In this way, [sændwɪʧ] ('sandwich') becomes [sæmwɪʧ] ('samwich'), or even [sæmɪʧ] ('sammich').

## Vowel reduction

Vowel reduction is a connected speech process in which vowel sounds change and the quality is consequently reduced. Vowel reduction tends to make the vowel sounds short, making some speech sound unclear or relaxed. Consider how you say the word 'banana'. If you pronounce the word naturally, it might sound more like [bənɐːnə] ('benaneh') than [bɐnɐːnɐ] ('banana'). The initial and final /ɐ/ vowel sounds are reduced to a **schwa**: a short, unstressed sound represented by the IPA symbol /ə/.

## Elision

When a speaker drops a sound segment, this is known as elision. It usually involves the omission of an unstressed vowel, consonant or syllable. Consider how you say the word 'library'. Through the process of elision, the word is most likely pronounced [laɪbɹɪ] ('lie-bri') rather than the fully articulated [laɪbɹeːɹɪ], as a whole syllable is elided. As another example, many people pronounce the word 'chocolate' as [ʧɔklət] ('choklet') rather than [ʧɔkələt]. In this case, the schwa vowel in the middle of the word is elided, making it easier to say in connected speech.

## Insertion

When a speaker adds a sound where there wouldn't normally be one, this is called insertion. It usually occurs when a word ending with a vowel is immediately followed by a word that begins with a vowel, or when two consonants in a row are difficult to articulate.

Consider how a speaker would naturally say 'Anna ate a pancake': 'ate' is likely to be articulated as [ɹæɪt] ('rate') as the speaker transitions between the words 'Anna' and 'ate'. This is an example of r-insertion, which is common in Australian English.

Similarly, a speaker might insert a schwa between two consonants. Take, for instance, the word 'athlete': for some speakers, producing the combination of /θ/ (th) and /l/ feels unnatural, so they include a schwa /ə/ and say [æθəliːt] ('ath-e-leet') instead, while others do not insert a schwa, producing [æθlɨːt] ('ath-leet').

Scan the code or click here to access a video about connected speech processes, on our webpage of further resources.

## Develop your understanding 4.3

Scan the code or click here to watch a Channel 9 *Today Show* interview with Daniel McConnell, a member of the public who recounts his experience chasing down an offender whose vehicle crashed into a shopfront.

Identify the connected speech processes McConnell employs during the interview. Fill in the table with examples from his speech. Compare your answers with the class.

| Connected speech process | Example |
|---|---|
| **Assimilation** | |
| **Vowel reduction** | |
| **Elision** | |
| **Insertion** | |

CHAPTER 05

# Understanding language acquisition

In Chapter 5 you will gain fascinating insights into the developmental stages of language acquisition. We examine how children acquire the phonological, syntactic, morphological, lexical and semantic features of grammar in their first five years, and look at some similarities and differences in the ways people acquire first and additional languages.

You will find that the key knowledge you have learned throughout the previous chapters is essential in developing your use of metalanguage and linguistic terms when discussing language acquisition.

## Key knowledge covered:

- the characteristics and developmental stages for first- and additional-language learners
- the universal grammar and usage-based theories of language acquisition
- the phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic development of language in children, including speech sound production
- metalanguage to discuss how language is acquired

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Morphological overgeneralisation** | Applying a grammatical pattern when it is not appropriate in adult language. When acquiring language, children tend to overgeneralise the morphological patterns for plurality (e.g. 'tooths' for 'teeth') and verb tense (e.g. 'runned' for 'ran'). |
| **Critical period of language acquisition (the critical age hypothesis)** | The hypothesis that learning a new language to a level of native proficiency is biologically constrained to a critical period of life, beginning in early childhood and ending around puberty. During this period the brain has a higher level of neuroplasticity (ability to change). After this time, learning grammar is more difficult. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **First-language acquisition** | The developmental processes by which children acquire a first (native or home) language. |
| **Universal grammar** | The theory that children are born with innate knowledge about the structure of language, which allows them to adopt any language. This innate grammar involves a set of language rules that are assumed to be universal, shared by all languages of the world. |
| **Usage-based theory** | Proposes that children acquire language through social interaction, in combination with their general cognitive skills; that they gain knowledge and skills by using language throughout their life; and that an important role is played by caregivers using infant- or child-directed speech. |
| **Additional-language learning** | The developmental processes by which a speaker acquires a second or additional language. |

## The characteristics and developmental stages of first-language learners

The ability to acquire language from birth through to early childhood is an incredible feat of human intellect. Before children start kindergarten, they will have come close to mastering the phonological, syntactic, morphological and semantic features of grammar.

The acquisition of language in children occurs in developmental stages, and the rate of development varies from child to child. However, across many languages, children tend to reach milestones at similar ages and progress through those milestones chronologically. From birth, their interactions with primary caregivers and the stimulating world around them become crucial in learning complex systems of language.

Do babies learn in the womb? Some studies suggest they do. Scan the code or click here to find out more.

The **pre-linguistic** stage occurs from around birth to six months of age. During this time babies begin to communicate in a basic form. They cry to signal needs such as hunger, discomfort and pain. As babies develop more control of airflow to make sounds, they begin to cough, gurgle and coo. They can recognise a primary caregiver's voice and distinguish differences in tones of voice.

The **babbling** stage occurs at around six to twelve months of age, when babies experiment with making repetitive vocal sounds. Consonant-vowel sounds (the blend of consonant and vowel sounds) such as 'dadda' and 'mamma' are frequent. Babies can be observed making all manner of noises, often entertaining themselves and primary caregivers with vocal effects involving the vibration of

their lips and poking out their tongues, colloquially known as the 'raspberry'. They experiment with prosodic features such as intonation and volume, while physical gestures begin to develop. As babies reach around twelve months of age, the sounds they make when babbling become specific to the particular language they are learning.

See pages 65–8 to learn about prosodic features.


At around twelve months of age, a young child begins to utter their first words and starts to understand that these are associated with meaning. Between twelve and eighteen months, they enter the **holophrastic** stage of language acquisition, whereby they use one word to communicate several meanings, or the meaning of a whole sentence. For example, 'ball' can signal that the child recognises the physical object, or it can mean they want someone to pass them a ball. To express the intended meaning, the child will vary the sound of the word and use gestures, such as by pointing to an object they want.

The **two-word** stage typically occurs around eighteen to twenty-four months of age. During this time children develop a greater understanding of syntactic and semantic relations as they begin to combine words. These two-word constructions mainly consist of noun and verb combinations; for example, 'dadda come'.

Children enter the **telegraphic** stage of language development at approximately twenty-four to thirty months of age. At this stage they communicate meaning by combining content words (words that possess meaning) while omitting grammatical function words; for example, 'I want pat doggy' and 'I go shops'.

The **multi-word** stage occurs at around thirty months of age, when children begin to use grammatical function words along with content words. Their sentences become more complex, demonstrating that their syntactic knowledge has increased.

# Develop your understanding 5.1

1 Identify the developmental stage for the following examples of children's speech. Describe the key linguistic features that helped you determine the stage. The first has been done for you.

| Example | Developmental stage | Key features |
|---|---|---|
| puppies? | *Holophrastic* | *Understands puppies. Seeking confirmation that they are looking at puppies.* |
| Ma ma ma ma ma | | |
| Doggy bye-bye | | |
| But Gracie is my dolly ... She no go to bed, it's daytime! | | |
| Goo goo goo | | |
| Why do I have belly button? | | |
| I putted my chocolate in my bowl in my tummy | | |
| Pat kitty | | |
| Puppy big cuddle Bridie | | |

2 Find videos of young children talking and identify their developmental stage. Share your findings with your class.

3 Scan the code or click here to watch a YouTube video of twins communicating with each other.

Why do the twins appear to be talking even though they are babbling? Discuss with a friend, considering the phonological knowledge the twins are demonstrating.

# Subsystem development of language in children

When children begin to acquire language, they experience developments in each of the language subsystems. The subsystems are interconnected and develop concurrently.

Scan the code or click here to see a chart that summarises the development of subsystems in first-language acquisition. You will find it helpful to refer to this chart as you read this section.

## Phonological development

In children, phonological development generally has a sequential pattern and coincides with the development stages of first-language acquisition. Children learn the speech sounds and patterns in language, in particular the consonant and vowel sounds. As their language develops, consonant and vowel sounds blend together to make words. Children start to use intonation in speech and, by the time they are four or five years old, almost all of their connected speech will be intelligible.

## Morphological development

Morphological development occurs when children start to understand the patterns in the structure of words. Some of the earliest grammatical morphemes (the smallest unit of meaning within a word) young children develop are inflectional morphemes, such as those that show possession (e.g. 'Mummy's flower').

**Morphological overgeneralisation** commonly occurs at this stage: children apply patterns of inflection to irregular nouns (e.g. 'tooths' for 'teeth') and irregular verbs (e.g. 'runned' for 'ran'). As their receptive and expressive vocabulary increases, young children begin to use derivational morphemes (affixes used to create new words) to modify root words and change meaning (e.g. by adding the prefix 'un-' to the root 'happy' to form 'unhappy').

## Lexical development

When children begin to utter their first words, between twelve and eighteen months of age, they develop an expressive vocabulary of approximately fifty to 100 words. Notably, half of these words will be nouns. A 'vocabulary explosion' occurs at around eighteen months of age, when their average expressive vocabulary increases as they begin to use some verbs and adjectives.

Between two and three years old, children begin to use pronouns and contractions, and start to use adverbs of location (e.g. 'here' and 'there'). Between the ages of three and four, they consistently use contractions and pronouns, and start to use reflexive pronouns. More sophisticated conjunctions are used by children between the ages of four and five (e.g. 'when', 'so' and 'if'). Coinciding with their curiosity about new concepts in the world around them, children also ask questions using 'why', 'when' and 'how'.

By the time they are seven, children can draw on a well-developed lexicon that allows them to use language at a higher level. They make jokes, argue, explain and can talk about past events in detail.

## Syntactic development

Before children begin to form sentences, they must acquire words, particularly nouns and verbs, that they will eventually combine. Between twelve and eighteen months of age, they usually know up to 100 words. Once they have mastered an expressive vocabulary of this size, sometime between eighteen months and two years, they begin to combine two words, demonstrating some understanding of semantic relations (e.g. noun + verb as in 'nanny go').

Somewhere between the ages of two and three, they can combine three or four words in subject + verb + object format (e.g. 'Franky build blocks'). Coinciding with their expanding vocabulary, by the time they are four they can combine four or five words into sentences. They use compound sentences containing conjunctions, frequently use complex sentences, and demonstrate an understanding of sentence functions. At five, children combine four to eight words and begin to refine their syntax. By the time they begin school, they have enough syntactic knowledge for their speech to be understood by everyone they converse with.

*Tip*

Although age is often used to determine common developmental benchmarks, other systems are also used to test a child's language development. Researchers refer to the number of words children combine in a sentence as a Mean Length of Utterance (MLU). Proposed by Roger Brown, MLU is a quantitative measure for determining morphological and syntactic complexity. It is considered to be better than age as an index for language development in children (Brown 1973). Higher MLU values result in a child producing more complex sentences.

## Semantic development

Children's semantic development begins before they utter their first words. By the time they are twelve months old, young children begin to construct meaning associated with objects around them; for example, that object containing food is a bowl. They can understand and follow simple commands regarding body actions (e.g. clap). They also use paralinguistic features to indicate their wants and needs.

By eighteen months, they comprehend approximately 200 words; by the age of two, they show understanding of a variety of word classes (nouns, verbs, pronouns, prepositions etc.). By three or four years old, children can sort objects into categories as they develop knowledge of semantic domains (e.g. colour: blue, red, green, yellow). Soon after, children begin to understand temporal markers and use prepositional phrases such as 'under the bed' and 'up on the shelf'. By four, they understand and can describe the differences and similarities between objects and can describe these using three or more adjectives.

Much like morphological overgeneralisation, young children apply **semantic overgeneralisation** when they extend the meaning of a word beyond its intended use. For instance, a young child learns that the word 'cat' means the family pet but then applies the word to all four-legged furry animals.

By the time children begin primary school, they can comprehend approximately 13 000 words. Between six and seven years old, a child's comprehension of words expands to around 20 000 to 26 000 words.

# Develop your understanding 5.2

Scan the code or click here to see a chart that summarises the development of subsystems in first-language acquisition (also accessible on page 92). Use the chart to answer the following questions.

1 As you read the chart, consider how each of the developing subsystems coincides with one another. What conclusions can you reach about the overall development of the subsystems of language?

2 Read the transcript of a child speaking with their parent on pages 96–7. Write an analysis of the child's speech that includes the following:

   a classification of the child's stage of language development

   b the role the parent plays in helping the child to develop language

   c the stage of language subsystem development – refer to the chart linked above to assist you.

   Support your discussion with examples from the transcript, including line numbers.

See pages 128–9 to view an example analysis of a transcript of a child's speech (though note that it is longer than is required for this task).

As you complete your analysis of the child's subsystem development, it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions about each of the different subsystems.

**Phonological development**
What consonant sounds have been mastered?
Does the child use intonation?
Does the child substitute one consonant sound for another?
Is there evidence of connected speech being intelligible?

**Morphological development**
Does the child use any regular verb tenses?
Does the child use any irregular verb tenses?

**Lexical development**
What word classes feature in the child's speech?
Does the child use pronouns?

**Syntactic development**
How many words are in the sentences the child constructs?
What are the types and functions of the sentences used by the child?
Are there any syntactic irregularities?

**Semantic development**
What does the child's utterances show about their understanding of objects, people and basic events?
Does the child's use of word classes show their understanding of complex thoughts?

**Transcription key**

| | |
|---|---|
| . | final intonation |
| / | rising intonation |
| ? | questioning intonation |
| <P P> | soft |
| <PP PP> | very soft |
| <F F> | loud |
| <L L> | slow speech |
| <A A> | fast-paced speech |
| <H> | intake of breath |
| (.) | short pause |
| (..) | longer pause |
| _____ | stress |
| = | lengthening of sound |
| @@@ | laughter |
| XXX | unintelligible speech |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Parent: | What? |
| 2 | Child: | <P Yes P> |
| 3 | Parent: | Tell me again. |
| 4 | Child: | Let's watch XXX |
| 5 | Parent: | What are they? |
| 6 | | What was on there? |
| 7 | | <PP Tell me again/ PP> |
| 8 | Child: | It's (.) <A it's what (XXX) A> movie. |
| 9 | Parent: | A lot of girls? |
| 10 | Child: | Yeah a movie. |
| 11 | Parent: | Like how many girls? |
| 12 | Child: | Like this seven. |
| 13 | Parent: | And what are they? |
| 14 | Child: | <A Seven eight A> gee=rls. |
| 15 | Parent: | Gi=rls? |
| 16 | Child: | Yes <H> se <H> seven girls. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 17 | Parent: | Not boys? |
| 18 | Child: | No (..) gee=rls. |
| 19 | Parent: | Ohh/ |
| 20 | Child: | Seven gee=rls. |
| 21 | Parent: | Seven girls. |
| 22 | Child: | Yeah. |
| 23 | Parent: | On that movie? |
| 24 | Child: | <PP yeah PP> |
| 25 | Parent: | Whoa/ |
| 26 | | Are you a boy or a girl? |
| 27 | Child: | (..) A bo=y. |
| 28 | Parent: | What about daddy? |
| 29 | Child: | <P Daddy a boy too P> |
| 30 | Parent: | What about mummy? |
| 31 | Child: | <F Mummy is a gee=rl F> |
| 32 | Parent: | What about the dogs? |
| 33 | Child: | Dogs (..) uh doggy. |
| 34 | Parent: | They're girls. |
| 35 | Child: | Geerls. |
| 36 | Parent: | <P mmmh P> @@@ |
| 37 | | Are you a good boy? |
| 38 | Child: | <L Yeah L> |
| 39 | Parent: | Love you. Bye bye. |
| 40 | Child: | XXX |

# Theories of first-language acquisition

Decades of research have been dedicated to discovering how children acquire their first language. In Year 11, you will examine two theories: the **universal grammar** and **usage-based** theories. At the crux of both theories are longstanding questions. Is it in our nature to learn language, regardless of the stimulus we receive? Or are we primarily taught language through the nurturing we receive from caregivers? Or does first-language acquisition perhaps involve both?

## Theory of universal grammar

Accredited to linguist Noam Chomsky, the theory of universal grammar proposes that children are born with innate knowledge about the structure of language, which allows them to adopt any language. This innate grammar centres around a set of rules for language that are assumed to be universal, meaning that they are shared by all languages of the world.

Chomsky believes that:

> *We are designed to walk ... That we are taught to walk is impossible. And pretty much the same is true of language. Nobody is taught language. In fact, you can't prevent the child from learning it.* (Chomsky 1994)

Chomsky theorises that children are born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) – a cognitive structure in the brain that allows children to organise the language that they hear in various grammatical ways (Chomsky 1965). Therefore, a child is hardwired to learn language, much like a SIM card is pre-programmed to work in various ways the moment the phone is switched on for the first time. Chomsky argues that a child's linguistic experience alone is insufficient to explain how they end up with detailed knowledge about language – knowledge that they could not have learned from caregivers or their own experiences of language in their immediate environment. This argument is called the **poverty of stimulus**.

In the first few years of life children hear thousands of verbal utterances, both complete and incomplete: various sentence types and syntactic structures, sentence fragments, multiple words, errors in speech and corrections. In other words, they are exposed to innumerable incomplete grammatical sentences. Yet, as they enter the multi-word stage of language acquisition, they are able to form complex sentences that demonstrate a knowledge of syntactic structure.

## Develop your understanding 5.3

Scan the code or click here to watch a YouTube video that briefly explains Noam Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device.

Scan the code or click here to watch a YouTube video featuring Steven Pinker discussing Noam Chomsky's theory of universal grammar and answer the following questions.

1 What are Pinker's criticisms of Chomsky's theory of universal grammar?

2 How does Pinker's explanation of universal grammar differ from Chomsky's?

## Usage-based theory

Introduced by Michael Tomasello, the usage-based theory of language acquisition proposes that children acquire language through **social interaction** in combination with their **general cognitive skills** (Tomasello 2003). According to this theory, language learning results from the accumulation of knowledge and skills gained through language use across a child's life.

### Cognitive skills assisting language development

Accumulated skills help children to **intention read** as they interact with caregivers and other adults in their lives. Intention reading occurs when a child determines the communicative goals or intentions of the adult speaker. For example, when the child hears 'Can you close the car door for me?', they must ascertain that this is a request for help to shut a car door, rather than a question about their ability to close a car door.

Intrinsically linked to intention reading is **pattern finding**. Pattern finding involves a child recognising patterns in language, which allows them to create linguistic schemas or constructions. Young children regularly hear basic sentence structures containing a noun + verb + noun. According to usage-based theory, children follow this pattern as they enter the telegraphic stage of speech. They create a linguistic schema around syntactic word order, which becomes evident as they create noun + verb + noun sentences to communicate their thoughts, such as 'Doggy splash water', 'Baby eat fruit' or 'Amy makes mess'.

Another important behaviour studied in usage-based accounts is children's use of **analogy** to construct language knowledge. Analogy is a cognitive process that involves recognising and comparing similar characteristics in two different components of language. When children make associations through the process of analogy, they make a generalisation. Fill in the blank in the following example of a word-association game:

Warm is to summer, as cold is to _____.

If you answered with 'winter' you made an analogy associating the antonyms 'warm' and 'cold' to contrasting seasons and then you generalised (inferred) the correct answer. While analogy is a useful learning strategy, it can result in grammatical errors. Children often incorrectly apply a language pattern through using analogy, such as adding the plural '-s' morpheme to irregular nouns, as in 'foots' instead of 'feet' or 'mans' instead of 'men'. These errors are examples of morphological overgeneralisation.

## Social interaction

Usage-based theory emphasises the importance of primary caregivers in a child's development of language. Adults' interactions with a child can assist language development in several ways including **imitation**, **corrective feedback** and **infant-directed speech**.

In the earlier developmental stages of language acquisition, children imitate others. When a caregiver points at objects, a baby mimics this action to indicate that they want something. This occurs long before they have the ability to name the object. They parrot sounds back to adults, copy paralinguistic features and, as their language develops, imitate speech, especially as they acquire new words.

Imitation is not simply a child's ability to repeat what they hear. Research shows that children try to replicate language based on its contextual use – for example, a child who observes a caregiver talking on the telephone might later imitate the adult's conversation and behaviour while they are playing with a toy phone. Drawing on what they remember a caregiver saying in a similar context, the child might say 'hello' with a rising intonation, or use cues appropriate to a phone conversation, such as 'mmm' and 'uhuh' to show the speaker they're listening.

Primary caregivers also play a crucial role in providing corrective feedback when a young child makes language errors. Caregivers are unlikely to correct the child's grammar by directly pointing out errors; rather, they are more likely to recast what the child said, using correct grammar.

*Example*

Child: 'I goed there?'
Parent: 'Yes, you went there.'

The way a caregiver speaks to them also helps a child's development of language. During infant-directed speech, or child-directed speech, caregivers usually use a higher pitch and, along with exaggerating intonation, speak more slowly, using shorter and simpler sentences. They might also exaggerate the articulation of vowel sounds and place stress on content words at the end of a sentence.

*Example*

Caregiver: 'Look! There's a doggy.'

## Develop your understanding 5.4

Scan the code or click here to watch a YouTube video of a two-year-old imitating an adult talking on the phone.

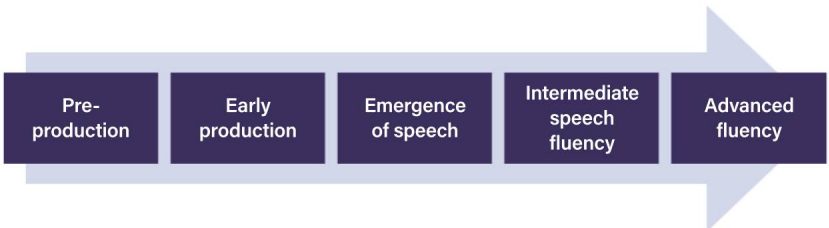
Describe how usage-based accounts would interpret this child's speech.

# The characteristics and developmental stages of additional-language learners

When a person begins learning a new language in addition to their native or home language/s, this is known as additional-language learning (ALL). Unlike acquiring our first language, learning an additional language, especially as an adult, can require a great deal of effort.

If you learn an additional language in school, your teacher might begin with basic greetings and salutations, then present you with vocabulary to memorise and practise pronouncing. You might have class conversations, learn songs or poems and engage in various activities designed to teach you grammar, syntax and phonetics.

Of course, individuals can also acquire additional languages in other ways, such as spending time in another country where they interact daily with native speakers of that language. Regardless of the teaching method, additional-language learners follow a consistent developmental pattern.




The **pre-production** or **receptive** stage shares some similarities with the pre-linguistic stage of first-language acquisition, in that the learner absorbs the sounds and words of the additional language by listening while remaining silent. At this stage, the learner might not comprehend much, but might attempt to respond with hand gestures such as pointing.

The **early production** stage occurs when the learner begins to develop a vocabulary in the target language. They begin to speak one or two words that are mainly familiar content words. Some learners might even attempt simple phrases. At this stage, basic comprehension of the target language is beginning.

The **emergence of speech** occurs when the learner develops a good level of comprehension of the target language. They are able to answer questions in the form of simple sentences. Like a child acquiring a first language, additional-language learners are likely to make grammatical and pronunciation errors.

Learners reach **intermediate speech fluency** when they have excellent comprehension of the target language. They can use complex sentences and participate in conversational speech acts. While they make some grammatical errors, these are minimal. The learner might also begin to think in the additional language.

At the **advanced** or **continued fluency** stage, the learner has reached near-proficiency in the additional language. They continue to develop more complex understanding of the language and can communicate in a range of contexts, for various purposes. They also think in the additional language.

## Factors that influence additional-language learning

Although learning an additional language can be challenging, researchers have found that success can be influenced by a number of factors, categorised as **internal** and **external**.

### Internal factors

The **age** at which a person begins learning will influence the success of additional-language acquisition (see pages 106–7 to read about the critical age hypothesis). Compared to adult learners, young children can reach greater proficiency in phonological sounds and grammar. Some research has shown that the rate of proficiency begins to decline as early as between four and six years old, and reaches a plateau in adult learners (Johnson and Newport 1989). However, there are differences in the ways in which children and adults learn, and adults do have some advantages.

→ See Chapter 6 to learn about the differences between learning a language as a child and as an adult.

The **motivation** of the learner plays an important role in additional-language acquisition. A student who enjoys learning a language and is determined to succeed is likely to have greater success than a student who is required to learn an additional language because it is a mandatory part of the school curriculum. A learner may also be motivated and more determined if they need to become proficient for work or to socialise.

A learner's **attitude** affects their motivation. Some research shows that learners who have a positive attitude towards the target language's speakers and culture are likely to learn more effectively than those who have less positive attitudes.

**Cognitive abilities** also influence additional-language acquisition. Having a good memory, in addition to well-developed verbal and auditory skills, can help learners acquire new languages more easily.

**Aptitude** for learning languages generally refers to a person's potential for learning. This potential can be measured by tests such as the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT), which is published by the Language Learning and Testing Foundation.

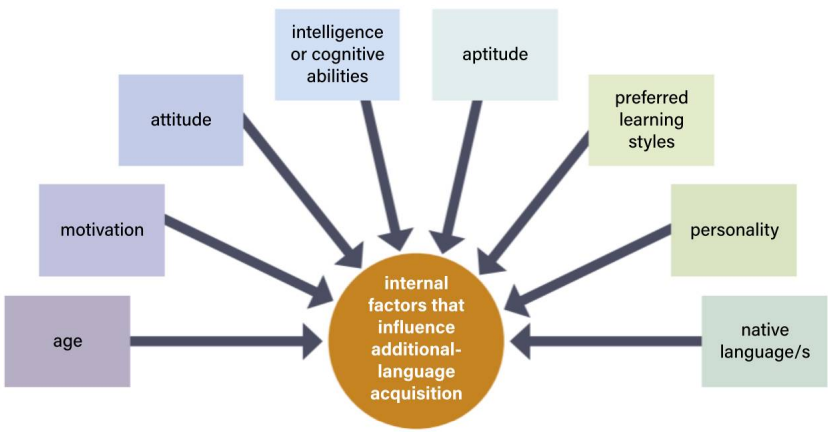
Learners' preferences for the ways in which they learn are known as **preferred learning styles**. One person might like to listen to audio and practise speaking, while another prefers to do grammar exercises and write down lists of words. While the type of learning style does not predict success in language acquisition, using their preferred style can improve an individual's motivation and attitude.

**Personality** refers to the unique traits and patterns that distinguish one person from another. The following personality traits are known to impact additional-language learning:

- **Introversion/extroversion:** An introvert will prefer focusing on inner thoughts and feel more comfortable working independently, whereas an extrovert will thrive in social situations such as working in groups. Consequently, extroverts can seem better at learning a language, especially when learning conversational speech. However, research has shown that introverts can perform better in independent and routine study of the new language.

- **Self-esteem:** Learners may perform better if they see themselves as capable of learning the language.
- **Inhibition and risk-taking:** The learner's willingness to take risks and make errors will impact their performance when learning a language. Inhibition or self-consciousness can stifle learning additional languages.
- **Anxiety:** feelings of worry, self-doubt, uneasiness and frustration can have a negative impact on learning languages.
- **Empathy:** When communicating in an additional language, willingness to relate to others can improve learning.

The **native language/s of a learner** can also influence additional-language acquisition. Learners tend to transfer the grammatical patterns and phonological conventions of their home language/s to the language they are learning. Consequently, if the target language is similar to their native language/s, learners require fewer explanations and are likely to learn the grammatical constructions of the target language more quickly than if it has few similarities. For example, a common word order in English is subject + verb + object (SVO). SVO is also common in languages related to English such as Greek, French and Norwegian; a native English speaker is likely to find these easier to learn than languages that follow different patterns.



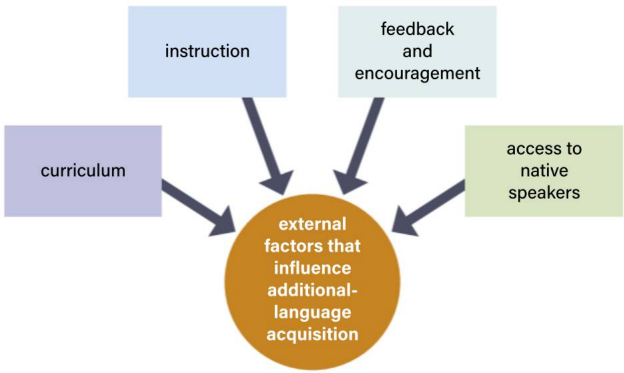

## External factors

Additional-language learning can also be influenced by the **language curriculum** and its design. Decades of research indicate the need for a quality curriculum that is carefully planned around the needs of the learner. Teachers designing language courses consider the context in which the learning takes place, the content to be taught and the most effective and engaging ways to teach the skills of speaking and listening, and reading and writing.

**Instruction** provided through quality teaching has an influence on additional-language learning. Teachers should provide appropriate learning experiences that directly respond to the individual needs of the learner.

**Feedback and encouragement** from teachers and native language speakers provides external motivation for the language learner to continue and helps to create positive attitudes to learning the language.

Learners who have **access to native (or proficient) speakers** of the target language have a significant advantage over those who do not. A recent study carried out at Griffith University in Queensland matched native speakers of Japanese with students enrolled as low-level to intermediate learners of Japanese as an additional language. In their regular meetings outside the classroom over a three-year period, both parties were required to use Japanese only. The study found that most learners believed their speaking and listening skills, along with their cultural understanding of Japanese, significantly improved (Imura 2004).




## Develop your understanding 5.5

Develop some questions about the factors that influence additional-language learning and interview a classmate or friend who has studied another language. Write a brief report on the results of the interview and present your findings to your class or share in small groups.

If you do not have access to anyone who has learned an additional language, scan the code on the left or click here to read an interview, and scan the code on the right or click here to watch an interview with students learning additional languages.

Write a brief report that explains some of the common issues experienced by the students.

## The critical age hypothesis

Eric Lenneberg in *Biological foundations of language* (1967) hypothesises that the ability to learn a language to a level of native proficiency is biologically constrained to a critical period, beginning at early childhood and ending at puberty. Lenneberg proposes that during this time (sometimes referred to as a sensitive period) the brain has a higher level of neuroplasticity (being malleable or able to change), thereby allowing new synaptic connections (between brain cells) to form. When a child enters puberty, there is an abrupt decline in neuroplasticity. Lenneberg concludes that after this a person can learn a first or additional language, but with considerably more difficulty.

Much research supports the idea that learning an additional language is easier for children than for adult learners. A study carried out by Jacqueline Johnson and Elissa Newport (1989) examined the differences in acquisition of morphology and syntax in children and adults whose first language was not English; they had moved to the United States of America between the ages of three and thirty-nine and had lived there for several years. In the study, when tested on morphology and syntax knowledge, children aged three to eight performed equally as well as children born and raised in the US. However, there was a steady decline in test scores that correlated with the participant's age when they arrived in the country. The tests demonstrated a clear advantage for those who were younger on arrival. For example, a child who was eight when they arrived in the US scored better than a child who arrived at the age of nine, and so on. For those who arrived after puberty, performance was lower and variability within that group did not relate to age.

Does this mean an adult learning an additional language will never reach full proficiency? While the above research is compelling, other studies show that adults are just as adept at learning additional languages as children (see Chapter 6). However, research does suggest that, for most additional-language learners, the ability to achieve native-like pronunciation is limited to a critical time period.

### Case study: Genie

Researchers turn to case studies of so-called 'feral' children for evidence of a critical time period for language acquisition. One of the most famous of these case studies is Genie, a victim of abuse, neglect and social isolation. When Genie was discovered by authorities at the age of thirteen, she presented with extreme language deficits. This was considered to be a result of her being deprived of social interaction as well as being traumatised by the long-term abuse she suffered throughout her childhood.

After Genie was discovered, researchers followed her closely as they attempted to teach her language. She was able to acquire some basic English, but had a phonological disorder, resulting in the production of abnormal sounds. Her control of syntax and morphology was also limited to basic aspects of language.

This case study offers evidence in support of Lenneberg's critical age hypothesis, as Genie was unable to fully learn and use grammar. During the critical period, she was deprived of early language exposure and the stimulation required for normal childhood language development. As she was unable to develop aspects of language once she was beyond the critical age, her language impairment was permanent.

## Develop your understanding 5.6

Conduct research online about the case study of Genie, then discuss and answer the following questions.

1. Describe Genie's stage of language when authorities first found her.
2. What did researchers set out to do with Genie? How did they achieve this?
3. How does the case study of Genie support the critical age hypothesis?
4. What criticisms did the researchers face? Do you believe these criticisms were justified?
5. Conduct some basic research online to discover what happened to Genie after the study. Share your findings with the class.

CHAPTER 06

# Language learning and multilingualism

In Chapter 6, we examine the commonalities and differences between children and adults when learning languages, and consider the distinct advantages that exist for each group. You will learn about the benefits of learning additional languages, multilingualism, and the role of code switching in language learning.

## Key knowledge covered:

- commonalities and differences between learning a language as a young child and as an adult, including first- and additional-language learning, and multilingualism
- code switching in language learning
- metalanguage to discuss how language is acquired

### Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Multilingualism** | The ability of a speaker to communicate in more than one language. |
| **Code switching** | Alternating between two or more languages when speaking or writing. |

## First- and additional-language learning

There are several similarities between children acquiring their native language/s and adults learning an additional language. Both children and adults progress through identifiable **developmental stages** during their learning, and benefit from **making errors** and **interacting with native speakers**.

### Developmental stages

There are some similarities between the developmental stages experienced by children acquiring a first language and adults learning an additional language. For

example, the pre-linguistic stage in early childhood resembles the pre-productive stage for additional-language learning in that both adults and children absorb the new sounds and words of the target language, without producing them. Children receive constant language input from caregivers, and adult learners receive input from teachers, learning materials and native speakers. Similarly, the holophrastic stage in children has some parallels with the early production stage in adults. Learners at both these stages begin to associate meaning with words and begin to speak basic words as they develop their vocabulary. It is also common for both young children and adults to understand basic speech before they can speak the language themselves. In this way, for both children and adults learning languages, speaking can be more challenging than comprehension.

See pages 89–90 to learn about the developmental stages of language acquisition for first-language learners, and see pages 101–2 to learn about the developmental stages of language learning for additional-language learners.

## Making errors

Making mistakes is crucial to learning, as it gives caregivers and language teachers the opportunity to provide feedback or correction. As we learned in Chapter 5, caregivers are more likely to recast the child's utterance using correct grammar rather than to directly point out the grammatical error. Adults learning additional languages in a more structured environment benefit from the teacher both recasting their expression and giving explicit feedback, explaining the error. This improves the adult's understanding of the linguistic knowledge underpinning grammatical constructions.

## Interactions with native speakers

Adults and children both benefit from interactions with native (or proficient) speakers of the target language. Through interactions with such speakers, adult learners can practise their language skills and improve their cultural understanding of the target language.

Young children rapidly acquire language through interactions, as they learn the sound patterns of their native language/s by listening to their caregivers. When a caregiver responds to the sounds that a young child makes, the child begins to respond back. During these interactions, young children imitate caregivers and employ analogy (see pages 99–100). These early interactions underpin what will become conversational speech. Interactions also stimulate a child's curiosity and desire to develop knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

## Multilingualism

Multilingualism refers to the ability to speak in more than one language. The benefits of multilingualism are numerous and provide compelling reasons for learning a new language, regardless of age. Perhaps one of the greatest benefits is the impact on the brain. Research shows that multilingual people have more developed executive control systems. This is the part of the brain that controls cognitive processes such as the ability to shift attention and exercise working memory. Studies also reveal that multilingual children and adults have a larger working memory compared to their monolingual counterparts.

There is compelling research that also shows that being multilingual can delay degenerative brain diseases such as Alzheimer's, with more research underway investigating whether this extends to other neurodegenerative disorders, such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease (Voits et al. 2020). Multilingual people, regardless of age, develop greater cognitive flexibility because their brains are able to express thoughts in different ways through languages. Consequently, they may be able to solve complex problems in more creative ways than people who only speak one language.

**Some of the benefits of learning languages:**

- improves working memory
- increases ability to multitask
- improves concentration
- enhances creativity in problem-solving
- can delay degenerative brain disease

## Language learning in multilingual children

When children learn more than one native language at the same time, they are said to be **simultaneous multilinguals**. A simultaneous multilingual child acquires the vocabulary and grammar of each target language in the same way that monolingual children acquire their native language. In contrast, a **sequential multilingual** child learns a new language after acquiring their first language.

A multilingual child may develop more proficiency in one of their languages than the others, a phenomenon known as **language dominance**. Which language is dominant can change depending on their environment. For example, if a child predominantly speaks Italian with their caregiver then attends early education in Australia where they are exposed to and immersed in English, their dominant language might change from Italian to English.

## Code switching

When speakers alternate between languages, they are said to **code switch**. Code switching mostly occurs in interactions between multilingual speakers who have two or more languages in common. This is considered to be an effective communicative strategy that helps multilingual speakers to convey their ideas and ensure they are fully understood.

Nearly all multilingual children demonstrate code switching at some point in their development of languages. This means they mix elements of more than one language. Once viewed as a sign of language confusion, code switching is now seen as evidence of multilingual proficiency and resourcefulness: the child draws on the most appropriate language available to them, to express their thoughts and emotions in a given context. While a monolingual child might overgeneralise the meaning of a word (e.g. by referring to all four-legged animals as 'cat'), a multilingual child might borrow a word from another language to make up for their limitations in the main language they are speaking.

When examining code switching, researchers look to syntax, specifically *where* in a sentence the code switching occurs. There are three types of code switching: **inter-sentential**, **intra-sentential** and **extra-sentential or tag switching**. The word 'sentential' simply means 'relating to sentences'.

- Inter-sentential code switching occurs at either the beginning or end of a sentence or clause.

  *Example*

  Please pick up your clothes – I can't stand *ang gulo*! ('the mess' in Tagalog)

- Intra-sentential code switching occurs when a speaker changes to a different language in the middle of a sentence, then back again.

  *Example*

  'I don't understand; *por qué no podemos comer ambos* soft-shell and hard-shell tacos?' ('why can't we eat both' in Spanish)

- Extra-sentential code switching or tag switching occurs when an exclamation, tag question (a question added to the end of a statement to seek confirmation or express doubt) or parenthesis (phrase containing non-essential information) from one language is inserted into an utterance in another language.

  *Example*

  'I can borrow your dress for the formal – *es-tu sûre?*' ('are you certain' – a tag question in French)

The reasons for code switching are determined by context and communicative function. Here are a few of those reasons, drawing on research by Lalita Malik (1994):

- to emphasise a point
- to express attitudes, intentions or emotions
- to convey meaning when the speaker doesn't have the vocabulary to express themselves in one of the languages
- to convey solidarity with a group
- to address different audiences with varied linguistic backgrounds
- to use a popular expression or phrase from the speaker's native language
- to call attention to particular contextual elements in an utterance.

In the classroom context, code switching plays an important role in facilitating learning. It has positive effects on both learners and teachers. When students code switch, it provides opportunities to enhance their understanding. When teachers code switch, it enables them to simplify complex explanations of grammatical patterns and make learning more meaningful for students. Meaningful learning of the additional language results in a greater retention rate and the ability to retrieve information more quickly. Supporting code switching behaviour in language classrooms increases students' participation and confidence.

## Develop your understanding 6.1

Scan the code or click here to watch a video of a group of multilingual students reminiscing about their high school experiences, then respond to the following questions.

1 Which types of code switching do they employ? (inter-sentential, intra-sentential, extra-sentential/tag switching)

2 Identify some of the factors that cause the students to code switch between English and Japanese.

3 What can you conclude about why these students code switch?

Scan the code or click here to read a case study published by researchers that examines code switching in a formal workplace setting. Focus on the information provided in the 'Abstract', '9.4 Summary of Observations' and '10 Conclusion'. What does the research find? Does it answer the research questions?

### Interlanguage in additional-language learners

As learners go through the developmental stages of learning an additional language, they create an **interlanguage**. Interlanguage theory, generally credited to Larry Selinker (1972), proposes that additional-language learners create their own linguistic system that is somewhere between the system of their first language and that of the additional language. Therefore, a learner's interlanguage is different from their first language as well as the target language.

Interlanguage can be viewed as a bridge a language learner constructs that allows them to travel from their first language to the additional language. As the learner constructs language patterns to communicate, they receive feedback from language teachers or native speakers. Consequently, errors are corrected, and the learner will adjust their interlanguage usage as their understanding of the new language develops. In this way, interlanguages are dynamic as they reflect developmental stages of the learner. However, an important characteristic of interlanguage proposed by Selinker is fossilisation. This term is used to describe the situation when a learner's interlanguage stops short of acquiring some aspect of the additional-language system, such as the correct way to form past tenses.

Selinker proposes five processes that can be observed in the interlanguage behaviour of a learner acquiring an additional language.

1 **Language transfer** occurs when a learner transfers linguistic patterns from their first language to the additional language. For example, a Spanish speaker learning English might transfer features of Spanish into their interlanguage, using the verb 'to be' in place of the verb 'to have' to express possession, as in 'I am a car' instead of 'I have a car'.

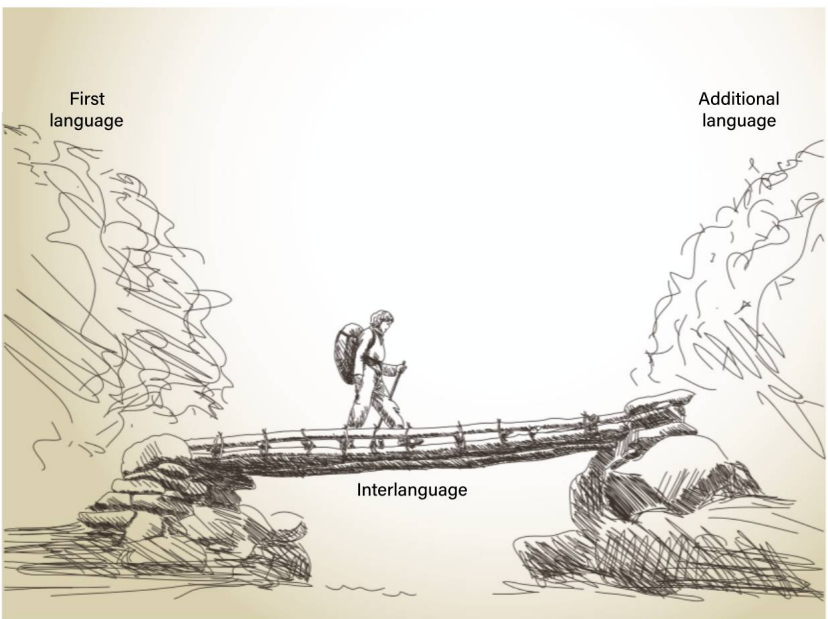
2 **Strategies of additional-language communication** consist of a set of skills that additional-language learners draw on, mainly when speaking, when they do not have enough knowledge and understanding of the target language. Examples include code-switching, employing **pause fillers** (words used to fill in pauses, such as 'um' and 'ah'), inventing new words (known as **neologisms**) and using approximate words.

→ See page 177 to learn about neologisms.

3 **Transfer of training** occurs when the learner of an additional language learns and applies incorrect patterns in the target language. This can happen if the teacher of the additional language is not a native speaker of the target language and gives the learner incorrect instructions.

4 **Strategies of additional-language learning** are applied by learners as an interlanguage develops. These include hypothesising patterns and inferring meaning as the learner communicates with native speakers. These strategies are a way for the learner to make complex language simpler.

5 **Overgeneralisation**, including both morphological and semantic overgeneralisation, occurs when the learner generalises a language pattern and extends this to a situation where it does not apply. For example, a learner of English might apply the plural '-s' morpheme to words such as sheep ('sheeps') and tooth ('tooths').



## Additional-language learning in children and adults

While adults and children go through developmental stages in language learning, there is an important distinction to be made: a young child *acquires* language, whereas adults *learn* additional languages. This implies that a young child is fully immersed in the target language/s, as is the case for children raised as simultaneous multilinguals from infancy. In comparison, adults begin to learn an additional language after they have fully mastered their native language.

Unless adults move to a foreign country and immerse themselves fully in its language and culture, most learn additional languages in more structured environments; in most cases, this will be in dedicated classes scheduled over a specific period. When young children are immersed in languages, they become more proficient in the phonological sounds of the languages, especially if they are acquired during the critical period. Adults, however, are often unable to attain a native level of proficiency of phonological sounds when learning an additional language.


Another point of difference in the ways that children and adults acquire additional languages is in **implicit** versus **explicit** learning. For children, additional-language acquisition tends to occur more implicitly, automatically and effortlessly, through immersion in natural settings. This may explain why young children seem more adept at spontaneous speech in their additional language, because they do not need to think consciously about the grammar. In contrast, adults rely more on explicit knowledge learned in a formal setting, which requires conscious effort.

It is important to note, however, that proficiency standards are different for a child versus an adult. Children, given their age and limited experience, have much smaller vocabularies. As adults' intellects are far more developed, they need a larger vocabulary and sophisticated grammar to communicate more complex thoughts. This may be one reason why it seems to take longer for adults to acquire additional languages.

Research shows that, in more structured and explicit learning environments, adults tend to outperform children. Mainly due to cognitive maturation, adults are primed for completing learning tasks that involve complex thinking. In an explicit learning setting, adults can comprehend and apply the grammar patterns of the additional language faster and more accurately than children. Interestingly, however, adults immersed in implicit learning environments do not do as well as children.

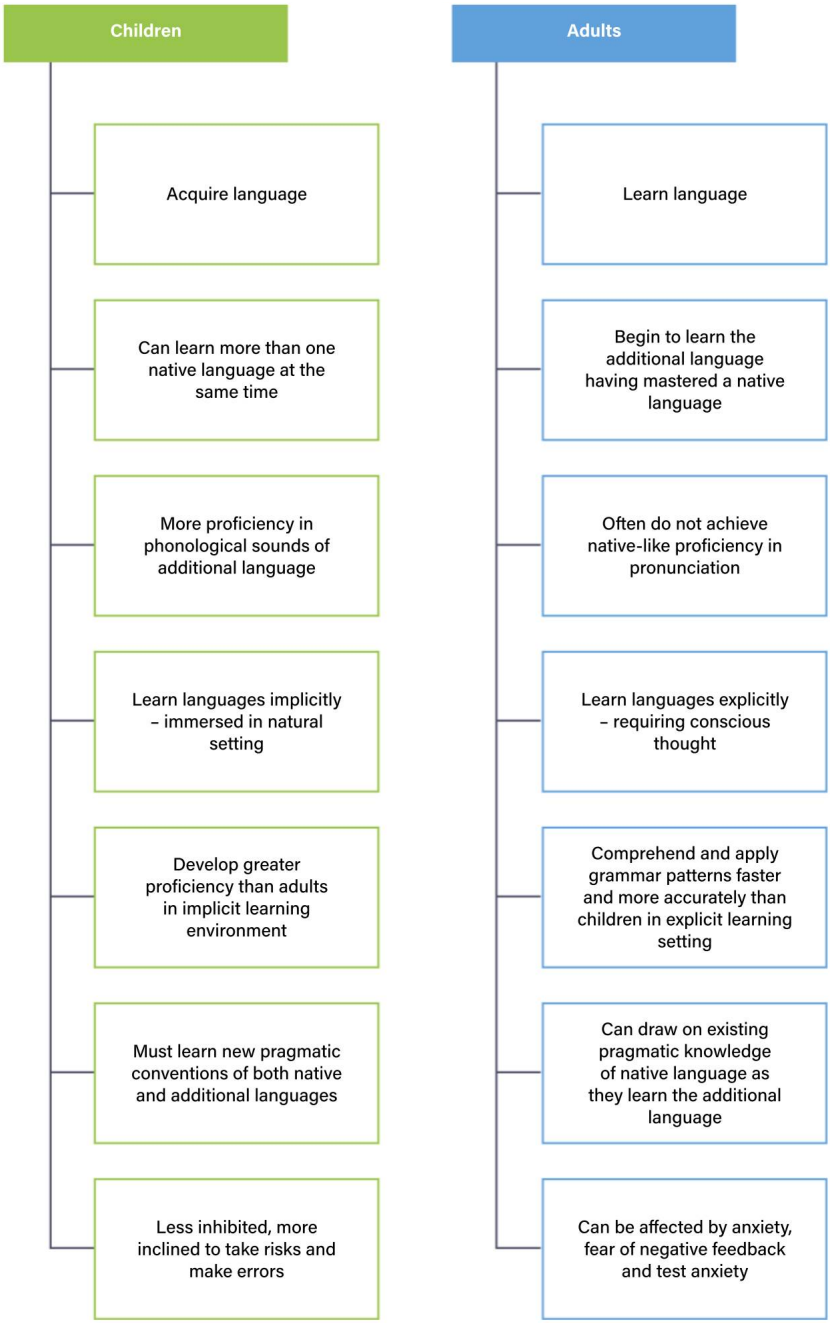
Adults learning additional languages do have a distinct advantage over children. Because of their higher proficiency in their first language, they have more linguistic knowledge to draw on as they learn an additional language. As mentioned in Chapter 5, when their first language/s and target additional language are closely related, adults learn the grammatical patterns faster. This is because they have a point of comparison and can apply their existing knowledge; for example, they understand syntax in English and can relate this to learning Spanish.

Adults can also draw on their lived experience. They have acquired pragmatic (practical) knowledge and understanding of the use of language in a range of social contexts and for a range of purposes, and they are able to interpret another speaker's intentions through the skills of implicature (logical assumption). Children, on the other hand, are still trying to master the pragmatic conventions of their first language while learning these aspects of the additional language.

Another noticeable difference between the way young children and adults learn languages is the impact of internal factors, specifically personality. Young children, immersed in natural language settings, are less inhibited and therefore more inclined to take risks and make errors when acquiring languages. Adults learning additional languages can be constrained by apprehension due to performance anxiety about communicating, fear of negative feedback and (in formal language courses) test anxiety.

See pages 102–4 to read about the impact of internal factors on learning languages.



# Develop your understanding 6.2

1 Conduct some online research to investigate the benefits of learning additional languages. Create an infographic that illustrates the benefits of raising a multilingual child and the benefits of learning additional languages as an adult.

You may find the following websites and videos helpful.

Scan the code or click here to read an article about the benefits of learning new languages.

Scan the code or click here to watch the TED-Ed lesson video 'The Benefits of the Bilingual Brain' by Mia Nacamulli.

Scan the code or click here to read an article about the benefits of multilingualism for children.

2 The table below lists some common interlanguage behaviours involving language transfer and overgeneralisation. Explain the error/s using appropriate metalanguage.

| Interlanguage error/s | Explanation |
|---|---|
| The teacher book | *Morphological error.*<br>*Omitting the '-s' morpheme to show singular possession.* |
| I movie go | |
| Amil goed shopping | |
| Anna should avoid from food contained nuts | |
| You not eat hunger now | |
| Just in cases | |
| Billy old uncle kicking bucket | |

3 **Polyglots** are people who can speak many languages.

Scan the code or click here to watch a video produced by THNKR that showcases Tim Doner. He is a hyper-polyglot who can speak almost twenty different languages.

After viewing the video, discuss the benefits that Tim Doner experiences from speaking multiple languages. You might consider his experiences of cultural diversity, diverse social interaction with native speakers and his ability to empathise with others.

CHAPTER 07

# Linguistic field work

In Chapter 7, we look at linguistic field work, putting into practice some of the key knowledge and skills about language acquisition that you have developed in previous chapters. You will learn about the different types of linguistic field work, the role that research questions play, and important considerations and preparations for conducting field work, especially acquiring informed consent. The chapter provides an analysis of sample data (a transcript of speech) and advice on how to present your field work findings in a research report.

## Key knowledge covered:

- understanding of linguistic field work, including acquiring consent

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Linguistic field work** | The collection of language data in its natural environment. |

## An introduction to linguistic field work

Linguistic field work provides an exciting opportunity to expand your knowledge of how language works. For the purposes of your studies in Year 11, you will conduct linguistic field work for Area of Study 2, Language acquisition. This is a way to confirm some of the theories you have learned and to answer questions you have about the developmental stages and features of language acquisition. The type of linguistic field work you will do as a Year 11 student is adapted to provide a taste of some of the kinds of field work done by tertiary students and professional researchers, so it is an opportunity to get a sense of whether this research path is for you.

Linguistic field work involves collecting language data in its natural environment, then analysing parts of language to answer research questions. This is a valuable way for researchers to interact with **language communities** (groups of people who speak the same language).

Below are some of the research methods used in linguistic field work.

- **Qualitative methods** look at naturalistic language use and concentrate on a small number of speakers. The main focus is on the behaviour of individuals, specifically their subjective behaviour: how their language behaviour is influenced by context, purpose, internal and external factors, and so on. For example, a researcher might look at how the situational context influences the conversational speech of a caregiver and a child.
- **Quantitative methods** focus on studying one or several variables in a range of speakers. This method can also involve treating or manipulating groups of participants differently, then testing them to compare their results with each other and/or with a control group. For example, an experiment might investigate the effects of feedback on children's language development, by randomly dividing participants into two groups, with one group receiving feedback and the other not. Both groups are then tested and compared to determine whether feedback has an effect.
- **Mixed methods** are combinations of both qualitative and quantitative methods.
- **Cross-sectional studies** involve carrying out any of the above research methods to collect data at a particular moment in time.
- **Longitudinal studies** involve carrying out any of the above research methods over a long period of time, usually at regular intervals. Researchers return to the same speakers to collect and compare data from different points in time.

Due to time constraints, for the purposes of Year 11 studies, qualitative research methods are the most suitable type of linguistic field work.

# Collecting and analysing data

This section describes the steps from conceptualising research to collecting and analysing linguistic data.

## Developing research questions

An essential part of your linguistic field work is to develop an appropriate research question or questions you want answered. Previous chapters can provide you with topics to investigate. For example, you might have questions about the characteristics and developmental stages for first-language learners, the universal grammar and usage-based accounts of language acquisition or the subsystem development of language in children.

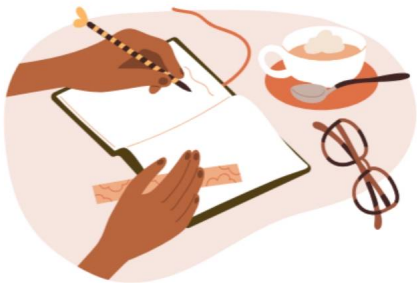
A research question should be specific to the aspect of language you wish to study, and should be verifiable through the research you undertake (i.e. the data you collect in your research should enable you to answer the question). The question should focus on the evidence. A question such as 'how do children

acquire speech?', for example, is quite broad and so would be difficult to answer with a single case study.

Here are some examples of the types of research questions you could develop from Chapter 5:

- Can I see evidence of the role of infant- or child-directed speech? Is there evidence of impact on the child when a caregiver speaks this way?
- Can I find evidence of a child reaching a specific developmental stage? What evidence can be observed in their language?
- Can I see evidence of a child's language acquisition through their development of the English language subsystems?
- Can I observe evidence of a child's language use that supports one or both of the theories of language acquisition?



Alternatively, you might prefer to develop research questions that allow you to investigate the ways in which adults acquire additional languages. Here are some examples of research questions you might develop from Chapter 5 and Chapter 6:

- Can I find evidence of the effectiveness of an explicit learning strategy, when adults are learning additional languages?
- Can I observe code switching among adult speakers or in a classroom of students learning additional languages? Can I see the causes of code switching?
- Can I find evidence of adults going through developmental stages when learning additional languages?

## Selecting appropriate participants

When you have formulated your research question/s, turn your attention to selecting appropriate participants for your study. If you're studying child language acquisition, you might be in the fortunate position of being able to study a young child in your own family. Maybe your caregivers have kept videos of you talking at a young age. Possibly a member of your school community will be willing to share videos of their young children speaking. Your teacher might give you permission to work in small teams so you can share your data. If you cannot access someone to study nearby, you can find numerous online videos of young children talking. If you are studying additional-language learning, you might find adults you know, or fellow students, who are learning a new language. If you study an additional language yourself, you might be able to carry out your linguistic field work in your language class. Once you have selected your participants, consider whether you will be an active participant during the field work (e.g. as an interviewer) or simply be present to observe and record.

## Considering ethics

At university, linguistic field work requires researchers to gain **ethics approval** from a committee. This means careful consideration is given to the impact that the research may have on the language community involved in the study. For your field work, it is important to consider the potential impact of your research, particularly the collection of data, on the participants.

**Protection of privacy** of the participants is important; consequently, it is imperative that the data you collect is carefully and securely managed and stored. Saving your data in a safe location is a priority, so you need to work out where this will be. It could be best to protect the names and identities of your participants by using pseudonyms or removing names altogether. In consultation with your teacher, decide how you will archive the data once your field work is complete. Remember to fully inform your participants about these matters in the consent document you create (see page 124).

Make sure your participants, or their parents / legal guardians, **fully understand** the aims of your research. Explain your research question and why you are conducting this field work. It is also important to offer participants a copy of your research report.

Ensure you avoid embarrassing your participants, and treat them with **respect and dignity**. Be considerate; for example, limit the time you spend collecting data depending on the age and stamina of the participants.

It is essential that you **remain impartial** when analysing the research data. Avoid value-based judgements or any preconceived biases when analysing the findings.

## Develop your understanding 7.1

1 The Australian Linguistic Society, a national organisation for linguists and linguistics in Australia, adopted and published a **statement of ethics** to be applied when conducting linguistic research.

Scan the code or click here to read this statement of ethics.

a Why do the rights of individuals and communities require special consideration during the research?

b What are the consequences for researchers who choose not to follow the statement of ethics?

2 As a class, discuss some of the ethical considerations that could impact your participants. Devise ways to address any issues or concerns that may arise.

## Collecting data

One of the most useful ways to collect data is through **video or sound recording**. You can use a mobile phone or other digital technology to record your participants. Don't assume that exactly the type of interaction you're looking for will happen the moment you start recording. You need to be patient, particularly when working with young children. During data collection, taking observational notes will assist you later when transcribing the recording and analysing the data. You can choose either to partake in the field work, such as by recording yourself **interviewing** a participant, or to **observe** only. If your school allows you to use an online video, one advantage is not having to spend time recording participants.

You could also develop a **questionnaire** as an additional means of collecting data. If you are interested in finding out more about a caregiver's interactions with their child that may not be evident when recording, questions are an effective way to elicit this information from participants.

There are some important factors to consider when putting together questionnaires. Long questionnaires can be tedious and result in participants losing interest or rushing through their answers just so they can finish. Aim to construct shorter questions with an appealing layout that is user-friendly. As you devise your questions, keep in mind the exact data you want to collect: the information that is essential to answering your research question. It can be useful to give your questionnaire a trial run in a pilot study. This can highlight questions that produce answers that are confusing or off-topic, and gives you a chance to fix these. Here are some examples of questions that might feature on a questionnaire:

- How do you encourage your child to speak?
- What behaviours do you notice in your child when you use new words?
- Do you see your child attempting to say words that you use?
- Do you ever correct your child's language? If so, how do you do this?
- Does your child ever imitate your speech? What does this look like?
- Does your child show a particular interest in certain activities that they like to talk about?
- How old was your child when they said their first word? How has their language developed since then?

## Develop your understanding 7.2

1 As a class, develop a list of potential questions for a questionnaire that could be used to elicit data to support study of a research question.

2 Discuss the suitability of either interviewing a participant or giving them a written questionnaire.

### Acquiring consent

It is crucial that you get written and signed consent from the participants taking part in your field work. If participants are under the legal age for this kind of consent, a parent or guardian will have to provide permission for you to record and use any data you collect.

Participants should be fully informed of the purposes of your field work. You must tell them how you intend to store and use the data that you collect, including archiving data after you have finished your research. As a courtesy, you should be prepared to share the findings of your research with the participants. As a class, you can develop a formal document of informed consent for the participants in your research. An informed consent form should include the following key information:

- your name, school name and title of the research
- purposes of the research
- procedures
- risks or potential discomfort for the participants
- benefits of taking part in the research
- confidentiality
- voluntary participation
- questions and contacts
- consent to receive a copy of research report
- participant's agreement that they have read, understand and accept this information
- signatures.

Scan the code or click here to view a sample informed consent form for the parent or guardian of an under-aged participant.

## Making a transcription

Once you have collected your speech recording, you will need to transcribe it for your analysis. It can take a considerable amount of time and concentration to transcribe recordings of conversational speech. Select the most appropriate data to enable you to answer your research question/s. This might mean that you decide to transcribe only a section of what you record. You might find it useful to transcribe speech using the International Phonetic Alphabet (see Chapter 4). The following is an example of a transcript of an interaction between a mother and her two-year-old daughter that can be analysed to answer one or more research questions. The mother's (MOT) and child's (R) names have been removed.

**Transcription key**

| | |
|---|---|
| / | rising intonation |
| \ | falling intonation |
| ? | questioning intonation |
| , | continuing intonation |
| - | truncated word |
| (.) | short pause |
| (..) | longer pause |
| _____ | stress |
| = | lengthening of sound |
| @@@ | laughter |
| XXX | unintelligible speech |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | MOT: | Hey R. |
| 2 | | Can you say hi/ Mummy? |
| 3 | R: | Hiii\ |
| 4 | | Hi (..) Mumma/ |
| 5 | MOT: | @ Good/ gi=rl\ |
| 6 | | Can you say, hi/ Daddy? |
| 7 | R: | Hi Da=dda. |
| 8 | MOT: | Can you say, hi/ Sissy? |
| 9 | R: | Hi, Sis-thy. |
| 10 | MOT: | @@@ |
| 11 | | What else can we say? |
| 12 | | Can we say, go? |
| 13 | R: | Gooo! |
| 14 | MOT: | Can we say, go home? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 15 | R: | Go X ho-XX |
| 16 | MOT: | Good gi=rl/ |
| 17 | | What else can we say? |
| 18 | | Can you say, bye? |
| 19 | R: | By=e. |
| 20 | MOT: | Can you say, bye Kitty? |
| 21 | R: | Bye KXXye. |
| 22 | MOT: | Good @@ girl/ |
| 23 | | Hey R, |
| 24 | | Are you a big girl? |
| 25 | R: | Mmh X |
| 26 | MOT: | Yeah @@@ |

## Analysing the data

Your analysis of the data will depend on your research question/s. If you present your research as a report, your analysis will go in the discussion section.

See page 130 for an example outline of a research report.

There are many ways to approach writing an analysis. You can use the following steps as a starting point as you begin practising analysing transcripts, or find a method that works for you. In the following steps, we focus on the question 'Can I see evidence of a child's language acquisition through their development of the English language subsystems?', but the same method can be used for any research question.

**Step 1: Annotate your transcript**

Read through your transcript and highlight relevant language features as you go. As we're focusing on the subsystems, the chart summarising the development of subsystems in first-language acquisition from Chapter 5 is a useful reference here.

Scan the code or click here to access the chart.

Seeking patterns or repetition of certain language features can help you to identify the most salient features. Once you've identified those, include a brief annotation that explains each one's relevance. You will refer to these explanations in your analysis.

See page 73 for guidelines on annotating a transcript.

For our example, we have identified features and explanations relating to subsystem development in the table below. For your own annotations, you can write directly on the transcript.

See pages 81 and 83 to read about naming consonants and vowels.

| Examples | Explanation |
|---|---|
| 'Hi (..) Mumma' (line 4) | Child displays phonological skills advanced for her age – has mastered voiced bilabial nasal [m] and the voiceless glottal fricative [h] (child is 2, but development chart indicates mastery occurs at 2–3 years). |
| 'Go' (line 15) | Mastery of the voiced velar plosive [g] also demonstrates advanced phonological skills (development chart indicates mastery occurs at approximately 3–4 years). |
| 'Sis-thy' (line 9) | Inclusion of voiceless dental fricative [θ] in 'sis-thy' (line 9) is a mispronunciation of 'sissy.' |
| 'Hi (..) Mumma' (line 4), 'Hi Da=dda' (line 7), 'Hi, Sis-thy' (line 9) | Child mostly uses content words and shows understanding of greeting words ('hi'). |
| 'Bye KXXye' (line 21) | Child does not appear to understand the word and is simply repeating it from her mother. |

*Writing tip*

Remember to identify features that are relevant to your topic – for example, if we were looking for examples of child-directed speech and its impact, we would look at language features evident in the caregiver's speech, and in the child's responses to it.

**Step 2: Determine your findings**

Now that you've identified some language features and explained their relevance to the research question, you should draw your conclusion – that is, the answer to the research question. From the examples and annotations gathered, we can determine that evidence of a child's language acquisition through their development of the English language subsystems has been found in the phonological and semantic subsystems.

### Step 3: Putting it together

Once you have established your ideas, write a cohesive analysis. This should include a mix of examples from the transcript and your own conclusions. Make sure your ideas connect – they should be organised in a way that is easy to follow. Using linking words, such as 'however' and 'in this way', can help you connect your ideas in a logical manner.

An example of an analysis of the transcript on pages 125–6, responding to some of the research questions on page 121, is provided below and on the following page. You may use this example and the annotations to inform your own analytical writing.

*Writing tip*

It is important to use accurate metalanguage to discuss examples of language for this outcome of study. When providing an example of speech, use a metalinguistic term before quoting the example and line number. For example, 'The mother uses questioning intonation when she asks her daughter "what colour is that?" (line 7).' In this instance, the metalanguage is 'intonation' – one of the prosodic features.

***Worked example***

Child R demonstrates evidence of having reached the two-word stage of childhood language acquisition. At approximately two years of age, R demonstrates her ability to connect two words together at a given time. This is observed as she responds with 'Hi (..) Mumma' (line 4) by connecting the formulaic greeting 'Hi' with the recipient, her mother. In terms of phonological ability, R displays more advanced phonological skills, which are evident in her mastery of the voiced bilabial nasal [m] and the voiceless glottal fricative [h] in this utterance. Her mastery of the voiced velar plosive [g] as she exclaims 'Gooo!' (line 13) also suggests that she might be placed at a stage of approximately 36–48 months in terms of language acquisition. However, R does incorrectly apply some sound segments within her speech. Her pronunciation of the lexeme 'Sissy' (line 8), containing the voiceless dental fricative [θ] 'Sis-thy' (line 9), is a mispronunciation as she attempts to mimic her mother's speech. Throughout the transcript there are also various examples of indiscernible speech, indicated by 'X', in which R experiments with different sounds to imitate the sounds made by her mother.

R's mother employs child-directed speech as she interacts with her daughter. This is evident in the questioning intonation she uses on target words such as 'Mummy' (line 2), 'Daddy' (line 6), 'Sissy' (line 8) and 'big girl' (line 24). R's mother is attempting to help facilitate her daughter's

Addresses evidence of a developmental stage

Demonstrates sophisticated knowledge of the subsystems, and uses metalanguage with confidence

More evidence of developmental stage

Discusses use of child-directed speech, with evidence from the transcript.

acquisition of these target words. Her adoption of child-directed speech also works to ensure that R understands that her mother is talking to her and asking her to respond to various questions. In this way, R's mother is encouraging her daughter to be focused on the conversation at hand.

R's utterances mainly contain content words (words containing lexical meaning). This is evident as she responds to her mother's child-directed speech with 'Hi Da=dda' (line 7). Within this statement there are only content words: 'Hi' serves as a formulaic greeting, and 'Da=dda' refers to the noun at which the speech is directed, her father. R does not appear to display overly developed semantic ability within her speech. This is likely since she is imitating the sounds her mother is making, and therefore does not associate meaning with these lexemes as she is still learning them. For example, when R responds with 'Bye KXXye' (line 21), it does not seem clear that she can associate the meaning of her speech with a cat being removed from the environment.

Follows up assertions with examples from the transcript, including line numbers.

R's development of language and the correlation this has with her mother's interaction aligns with usage-based accounts of childhood language acquisition. As noted, R's mother employs child-directed speech when conversing, an important aspect of usage-based accounts. Modelling accurate syntax to R in the form of interrogatives with a repeated introductory phrase, 'Can you say hi/ Mummy?' (line 2) and 'Can you say, bye?' (line 18), encourages R to recognise a pattern. This supports her following a pattern of response when she copies the end of her mother's questions with 'Hi (..) Mumma' (line 4) and 'By=e' (line 19). Another aspect of the mother's behaviour that aligns with usage-based accounts is observed in the feedback she gives her daughter. As R appropriately responds to her mother's requests to say words and phrases, the mother praises R by saying, 'Good girl' (lines 5, 16, 22). Such positive praise reinforces R's developing language skills and is likely to build her confidence.

Discusses evidence that supports language acquisition theories.

From the analysis of the transcript, it is evident that the data collected answers the research questions.

## Presenting your research

In this area of study, you are required to present the findings of your field work. The following outline provides a possible structure for your research report; however, if your teacher has a specific plan for how your research should be presented, you should follow those instructions.

The outline on the next page shows the usual main sections of a research paper or report, in the order in which they should appear.

**Cover page**

- Gives the title of the report: a concise statement of the topic that was studied (e.g. 'Language acquisition in a five-year-old child').
- Also includes your name and contact details, the name of the subject, the name of your teacher, and the date the report is submitted.

**Abstract**

- A descriptive and concise one-paragraph summary of your research report, including your research question/s.
- A description of the linguistic theory and/or key knowledge relating to this area of study that you wanted to examine through your research.

**Introduction**

- Addresses the main topic your research focused on (e.g. language acquisition, additional-language learning, developmental stages).
- Describes the purposes of the research – what was studied and why.

**Research methods**

- Outlines your approach to conducting your research. Explains how you formulated your research question/s, selected participants and obtained consent.
- Provides key information about the participants (e.g. age, linguistic background). Be mindful of protecting their identities.
- Addresses any ethical considerations relevant to the research.
- Describes how you collected your data, including the resources used (e.g. a mobile phone to record video). Focus on the procedures followed during data collection.

**Results**

- Describes what was expected during the observation/recording of participants, and what was actually observed.
- Includes the data collected during your research (e.g. transcripts, results of questionnaires and interviews).

**Discussion**

- Gives your analysis of the data (see 'Analysing the data' on pages 126–9), explaining how and why the data provides answers to your research question/s.

**Conclusion**

- Restates your research question/s and summarises the answers provided by your research.

**References**

- A list of articles, research papers or expert commentary you have read to support your linguistic field work and research presentation.

# Practical strategies

## Describing language functions

Regardless of the type of assessment you face, one of the major skills you must demonstrate in Year 11 is the ability to describe how language functions in texts. You can refine this skill by sourcing language excerpts, then practising identifying the language features and describing their function.

### *Worked example*

The following worked example describes the function of word classes in a job advertisement for the position of store manager for a high-end fashion retailer.

1 **Seeking store manager at Jasper Ave**
2 We are seeking an experienced and enthusiastic store manager to lead a close-knit team in a
3 luxury retail environment. Applicants should have a cheerful, optimistic personality, and must
4 have at least three years' experience in retail management, as well as strong leadership and
5 communication skills.
6 **Working at Jasper Ave**
7 Jasper Ave is a leading luxury fashion retailer. Our staff are highly valued and receive a
8 competitive salary as well as generous discounts through our Employee Purchase Program.

The key to accurately describing how language functions is to provide contextual details.

The text relies on a range of adjectives that work to describe the store and the appropriate candidate for the advertised role. For example, the business seeks an 'experienced and enthusiastic' (line 2) store manager who is 'optimistic' (line 3). These adjectives provide crucial descriptive details relating to the potential candidate. Nouns also have an important referential function in the advertisement, such as the proper nouns 'Jasper Ave' (lines 1, 6, 7) and 'Employee Purchase Program' (line 8). These provide key information regarding the business and benefits to attract a suitable applicant. Also playing an important role are verbs, which serve to support the description of the requirements for the role. The candidate 'must have' (lines 3–4) 'three years' experience' and 'strong leadership and communication skills' (lines 4–5). The modal verb 'must' states that a certain amount of experience is required for an application to be considered, and the verb 'have' indicates that the successful candidate is expected to already possess certain skills.

Accurate metalanguage for the word classes has been used.

Evidence, including line references, is included. These are embedded within the sentence rather than left 'floating'.

The descriptions of the evidence from the text relate the examples to the text's purpose.

Scan the code or click here to view another example of describing language functions.

UNIT 2

# LANGUAGE CHANGE

## Area of Study 1: English across time

Chapters 8 and 9 provide comprehensive coverage of Unit 2, Area of Study 1: English across time. The English Language Study Design outlines the following key knowledge points:*

- the historical development of English through key events and resulting language change
- the relationship of English to the Indo-European languages
- the codification and the evolution of Standard English, focusing on the origins of the English spelling and grammar systems
- changes across the subsystems of language, including:
  - phonetics and phonology – the Great Vowel Shift
  - morphology – abbreviations, acronyms, shortenings, compounding, blends, backformation, affixation
  - lexicology – borrowings, commonisation, archaisms, neologisms, obsolescence
  - syntax – word order
  - semantics – broadenings, narrowings, elevation, deterioration, shift
- attitudes to changes in language, including prescriptivism and descriptivism
- metalanguage to discuss language change.

These chapters offer a detailed examination of the evolution of the English language over time. Chapter 8 describes the historical periods of English – Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English and Modern English – discussing the major historical events that influenced language change and describing each period's distinct language features, with accompanying text examples. This chapter also introduces the Indo-European family tree and explores links between English and other languages. Chapter 9 examines the processes of language change across the subsystems of language, and discusses attitudes towards language change.

Both chapters include the relevant metalanguage throughout, and feature bonus content and activities to help you further your knowledge. This section concludes with a page of practical strategies, providing advice on how to respond to short-answer questions – a common form of assessment in VCE English Language.

CHAPTER 08

# The history of the English language

In Chapter 8, we explore the history of English through the eyes of its speakers, and place English within its linguistic family. You will draw on your knowledge of the subsystems of language and the role that context plays in shaping language use.

This chapter lays the foundations for Chapter 9, which will look in more detail at the processes of language change and how attitudes can influence the speed and success of change.

## Key knowledge covered:

- the historical development of English through key events and resulting language change
- the relationship of English to the Indo-European languages

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Codification** | The process of developing and writing down a norm for a language, covering elements of spelling, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. |
| **Etymology** | The study of word origins within a language. |
| **Indo-European** | The name given to the language that was the ancestor of many of the languages spoken today in Europe and Asia, such as Polish, Punjabi and English, as well as dead languages such as Latin, Ancient Greek and Sanskrit. |
| **Standardisation** | The process of a language becoming more consistent in the way it is spoken and written across all of its speech communities. |

# The nature of language change

Across time, English has taken many forms. From its early origins in the British Isles to its global role in the modern world, English has demonstrated itself to be an adaptive language, changing to meet the needs of its speakers. Every subsystem of English has been shaped by the influences that have affected its speakers; the link between language users and language use is clear. Adapting to meet the needs of users is an important trait for living languages, to ensure that they continue to be relevant and usable.

The history of a word is called its **etymology**. You can look up etymologies in a dictionary or on websites such as etymonline.com, to see how and when semantic denotations of words have changed.

Scan the code or click here to access etymonline.com

You will have already personally witnessed changes in the way English is used, and no doubt the English language will continue to change throughout your lifetime.

## Develop your understanding 8.1

1 All of the following lexical items (words and phrases) are used to denote something as fashionable or popular. When do you think these terms came into English? Suggest a decade. (Hint: the oldest on the list is from the 1570s.)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a appealing | c (on) fleek | e (the) rage | g stylish | i trendy |
| b cool | d modish | f snappy | h swanky | j (en) vogue |

2 Check your answers by consulting an etymological dictionary. Did some of these dates surprise you?

# Historical periods of English

The history of a language is intrinsically linked to its speakers: changes to one affect the other. Since language is a tool used by speech communities to express their perceptions of the world, impacts on those communities are reflected in changes to the language. English has changed significantly over time, with some older versions looking very different to modern English. Due to the magnitude of the changes and the fact that they were often paired with major events affecting English speakers, the study of English across time is broken down into the following periods and forms:

- Old English: 450 CE ~ 1150 CE
- Middle English: 1150 CE ~ 1500 CE
- Early Modern English: 1500 CE ~ 1750 CE
- Modern English: 1750 CE ~ present.

These language changes occurred gradually: Old English speakers did not wake up one day and start speaking Middle English; rather, the language changed constantly, with some innovations taking hold and others fading out. Language differences within a generation or two would not have been mutually incomprehensible, but over time they resulted in older texts looking very different from the English we know today. Prior to the Early Modern English period, English was also more of a collection of dialects than a single consistent language, since it did not yet have a standard form and its patterns and conventions had not been written down through the process called codification.

## Old English (450 ~ 1150 CE)

Around 450 CE, the British Isles were largely inhabited by groups of people known as the Celtic Britons, who spoke Brythonic languages, a group of Celtic languages.

Old English formed as a blend of languages spoken by the Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians, who are thought to have settled in the British Isles in approximately 450–500. These Germanic tribes migrated from mainland Europe and moved into Great Britain, taking over the area of modern England. The linguistic similarities between the **Germanic languages** of Anglisc, Saxon, Jutish and Frisian allowed for easy communication between the groups and the establishment of combined communities. During this period, as they interacted with the local populations, the new immigrants' dialects mixed with local Celtic languages.

*Tip*

Germanic languages are a branch of the **Indo-European family** of languages. 'Germanic' refers to a group of related languages that derive from a shared 'parent' language, Proto-Germanic, and today include languages such as English, German and Norwegian.

→ See pages 153–4 to read about the Indo-European family of languages.

During this early medieval period, smaller kingdoms warred against each other, forming alliances, conquering neighbours or dividing kingdoms. The prevalence of Angles and Saxons, in particular, saw the label 'Anglo-Saxon' applied to early dialects of Old English and important elements of their culture, and the name 'England' evolved from the region being described as the land of the Angles – 'Angles' Land'.

In the sixth century, Ecclesiastical Latin became powerful as Pope Gregory the Great sent Catholic missionaries from Rome to convert Anglo-Saxon kings to Christianity; this was known as the Gregorian Mission. Becoming a language of the ruling class, Latin again influenced the languages spoken in Britain, which borrowed aspects of its grammar and lexicon.

The eighth to eleventh centuries saw multiple Viking invasions, with settlements along the east coast of Britain operating under Danish laws. Old Norse and Old English, which were both Germanic languages, blended elements such as morphology, syntax and lexicology to create a more simplified Anglo-Saxon dialect. For example, marking simple past tense in Old Norse was done with '-in' or '-ð', while Old English marked it by changing the internal vowel or by adding '-de' or '-don'. While archaic forms of these exist in some verb inflections, the regular marker for simple past tense became '-ed'. Many irregular morphemes (morphemes that do not follow a standard pattern) were dropped at this time in areas where Old Norse and Old English speakers were intermarrying, and lexemes that were heavily used by the Vikings were adopted into this early form of English.

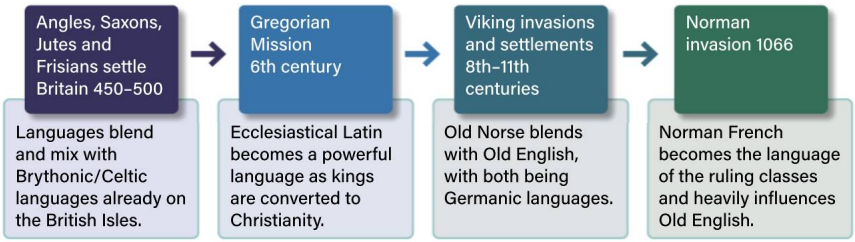
*Writing tip*

Irregular forms of words will often indicate an interesting etymology – when you come across these, make a note of them, to discuss in class, research, and add to your example bank for essays.

Much of modern England was unified by Alfred the Great in the ninth century, breaking the Isles into three parts – the Danelaw (under laws brought by Danish occupiers), Anglo-Saxon states, and lands of the Britons (the Celtic Britons). The Danelaw region developed a variety of Old English more heavily influenced by Norse, seen in place names such as Egilsay (a Scottish island) and Snaefell (on the Isle of Man), while cities in Anglo-Saxon states had names such as Stafford and Buckingham. Brythonic place names still exist in the names of natural features, such as Blencathra (a hill in the Lake District) and the Cornish town of Crewkerne.

The rule of Anglo-Saxon kings came to an end with the Norman conquest of 1066. The Anglo-Saxon king Edward the Confessor died in January 1066 and his brother-in-law, Harold Godwinson – Harold II – succeeded him to the throne. This gave rise to a struggle for power as other leaders attempted to take the throne. Harold II gathered his forces to repel a Danish invasion. Meanwhile, the Duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror, had gathered French forces and departed from Saint-Valery-sur-Somme in the north of France to land on the Sussex coast. Harold II rushed south to fight these forces; he was defeated and died in the Battle of Hastings. William the Conqueror built an abbey to honour the place of his death. This battle marked the beginning of French rule over much of Britain, bringing the influence of their language.




## Features of Old English

| | |
|---|---|
| **Phonetics/ Phonology** | Additional phonemes included voiceless alveolar nasal /n̥/, voiceless lateral approximant /l̥/, voiceless palatal fricative /ç/, voiceless labial-velar fricative /ʍ/, voiceless velar fricative /x/ and voiced velar fricative /ɣ/.<br>See the table on page 167 for an overview of English phonemes across time. |
| **Morphology** | Cases (a system of inflectional morphemes) were used to denote the grammatical role of nouns, including nominative (subject), accusative (direct object), genitive (possession) and dative (indirect object). These varied for singular and plural form, with adjectives needing to match the inflections of the nouns they modified.<br>Verbs were conjugated using more inflectional morphemes to mark grammatical person (first, second or third), number (singular or plural), tense (past, present or future), mood (indicative, imperative or subjunctive), and whether it was a strong (forming past tense by changing a vowel sound) or weak (forming past tense by adding a suffix) verb. |
| **Lexicology** | Dialects of Kentish, Mercian, Northumbrian and West Saxon carried around 50 000 words each and were largely mutually intelligible. |
| **Syntax** | Old English was a **synthetic language** – it relied more on inflectional morphemes to convey the grammatical roles of lexemes, rather than word order (like Modern English does). For example, the Old English adjective 'beautiful' would be 'cyme' in the phrase 'the beautiful man': 'se cyme mann' but 'cymu' in the phrase 'the beautiful woman': 'se cymu frowe.' This meant a freer word order overall, with some conventions around placement of the verb or other elements for emphasis. |
| **Alphabet** | Runes were used initially, but were replaced with letters of the Roman alphabet.<br>The **graphemes** (symbols or characters such as letters and punctuation marks) known as thorn 'þ', wynn 'ƿ', eth 'ð' and ash 'æ' were used to represent the phonemes /θ/ (as in 'thing'), /w/ (as in 'way'), /ð/ (as in 'this') and /æ/ (as in 'act') respectively. |

*Tip*

Synthetic languages have more inflections than **analytic languages** such as Modern English, which are more reliant on word order to convey syntactic relationships.

Scan the code or click here to learn about the features of Old English in greater depth.

### *Beowulf*

Although Old English shares foundational elements with contemporary English, it looked quite different and would sound foreign to modern ears. While important English stories from the time have survived, the language has changed so much that we have to rely on translations.

One such story is the epic poem, *Beowulf*, thought to be written around 700 CE and considered to be one of the earliest forms of European heroic literature and thus of particular significance in the history of English. *Beowulf* tells the story of a hero who travels the land and slays monsters, notably Grendel and Grendel's mother, which makes him famous and wins him accolades. A young and brave warrior, he becomes king and dies an old man after killing yet another dragon.

Here are some opening lines from *Beowulf*:

> Hwæt. We Gardena in geardagum, þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,
> hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.
>
> Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum, monegum mægþum,
> meodosetla ofteah, egsode eorlas.
>
> Syððan ærest wearð feasceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad, weox
> under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah, oðþæt him æghwylc þara
> ymbsittendra ofer hronrade hyran scolde, gomban gyldan.
>
> Þæt wæs god cyning.

Scan the code or click here to access a video of Professor Justin A Jackson from Hillside College perform the opening lines of *Beowulf* in Old English.

## Develop your understanding 8.2

1 With the help of an etymological dictionary, group the words below according to whether they have come from Celtic, Latin or Norse origins.

a æg (egg)
b clan (intimate group)
c frigedæg (Friday)
d glen (narrow valley)
e hoch (pig)
f Prim (first)
g sacerd (priest)
h sweostor (sister)
i tacan (to take)

2 What are the extra letters that were used in Old English? Which phonemes did they represent?

3 Syntax was used to create emphasis or tone, or to indicate the importance of key information in a clause or sentence in Old English. What do we use now to create these effects in written and spoken language?

4 Imagine travelling back in time and meeting an Old English speaker. What might be some of the key elements you would need to consider when trying to communicate with them?

## Middle English (1150 ~ 1500 CE)

The Middle English period saw French rulers on the throne and the use of English outlawed in written works and public domains from 1100 until 1362. During this time, English was still the vernacular (the language widely spoken by ordinary people), but it underwent many unrecorded changes that are now impossible to trace.

Old Norman, the language of the ruling class, influenced the existing Anglo-Saxon language, forming more of an Anglo-Norman tongue. To describe roles and activities introduced by the new arrivals, English borrowed lexemes from French, such as 'joust', 'lute' and 'bounty' pertaining to court life. Since Latin had prestige in the French Norman court, much of the vocabulary relating to the law, governance and religion was Latinate in origin. For instance, 'tort', 'edict' and 'tabernacle' entered English at this time and are still used today. Important documents of governance, such as the Magna Carta (1215), were written in Latin. This period laid the foundations for French and Latin terms being perceived as more formal than their Anglo-Saxon or Germanic counterparts.

Old Norse, the language of the people living in the Danelaw (the eastern region of Britain, which was under the laws of Danish tradition) continued to heavily influence the shape of English. As these settlers connected, traded and intermarried with their Anglo-Saxon neighbours, their language influenced the inflectional morphology of Middle English among the lower classes. This was especially notable in the dialects of Northern and East Midlands regions of Britain at the time, since they were closest to where Old Norse was being spoken.

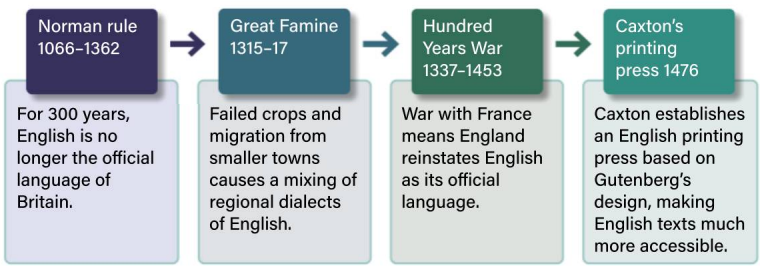
A sudden change in the climate in Europe resulted in the Great Famine, from 1315 to 1317. Crops failed and many people starved, so crime and death rates quickly increased. The extent of the famine was such that, in August 1315, even the King of England, Edward II, is said to have been unable to get any bread while travelling with his entourage. With smaller agricultural communities failing, many people headed for larger cities, bringing with them regional linguistic variation.

Unfortunately, following this explosion of city populations, bubonic plague, referred to as the Black Death, swept through Britain from around 1348 until 1353. It is thought that forty-five or fifty per cent of the population of Europe was killed by the disease (or even more, according to some scholars). The loss of life resulted in further mixing of varieties of Middle English, assisting the standardisation of the language but also eliminating some regional varieties.

→ See pages 159–60 to read about standardisation.

The Hundred Years War, a series of conflicts between England and France, raged from 1337 to 1453 and resulted in English people perceiving French as the language of the enemy. The English language was reinstated as the official language of England from 1362. While this separated England and France politically and linguistically and created a strong sense of national pride for the English people, the existing borrowings from French had taken hold, so English has retained words from that source, such as 'dress', 'scent' and 'beef'.

Towards the end of the Middle English period, the English language still had distinct regional variations with no standard form; however, technological advancements were beginning to give wider access to texts, particularly through Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1440. This transformed the long, technical, and arduous job of copying books out by hand to a much faster process that enabled mass production of texts at a fraction of the price. This technology was introduced to England by William Caxton, who brought his printing press from Belgium to London around 1476 and produced the first print edition of Chaucer's *The Canterbury tales*.




Scan the code or click here to view a video about the way incursions influenced the English language, on our webpage of further resources.

## Features of Middle English

| | |
|---|---|
| **Phonetics/ Phonology** | Additional phonemes included voiceless palatal fricative /ç/ and voiceless velar fricative /x/.<br>Phonemes added and still in use: voiced palato-alveolar fricative /ʒ/ as we use in modern words like rouge /ɹuːʒ/<br>See the table on page 167 for an overview of English phonemes across time. |
| **Morphology** | Cases still existed to mark grammatical roles but they became more similar to each other as the syntax became more important. Nominative, accusative, genitive and dative cases still existed in this period.<br>Inflectional morphemes were reduced. For example, by the end of the Middle English period, plurals took on a standard form of '-s', with irregular plurals remaining for commonly used nouns and those borrowed from other languages. |
| **Lexicology** | Dialects were grouped as Northern, Southern, East Midlands, West Midlands and Kentish, but all varieties took on French and Norse words, taking the lexicon to around 100 000 words. |
| **Syntax** | Freer word order could be used to stylistic effect, but otherwise a more standard word order of subject, verb, object was established, to bring it in line with French syntax. This more fixed word order allowed for inflectional morphemes to be dropped over time. |
| **Alphabet** | The graphemes known as ash 'æ', eth 'ð', and wynn 'ƿ' were replaced with 'a', 'th' and 'w' respectively.<br>Letters 'j', 'k', 'q' and 'z' were added to the writing system.<br>Note that the following pairs of letters were used interchangeably at this time: 'j'/'I' and 'u'/'v'. |

Scan the code or click here to learn about the features of Middle English in greater depth.

### *The Canterbury Tales*

Middle English was much closer to the English we are familiar with, so some texts from the time can still be read in modern schools, notably Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400). The variation between dialects was at times mutually incomprehensible, as noted by Chaucer himself in one of his stories in which some northern merchants seek to buy eggs from a woman from the south. She cannot understand their request, not knowing what they meant by 'egges', as this lexeme came from the Old Norse word. Luckily, a local is able to understand the strangers' dialect and translates it to 'eyren', a word from Anglo-Saxon origins which the woman understands.

Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of short stories presented as tales told by a group of pilgrims to pass the time as they travel to Canterbury. The opening to 'The Miller's Tale' informs readers that the Knight has just told an engaging story and the host invites other members of the group to tell their tale. The Miller volunteers, but is quite drunk by this point in the night so his companions are not sure if he should!

Below is an excerpt from the prologue of Chaucer's 'The Miller's Tale'.

Heere folwen the wordes betwene the Hoost and the Millere:
Whan that the Knyght had thus his tale ytoold,
In al the route nas ther yong ne oold
That he ne seyde it was a noble storie
And worthy for to drawen to memorie,
And namely the gentils everichon.
Oure Hooste lough and swoor, 'So moot I gon,
This gooth aright; unbokeled is the male.
Lat se now who shal telle another tale ...'

## Develop your understanding 8.3

1 The Hundred Years War, the Great Famine and the Black Death severely reduced the number of English speakers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. What impact do you think this would have had on English at the time?

2 Give the plural forms of the following words and compare with your classmates. Do you notice any differences or variations?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| a calf | c ellipsis | e kangaroo | g sheep |
| b criterion | d hero | f platypus | h tooth |

3 For each of the examples above, is the plural irregular because the word is a borrowing from another language, or because it is historically an irregular noun? Check your answers with an etymological dictionary.

4 Imagine travelling back in time and meeting a Middle English speaker. What might be some key elements you would need to consider when trying to communicate with them?

## Early Modern English (1500 CE ~ 1750 CE)

The Early Modern English period began with English again being the official language of England. However, it was still more a collection of dialects than a singular form. The capacity to mass-produce books in the dialect of a single region allowed for the spread and eventual adoption of the Mercian dialect, since this was spoken in southern England when Caxton set up his printing press in London. Elements of the work printed by Caxton prior to 1500 showed progression towards Early Modern English, but the spread and standardisation of the language took time.

The Early Modern English period began during the Tudor period of English history, a time largely marked by economic stability and a sense of optimism. The English Reformation led to the Church of England separating from the Catholic Church in 1534, removing previous restrictions on the translation of sacred texts into English. The production of the first authorised English Bible in 1539, called *The great Bible*, and the publication of *The book of common prayer* in 1549 further spread a singular form of English and progressed the standardisation process.

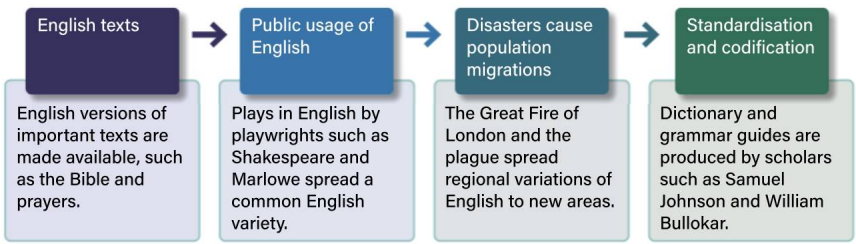
In the Elizabethan era, playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare extended the English lexicon, playing with the semantics of the language through metaphor, puns and idioms that are still in regular use today. Shakespeare's works form the first recorded instances of over 640 words. Lexemes such as 'dwindle', 'misquote', 'laughable' and 'puppy-dog' all first appeared in Shakespeare's works, as he used a range of word formation processes to bend the English language to meet his needs.

William Shakespeare

The impact of the plague meant that mass gatherings (including theatres) were shut down at times, notably during the London plague of 1592–93. During this time, Shakespeare published poems. The plague resurfaced again in 1625 and 1665, then the Great Fire of London in 1666 caused King Charles II to urge Londoners to disperse from the city. This movement of the population would have further spread the Mercian dialect beyond this area.

Academics sought to rediscover the knowledge of antiquity, bringing a resurgence of philosophy, science and mathematics, along with an influx of borrowings from Greek and Latin. These academic circles discussed the English language's lack of uniformity. Author and satirist Jonathan Swift penned an essay, 'A proposal for correcting, improving and ascertaining the English tongue', in 1712. In this public letter to the leader of the government, he argued that experts should be appointed to protect the integrity of the English language and prevent it from declining through poor usage.

Seeking to protect English from further changes, two important works were written to lay down its use. The first was William Bullokar's 1586 *Pamphlet for grammar*, which aimed to give English grammatical patterns and structures some regularity. The second was *A dictionary of the English language*, penned by English writer Dr Samuel Johnson and published in 1755. Johnson worked for about nine years on the creation of his comprehensive dictionary, which was more than just a glossary of jargon like most dictionaries of the time. His work was the precursor to the modern type of English dictionary now used around the world. Both Bullokar's *Pamphlet for grammar* and Johnson's *A dictionary of the English language* are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.




## Features of Early Modern English

| | |
|---|---|
| **Phonetics/ Phonology** | By the Early Modern English period, the phonology mirrored modern English's set of phonemes, with differences in some vowels.<br>→ See the table on page 167 for an overview of English phonemes across time. |
| **Morphology** | Inflectional morphemes continued to decline in usage, with accusative and dative inflectional morphemes merging in the pronoun system.<br>Second-person singular present-tense verbs in the indicative mood (i.e. used to express statements or questions) both required '-(e)st' to be added, meaning that the phrases 'you take' would be 'thou takest'.<br>The '-en' inflectional morpheme to mark present-tense verbs in the second-person plural was retained only in formal discourse, so 'ye eaten' became 'ye eat.'<br>By the end of the period, present-tense third-person singular verbs all took '-s' rather than '-(e)st'. Both forms are seen in works of the time, sometimes within the same sentence. |
| **Lexicology** | During the period, there was an influx of Greek and Latin words to denote abstract ideas and concepts, influencing the spelling of existing words to try to match these foreign conventions. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Syntax** | Auxiliary verbs underwent changes, with 'to be' used for progressive constructions (denoting ongoing actions), and the verb could still take the prefix 'a-', making phrases such as 'I am atalking'. The auxiliary 'to do' also negated the need for inflection, so all three of the following would be acceptable: 'I am atalking', 'I am talking', or 'I do talk'. The verb 'to have' could be used for perfect constructions (denoting actions that were completed in the past) in addition to the existing 'to be', so both of the following were acceptable: 'I am spoken' and 'I have spoken'. |
| **Alphabet** | The grapheme 'ſ' could be used for the letter 's' when not at the end of a word; 'ss' could be written as 'ß', a grapheme that still exists in modern German. Thorn 'þ' was relegated to handwritten texts only.<br>Note that the following pairs of letters were used interchangeably at this time: 'j'/'i' and 'u'/'v'. Additionally, 'y' was sometimes used in place of 'i'. |

Scan the code or click here to learn about the features of Early Modern English in greater depth.

### *The Tempest*

With so much of their lexicon and grammar being consistent with the forms of English used today, Early Modern English texts are still taught in schools and are highly accessible. Some arguments for slowing down the pace of change of the English language cite the ability to teach Shakespeare in classrooms, which is only possible because changes to the language so far have not yet rendered it unintelligible. Individual lexemes, literary or historical references, and semantic changes still require some decoding, but dialogues such as in the following excerpt from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are still largely coherent to modern readers.

*The Tempest* is thought to be Shakespeare's final completed solo work and tells the tale of a sorcerer, Prospero, who is banished to an island and attempts to regain his dukedom through magic and guile. He summons a storm that shipwrecks his brother, Antonio, along with the King of Naples, Alonso, and the King's son, Gonzalo. They land on Prospero's island, where he plans to take back his title with the help of his magical servants and teenage daughter.

The following excerpt is the opening to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611).

ACT I, SCENE I

*On a ship at sea: a tempestuous noise*

*[Enter a MASTER and a BOATSWAIN]*

MASTER Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN Here, master: what cheer?

MASTER Good, speak to the mariners: fall to't, yarely,
or we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.

*[Exit]*

*[Enter MARINERS]*

BOATSWAIN Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly, my hearts!
yare, yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the
master's whistle. Blow, till thou burst thy wind,
if room enough!

*[Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND, GONZALO, and others ]*

ALONSO Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master?
Play the men.

BOATSWAIN I pray now, keep below.

ANTONIO Where is the master, boatswain?

BOATSWAIN Do you not hear him? You mar our labour: keep your
cabins: you do assist the storm.

## Develop your understanding 8.4

1 How would the shift of the language of religion from Ecclesiastical Latin to English have changed Latin's influence on English?

2 Why has it been possible for more and more inflectional morphemes to exit the English language over time? Do you think this is a positive or negative thing?

3 Many idioms and metaphors appeared for the first time in Shakespeare's works. Define the following expressions.

a break the ice
b catch a cold
c green-eyed monster
d naked truth
e strange bedfellows

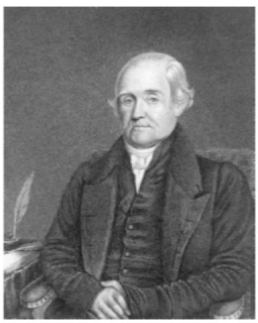
4 Early Modern English is close enough to contemporary English for modern speakers to code switch into this variety. Why might someone choose to do this?

5 Imagine travelling back in time and meeting an Early Modern English speaker. What might be some of the key elements you would need to consider when trying to communicate with them?

## Modern English (1750 CE ~ present)

Dr Samuel Johnson

Dr Johnson's revolutionary dictionary established a sense of correct spellings and denotations for English, although Johnson himself acknowledged that it was impossible to stop a language changing. Various dictionaries followed Johnson's lead. American Noah Webster tried to make changes to the language through the writing of his dictionary. He simplified spellings to make them more in line with pronunciation and removed double or silent letters that he considered unnecessary: for instance, 'familiarise' became 'familiarize', 'cancelled' became 'canceled' and 'jewellery' became 'jewelry'. Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* was published in 1828, and was bought by the established printing family of Merriam upon his death. The Merriam-Webster dictionary traces its origins back to this important early dictionary and functions to represent and uphold American English as distinct in its own right.


Noah Webster

In the mid-eighteenth century, the British Empire spread English throughout the world. Using important technological advancements, Britain extended its influence across the globe, with mixed impacts on the language. International varieties of English emerged through mixing with local languages, while in some regions historical forms of English persisted. British people migrating to other countries tended to preserve the form of the language that they took with them, so traits that were later lost back in Britain were sometimes maintained in the colonies. **Rhotic pronunciations**, for example, were now typical in American English (see the tip below). The international varieties also took on features of the local languages with which they interacted, creating distinct varieties of English over time.

*Tip*

Rhotic varieties of English are those where the phoneme that represents the 'r' sound is pronounced in all positions and contexts. This contrasts with Australian English, a non-rhotic language, in which the phoneme representing the 'r' sound /ɹ/ is not pronounced at the end of syllables or immediately prior to a consonant. For instance, the /ɹ/ would not be pronounced in words such as 'car park' /kɐː pɐːk/ in Australian English, but it would be in rhotic varieties such as Irish and American English.

The American War of Independence (1775–83) reduced Britain's political reach in that region. Through the *Treaty of Paris* in 1783, however, Britain retained Canada, Senegal and India, while ceding Cuba, Manila and what is now the United States of America. The Empire expanded its reach in other areas, claiming lands in New Zealand (1769), Australia (1770) and Singapore (1819), and occupying Hong Kong (1842), to name a few. The United Kingdom joined the 'Scramble for Africa' between 1881 and 1914, in which seven European powers invaded, annexed and dissected the lands of Africa to expand their empires in the period of New Imperialism. English thus spread to many territories, including areas in the contemporary nations of Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Technological advancements allowed Britain to maintain some control over how English was being employed as a language in its colonies. In 1902 the All Red Line connected all the British territories via an electrical telegraph network, linking members of the Empire back to what was perceived as the correct form of English. Despite this attempt to maintain a singular form of the language, variations specific to these speech communities arose, which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 11.

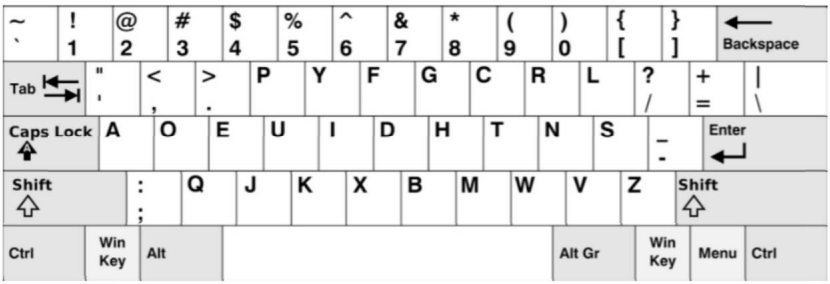
The invention of typewriters allowed letters to be printed onto paper in a simple and uniform way, enabling individuals to produce printed text without the need for a large printing press. Pressing a typewriter key activates a metal hammer with a character on the end, which strikes an inked ribbon, transferring the character to a sheet of paper. Although a patent for a machine similar to a typewriter was lodged in 1714 by Henry Mill, it took over a century for the typewriter to be developed to the point of being commercially produced.

The QWERTY keyboard layout was created for the Sholes and Glidden typewriter (patented in 1868) over a period of around five years of trial and error. This key configuration remains the basis for modern keyboards that use a Latin script. Over time, diacritics, punctuation marks, and the '1' and '0' numerals have been added.

While many people believe that the QWERTY order of keys was created to slow down typists, to prevent the hammers jamming, this is not actually the case. Scan the code or click here to see a short video about how QWERTY became the most prominent keyboard layout.

Alternative keyboard configurations have been released over time, with some swapping a few keys around to suit languages other than English or adding language-specific graphemes. Other configurations were also developed to support typing with one hand, playing online games and other specific tasks or occupations, aiming to make typing faster and more efficient. However, the advantages are limited because traditional keyboards still use the QWERTY layout, meaning users would need to relearn typing skills if changing from one keyboard to another.

A well-known alternative to the QWERTY keyboard, the Dvorak keyboard configuration was developed in the 1930s by Dr August Dvorak. It places the letters most commonly used in English, 'E' and 'T', closest to the middle typing fingers. The most frequently used letters, vowels and 'D', 'H', 'T', 'N' and 'S', are placed in the middle row.

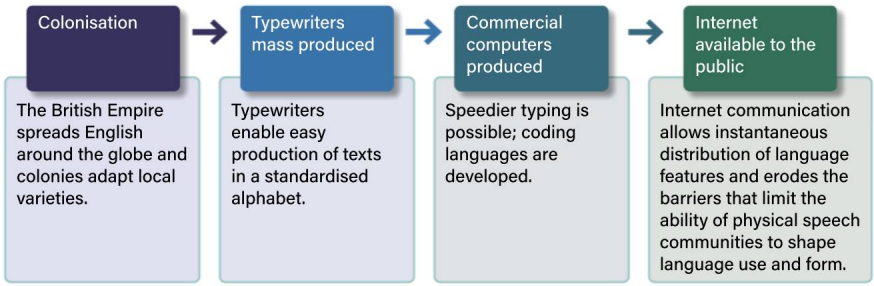



The Dvorak keyboard

The development of computers eliminated the mechanical problem of typewriter hammers jamming together if they swung at the paper at the same time, so faster typing was enabled and encouraged. But with this increase in speed came more propensity for errors. To mitigate this, in 1993 Microsoft launched the autocorrect feature for word processing. This feature, now adopted by other applications, makes suggestions about the intended word or grammar, based on the **orthography** (the conventions for the writing of a language) of the author. While it can be effective for more formal writing, autocorrect lacks nuance when the author is writing in an informal register, utilising code switching or using words that are not in the program's lexicon.

The availability of the internet to academia and for military applications from the 1980s, and spreading to the broader public in the 1990s, changed the way many English speakers communicated. Engaging with others via chatrooms and messaging services resulted in the development of new forms of shorthand. To indicate prosodic and paralinguistic features, context-specific graphemes were codified into the online style: emoticons, emojis, gifs and memes were used to convey tone clearly; actions could be indicated through initialisms and acronyms; and context for shorter texts could be indicated through hashtags, hyperlinks or images.

Now that technology is ubiquitous, more technological jargon is entering our language. Due to the nature of language online being both global and non-transient, language change and generational differences are highly visible and locational variation is reducing, without disappearing entirely. The near-instantaneous global spread of language features can require modern English speakers to be well-versed in a range of dialects and language varieties.




Scan the code or click here to view a video about the influences of inventions on the English Language, on our webpage of further resources.

## Features of Modern English

| | |
|---|---|
| **Phonetics/ Phonology** | By the Modern English period, the phonology mirrored present-day English's set of phonemes; however, between 1750 and now, there have been shifts in how some vowels are pronounced.<br>See the table on page 167 for an overview of English phonemes across time. |
| **Morphology** | Inflectional morphemes were reduced to seven regular suffixes to mark simple past tense, simple present tense for third-person singular, past participles, present participles, comparatives, superlatives and plurals. |
| **Lexicology** | Borrowings were extensive during the expansion of the British Empire. Anglicised pronunciations and spellings of proper names are being corrected in contemporary English, e.g. 'Peking' moving to the more accurate 'Beijing' and 'Turkey' moving to 'Türkiye'.<br>Technological jargon became more visible due to the ubiquity of its presence and impacts on our lives. |
| **Syntax** | Grammar books codified many syntactic patterns and made them more regular, including requiring interrogatives to contain auxiliaries, to facilitate the inversion of the subject and first word of the verb phrase, making the Early Modern English construction 'Want you the book?' into 'Do you want the book?'<br>The 'who'/'whom' distinction became less pronounced, with language users more likely to use 'who' in most contexts.<br>Singular 'they' as a non-gender-specific personal pronoun fell out of usage at the start of the Modern English period but has seen a resurgence in the twenty-first century. |
| **Alphabet** | The graphemes 'ſ' and 'ȝ' and thorn 'þ' were removed from the language.<br>The following pairs of letters ceased being used interchangeably at this time: 'j'/'i', 'u'/'v' and 'y'/'i'. |

Scan the code or click here to learn about the features of Modern English in greater depth.

### *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

The following is an excerpt from Chapter 15 of Philip K Dick's 1968 science-fiction detective drama, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* This book was the inspiration for the film *Blade Runner*. Set in what is now the past (2021), it paints a 1960s image of the future with details that are now familiar to us, such as video calls, as well as fantastical elements such as androids and interplanetary travel. The language is modern, employing pronouns and sentence fragments in ways familiar to modern readers and using internal and interpersonal dialogue to drive the narrative.

In the excerpt below, Decker, a bounty hunter of rogue androids he calls 'andys', has just returned from the rooftop where he and his wife, Iran, have been admiring their new goat, which he bought to keep her happy. He receives a call from his Captain, Harry Bryant, with an update on some androids he has been hunting, but would rather enjoy some time with his wife.

> The vidphone rang.
>
> 'If we hadn't come back down here,' Rick said, 'if we'd stayed up on the roof, with the goat, we wouldn't have gotten this call.'
>
> Going to the vidphone, Iran said, 'Why are you afraid? They're not repossessing the goat, not yet.' She started to lift the receiver.
>
> 'It's the department,' he said. 'Say I'm not here.' He headed for the bedroom.
>
> 'Hello,' Iran said, into the receiver.
>
> Three more andys, Rick thought to himself, that I should have followed up on today, instead of coming home.

## Develop your understanding 8.5

1 Early dictionaries sought to codify a standard of English for their respective nations. Would a dictionary alone be able to achieve this? What else do you think would be needed?

2 What are some of the advantages of the QWERTY and Dvorak keyboards, compared to each other?

3 Social media often uses hashtags to provide context for short messages and to allow for ease in grouping and finding posts around a core concept. What contexts do the following encode?

a #auspol
b #blm
c #ootd
d #tbt
e #travel
f #vcaa

4 Create a timeline marking the events outlined in this chapter so far. Ensure you include the following elements:

a Old, Middle, Early Modern and Modern English periods
b important incursions into the British Isles, including the Vikings, Normans, religion and plagues
c important inventions and when they first influenced the English-speaking world, including the printing press, typewriters, computers and the internet
d literary texts cited in this chapter, and any others you have looked at in class

For your Unit 2 studies, you will undertake an in-depth analysis of how the English language has changed, based on the topics of 'Incursions' or 'Inventions'. As your research progresses, you will explore how social and cultural changes have impacted language and led to change across a range of subsystems. While you are required to be familiar with all the topics in the relevant list below, you need to look at one of these options in more depth. Complete the following activities, based on the option you are exploring, to support you in collating and summarising this information before moving on to Chapter 9. The two options from the VCE English Language Study Design are listed below.

**Option 1: Incursions**

- the Vikings
- Norman conquest in 1066
- religion
- plagues

**Option 2: Inventions**

- Gutenberg and the printing press
- dictionaries
- typewriters/keyboards
- the internet

## Develop your understanding 8.6

**Option 1: Incursions**

1 Draw a map of Europe and add arrows to highlight the origins and destinations of the different groups of invaders or incursions into the British Isles, taking particular note of the following events.

a the Vikings
b Norman conquest in 1066
c religion
d plagues

2 Create a list of key changes to the English language that have clear links to the incursions into the British Isles listed in Question 1.

3 Which of the English language periods do you think transitioned as a result of incursions? Why do you think these incursions had such a big impact on the English language?

**Option 2: Inventions**

1 What do you think were the impacts of the following inventions on the process of standardising and codifying the language?

a Gutenberg and the printing press
b dictionaries
c typewriters/keyboards
d the internet

2 Draw a map of Britain and show the major dialects that existed in Old, Middle and Early Modern English. Label places where the following inventions were developed.

a Caxton's printing press
b Dr Johnson's dictionary

3 Which of the English language periods do you think transitioned as a result of inventions? Why do you think these inventions had such an impact on the English language?

## The Indo-European family of languages

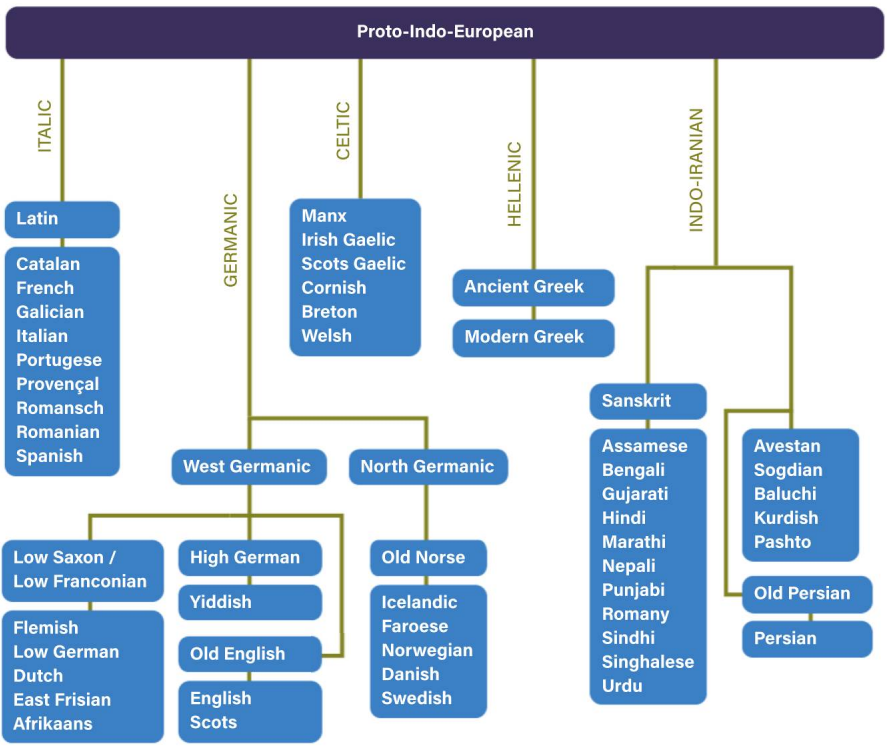
Languages change across time, but where does English come from originally? A primary way in which linguists have tracked down the origins of English is by identifying trends across different languages and looking for how words, phrases and sounds are related to English equivalents. Lexemes that are markedly similar to each other and indicate a relationship across languages are called **cognates**. These cognates will vary in predictable ways in terms of spelling and phonology, but will have consistent elements of their denotations (literal meanings).

| English | Norwegian | Icelandic | Russian | Croatian | Latin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| brother | bror | bróðir | брат | brat | frater |
| mother | mor | móður | мать | majka | mater |

The more cognates linguists find between languages, the closer their family link. In tracing language family trees, all relatives are referred to in the feminine, so Latin is the mother language of Italian, Italian is the sister language of Spanish.

The vast majority of languages that span the European continent are said to have a singular 'mother' language – **Proto-Indo-European (PIE)**. PIE is a hypothetical reconstructed ancient language (the word 'proto' in the name indicates that it is a hypothetical language). It is thought to date from anywhere between 3500 and 8000 years ago (estimates vary), and is the mother language

to different 'branches' of the PIE language tree such as the Italic, Germanic and Indo-Iranian branches. As there are no written records of the language, some key phonemes, morphemes, lexemes and syntactic patterns have been hypothesised based on its descendent languages. The Indo-European language family is very diverse. An illustration of some of the branches is provided below.




## Develop your understanding 8.7

1 What is a cognate?

2 What types of words would you expect to function as cognates and why? (Hint: think about words that stay consistent over time due to their frequent usage.)

3 What are some of the key factors that historical linguists have to consider when identifying cognates across languages?

## Links between English and other languages

Historical linguists use cognates to find relationships between languages, and they also use them to identify linguistic trends across time when languages have diverged. A key historical linguist was Jacob Grimm, the elder of the Brothers Grimm of fairytale fame who, around the same time as Danish linguist Rasmus Rask, recognised a systematic relationship between the phonetics of Germanic and Latinate languages, which he wrote about in his 1822 book *Deutsche grammatik*. Subsequently, the patterns governing this sound change were referred to as Grimm's Law (also known as the First Germanic Sound Shift, or Rask's-Grimm's Rule). This law states that when Indo-European split up into the Italic and Germanic branches, some sounds went in different directions: in Italic languages the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ appeared, while in Germanic languages the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/ occurred. (See Chapter 4 to review manner and place of articulation.) This predictability helped to identify cognates more effectively, as well as telling us something about the Indo-European language.

While Grimm's Law cannot be applied to all words in these languages, it provides a solid indicator for when words entered the lexicon: in this case, the words that complied with these patterns tended to be older words. As further patterns of phonological changes were identified, other rules could be applied to further pinpoint lexical entry into languages.

Below are some examples of Grimm's Law, which affected English, as well as Verner's Law, which affected other Germanic languages. Verner's Law saw a number of Germanic languages move the dental fricatives (e.g. /θ/ as in 'thing' and /ð/ as in 'this') to alveolar plosives (e.g. /t/ as in 'ties' and /d/ as in 'diss'). In the table, these are marked with '^'.

| | Latin | Italian | Old English | Dutch | German | English |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| /p/ to /f/ | pisces | pesce | fisc | vis | Fisch | fish |
| /t/ to /θ/ | triplex | triplice | þrifeald | drievoudig^ | dreifach^ | threefold |
| /k/ to /h/ | cor | cuore | heorte | hart | Herz | heart |
| /kw/ to /w/ | quandō | quando | hwonne | wanneer | wann | when |
| /d/ to /t/ | decem | dieci | ten | tin | zehn | ten |
| /g/ to /k/ | granum | gabbia | cyrnel | kooi | Käfig | kernel |

In many cases, borrowings have made it challenging to accurately trace cognates, with false cognates, also called false friends by linguists, seeming to indicate connections that are not present. For instance, the Old English word 'docga', meaning a powerful hound, looks deceptively similar to the Australian Aboriginal word 'dúg', coming from the Mbabaram language of Northern Queensland. Although seeming similar phonetically and in meaning, they are not cognates as there are no historical connections between the origins of the two languages.

The exact number of words in the English language today is challenging to calculate, but scholars place it between approximately 130 000 and 170 000 words. Of these, at least 30 000 are of French origin and 50 000 are of Latin origin, thanks largely to the Norman invasion of Britain in 1066 and the power and influence of the Church. Viking invaders affected grammar and shared more in common with Old English, meaning that their impact on the language is more challenging to trace, but over 200 of our commonly used words in English can be traced directly back to Old Norse and approximately 4500 words to Anglo-Saxon. Understanding the historical context of how and why these words came to English helps historical linguists discern true cognates from false cognates – those that have a common ancestor and those that do not.

## Develop your understanding 8.8

Create a poster of your own version of the Indo-European family tree. Take special note of where English is on the tree relative to some of the other languages talked about in this chapter.

CHAPTER 09

# Changes to the English language

In Chapter 9 we explore processes, drivers and causes of changes to the English language, and the role played by attitudes. You will learn names for these processes and consider examples of the changes that have shaped the way we speak today. You will also draw on your knowledge of the subsystems of language and the history of English across the Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Modern English periods.

This chapter lays the foundations for Chapter 10, which will explore in more detail the processes of change and how attitudes can influence the speed and success of change.

## Key knowledge covered:

- the codification and evolution of Standard English, focusing on the origins of the English spelling and grammar systems
- changes across the subsystems of language, including:
  - phonetics and phonology – the Great Vowel Shift
  - morphology – abbreviations, acronyms, shortenings, compounding, blends, backformation, affixation
  - lexicology – borrowings, commonisation, archaisms, neologisms, obsolescence
  - syntax – word order
  - semantics – broadenings, narrowings, elevation, deterioration, shift
- attitudes to changes in language, including prescriptivism and descriptivism
- metalanguage to discuss language change

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **The Great Vowel Shift** | A change in the pronunciation of English that took place at the end of the Middle Ages: most long vowels were raised and those vowels already at the top of the mouth became diphthongs. |
| **Morphological word formation processes** | Processes of constructing words through the use of morphemes. |
| **Abbreviation** | A shortened version of a word created through its initials or other symbols, or by removing components of a longer word or string of words (e.g. VCAA, St). |
| **Acronym** | A word formed from the initial letters of a series of words that refer to an entity or concept and are pronounced as a word (e.g. scuba, ANZAC). |
| **Initialism** | A word formed from the initial letters of a series of words that refer to an entity or concept and are pronounced as a string of letters (e.g. VCE, RSVP). |
| **Shortening** | Forming a new word by removing part of a longer word. |
| **Contraction** | A word formed by removing some letters and marking the missing letter with an apostrophe. |
| **Compound** | A word formed by joining two full words together into a single word (a process called compounding). |
| **Blend** | A word formed by joining parts of two or more words together into a single word. |
| **Backformation** | The process of forming a word by removing a part of a word that is mistakenly thought to be an affix from a longer word. The resultant word is also known as a backformation. |
| **Conversion of word class** | Changing the part of speech to which a word belongs without adding affixes (e.g. 'to email'). |
| **Affixation** | The process of forming a new word by the addition of affixes |
| **Lexical word formation processes** | Processes of bringing new words into the language. |
| **Borrowing** | A word taken from another language and adapted into English. |
| **Commonisation** | Forming a common noun from a proper noun. |
| **Nominalisation** | Forming a noun from an existing verb or adjective. |
| **Neologism** | A new word in the lexicon, having been introduced to the language or being a repurposed existing lexeme or lexemes. |
| **Archaism** | A term or phrase that exists within specific contexts (e.g. idioms) but has otherwise dropped out of the language. |
| **Obsolescence** | A term or phrase becoming obsolete: no longer used as part of the language. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Semantic broadening** | The process of a word denoting additional referents (the thing that a word or phrase refers to or stands for) – i.e. gaining additional meaning/s. |
| **Semantic narrowing** | The process of a word denoting fewer referents (a reduction in the breadth of its meaning). |
| **Semantic shift** | The process of a word changing what it denotes to something different. |
| **Elevation** | The process of a word's connotation becoming more positive. |
| **Deterioration** | The process of a word's connotation becoming more negative. |
| **Semantic denotation, changing connotation** | Changes to the meanings of words that affect their connotations. Over time, such changes can also shift the denotation. |
| **Taboo language** | Terms or language use socially prescribed as improper or unacceptable, including the use of dysphemism (substituting a harsh or offensive expression for a more acceptable one – opposite of euphemism). |
| **Prescriptivism** | Focuses on correctness of language and its use and aims to preserve perceived standards or impose ideals about how the language 'should' be. |
| **Descriptivism** | Gives an objective account of actual observed patterns and use of a language. |

# The process of language change

At some points in history, changes to English have been slow and systematic, complying with the norms of how other languages change. At other times, the English language has changed quickly or mysteriously, leaving historical linguists only hints of why and how those changes took place. Because of this, it is important to understand not just the nature of language change but also the processes by which changes occur. We will look at processes that have affected changes to English at its various stages, drawing on knowledge of historical events provided in Chapter 8.

Are there patterns to changes in the English language that can help us predict future changes? Who decides what changes occur? How do attitudes to language shape what changes, what stays the same and what types of changes occur?

## Standardisation and codification

By the beginning of the Early Modern English period, English had developed to a point where it began to undergo a process of **standardisation**. Standardisation is a continuous process that brings uniformity to the writing and speaking of a language, so that it becomes more regular and consistent among users, rather than functioning as a collection of dialects that are not always mutually intelligible.

Language users play a large role in the process of standardisation. As they communicate with one another, they naturally develop, promote and spread a variation of the language that holds meaning for their community. In doing this, they popularise practical language norms, reducing variability across dialects, and introduce a 'standard'.

Standardisation can also occur as eminent language users set down rules for language use and determine a 'correct' language form. For example, in the Old and Middle English periods, members of royalty and the upper classes would have promoted and enforced language use that they deemed 'acceptable'. In the modern age, this type of standardisation occurs through the media and institutions such as governments, schools and universities.

When language norms enter popular usage, they are written down. This is known as **codification**. Codification is a component of standardisation and can involve developing and documenting a writing system and official rules around orthography, pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary. As languages continually evolve to meet the needs of their users, the processes of standardisation and codification are ongoing and will never be 'complete'.

*Tip*

Codification and standardisation are connected but distinct. Codification is the writing down of formal rules, while standardisation refers to these rules themselves becoming more consistent across dialects, progressing towards a single form of the language.

Codification can cause problems when there isn't a widely accepted form of the language. In Middle and Early Modern English, technological advancements allowed individuals to codify and spread their own understanding of English, regardless of the variations that existed in society.

Important examples of this can be seen in texts produced by Caxton's printing press, in Dr Johnson's *A dictionary of the English language* and in William Bullokar's *Pamphlet for grammar*. Each of these resulted in different problems in terms of consistency for a standard form of English. Caxton's press had numerous spelling inconsistencies. Johnson's dictionary was riddled with his own guesswork and preferences, and he injected his personal values and attitudes into definitions. Bullokar's pamphlet imposed the patterns of Latin onto English, despite some elements not fitting well due to English being a Germanic language. The following paragraphs outline some more specific problems these works created for the standardisation of English.

*Writing tip*

Remember that when you refer to a person in your assessments, you should use their full name in the first instance, then just their surname thereafter, unless you are referring to more than one person with the same surname.

## Caxton's printing press

Caxton's printing press spread the Mercian dialect of English around Britain from 1476, long before the establishment of agreed rules for English grammar and spelling. The priority for compositors (who assembled the metal type for printing) was to ensure that each of the lines filled the width of the page, to create a consistent appearance and make buyers feel that they were getting their money's worth. Handwritten books included small diagrams, pictures or elongated letters to fill the pages but this was not an option for the printing process, as compositors were limited to using letters. It was not uncommon for compositors to add or remove letters to make the text fit better on the page, meaning that a particular word might have multiple different spellings in the same book.

With no standard record of English spellings to refer to, other factors also played a part in determining spellings in Caxton's publications. Terms pertaining to the law and the Church often had Latin origins, so sometimes printers decided on spelling based on where they thought letters should appear to mark this etymology, rather than accurately reflecting the word's orthography. For instance, a 'b' was added to 'debt' to connect better with the Latin lexeme *debitum*, despite the 'b' having been dropped in Middle English, when it was commonly spelt 'dette'.

William Caxton showing the printing press to King Edward IV.

## Develop your understanding 9.1

1 Below is an example of a sentence from Caxton's introduction to *Aesop's fables*, published in 1484 CE. How would you modify the orthography to fill the lines, creating three lines of exactly fifty characters each?

> Here begy̆nneth the book of the subty̆l historyĕs and Fables of Esope whiche were translated out of Frensshe in to Englysshe by Wy̆lliam Caxton.

2 What difficulties could be caused by authors making up their own spelling?

3 Silent letters and when to use double letters are common problems for those learning English. How can some of these spellings be attributed to Caxton's printing press?

### Bullokar's pamphlet

William Bullokar's *Pamphlet for grammar* was published in 1586 and drew heavily on the tradition of Latin grammar books, seeking to impose onto English the grammatical patterns and structures of the now-dead language. Bullokar felt that this would make English more regular in its form and add greater legitimacy to the language by likening it to a language of such high prestige. Likening English to Latin would also make it easier for foreigners to learn, as Latin was common to most of Europe in the sixteenth century. This was a sound theory in terms of his aim of making English more accessible and easily taught, for English and non-English speakers alike.

Latin terms that Bullokar used to describe the elements of English grammar are still used today, such as 'verb' from the Latin word *verbum*. Bullokar also applied to English the Latin grammar system of classifying verb tenses (past, present and future) into different aspects (how an action or state extends over time), which gave English the forms of simple, progressive, perfect progressive and perfect.

→ See pages 34–6 to learn more about verb tenses and aspects.

| Latin | Translation | English term | Example (present tense) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **simplex** | having few parts | simple | they go |
| **continuus** | following one after another | progressive | they are going |
| **perfectum continua** | completed one after another | perfect progressive | they have been going |
| **perfectus** | completed | perfect | they have gone |

Rather than simply noting how to mark possession, he also advised how the language should be changed. For example, Bullokar stated that a singular possessive noun should be marked with '-is' so that it would not be confused with the plural marker for nominative case nouns, '-es'. In this way, the Middle English phrase 'Jacobes bookes' (Jacob's books) would be written as 'Jacobis bookes' to indicate to whom the books belong. This application of Latin grammar patterns to English was typical of the time and was done to invent etymological links between Latin and English, despite English being a Germanic language.

## Develop your understanding 9.2

1 Bullokar sought to affect change in the language through his works. If you could change one aspect of English grammar, what would it be and why?

2 Where do these three important events – the appearance of Caxton's printing press, Johnson's dictionary and Bullokar's pamphlet – fit on the timeline you created for Develop your understanding 8.5, Question 4?

See page 152 to view Develop your understanding 8.5, Question 4.

### Dr Johnson's dictionary

Dr Samuel Johnson's work in the mid-1700s established the style used by dictionaries for centuries to come. Although his *A dictionary of the English language* was not the first dictionary, nor the most comprehensive, it clearly articulated definitions, classifications, etymologies, pronunciations and usage, recording the shape of English at the time. Major criticisms of his dictionary come from his attempts to guess at etymologies, his personal biases influencing his definitions, and the limitations of his own lexical knowledge (he wrote his dictionary with only the aid of six transcribers). There were errors such as 'pastern' being defined as the incorrect part of a horse's leg, which, according to Boswell's biography, Johnson explained to a lady as 'ignorance, madam, pure ignorance'.

Johnson is also thought to have included words that were not real, to protect his copyright. This practice continues today, the idea being that these quirks will identify plagiarists who illegitimately reproduce the work. In 1943, *Webster's new twentieth century dictionary of the English language* contained the lexeme 'jungftak', and the 2001 edition of *The new Oxford American dictionary* included 'esquivalience' specifically to trap such copyright infringers. Unfortunately, Johnson did not record which words in his dictionary he invented for this purpose, meaning that these made-up lexical entries were permanently codified into English and became accepted.

## Develop your understanding 9.3

1 Johnson's dictionary can be accessed through the National Library of Australia, or in various places online. Scan the code or click here to access an online version of the dictionary. Look up the following definitions in Johnson's dictionary and note what this tells you about his biases and some of the problems his dictionary presents.

a finesse
b lexicographer
c lunch
d patron
e trolmydames
f writative

2 Try to define the following words on your own and then compare your definitions with a partner.

a happiness
b perfection
c yellow
d intelligence

What does this tell you about the pitfalls of one individual writing a whole dictionary?

3 Johnson included some made-up words in his dictionary. Invent a couple of words of your own, with definitions.

## Problems of spelling

English spelling is incredibly inconsistent, demonstrated by words that rhyme with each other, despite different letter combinations representing the same set of phonemes.

*Examples*

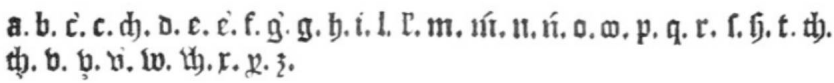
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| dough | /dəʉ/ | know | /nəʉ/ |
| true | /tʃɹʉ:/ | few | /fjʉ:/ |
| choose | /tʃʉ:z/ | lose | /lʉ:z/ |
| heard | /hɜ:d/ | bird | /bɜ:d/ |
| nose | /nəʉz/ | flows | /fləʉz/ |

Alternatively, words may have the same form or same ending orthographically, but have different phonological realisations.

*Examples*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (to) lead | /li:d/ | lead | /led/ | | |
| thorough | /θɐɹə/ | through | /θɹʉ:/ | cough | /kɔf/ |
| wound | /wæɔnd/ | wound | /wʉ:nd/ | | |
| (to) row | /ɹəʉ/ | (to) bow | /bæɔ/ | | |
| tear | /te:/ | rear | /ɹɪə/ | | |

As English has become more standardised, some prescriptivists (individuals concerned with preserving the 'correct rules' of language) thought that spelling should be made more consistent by basing it on etymologies; however, this conflicted with the way most people used the letters of the language. This led to suggestions to reform the alphabet and overhaul the English spelling system. In his first text, *Book at Large, for the Amendment of Orthographie for English Speech* in 1580, Bullokar suggested a forty-letter alphabet. His suggested additions to the alphabet included a differentiated soft and hard 'c' and 'g', with soft forms taking on a distinguishing marker. This meant that the word 'conceal' would be written as 'conċeal' to indicate which 'c' was a velar plosive /k/ and which was an alveolar fricative /s/. The word 'gauge' would be written as 'gaugė' to show readers which 'g' used a velar plosive /g/ and which the palato-alveolar affricate /ʤ/. Heavily reduced or unpronounced vowels would be represented with a mark above the following consonant. For example, the word 'bacon' would be written as 'bacn̄' to represent the reduction of the vowel to a schwa. While these ideas would have helped clarify English spelling and met his intended purpose of making English an easier language to learn, his work did not carry sufficient influence to effect these changes.



Letters from Bullokar's alphabet

## Develop your understanding 9.4

1 Find one or more of the following poems online and transcribe some of the homophones, rhymes and homonyms that are the source of confusion in English spelling.
   a 'Our Strange Lingo' by Lord Cromer (1902)
   b 'The Chaos' by Gerard Nolst Trenité (1920)
   c 'Phoney Phonetics' by Vivian Buchan (1966)
2 Write an additional stanza for one of the poems you have read, drawing on some of your own examples.

Scan the code or click here to learn about gloss and free translations.

# Changes across the subsystems of language

The evolution of English has affected all levels of the language, including major changes to each of its subsystems. The connections across subsystems allow the language as a whole to function – for example, a lexical change could result in the introduction of a new phoneme.

Changes to morphology can affect the way the syntax of a language works. For instance, when the Middle English morphemes to mark direct objects and indirect objects became too similar, English speakers started using the preposition 'to' as a marker. This provides clarity; for example, in the clause 'Kiera kicked the ball to Mohan', it is clear that it was the ball experiencing the kick and Mohan receiving the ball.

Semantic changes can mean that words are either no longer used or are used more frequently. For instance, the word 'handle' became more frequently used when it broadened to include an additional meaning, referring to an internet username.

## Phonological changes

Since the Old English period, the phonemes used in English have continued to evolve and change. Phonemes have been added, merged or lost. Since we have no audio recordings of Old, Middle and Early Modern English varieties, much of the work of historical linguists in the area of phonology is based on current trends, commentaries about pronunciations and works that used rhythm (such as songs and poems), which enable researchers to discern the length of syllables and where rhyming couplets exist.

In Old English, there were some additional voiceless phonemes – /n̥/, /l̥/, /ʍ/, /ç/, /x/ – and one extra voiced phoneme, /ɣ/. A number of voiced phonemes are thought to only have occurred between vowel sounds, giving us the modern trend of substituting /v/ for /f/ in words such as 'calves' and 'hooves', substituting /ð/ ('this') for /θ/ ('thin') to create words such as 'bathing' and 'clothing', and using /z/ in place of /s/ to give 'rise' and 'hypothesised'.

→ See pages 85–6 to read about connected speech processes.

Scan the code or click here to hear pronunciation of phonemes from the IPA chart. Note that this chart shows more technical or narrowly transcribed sounds, which are not required for VCE English Language.

By the Middle English period, a number of the voiceless phonemes had been lost while other phonemes became more prominent due to borrowings from other languages, such as Latin and French. The distinctive velar and palatal fricatives that were common to Germanic languages remained at this time, meaning that 'night' would still have been pronounced /nɪçt/ and 'thought' would have been pronounced as /θɔxt/. These are both similar to modern pronunciations but with the 'gh' denoting a guttural sound found in modern Scottish pronunciation of 'loch' as in the placename Loch Ness. (To make these kinds of guttural phonemes, act as if trying to clear the back of your throat of phlegm.) Since these phonemes existed into the Middle English period in these words, the orthography retained them.

The Early Modern English period saw the addition of the voiceless palato-alveolar fricative /ʒ/ ('rouge') around the mid-seventeenth century and the velar nasal phoneme /ŋ/ ('hang') was finally pronounced independently of the voiced velar plosive /g/. When a sufficient number of speakers were eliding the final voiced velar plosive /g/ phoneme in lexemes such as 'sing' and 'thing', the previous articulation of /sɪŋg/ and /θɪŋg/ became more like our modern pronunciation /sɪŋ/ and /θɪŋ/.

The practice of h-dropping (pronouncing words without their 'h') was common, with the letter and phoneme falling in and out of vogue during this period. The result of this was inconsistency in how it was applied: either a semivowel (a letter that sounds like a vowel but functions like a consonant) or a consonant, giving us 'an honest mistake' but also 'a house on a hill'. See the table below for an overview of the phonemes thought to have entered and exited English through Old, Middle, Early Modern and Modern English periods.

| | Bilabial | Labial-velar | Labiodental | Dental | Alveolar | Palato-alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Nasal** | m | | | | ɳ n | | | ŋ | |
| **Plosive** | p b | | | | t d | | | k g | |
| **Affricate** | | | | | ʧ ʤ | | | | |
| **Fricative** | | | f v | θ ð | s z | ʃ ʒ | ç | x ɣ | h |
| **Approximant** | | ʍ w | | | ɹ | | j | | |
| **Lateral** | | | | | l̪ l | | | | |
| **Trill** | | | | | ɾ̪ r | | | | |

KEY

Red: Lost between Old English and Middle English

Purple: Lost between Middle English and Early Modern English

Green: Added between Middle English and Early Modern English

*Writing tip*

When discussing phonological changes, try to highlight what has changed in terms of place and manner of articulation as well as voicing.

Overall, the change process of phonology in English results in the addition, loss or alteration of phonemes. See the following table for more details and examples of how these processes have affected pronunciation in the past and still affect pronunciation today.

| Process | Likely environments | Typically why it occurs | Old example | Contemporary example |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Loss** | unstressed syllables<br><br>ends of lexemes<br><br>phonologically complex lexemes<br><br>when phonemes fall out of the language | Phonemes aren't being articulated, so eventually stop being pronounced. | 'knit'<br>/knɪt/ ('knit')<br>→ /nɪt/ ('nit')<br><br>The velar plosive /k/ was elided so much over time that it was lost from the word's phonology. | 'every'<br>/evəɹɪ/ ('every')<br>→ /evɹɪ/ ('evry')<br><br>Since schwa is a short central vowel, it can be absorbed into /ɹ/, due to it also being a central phoneme. |
| **Addition** | consonant clusters<br><br>phonologically complex lexemes | Breaks up complex pronunciation tasks by inserting a vowel or consonant as a break or link between phonemes. | 'thunder'<br>/ðunɔɹ/ ('thunor')<br>→ /θendə/ ('thunder')<br><br>The addition of the alveolar plosive /d/ comes from the release of the sound stream from the nasal cavity into the oral cavity, in preparation for the vowel phoneme. | 'film'<br>/fɪlm/ ('film')<br>→ /fɪləm/ ('filum')<br><br>Some speakers insert a schwa to break up phonemes that would not usually occur next to each other. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Alteration** | phonologically complex lexemes<br><br>unstressed syllables | One phoneme assimilates into another (assimilation refers to a phoneme becoming more like the one next to it) or the two coalesce (both change to be more like each other) in anticipation of the next manner or place of articulation. Vowels in unstressed syllables are most at risk of change. This also covers the movement of phonemes within words. | 'treasure' /tɹɛzjuɹ/ ('trezyiur') → /tɹeʒə/ ('tresha')<br><br>The alveolar fricative /z/ and palatal approximant /j/ merge, with the place of articulation moving closer to the palate and retaining the fricative element to become a palato-alveolar fricative /ʒ/. | 'did you' /dɪd ju/ ('did you') → /dɪʤə/ ('didja')<br><br>The plosive and fricative assimilate to become an affricate. The sound stream is stopped by the tongue at the alveolar ridge and then released along the palate. |

*Tip*

**Metathesis** is an example of an alteration process (described in the table above), in which two phonemes swap places. Historically, this is where words such as 'ask' came from, with the original form being *aks* from the verb *to ax* (pronounced like 'arks').

## The Great Vowel Shift

The **Great Vowel Shift** (GVS) was a major upheaval of the pronunciation of long vowels (vowels that are held proportionately longer than other vowels, such as the 'oo' sound in 'moon') in English, taking place between 1400 and 1700 CE. The seven long vowels of English each moved up one position in the mouth, with the highest vowels then moving into diphthongs (when one vowel phoneme glides onto another in the production of a syllable; e.g. the 'oi' sound in 'coin').

See the following table for an outline of how the vowels started and how they changed during the GVS. Modern English words have been used to give you a sense of the sound of the vowels.

| Lexeme | Vowel sound before the GVS | Example of pre-GVS pronunciation | New vowel sound at end of the GVS | Example of post-GVS pronunciation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| mice | 'ee' as in 'cheese' | m-ee-s | 'eye' as in 'price' | m-eye-s |
| meat | 'eh' as in 'bear' | m-eh-t | 'ee' as in 'cheese' | m-ee-t |
| meet | 'er' as in 'bird' | m-er-t | 'ee' as in 'cheese' | m-ee-t |
| mate | 'ah' as in 'bard' | m-ah-t | 'eh' as in 'bear' and then 'ay' as in 'hay' | m-eh-t m-ay-t |
| mouse | 'oo' as in 'boot' | m-oo-s | 'ow' as in 'house' | m-ow-s |
| moot | 'awe' as in 'yawn' | m-awe-t | 'oo' as in 'boot' | m-oo-t |
| moat | 'or' as in 'board' | m-or-t | 'awe' as in 'yawn' and then 'oh' as in 'joke' | m-awe-t m-oh-t |

Scan the code or click here to listen to audio recordings demonstrating these vowel changes (under the section 'Changes').

While there is no singular reason for these changes, historical linguists have highlighted three possible main causes:

- As mentioned in Chapter 8, the Black Death ravaged the population of Europe and caused mass migration to bigger cities such as London. The mixing of dialects from across the British Isles may have created the shift.
- During the Hundred Years War against France, in Britain there was a desire to move away from French-sounding vowels and borrowings; adopting different vowels helped to demonstrate this anti-French sentiment.
- Outside of this time of war, the wealthier middle class may have hyper-corrected their speech to sound more similar to French.

While there were distinct movements, they did not happen in an orderly manner; 300 years would be considered quite a fast overhaul of the long vowels of a language. Within a person's lifetime, they may have witnessed change or actively shifted the way in which they articulated particular vowels as part of this larger vowel shift. It would not have been uncommon for grandparents to pronounce some words differently from their grandchildren.

Since English was also in the process of standardisation and codification, lexemes that were written down for the first time prior to the Great Vowel Shift differ from those written during and after the shift. Therefore, the GVS is one of the reasons why some modern English spellings don't seem to match their pronunciations (see pages 164–5, 'Problems of spelling', for examples).

## Develop your understanding 9.5

1 What are thought to be some of the causes of the Great Vowel Shift?

2 Why was the timing of the Great Vowel Shift so detrimental to English spelling?

3 During the shifts, some homophones (different lexemes that share a common pronunciation) would have appeared. Look up a list of homophones online.

   a Select a few of the English homophones that you agree sound the same.

   b Find some listed homophones that you think aren't homophones given the way that you speak.

   c Compare your list with others in the class.

   d Why do you think that there is some variation in people's lists?

## Morphological changes

While they have been retained in many of the Indo-European languages, English has been steadily losing inflectional morphemes (morphemes that attach grammatical properties to a word) since the Middle English period, when English went from being a synthetic to an analytic language. Consequently, the function words and the role of word order became more prominent in defining the grammatical roles of lexemes. Derivational morphemes (morphemes that change the meaning of a word) were important during this shift as they provided an opportunity for the creation of **neologisms** (new words) through morphological processes.

→ See pages 29–30 to read about inflectional and derivational morphemes.

New words can enter into English through a range of morphological processes including **abbreviation**, **acronym**, **initialism**, **shortening**, **contraction**, **compounding**, **blending**, **conversion**, **affixation** and **backformation**.

### Abbreviation

Abbreviations are formed by writing or pronouncing shorter forms of a word or string of words. They can be constructed from standard graphemes from the alphabet, numbers and context-specific graphemes.

These can cross over with acronyms, initialisms, blends or shortenings, as well as covering things that fall in between.

*Examples*

VCAA (where 'V' is said as a letter and CAA is pronounced like 'car')
St (either denoting street or Saint, depending on context)
GR8 (meaning great, with the 'gr' followed by the pronunciation of 'eight')

### Acronym

Acronyms are formed by taking the first letter of each word in a string of words and pronouncing them as a new word.

*Examples*

scuba (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus)
ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps)
lol (laugh out loud)

### Initialism

Initialisms are formed by taking the first letters of words in a string of words and pronouncing them as letters or a combination of letters and other symbols. While sometimes confused with acronyms in common vernacular, in the field of linguistics, these are separate labels to be applied.

*Examples*

VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education)
Q&A (question and answer)
NPC (non-playable character)

### Shortening

Shortenings are constructed by cutting words down to smaller forms. Over time, the original phrase or word from which the word was cut may cease to exist and orthography may be adjusted in order to maintain the pronunciation of the term.

*Examples*

pram (from 'perambulator')
noob (from 'newbie', a person new to an activity or game)
all caps ('caps' is a shortening of 'capitals')

### Contraction

Contractions are formed by removing some letters from words and marking the missing letter/s with an apostrophe. Since this often mimics the spoken mode, contractions are usually viewed as more informal, with some contractions considered more informal than others.

*Examples*

She's (from 'she' and 'has')

It's (from 'it' and 'is')

Couldn't've (from 'could', 'not' and 'have')

## Compounding

The process of compounding refers to the addition of two or more words in their entirety, creating a word that carries meaning from both elements. For compounds, there will be a stem word that is the main element of the meaning, with the added free morpheme functioning as a derivational affix.

*Examples*

bookcase (book tells us what the case is designed for)

swimsuit (swim tells us what kind of suit)

keyboard (key tells us what we will find on the board)

## Blending

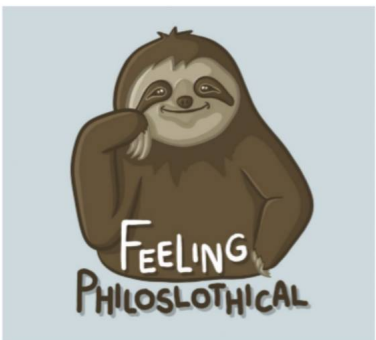
Blending is the process of adding together parts from two different words or adding part of one word to another full word. Puns are often created through the use of blends, with modern language play constructing animal puns such as 'koalafications' and 'hawkward'.

*Examples*

glitterati (glitter + literati)

modem (modulator + demodulator)

kidult (kid + adult)




*Tip*

When you observe new words in public usage, make a note of them to use in your Year 11 work. In Year 12, you will also be expected to discuss contemporary examples in Australian society, so noting such examples will also help you to be more aware of public discourse.

## Conversion

Conversion is the process of using a word in the role of a different part of speech, but without adding any affixes to mark it as such.

*Example*

email (originally a noun, but now also used as a verb. It does not take on '-ise' or '-ate' to indicate its shift from a noun to a verb.)

## Affixation

Affixation is the process of adding affixes to words to create new words. The affixes can be prefixes or suffixes.

*Examples*

quasiluxury (with the prefix 'quasi-')

government (with the suffix '-ment')

Affixation can sometimes create homonyms unintentionally. For example, depending on the context, the term 'unionised' can function as an adjective to refer to atoms that are not ions or to a group of workers who belong to a trade union.

In modern technology, neologisms such as 'YouTuber' and 'podcaster' have become commonplace, describing those who perform in these media.

## Backformation

Backformation refers to the process of removing what are mistakenly thought to be affixes. This process is similar to shortening but the basis for removing parts of the word is to convert it to a different part of speech, or alter meaning by targeting clusters of letters that look like derivational morphemes.

*Examples*

televise (backformed from 'television' in 1927, twenty years after 'television' came into English)

typewrite (a backformation from 'typewriter')

Backformations are challenging to spot, as you need to know when each form of the word entered the language.

## Develop your understanding 9.6

1 Define the meaning of the underlined examples and classify them as an abbreviation, initialism, acronym, shortening or combination thereof.

a ACDC play this weekend.
b Break is over, B2B!
c Drink 200 ml each evening.
d Happy IDAHOBIT Day!
e HMS *Victory* sailed today.
f See you on 14 Feb :)

2 Read the following short interaction that relies on online chat abbreviations, acronyms, initialisms and shortenings. Identity what they mean, classify them with appropriate metalanguage and create a similar discourse using the terms you are familiar with.

Player 1: hey wyd?
Player 2: not much tbh, u?
Player 1: nm but i miss youuuu. its been forevs.
Player 2: ikr, its whack lol

3 A good way to figure out the stem of a compound word is to think about which element would take on inflectional morphemes for plurality or tense (e.g. '-s', '-ed', '-ing'). Apply this to figure out which is the stem of the following compounds.

a deadlift
b firefighter
c motherboard
d mother-in-law
e pancake
f skateboard

4 Do you see any patterns from the previous question? What might this indicate about English morphology and any exceptions to this?

5 Blends can be a playful way of engaging with ideas, often drawing on powers of inference and context to understand what is being said. Explain the following blends and what knowledge you need to have to enable you to understand them.

a chairdrobe
b hangry
c malware
d sitcom
e shampagne
f smog

6 How would you add affixes to the following words to indicate who performs the action related to the item or event?

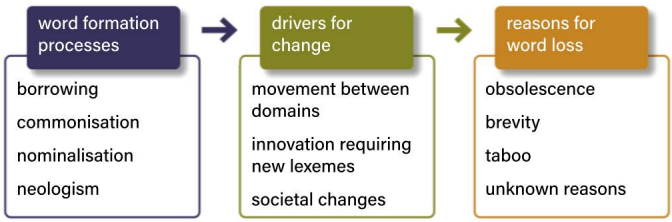
a beekeep
b Olympics
c piano
d removal
e skateboard
f TikTok

7 Compare your responses with a classmate and discuss the following questions.

a Can you see any patterns in how you have approached the previous activity?
b What might this indicate about affixation as a process?

## Lexical changes

The lexicon of English continually evolves to remain relevant and useful to its speakers. Words are lost, added or repurposed according to the needs of speakers. Linguists map how and why these changes occur to the lexicon by looking at the processes involved in forming new words, the drivers for change and the reasons why words fall out of use.




### Word formation processes

New lexemes may enter the language through the lexical processes of **borrowing**, **commonisation**, **nominalisation** and **neologism**.

#### Borrowing

Borrowings are anglicised forms of words brought in from other languages. They differ from code switches in that they have been naturalised (become part of the English language). In this process, English spelling conventions are applied to the existing orthography to establish pronunciation norms.

*Examples*

pen (from Latin 'penna' meaning feather, as the first pens were made from birds' quills)

smorgasbord (from Swedish)

sushi (from Japanese)

#### Commonisation

Commonisation is the process whereby a proper noun becomes a common noun. This typically occurs when a popular brand name is applied to all similar items, such as 'vaseline' and 'polaroid'. Some commonisations come from names of people. For example the verb 'boycott' (from Irish land agent Captain Boycott who was ostracised by tenants protesting unfair rents and evictions) and the noun 'cardigan' (supposedly invented by the 7th Earl of Cardigan).

Different countries may use different commonisations. For instance, Americans might call a tissue a 'kleenex' and many British will 'hoover' the carpets, instead of vacuuming.

### Nominalisation

Nominalisation is the process of making nouns from verbs or adjectives. They can require derivational affixes, such as 'scarcity' and 'completion', or occur without the need of affixes, such as 'change' or 'walk'. A single verb can produce multiple nominalisations. For example, the verb 'run' can be used as a noun without an affix ('I had a good run') or as a noun with an affix ('the running of the race').

Technological advancements have also led to nominalisations such as 'typing', 'streaming' and 'likes', as in 'Einar got lots of likes for the pic'.

### Neologism

Neologisms are words that are new to the language (from the ancient Greek terms: *neo* – 'new' and *logos* –'word'). These are classified as words that have risen in popularity and usage, and have been recently accepted as part of the language. They can be formed through the borrowing of words from other languages, creation of new word forms, adaption of existing words or repurposing of existing words in the lexicon. All words in a language have gone through this process at some stage to become a part of the language.

## Drivers for change

Lexemes may be invented, repurposed or lost due to **movement between domains**, **innovation requiring new lexemes**, and/or **societal changes**.

### Movement between domains

When advances in specific domains create the need for new words, terms may be borrowed from other domains to be used in a more specialised or more generic way. This is particularly noticeable with technical jargon, where a lexeme can start as a highly specific term, then evolve to refer to something entirely different, through common usage or transference between domains.

*Example*

wireless (historically this referred to the transmission of radio signals, without the use of wires; however, in the modern world we use this lexeme to denote accessing the internet without a wired connection)

Technological terminology is used ubiquitously in other domains, such as in business, 'taking something offline', or in wellness, 'switching off'.

### Innovation requiring new lexemes

New inventions can also lead to the creation of new terms. These can be adapted from older and less commonly used lexemes. For example, the term 'goon', used in Australia to denote cask wine, is thought to have come from the word 'flagon', which was once a measurement for a volume or vessel of wine.

### Societal changes

Social values evolve over time, meaning that elements of language that no longer comply with social norms are amended or removed. While terms like 'mankind', 'policeman' or 'chairman' were once ubiquitously used to refer to people of all genders, these terms are now being phased out and replaced with gender-neutral terms such as 'humankind', 'police officer' and 'chairperson'.

Social trends also require new terms to be created, but when the trend ceases then the associated lexemes also disappear, such as 'beatniks' (members of an anti-consumerist movement in the mid-twentieth century), 'greasers' (members of a youth subculture in North America in the mid-twentieth century) and 'roundheads' (supporters of the Parliamentary party during the seventeenth-century English civil war), which are now only used when discussing those movements historically.

## Reasons for word loss

Lexemes in English have been lost over time due to:

- **obsolescence**
- **brevity**
- **taboo**
- **unknown reasons**.

If a lexeme has mostly been lost but is still used as a part of a figure of speech, it may stick around as an **archaism** (a term or phrase that only exists within specific contexts and has otherwise dropped out of the language).

*Example*

kith (in the expression 'kith and kin', meaning 'friends and relatives')

### Obsolescence

When the **referent** (the thing that a word or phrase refers to or stands for) of a content word ceases to exist, the lexeme no longer serves its purpose, so may be removed from the language.

*Examples*

baselard (a small sword or dagger with an 'I'-shaped hilt)

brigadine (a type of armour that protected the torso)

### Brevity

Sometimes words become too short, so are cut from the language or exist only as morphemes attached to other words. The word 'ig' from Old English meant an island; however, over time it was absorbed into the word as 'igland' and eventually changed to 'island'. The word 'a' once functioned as a preposition similar to 'on', but was converted to a prefix to form some verbs that function as nouns, giving expressions such as 'a-hunting we will go', meaning 'we will go on the hunt'.

### Taboo

Taboos refer to things that are avoided or banned in a society. Homonyms, or near-homonyms, of taboo terms are lost from English to avoid potentially offending others. The traditional English word for 'rabbit' was 'coney', rhyming with 'honey', but its similarity to a vulgar English slang term saw its exit from the language.

To avoid taboo language, we often use **euphemisms** – words or phrases used in place of taboo terms and that appear more harmless, such as 'passed' instead of 'died'. The pronunciation of 'coney' gave us the euphemistic mispronunciation 'bunny' which was able to survive in English as it was far enough removed from the vulgar word that was being avoided.

Sexist terms such as 'wench' have disappeared from the language except in archaic insults or old texts, and racially charged language is actively being removed from some older texts; for instance, a revised edition of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has been published, which removes a racial slur used to describe the character Jim.

Modern editions of Enid Blyton's children's books rename the characters Dick and Fanny as 'Rick' and 'Frannie', as the previous names are now slang for genitalia.

More recently, in 2023 Puffin Books hired 'sensitivity readers' to rewrite elements of Roald Dahl's children's books to remove language considered offensive to modern readers. Scan the code or click here to read an article about the move.

### Unknown reasons

Sometimes the reason for a word disappearing is not clear, or becomes lost over time. A number of seemingly useful words have been lost from English for no obvious reason. Terms such as 'velleity' – the wish to do something but it is not strong enough to make you act on it – is a concept that many people could relate to, and yet the term fell out of popularity in the 1920s and is not commonly used today. You might like to sit at the table 'overmorrow' (the day after tomorrow) and 'brabble' (argue loudly) with your family or friends, while your pet sits and 'groaks' (watches someone eating food in the hope that they will share it). Despite these lexemes having strong applications for the modern world, they have died out of popular usage.

Scan the code or click here to learn how the word 'people' became the plural form of 'person'.

## Develop your understanding 9.7

1 Classify the following examples as either a borrowing, commonisation or nominalisation.

a google
b sushi
c synergisation
d gelateria
e xerox
f depolarisation

2 For each of the following domains, provide some examples of lexemes and cite what kinds of lexical processes are likely to have provided these lexemes.

a social media
b cooking
c academia
d bureaucracy
e literature

3 Look at the following list of words and explain possible reasons why some of these lexemes have fallen out of use or been lost.

a cimicine
b crinoline
c dactylodeiktous
d jentacular
e tabard
f yesterneve

## Syntactic changes

English syntax has evolved over time. Initially, it was similar to German, using word forms to convey meaning. However, during the Middle English period, it began to resemble French, relying more on word order to express grammatical relationships. There were changes to the present participle, more standardised auxiliaries and a heavier reliance on prepositions to indicate the relationships between nouns and other elements of the sentence. The jump to Early Modern English saw further reductions in inflectional morphemes affecting both verbs and nouns.

## Semantic changes

In addition to words changing in form, their meaning can also undergo changes in **connotation** and **denotation**. Connotations are the culturally dependent positive and negative associations we make about a word and the feelings it evokes in us. The denotation is the literal, standardised meaning of a word, the definition found in a dictionary. For example, the word 'home' can have connotations of cosiness, while a denotation of 'home' is simply 'place to live'. Over time, connotative changes can lead to denotative shifts. Similarly, denotative shifts will attract new connotations or remove existing ones, based on the social values and ideas attached to the concept or item.

### Deterioration

Semantic deterioration refers to the process in which a word's connotations become more negative over time. The longer a word has existed in the language, the more likely it is to have attracted negative ideas or concepts in its

connotations, so you can sometimes tell the relative age of a word compared to its near-synonyms, based on how much semantic deterioration has occurred.

Words such as 'stench' and 'smell', both dating back to Old English, are older than the more positively connoted 'odour' and 'scent'. Once 'stench' took on negative connotations, 'smell' entered the language in the thirteenth century, followed by 'odour' in the fourteenth century, and then finally replaced with 'scent' in the fifteenth century.

Words that are associated with disempowered groups are more likely to also undergo semantic deterioration, as seen with words like 'hussy' (formerly denoting a housewife) and 'gossip' (previously denoting a neighbour or friend).

### Elevation

When the connotations of a word become more positive, the word has undergone semantic elevation. Elevation is rarer than deterioration, but can happen over time when originally negative associations are lost or changed through slang usage. The term 'gothic' was applied to a style of architecture that was seen as barbaric and ugly at the time. When later generations saw the beauty of the gothic style, the originally negative term was elevated.

In slang, negative terms have come to denote something as good; for instance 'sick' used colloquially can now mean 'excellent' rather than its original meaning of being unwell, although the lexeme still retains the latter denotation. The word 'mad' can similarly denote something good when used as a slang term, rather than its original meaning of insanity or wildness.

### Broadening

Over time, lexemes can take on additional referents, meaning that they gain additional meanings without losing any of the original meanings. When this is an extension of the original referent, we say that the denotation has **broadened**. Commonisation is a type of broadening.

*Examples*

viral (now can refer to content that spreads quickly through the internet)

dog (now slang denoting performing acts perceived as subhuman, such as betraying trust or going against a group's norms)

### Narrowing

The number of referents a lexeme denotes can also reduce, meaning that the scope of the denotation has **narrowed**. Narrowing is rarer than broadening.

*Examples*

apple (once referring to any fruit)

meat (once referring to any food humans consumed)

### Shift

Sometimes denotations can move away completely from their original meaning, perhaps broadening first or otherwise taking gradual steps.

*Examples*

awful (once meaning 'inspiring wonder', now 'very bad')
pretty (once meaning 'crafty' or 'clever', now 'attractive')
naughty (once meaning 'having nothing', then 'evil', now 'misbehaving')

## Develop your understanding 9.8

1 Read the following short story and note any terms that seem out of place.

**Alfred the cheater**

Alfred was a kind cheater, as honest and trustworthy as any man you could find. On his way home, he would buy vegetables, such as pears and plums, for his family to eat. Alfred worked hard until he was senile, staying clever and never mistaken for nice. His egregious daughter, Agnes, was respected for being a spinster, which she continued through her long married life. Agnes loved to eat apples, she and her husband growing them on large orange trees in their garden tended by a merry groom Agnes' mother had found for her. Alfred's other wench, Editha the Chaste, stayed an unmarried wife. As the Sun would rise each morning, she would eat dinner made from the furniture that Alfred had purchased the day before.

2 The previous story uses a mix of old and new meanings of words. Look at the list of words with their previous denotations below and re-read the story to see if it makes more sense.

apple: any fruit
cheater: collector of lands for the King
dinner: breakfast
egregious: extremely good
furniture: any equipment, supplies or provisions
groom: young male
merry: short
nice: stupid
senile: old
spinster: yarn spinner
vegetable: non-animal food
wench: female child
wife: woman

3 Create a couple of lines of your own to add to the story, using some of the old meanings above or others you find through your own research.

# Attitudes towards language change

It is clear that it is in the nature of language to change. However, not everyone approves of this tendency. Throughout history, authors and social commentators have lamented the changes to language, viewing them as the degradation rather than the evolution of language.

This negative view of language change aligns with the attitude of **prescriptivists**, those who define how others should use language. In contrast, **descriptivists** attempt to describe language use as it is occurring and see such changes as part of the natural evolution of languages.

## Prescriptivists

Prescriptivists tell others how to use language, prescribing the grammar, orthography, pronunciation and semantics. They are the driving forces behind codification and standardisation. Their role is important when learning a language, since we turn to the works of prescriptivists when we need clarification of how to use and apply language.

See pages 159–60 to read about standardisation and codification.

Famous prescriptivists throughout history have included Sir John Cheke, an English classical scholar and statesman (1514–1557), Anglo-Irish writer and satirist Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), and English writers Dr Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) and George Orwell (1903–1950), all of whom lamented the changes to English. Some quotes from these writers are included below. To justify their concern about language changing, prescriptivists often argue that language changing over time:

- causes confusion
- removes access to older texts for younger generations
- encourages greater variety between dialects, so reduces mutual intelligibility
- allows language to evolve to become less regular and 'lazier'
- causes rifts between speakers of different generations.

| | |
|---|---|
| Our own tongue should be written clean and pure, unmixed and unmangled with [the] borrowing of other tongues.<br>Sir John Cheke, 1557 | An English tongue, if refined to a certain standard, might perhaps be fixed forever.<br>Jonathan Swift, 1712 |
| Thus have I laboured to settle the orthography, display the analogy, regulate the structures, and ascertain the signification of English words ...<br>Dr Samuel Johnson, 1755 | [The English language] becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts ... if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.<br>George Orwell, 1946 |

There is logic to prescriptivists' view that language change can make communication more difficult, and this is particularly understandable coming from lexicographers, authors and scholars, since language change directly and negatively affects their work. Texts that continue to be readable and accessible over time can reach the widest possible audience without the need for translation or other support to aid comprehension. Reflect on your first encounter with a Shakespearean text: did you need a side-by-side translation or other support to help you understand it?

## Descriptivists

Descriptivists do not dictate how the language *should* be used, but rather report on how it is being used by others. They are open to changes in language and observe them as a part of its evolution, rather than trying to stop or prescribe them.

This view of language is encouraged in the field of linguistics, so that elements of language that evolve with changing concepts of identity and the natural progression of language are neither slowed nor ceased.

Descriptivists often cite the following reasons for valuing such language change:

- it is a natural part of living languages
- it can enrich the language for its users by giving more options for expression
- it reflects aspects of the lives, technology and values of modern users
- it allows for language to evolve to better meet the needs of its speakers
- it can alleviate discriminatory or otherwise problematically embedded elements of language.

Some prominent descriptivists include English chemist, philosopher and grammarian Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), Australian linguist Michael Clyne (1939–2010), and contemporary linguists David Crystal (British) and Kate Burridge (Australian).

| | |
|---|---|
| In modern and living languages, it is absurd to pretend to set up the composition of any person or persons whatsoever as the standard of writing, or their conversation as the invariable rule of speaking ... The general prevailing custom, where ever it happen to be, can be the only standard for the time that it prevails.<br><br>Joseph Priestley, 1762 | Language use in the home may be affected by a number of events, including entry into the workforce, marriage, birth of a new child, the child(ren)'s entry into different stages of schooling, child(ren)'s departure from the parental home and the death of the spouse.<br><br>Michael Clyne, 2003 |

| | |
|---|---|
| They are just that: changes. Not changes for the better; nor changes for the worse; just changes, sometimes going one way, sometimes another.<br>David Crystal, 1999<br>The only languages that don't change are dead ones.<br>David Crystal, 2010 | A non-standard dialect is as valid a communication system as the standard.<br>Kate Burridge, 2004 |

## Develop your understanding 9.9

1 Think about the prescriptivists you interact with regularly. Who are they? Why do they correct language?

2 What impact would changes to language have on the following professions?

a scholars who study old texts
b authors
c lexicographers
d teachers
e politicians or other public figures

3 List some of the reasons for prescriptivism and cite evidence to support these points.

4 List some of the reasons for descriptivism and cite evidence to support these points.

5 What are some of the advantages of linguists taking a more descriptivist approach to language change and use?

6 Look at the following list of words and rank them, from your favourite to your least favourite.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| doily | gotten | irregardless | moist |
| fester | gullet | literally | phlegm |

7 Compare your rankings in Question 6 to those of others in your class. Do you notice any similarities or differences?

# Practical strategies

## Responding to short-answer questions

Short-answer questions are a common form of assessment in English Language. When approaching a short-answer question, the first thing to do is to **deconstruct the question**. You can do this by following the three steps below.

**Step 1:** Identify the command word/s.

**Step 2:** Identify the key knowledge you need to demonstrate.

**Step 3:** Note any other important instructions.

Follow the steps above to deconstruct the questions below. The first has been done for you.

1 Identify one function of the text. (1 mark)

command word

important instruction

key knowledge

2 Describe the tenor between the speaker and the audience. (2 marks)

3 Explain how the context influences the register. (3 marks)

4 Identify and describe two different prosodic features. (4 marks)

You should also pay close attention to the marks available for each question, as these will indicate how much detail you should provide in your response.

A transcript of a speech from a school principal to their students is provided below. Read the transcript, then answer the questions above.

See pages 67–8 and 125 to view keys for the transcript symbols.

1 Good after=noon students. Today I would like to address expectations for behaviour on camp.
2 The opportunity to participate should be viewed as a privilege and it is our goal for you to
3 make the most of all the learning opportunities that come your way.
4 While we want you to have fun <L let me make this crystal-clear. L>
5 Any inappropriate behaviour <L will not be tolerated. L>
6 And if there are any signs of the recalcitrant/ and atrocious behaviour we have seen in the past/
7 you will be sent home immediately.
8 *Students begin talking.*
9 I'm waiting!
10 *Students continue talking.*
11 There will be zero tolerance (.) of any bad behaviour.
12 Now <F get out! Go to lunch. F>

Scan the code or click here to view the deconstructed questions, with sample answers and mark allocations.

UNIT 2

# LANGUAGE CHANGE

## Area of Study 2: Englishes in contact

The final chapters of this textbook examine Unit 2, Area of Study 2: Englishes in contact. The English Language Study Design outlines the following key knowledge points:*

- factors in the development of English as a world language
- the distinctive features of English-based varieties
- the distinctive features of English-based pidgins and creoles
- the role of English as a lingua franca
- the role of language as an expression of cultures and worldviews, including representations of worldviews
- the processes of language maintenance, shift and reclamation
- cultural and social effects of language change and loss, with particular reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages
- metalanguage to discuss the global spread of English.

Each chapter builds your knowledge of the global impact of English. Chapter 10 explores how English came to be considered a world language – a language that has a role recognised in most countries – and introduces Braj Kachru's 'three circles of English' model, as well as the relationship between language and worldviews. Chapter 11 introduces pidgins, creoles and world Englishes, and examines these through case studies of some of the languages spoken in Nigeria, Jamaica and Singapore. Chapter 12 draws upon the knowledge from Chapters 10 and 11 to examine different languages in Australia, focusing on Standard Australian English, Aboriginal Australian Englishes and English-based creoles spoken by First Nations people. It also discusses processes of language shift and loss, as well as efforts to reclaim and maintain traditional First Nations languages.

This section of the book uses case studies and examples to explore the impact of the spread of English across the globe. You are encouraged to engage thoughtfully with the knowledge and case studies provided, and to develop a critical understanding of the influence of English in the modern word. The practical strategies at the end of this section provide guidelines and a checklist for writing English Language essays – a valuable skill to help you explore ideas in your English Language studies.

CHAPTER 10

# The global spread of English

In Chapter 10, we follow the trajectory of English from the language spoken in England to one that is spoken all around the world, examining the impact of different world events on the export and movement of English. We also explore the concept of there being multiple Englishes rather than just one, and the impact of culture and worldview on the way people speak.

In this chapter, you will be asked to critically consider your own interactions in English and how these reflect your identity, and to evaluate the positive and negative factors of the current status of English in the world.

## Key knowledge covered:

- factors in the development of English as a world language
- the role of English as a lingua franca
- the role of language as an expression of cultures and worldviews, including representations of worldviews
- metalanguage to discuss the global spread of English

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Lingua franca** | A language that is adopted as a common language between speakers who have different first languages. |
| **World language** | A language that has developed an international role in communication. |

## English as a world language

When people from different language backgrounds interact, there needs to be some common form of communication for the exchange to be successful. In some communities that utilise two or three different languages, people often learn both or all of these languages and there is no language barrier to their exchanges. This is true in Montreal, Canada, for example, where many people are bilingual, speaking both French and English.

Complications arise when speakers of different languages come into contact, and they have no common language. This problem has traditionally been solved by a **lingua franca**. A lingua franca is a language that is widely used by speakers of differing language backgrounds as a common medium for communication. Often, the lingua franca is a **dominant language**.

*Tip*

Dominant languages are those used by institutions and media to the exclusion of other viable languages. They are often spoken by language communities with high levels of social influence, political power and industrial or technological might. **Minoritised languages** are languages that are marginalised or suppressed by a dominant power in society. They are not automatically used by institutions or media, and are often spoken by language communities with lower levels of social, political and economic power.

Over several centuries, the footprint of the English language increased around the world, including being spoken as a dominant and majority language in some settler colonial societies or as a lingua franca by speakers of other languages. English currently could be termed a **world language**. A world language or global language is a language that has developed an international role in communication that is recognised in most countries.

## Factors contributing to English as a world language

There is a very close link between language dominance and other forms of industrial, commercial and cultural power. When we explore the factors that contributed to English becoming a global language, it may help to classify them into six broad categories:

- colonial expansion
- the Industrial Revolution
- economic imperialism
- international institutions
- cultural dominance
- digital revolution.

### Colonial expansion

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a rush of European colonial expansion in an effort to capture valuable resources and accumulate wealth. Britain came to be one of the dominant colonial powers, primarily due to its strong navy, and expanded and maintained much of its empire into the twentieth century. English spread across the world during this expansion. Most countries who were colonised by the British at this time still retain English as their primary language or as one of their official languages today, even those who have since separated from the British Empire such as the United States of America.

## The Industrial Revolution

British economic historian Arnold Toynbee (1852–1883) coined the term 'Industrial Revolution' to refer to the period between 1760 and 1840 in Britain; however, since then, the term has been used more broadly to describe a period of industrial change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, England was transformed by the introduction of mechanical manufacturing methods and came to rely less on agriculture and more on industry for wealth generation, fuelled by coal, water and steam. The invention of the steam engine was arguably the most important driver of innovation in areas such as textiles, food, transport and mining. Productivity was centralised in factories, creating a labour demand that was filled by people moving from rural areas to cities. Factories could employ children and there was no minimum wage for adults, which enabled business owners to maximise productivity for little cost. Furthermore, goods and resources could be transported around Britain via its complex network of rivers, canals and railways. With its large empire around the world, Britain had access to a wide range of resources for production, as well as an exclusive market for its goods. This booming economy contributed to the increased status of Britain and its empire and of the English language around the world as such innovations spread beyond Britain's shores.

The electric telegraph, allowing messages to be passed from place to place using only code, was one of the innovations of the Industrial Revolution. Telegraphs changed the way people communicated around the world, as previously, people had relied on physically transporting documents to communicate with each other. Samuel Morse set up an American telegraph exchange system and then, in 1838, invented Morse code, which became a universally recognised system, representing letters, numbers and punctuation with dots, dashes and spaces. This new communication system allowed long-distance messages to be transmitted significantly faster than had previously been possible. For example, following the construction of the Australian Overland Telegraph Line (a telegraphy system using cables and electrical signals to communicate messages) and its connection to the Java to Port Darwin underwater telegraph cable in 1872, it took only hours to transmit a message between England and Australia, rather than months to carry it via ship. Because the electric telegraph and Morse code were first developed in English-dominant countries, they helped to maintain and strengthen the position of English.

## Economic imperialism

By the late nineteenth century, both the USA and Britain were very wealthy. The USA controlled much of the world's oil production, and had strong manufacturing, transport, news and banking sectors. The USA's entry into World War I was seen as pivotal to the Allies' victory, and these two English-speaking countries financed the Allies in World War I. The status of the USA in particular increased after World War I, as it had entered the world stage for the first time as an economic and industrial powerhouse. Consequently, the status and use of English was further enhanced, as doing business with the USA required English.

## International institutions

English continued to increase in status and use during the twentieth century. People associated English with telecommunications (including radio), technical innovation, financial wealth and cultural power. It became one of the official languages used by international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), formed in 1945; the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Council of Europe, formed in 1949; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), established in 1967; and the European Union (EU), founded on the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. The UK left the EU in 2020, but English is still an official language of the EU.

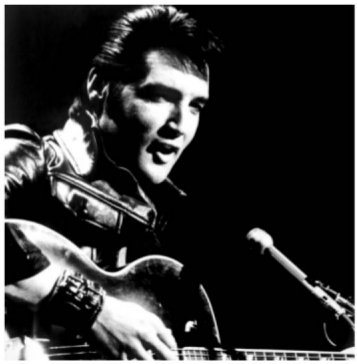
Today, English remains arguably the most common lingua franca in international exchange. On account of this, English can serve as a useful 'halfway point' if there is no translator/interpreter between two other languages. One translator/interpreter will translate from the first language into English, and a second translator/interpreter will translate from English into the second language.

*Tip*

Esperanto is an artificial international language designed in 1887 by Ludwik L Zamenhof (1859–1917). It was intended to be an additional language for people from any language background, to be used at international gatherings, and was designed to be very easy to learn. Even though Esperanto never became a popular international lingua franca, it has a certain following of language enthusiasts and is one of the most successful artificially constructed languages.

## Cultural dominance

The US film industry surpassed its competitors in Europe after the end of World War I. In 1927, Warner Bros. Pictures released *The Jazz Singer*, the first feature-length movie with music and speech, beginning Hollywood's success in cinema. The Golden Age of Hollywood endured into the 1960s, and movies in English and much-loved film stars travelled around the world, taking the English language with them.



Modern music was another cultural phenomenon that raised the prestige of the English language in non-English-speaking countries, particularly among young people. Elvis Presley (1935–1977) is one example from the age of rock-and-roll who could be considered a large cultural export from the USA. Records of his songs were played all around the world, exposing a wide audience of young fans to English.

The Beatles, from England, were another youth music sensation, creating a huge international response in the 1960s. In 1966, they were the first English-speaking group to be broadcast on television in Japan after causing unrest and controversy by performing at the Nippon Budokan in Tokyo, a large hall that had previously only been used for the sacred rituals of martial arts. The Beatles reinforced English as the lingua franca of rock-and-roll music: non-English-speaking bands, such as Swedish band ABBA and the Dutch band Shocking Blue, released all their albums in English; and clubs in districts such as Hamburg's Reeperbahn featured English rock music. This English phenomenon caused a lot of controversy at the Eurovision international singing competition and from 1966 to 1972 and 1977 to 1998, competing countries were only allowed to enter songs in their own national language.

Television first appeared in the USA in 1928, and gradually spread around the world. (It was twenty-eight years before television reached Australia in 1956.) In 1969, the US broadcast the Apollo 11 moon landing, and astronaut Neil Armstrong's words, 'That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind', were heard in English by approximately one fifth of the total population of the world. Television content in English from the USA, and to a lesser extent, Britain, was shown in many countries with translated subtitles, or translated audio dubbing in some European countries.

By the 1980s Disney had become a global empire, expanding the English language and American cultural ideation into the world market. Since then, English-speaking broadcasts have been so dominant on the world stage that it was only in 2022 that a non-English-speaking television program (South Korean television show 'Squid Game') first won an Emmy Award for best actor and best director. It must be said, however, that the winners, Lee Jung-jae and Hwang Dong-hyuk respectively, gave their acceptance speeches in English.

## Develop your understanding 10.1

Investigate a popular song and artist that was streamed on services such as Spotify in the past twelve months and answer the following questions.

1 In which countries did this song or artist achieve 'top 10' ranking?

2 Does this artist perform in English or languages other than English?

3 Based on your investigation, is there any noticeable presence of English language songs in non-English-speaking countries? What might be some implications of this?

### Digital revolution

ARPANET (the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) was the first decentralised computer-based communication system, which linked the computers of four American research institutions in 1969. Protocols for file sharing, remote login and email were all established around this time. By 1977, the network increased from four computers to 111 across the USA and Europe. Various universities and the American military all had access. By the time British computer scientist Sir Tim Berners-Lee brought the internet to the world in 1993, English-language conventions had been established. As the web was written for English speakers, who use the Roman alphabet, people whose languages used different scripts had no access except through the use of English or by rendering their language in the Roman alphabet. Newspaper columnist Michael Specter wrote an article in the *New York Times* in 1996 highlighting this limitation of the World Wide Web. As quoted in Crystal's 2003 book, Specter suggested that 'the Internet and World Wide Web really only work as great unifiers if you speak English' (Crystal 2003, p.117). Since then, other languages have become increasingly influential online, such as Chinese, Russian and Spanish, but the technical infrastructure to support many of the world's languages online is still in development.

Before the telephone was first used in 1876, the appropriate greeting when people met each other would be something like 'Good morning, Sir' or 'Good afternoon, Miss Walker'. But this form of address was not appropriate on the telephone, because when we pick up the phone, we don't know who is on the other end of the line. As a result, 'Hello' (previously a shout to attract attention) became the accepted linguistic convention. By the 1940s, 'Hello' had made its way from the telephone into everyday speech. At the time, people lamented the deterioration of social standards, but now we don't think twice about using 'Hello' as a greeting. In fact, we often use the even shorter and less formal words 'Hi' or 'Hey'.

Just as the new technology of the telephone influenced language use, today we can see language conventions initially cultivated on the internet infiltrating our offline interactions.

## Positives and negatives of a world language

There are both positive and negative aspects of having a world language, some of which are set out below.

| Positive factors of a world language: English is seen as being *shared* around the world | Negative factors of a world language: English is seen as *invading* the world |
|---|---|
| Eases communication between people from different language backgrounds. | Hastens the disappearance of minoritised languages, thereby threatening linguistic diversity. |
| Promotes greater cooperation between nations in a push for unity and harmony. | Contributes to inequality by creating an elite of those who speak this world language. |
| Removes the need to learn many different languages. | Reduces the opportunity to learn other languages due to the dominance of English. |

Crystal (2003) separates language into communicative and identity functions. On the one hand, we need language to communicate with each other and, on the other, language is used as a marker of our identity. The positive factors in the table above relate to the communicative function of language. In international interactions, poor communication can have life-threatening consequences. Consider the scenario of a German pilot trying to land a plane in Sri Lanka. A safe landing would be less likely if the German-speaking pilot and the Singhalese-speaking traffic controller did not have a mutually understood language. English is the lingua franca for communication in global aviation.

The negative factors in the table relate to communication barriers and to the expression of identity, relationships with others, and the individual's place in a broader social context. There can also be significant negative implications when a world language doesn't share the underlying values of all the cultures that use it. For example, English does not have grammatical distinctions between formal and informal ways of saying 'you', like many European languages, or markers of deference, respect and social status like the Japanese and Korean languages.

First Nations languages have more complex terminology for kinship which do not map straightforwardly onto the simpler English set of terms. The different social values conventionalised in languages have the potential to cause miscommunication or even offence, if those communicating are not culturally responsive.

*Tip*

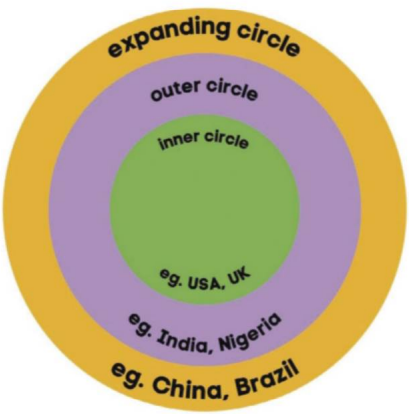
Languages are minoritised when speakers are not able to use their language to conduct all aspects of their life. They may be required to use a more dominant language to access education or health and legal services, or to increase their communicative reach. This has the potential to minoritise the less dominant language even further, perhaps ultimately leading to a shift in language use and the loss of the language.

## Develop your understanding 10.2

Investigate how the internet has contributed to the growth of English. How has this impacted the development of English around the world?

### Braj Kachru: 'three circles of English' model (1985)

Braj Kachru (1932–2016) was an Indian–American linguist who pioneered the study of world Englishes. He recognised the growing trend of English across the world and proposed the 'three circles of English' model to explain the status of English in different countries. The model has three concentric circles, labelled the inner, outer and expanding circle. Each of these represents ways English is used in each country.



### Inner circle

The inner circle represents the traditional bases of English, including countries that were colonised by the British, such as North America, Australia and New Zealand. All these countries have English as the primary language used in government, institutions and media. It is the predominant language of the population, spoken both privately and publicly. The most populous and culturally dominant of these countries provide the standardised varieties that are traditionally seen as models of the English language.

### Outer circle

The outer circle represents those countries that the British historically exploited for human labour (including slaves) and material resources, or used for trade, but without a major influx of English-speaking British people. They have mostly remained members of the British Commonwealth. In these countries, the English language was used between the British (often the trading companies representing Britain) and a local elite or ruling class. These countries include Singapore, India and Nigeria. They often have English as a co-official language, where English plays an important role in official and formal settings such as in higher education or the judiciary system; however, local languages are often used within families and acquired as first languages by children, and used in day-to-day activities. These countries have tended to develop their own varieties of English that are influenced by local cultures and languages.

### Expanding circle

The expanding circle includes countries that are not linked to the history of British colonisation, but rather where English has entered in the role of a lingua franca to interact with the rest of the world. These countries often promote English as a second language in their education system and speak it in international environments but it does not carry an official or unofficial capacity within their own country. These countries use English models as presented by those in the inner circle, so their use of English is not characterised by forming their own variety. Countries in the expanding circle include Germany, Brazil and China.

### Challenges the model presents

While Kachru's model offers a snapshot of the historical uptake of English in different countries, it does not capture any changes currently underway, nor any local effects within countries. For example, the apparent dominance of English in inner circle nations does not represent their linguistically diverse populations. In Australia, some traditional First Nations languages are still 'strong' – they are spoken by their language community in everyday interactions and acquired as a first language by children. In these language communities, English is a foreign language. Therefore, there can be a lot of diversity between countries within one circle, and some ambiguity in the distinctions between the circles.

## Develop your understanding 10.3

1 Create a table with three columns. Label the columns 'Inner circle', 'Outer circle' and 'Expanding circle'. Consider your knowledge of the development of English as a world language. Research the following list of countries. Add each one to the column that best represents their position, based on Kachru's categorisation.

India, Kenya, Thailand, Canada, New Caledonia, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, Ireland, Taiwan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Australia, Malaysia, Malawi, Brussels, Argentina

2 Due to the predominant use of English in Australia, and its colonial history, Australia has been categorised within the inner circle. Can you think of ways that the 'inner circle' doesn't capture how English is used here? Discuss this with your peers.

# Language and worldviews

The concept of identity in language is linked to the embedded cultures and worldviews that a language conveys. Culture refers to the attitudes, values and beliefs of a group of people, and this influences the assumptions we make and the ways we use language when we communicate.

A way that linguists represent this relationship between language and worldview is through an iceberg model. The one below is adapted from an iceberg model by researchers Patricia Konigsberg and Glenys Collard (2000).

The iceberg analogy draws attention to the underlying factors that influence our language choices and how we interpret the language used by others. The more obvious and tangible aspects of language – the words, sounds and sentences, written or spoken – are represented by the section above the waterline.

The section just below the waterline suggests that there are additional, perhaps more subtle, elements that contribute to the meanings of those sentences, words and sounds, including the ways they should be used appropriately in interactions.

Deep below the surface are our values, beliefs and attitudes that represent our personal worldviews. The language iceberg metaphor shows how our underlying values, attitudes and beliefs are inextricably linked to the language we use. They have been shaped by our families and communities and contribute to how we see ourselves. Thus, our identity, worldview and language are interlinked, and when a person's language is threatened, it can have a significant impact on their sense of self.

## Develop your understanding 10.4

Read the following two quotes (from the Reconciliation Australia website) from Australian First Nations spokespeople about their interpretation of 'Country' and their connection to the land.

> When we say Country we might mean homeland, or tribal or clan area and in saying so we may mean something more than just a place; somewhere on the map. We are not necessarily referring to place in a geographical sense. But we are talking about the whole of the landscape, not just the places on it.
>
> Professor Mick Dodson AM

> I have been brought up to believe that we have a special connection to the land. We belong to the land. The land does not belong to us.
>
> Cassandra Lawton (Gunggari woman, South West Queensland)

Then, read the excerpt below, from the Mabo land rights agreement.

> Native title is a pre-existing right, inherent to Indigenous peoples by virtue of their distinct identity as first owners and occupiers of the land and their continuing systems of law. Native title is not a grant or right that is created by the Australian government nor is it dependent upon the government for its existence, although it is dependent on recognition by the common law in order to be enforceable in the Australian legal system ... Native title in each instance is recognised as having its source in, and deriving its content from, the laws of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
>
> (AIATSIS, *Native Title Information Handbook, Victoria,* 2016)

Write a brief explanation of the different understandings of the terms 'Country' and 'land ownership' reflected in the extracts above.

CHAPTER 11

# Englishes around the world

In Chapter 11, we look at how English changed and affected other languages as it travelled beyond Britain. We look at various Englishes around the world, including Nigerian English and Jamaican English. We also look at examples of and attitudes towards English-based creoles, specifically Jamaican Patwa and Singlish.

Specifically, this chapter explores the relationship between the English language and power, and the hierarchical nature of world Englishes, and considers how this impacts the direction of world languages today.

To understand the nuances of relationships between world Englishes may require you to reflect on your own attitudes and the biases that may have coloured your education and limited your exposure to the 'other'.

## Key knowledge covered:

- the distinctive features of English-based varieties
- the distinctive features of English-based pidgins and creoles
- metalanguage to discuss the global spread of English

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Pidgin** | A type of language that emerges between groups of people of two or more different language backgrounds when there is no existing lingua franca. It will have a fusion of language influences and is not anyone's first language. |
| **Creole** | A type of language that often develops from a pidgin, when the pidgin is so useful to its language community that children learn it as a mother tongue. A creole language will display influences from a variety of source languages. The fundamental difference between a creole and a pidgin is that people speak a creole as their first language. |
| **World Englishes** | Varieties of English that have developed in different communities across the world, developing English to suit their needs. |
| **Dialect** | A variety of a language that can identify a person's geographical or social background. It may have distinguishing vocabulary or distinctive features of accent. It is largely comprehensible to speakers of other dialects of the same language. Some dialects might not have an official written form. |

# World Englishes

English is breaking new ground by playing a significant role as a world language. Most countries now have English as either a first language, an additional language or a privileged foreign language. This is the first time in history that there has been a single language playing such a dominant role throughout the world. This is despite the fact that native speakers of this language are a minority: more people in the world speak English as an additional language than as a first language. When a community takes on English, it adapts the language to its own language practices to suit local needs, creating different **varieties** of English around the world. Consequently, when we talk about English in this chapter, we use the plural, 'Englishes'. As each English variety has its own origins and uses, this chapter will examine world Englishes through individual case studies.

## English, power and prestige

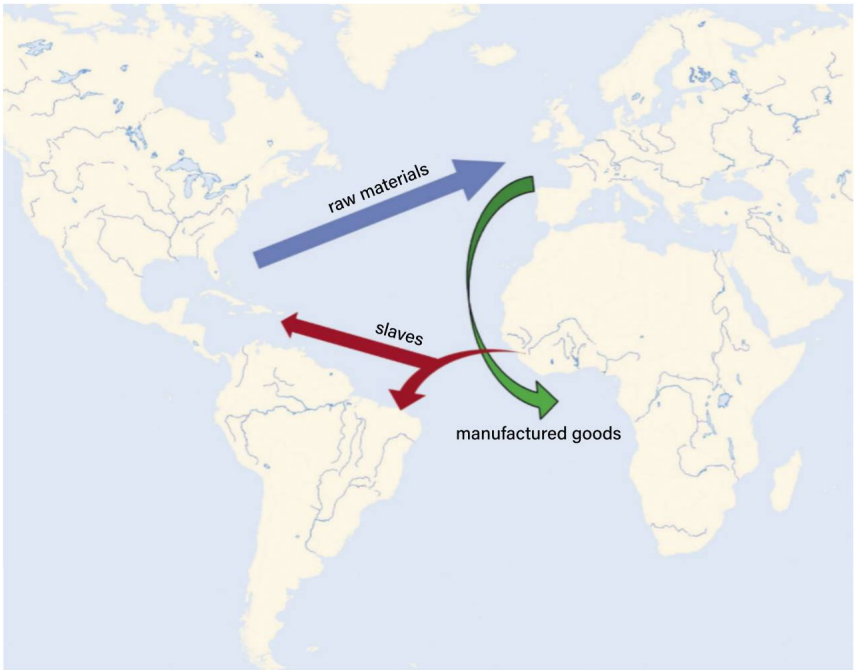
The spread of English occurred concurrently with an increase in the power and spread of the British Empire. In fact, these two stories are so closely interwoven that it is difficult to explore world Englishes without recognising the relationship between the English language and the status, wealth and power of the English-speaking West.

The countries that speak English as a native language, such as the United States, the UK, Canada and Australia, hold a significant amount of global wealth, despite being a minority in terms of global population. Of course, there are other factors that contribute to this increased wealth and subsequent power, but the seeming correlation between the English language and a country's wealth indicates the significant role that English plays in our world today.

Because the English language is linked with wealth and power, it carries a certain level of **prestige**. People who can speak English have more opportunities than those who speak only their local language. Consequently, governments might encourage their citizens to learn English so that they can engage in more economic and educational opportunities. English speakers might be better able to represent their country at a global level, giving the nation a higher status and a louder voice as well as economic and social benefits. As more countries encourage the speaking and learning of English, this reinforces the promotion of English, and thus English dominates the world stage, often at the expense of other languages.

### The triangular trade

The impact of English as a language of prestige can be seen in countries that were part of what is referred to as 'the triangular trade' between Britain, Africa and the Americas.






During the height of its colonial activity, the British took tradeable goods to Africa, such as textiles, weapons, ammunition and wine, and traded these for human slaves. Those slaves who survived the middle passage – the journey from Africa to the Americas and the Caribbean – were then exchanged for sugar, tobacco, cotton and other produce, and forced to work on plantations growing these crops. This produce was then taken back to Britain to be manufactured into more tradeable goods.

British colonial trade routes and, in some cases, imposition of colonisation, influenced language use in places along this triangular trade route, so that many now belong in the outer circle of Kachru's model. While the historical influence of British colonisation introduced English to these countries, contemporary factors also now influence attitudes and practices associated with English in the outer circle countries.

See pages 195–6 to read about Kachru's model.

## A study of Nigerian English

During British colonial expansion, Africa was not divided into all the nation-states that we recognise on the world map today. Historically the continent was home to various groupings with negotiated boundaries. Often each grouping spoke a different language. In the area that is now Nigeria, the three main languages were Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, although many other languages were spoken, too.

In the 1800s, the British set up a trading port in Lagos and continued to expand their territory until the boundaries around what is now recognised as the country of Nigeria were established in the twentieth century. Britain used its position of colonial power to claim natural resources in Africa, such as gold and oil, and granted monopolies to British companies and favours to British entrepreneurs. In this way, an English-speaking British elite commandeered the wealth of non-English-speaking peoples in Nigeria. They established trade and governance using the English language.

English-speaking missionaries also influenced the use of English in Nigeria. They were particularly active in the south of the country, among the Igbo and Yoruba speaking groups, and provided education, which included the teaching of English and Western values and ideologies. Owing to the association of English with literacy and education as well as trade and economic success, English was a desirable linguistic commodity that gave local people wider opportunities.

Nigeria remained under British rule until its independence in 1960. Although this ended Britain's colonial authority over Nigeria, the English language had become well established in the country. Most Nigerians spoke different mother-tongue languages but used English as a lingua franca. English has become so ingrained in some domains, such as government, higher education and business and literature, that it undeniably continues to play a significant role in Nigerian society.

Today, English is the most widely spoken lingua franca in Nigeria, which is regarded as one of the West African English-speaking countries. Even so, perhaps only half the Nigerian population speaks English. All secondary and tertiary education is conducted in English and students are required to pass an additional compulsory English subject to obtain the school-leavers' certificate.

Nigeria has developed its own type of English, from Nigerians learning and using English in ways suited to their cultural and linguistic environments. **Nigerian English** has specific linguistic features and is considered a variety of English in its own right: one of the world Englishes that has emerged from the spread of English around the globe. Nigeria is considered to belong in the outer circle in Kachru's 'three circles of English' model.

→ See pages 195–6 to read about Kachru's model.

## Features of Nigerian English

The table on the next page categorises just some of the unique properties of Nigerian English. The table describes how the listed features of Nigerian English differ compared to the standard English varieties spoken in countries in the inner circle.

| Subsystem | Nigerian English | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Phonology** | Pronounces all vowels, even long vowels, as short vowels | 'away' is pronounced 'aweh' |
| | Pronounces final voiced consonants as unvoiced | 'was' is pronounced 'wass' (has an 's' sound like 'moss' rather than a 'z' sound) |
| | Pronounces dental fricatives as alveolar plosives | 'that' is pronounced 'dat' |
| **Morphology** | Pluralises nouns that don't usually take a plural | 'informations' (information) |
| **Lexicology** | Includes many neologisms that express unique experiences and situations | 'Jambito' (a first-year university student)<br><br>'NEPA has taken the light!' (exclaimed during an electricity black out; NEPA is the National Electric Power Authority) |
| **Syntax** | Uses irregular tag question formation | 'They look happy, isn't it?' |
| **Discourse and pragmatics** | Incorporates titles and expressions that reference the importance of age and superiority in everyday conversation and not only on restricted formal occasions | 'chief'<br>'honourable'<br>'sir' |
| **Semantics** | Includes idioms that express unique experiences and situations | 'not on seat' (away from office)<br><br>'go slow' (traffic jam)<br><br>'take in' (pregnant) |

## Develop your understanding 11.1

1 Select a country represented by the inner circle or outer circle of Kachru's 'three circles of English' model (see Chapter 10). Do some research on your selected country and answer the following questions.

- a How and when did English enter this country?
- b How does the country's geographical landscape compare to that of Britain?
- c Describe a cultural practice of this country that differs from British culture.
- d What languages were spoken in this country before English arrived?

2 Can you find an example of a word or phrase used in the English of this country that is different from the usage or vocabulary of any other English-speaking countries?

   a How did it come about? A sample answer is provided below.

      *In South Africa, the word for 'traffic light' is 'robot'. The original term was 'robotic traffic controller', as the lights replaced police officers who controlled traffic with hand signals. This term was shortened to 'robot' and is now used in everyday South African English.*

   b What does your English term show about how English comes to represent a country's own history, culture or language environment?

3 Share your findings with other people in your class. From this information, can you reach some general conclusions about influences that change English in different countries?

4 Write a paragraph discussing why linguists consider there to be multiple Englishes, rather than just one.

# Pidgins and creoles

When people who speak different languages come into contact, they need a way to communicate with each other. **Pidgins** and **creoles** are both systems of communication that develop from interactions between people who do not have a common language.

## Pidgins

A pidgin is a type of contact language that might emerge when people of two or more different language backgrounds, with no pre-existing shared language, need to communicate with each other. A pidgin is not anyone's first language. Those who speak a pidgin use their own first language outside of this specific purpose-driven interaction.

A pidgin will have a fusion of language influences drawn from the various language backgrounds of the speakers. Often, much of the lexicon of a pidgin has been sourced from one language more than others. In many instances this main source was a colonial language such as English, French or Dutch, because of their profound social, economic and political impact in colonised countries.

A pidgin might be a fairly short-term language solution and not persist over an extended period. Some pidgins, however, expand to meet their speakers' communicative needs and may develop into creole languages.

## Creole languages

A creole language is a type of contact language that can develop from a pidgin. If the main language a child hears is a pidgin, they learn this as their mother tongue and speak it as their first language. A creole develops when there has been a shift away from the use of original languages spoken in a community, because the pidgin was required for more and more of the community's communication needs.

Because it is spoken as a first language, a creole language evolves a sophisticated structure to fulfil all the language functions for its language community.

Creole languages have a variety of linguistic influences. As with pidgins, one language might be a major source of the lexicon, and this is often, but not necessarily, a colonial language. If English is the historical source of much of the lexicon, the creole is called an **English-based creole**. Although the term 'English-based' is used, the creole as a whole is not actually 'based' on English. The rest of the language system can have other influences. For example, other languages might influence the creole language's phonological system, intonation, semantics, pragmatics and its speech community's cultural values. The way words are built and arranged in sentences might be quite original, or might be influenced by one or more of the contributor languages.

In an English-based creole, it is important to know that, even if words originally come from English, they might sound different, have different meanings, take different endings, be used in different sentence patterns or be used differently, socially and culturally. A speaker of English would not automatically understand a speaker of an English-based creole, and vice versa.

*Tip*

There is a creole language spoken in Nigeria called **Nigerian Pidgin**. (Don't let the word 'pidgin' in the name confuse you – many pidgins are named before they develop into creoles.) Both Nigerian Pidgin and Nigerian English co-exist in Nigeria; however, they have different histories.

# World Englishes and creoles

Although English-based creoles and world Englishes both involve a connection with English, it is important to remember that they are entirely different types of languages. World Englishes are all varieties of English, while creoles are types of contact language that are distinct independent languages.

In some countries, an English in Kachru's outer circle will co-exist with an English-based creole. In these situations, there can be judgements and attitudes about creoles, including some that are quite dismissive.

Speakers of English-based creoles may be evaluated negatively by English speakers as using a 'broken' English. Such attitudes can arise from a lack of awareness that creoles are entirely different language systems from English. English speakers might compare the language to their own and determine difference to be error. However, in recent years there has been growing recognition of creoles as complex, individual languages, each with their own language community, history and significant cultural value.

We will examine two different case studies, from Jamaica and Singapore – Jamaican Patwa and Singlish.

## A study of Jamaican English and Jamaican Patwa

In Jamaica, a variety of English known as **Jamaican English** is spoken by some of the population. It is a variety of English and closely resembles its British English heritage. Jamaica is in Kachru's outer circle, so Jamaican English is one of the world Englishes. The majority of Jamaicans speak the English-based creole commonly known as **Jamaican Patwa**, sometimes 'Patwa' for short. Jamaican Patwa is not a variety of English, because historically it has drawn on many language influences.

Jamaican history and its present-day language situation are closely tied to European colonisation and the slave trade. The Spanish were the first European power to colonise Jamaica and the Indigenous people, the Taíno. The British took over Jamaica in 1655. They initially brought slaves from other parts of the Caribbean for plantation work, who would already have acquired a pidgin. Later, Jamaica was part of the triangular trade route that included the slave trade. A common practice among British slave traders was mixing people from different language backgrounds, to prevent them collaborating in a rebellion or escape. On the plantations, too, slaves often would not have a common language background. This created the conditions for a pidgin to establish and spread. It is believed that Jamaican Patwa had developed by about the mid-eighteenth century.

In modern Jamaica, both Jamaican Patwa and Jamaican English are widely spoken and many people are bilingual. In recent times, some evidence of influence from American English has been seen in both Jamaican English and Jamaican Patwa, perhaps due to the global cultural influence of the US, and American tourism, given Jamaica's proximity to the US.

Despite some negative perceptions about creole languages, Jamaican Patwa has been gaining some ground over the last century. The publication of a poetry collection, *Songs of Jamaica*, in Jamaican Patwa by Claude McKay in 1912 is considered a turning point by many: evidence of its expressiveness as a literary language. Over time, Jamaican Patwa has gradually increased in status with political events such as independence from Britain in 1962 and the rise in popularity of Jamaican reggae music in the 1960s. Jamaican Patwa is now generally celebrated as a proud marker of identity, and so has an element of prestige.

Jamaican Patwa and Jamaican English are in contact to some extent, due to the bilingual population, despite some geographical and social distinctions; and, because of this, there is the potential for mutual influence. Now that Jamaican Patwa has greater prestige, it seems that Jamaican English speakers are more commonly incorporating some elements of Jamaican Patwa into their speech. Jamaican English is no longer the exclusive language of upward social mobility that it once was, but political and economic power is still largely wielded by people who speak English varieties, so its influence remains significant.

Scan the code or click here to watch the first in a series of video lessons on speaking Jamaican Patwa.

## Features of Jamaican Patwa

| Subsystem | Jamaican Patwa | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Phonology** | Five short vowels, three long vowels and four diphthongs (English has around 20 vowels sounds) | Short vowels:<br>'di' (the)<br>'we' (away)<br>'nyam' (eat)<br>'tod' (third)<br>'kuk' (cook)<br><br>long vowels:<br>'laas' (last)<br>'fuud' (food)<br>'chiiz' (cheese)<br><br>diphthongs:<br>'chai' (try)<br>'plies' (place)<br>'mout' (mouth)<br>'kuol' (cold) |
| **Morphology** | Marks plurals with free morpheme 'dem' | 'di buk dem' (the books) |
| **Lexicology** | Includes some African origin vocabulary | 'nyam' (to eat – from Akan) |
| | Gives words of English origin different meanings | 'belly' (pregnant) |
| **Syntax** | Uses lexeme 'no' to negate the verb | 'Mi no think so.' |
| | Maintains declarative word order with 'wh' questions | 'What you're doing for summer?' |
| **Discourse and pragmatics** | Creates stress using copula 'is' | 'Is now mi understand' (emphatic) |
| **Semantics** | Figurative language and idiomatic expressions may not align with English | 'Walk good' (used idiomatically as a farewell, similar to 'take care' or 'goodbye') |

## A study of Singlish


Modern Singapore is a multiethnic society that has four official languages – English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil – but the language spoken on the street is the English-based creole **Singlish**, which incorporates influences from English as well as Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, Hokkien and other regional dialects. Like all creoles, Singlish has an established set of grammatical rules. It displays influences from its multilingual origins in all its make-up, but English is the major source of words in the Singlish lexicon.

In 1819 a clerk with the British East India Company, Stamford Raffles, signed a treaty allowing England to establish a trading post on the small island. Once the trading post had been established, people of European, Chinese, Malay, Indian and Arab language backgrounds arrived to live and work there. A pidgin lingua franca grew out of prolonged contact between these groups. This situation provided the conditions for the emergence of a creole, as eventually children acquired Singlish as their mother tongue.

The variety of English in Singapore is known as Standard Singapore English, which is grammatically similar to Standard British English. In 2000, the Singapore government launched a campaign called the 'Speak Good English Movement' to encourage its citizens to speak Standard Singapore English, rather than Singlish. The title of this campaign suggests that the Singapore government consider Singlish to be a 'bad' form of English rather than a separate language with its own grammatical construct.

However, this movement was met with criticism by those who viewed Singlish as an important and valuable expression of Singaporean identity. Advocates for Singlish launched their own movements in response, including the 'Save our Singlish Campaign', and the 'Speak Good Singlish Movement', which emphasised pride in Singlish as a feature of Singaporean heritage and identity.

Scan the code or click here to watch a video featuring examples of Singlish.

## Features of Singlish

The following table provides a summary of some features of Singlish.

| Subsystem | Singlish | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Phonology** | In words of English origin, the final of two consonants (cluster) was deleted during pidginisation/creolisation | 'fas' instead of 'fast' |
| **Morphology** | Uses bare verbs in present tense, regardless of subject (whereas English conjugates verb to match a singular he/she/it subject) | 'She see this' |
| **Lexicology** | Includes words from other languages, as well as words specific to local/Asian culture (i.e. not British/European, despite mostly English origin lexicon) | 'angpow' (from a Hokkien term meaning 'red packet', referring to a red envelope containing money that is popularly given as a gift in many Asian countries)<br><br>'kena' (a Malaysian term meaning something unpleasant has happened to someone) |
| **Syntax** | Deletion of some function words, such as forms of 'to be' | 'This house very nice' |
| | Allows subject dropping (reference can be obtained from the context) | 'How come never show up?' (could refer to you, she, we etc., depending on the context) |
| **Discourse and pragmatics** | Uses discourse particles (of non-English origin) such as 'lah' for emphasis | 'Better do properly, lah.' |
| **Semantics** | Colloquial expressions not part of Standard English | 'sabo' (describes someone intentionally causing trouble or inconvenience for others, from 'sabotage') |
| | Unique idiomatic expressions | 'catch no ball' (to not be understood) |

*Writing tip*

When referring to creole languages generally as a type of language, use a lower case 'c'. When referring to the name of a particular creole language such as Hawaiian Creole, use a capital 'C'.

## Develop your understanding 11.2

1 Conduct some research on a creole, including the following information.
   a a description of the creole – for example, is it English-based?
   b how it came to be formed and its early history
   c who speaks the creole
   d language examples of the creole
2 Organise your research in the form of an infographic and then present it to your class.

## Critical thinking

In this course, you are expected to engage with the knowledge and concepts you learn, and to form your own views on attitudes and debates related to language use. You will develop your critical thinking skills and the ability to articulate your ideas and use evidence to back them up.

To help develop these skills, it is important to practise writing and reflecting on the ideas you are learning about. Your teacher might give you questions to debate or topics to write about. This section suggests ways to approach such exploration of ideas and hone your critical thinking ability.

For example, consider the question: **Can a language develop without first being a creole?**

First, think about any other questions that this topic inspires, and identify any assumptions within the question. Ask yourself questions such as these:

- What specific features define a creole?
- Do creoles need to exist for a certain length of time to count as creoles? If so, how do we define this?
- Do creoles ever develop into another language?
- Did English develop out of a creole? Is English a creole itself?
- What assumptions does the topic question make, which may or may not be correct?
- If all languages were creoles, would they have an equal level of prestige?

Think about what you have learned in this course, to find examples or evidence that might justify your ideas and help to determine your views.

Once you have thought about your position on the topic, try to write down your opinion, supported with examples. This process will help to consolidate your ideas. The following annotated example of a student reflection is provided to demonstrate how you might explore your ideas through writing.

### Sample student reflection

I find this question a little confusing because it was my understanding that creoles are languages. By framing the question in this way, we are assuming that creoles are not actually complete languages, and that the length of time a creole is in existence determines its establishment as a 'proper language'. Perhaps speakers of a language of power, such as English, would feel threatened if a creole is considered a 'real' language. Because it shares features with its parent language, validating a creole as a real language weakens the hierarchical relationship between the languages and, by association, changes their relative cultural power. Nigerian Pidgin and Jamaican Creole came into existence in the seventeenth century and Australian Indigenous creoles no earlier than the late eighteenth century. By this stage, English was already established as a language of power.

Old English, established in around 450 CE, is a blend of different Germanic languages from the Angles, Saxons, Frisians and Jutes. However, unlike the creoles in Singapore, Nigeria and Jamaica, which developed from a combination of different languages under an overarching English Crown holding power, these Germanic tribes' languages all shared Germanic roots. I don't think that Old English is a creole, therefore, because the similarity between the languages of the Angles, Saxons, Frisians and Jutes meant that they could use their own already established languages to communicate.

Therefore, I believe that languages do not start as creoles. I think that creoles are mostly a result of people of different languages being forced together so that they need to find a way to communicate with each other.

Establishes an understanding of the nuance of language; shows that the way we word things reveals or betrays some underlying beliefs.

Reveals some relevant historical chronological awareness.

This not only reveals retained knowledge from Unit 2, Area of Study 1, but also engages with it critically in the light of new information.

Articulates a discrete understanding of a creole.

In the concluding sentences the student shows confidence in their position.

As you will have already seen, there are many different attitudes towards languages and some of them are misconceptions, particularly when they are about languages that don't conform to the 'standard'. You should be able to unpack assumptions and critically evaluate them, using the concepts you are taught throughout your English Language studies.

CHAPTER 12

# Languages in Australia

In Chapter 12, we take what we have learned about world Englishes and creoles and apply them to the languages of Australia, looking at Standard Australian English, Aboriginal Australian Englishes, Australian Indigenous creoles and Australian Indigenous traditional languages.

We consider the impact of English on the survival of minoritised languages, particularly on the traditional Indigenous languages of Australia. We investigate why the imposition of English threatens traditional Indigenous languages, how language loss impacts a community, and the different programs that are in place to bring those languages back.

To develop an understanding of the work being done in this field, you will need to reflect on your own use of language and the language resources that are around you, and consider how your voice is heard in the community, and the role language plays.

## Key knowledge covered:

- the processes of language maintenance, shift and reclamation
- cultural and social effects of language change and loss, with particular reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

## Metalanguage and linguistic terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Standard Australian English (SAE)** | The variety of spoken and written English language in Australia that represents a common language standard agreed to by the general population and codified in dictionaries, style guides and grammar manuals. Standard Australian English represents a prestige variety in the Australian context.*<br>*This definition is reproduced from the VCE English Language Study Design 2024–2028. |
| **Aboriginal Australian Englishes (AAEs)** | Aboriginal Australian Englishes is an umbrella term used to refer to the many different varieties of English that many First Nations people speak. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Australian creoles** | English-based creoles formed in Australia after 1788. They have a fusion of influences, particularly from English-based varieties and traditional languages. The two most widely spoken creoles in Australia are Kriol and Yumplatok, although there are others. Speakers of SAE cannot automatically understand these creoles. |
| **Traditional languages** | Also known as pre-contact languages. Were spoken by Indigenous communities before colonisation. While only around twelve are considered strong today, many more continue to be spoken to some extent. |
| **Language shift** | Occurs when members of a community start speaking a different language from the one spoken by their ancestors. This most commonly occurs across generations. |
| **Language loss** | Refers to the situation where a language is no longer actively used or known. It implies that another language is replacing it. |
| **Language reclamation** | Refers to the processes by which a language community rebuilds, learns and teaches its language. Through this process, the community asserts its right to speak its language and express its culture. |
| **Language maintenance** | Processes that assist with keeping a language strong and transmitting it fully from generation to generation. A minoritised language (a language that is marginalised or suppressed by a dominant power in society) needs targeted efforts because it is not automatically supported in wider society. |

## A note on terminology

It is important to note that, among Indigenous language activists and linguists, there are many views about the appropriate terminology to describe a language that is no longer actively used. Some people refer to this situation as '**language loss**', to reinforce that many languages were destroyed by the colonial violence against First Nations people, cultures and languages. However, there are others who describe these languages as '**sleeping languages**', to highlight that these languages could be 'reawakened' or 'revived' by rebuilding, learning and teaching them. For the purposes of the VCE English Language Study Design, we will be using the term 'language loss'.

# Standard Australian English and Australian Indigenous languages

The concept of 'Australia' did not exist before British colonisation. Instead, the land consisted of many different language groups which are now sometimes called First Nations. There were well over 250 different languages spoken across the continent. British colonisation was accompanied by violence and displacement of First Nations people and their languages. The imposition of English-speaking settler colonial societies led to Australia becoming a nation with a variety of English known as **Standard Australian English** (**SAE**) as the default language of government, education and media. This institutional use of English places Australia in Kachru's inner circle. SAE is one of the world Englishes and reflects this history.

See pages 195–6 to read about Kachru's 'three circles of English' model.

Australia is home to hundreds of Indigenous languages, including **traditional languages**, **English-based creoles**, and varieties of English known as **Aboriginal Australian Englishes** (**AAEs**). The Indigenous creoles and AAEs are new ways of speaking that belong to First Nations people but have only existed since British colonisation. AAEs are Indigenised Englishes, and the creoles are each separate languages, distinct from English varieties.

AAEs are significant varieties of English in Australia, markers of local Indigenous identity and cultural continuity. AAEs have developed within Indigenous communities, alongside SAE but on a separate path. AAEs and SAE represent different speech communities with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Because SAE has a more dominant role in Australian society, there is often an expectation that speakers of an AAE will also learn SAE and become bidialectal (competent at speaking two dialects). In some cases this language learning is still not explicitly acknowledged and supported – for example, in education – and so activists advocate for a wider appreciation that there may be significant differences between these Englishes. In fact, as researcher Ian Malcolm says, it speaks to the 'remarkable demonstration of the human capacity' (Malcolm 2018, p. 161) that First Nations people have been able to maintain and incorporate traditional norms and values into their own English.

While SAE is spoken across the continent, AAE varieties are widespread, too. First Nations speakers of one AAE variety are expert at recognising that somebody is speaking another AAE variety, and can often place where they come from.

Traditional Indigenous languages are tightly connected to particular tracts of Country. Scan the code or click here to explore a map of Australia's first languages.

## Standard Australian English

Standard Australian English refers to the English associated with Australia and its institutions, government, education and health, law and finance, and media.

Some of the features of Standard Australian English began to develop the moment the British interacted with the First Nations Peoples of Australia. The arrival of convicts to Australia in 1788 to the first settlement in Port Jackson on Dharug land (Sydney) signalled the beginning of the British colonial period of Australia. The borrowing of Indigenous words is one noticeable difference in the English spoken in Australia today, compared to English in other countries.

Scan the code or click here for a list of Indigenous words that are now part of Standard Australian English.

## Aboriginal Australian Englishes

First Nations people experienced the destructive effects of violent conflict and removal from Country under the advancing frontiers of colonial occupation, and long-term marginalisation from settler-colonial society. The impact of colonisation, along with purposeful and damaging policies, created new language communities where English could be used as the common language between First Nations people, as well as for communication with non-Indigenous outsiders. This use of English by First Nations people for their own purposes ensured the continuity of cultural meanings and practices.

Even though AAEs represent cultural resilience and continuity, they are 'new' because they developed following colonisation. There is not one single Aboriginal Australian English, but rather, local varieties of AAE, just as there is not one traditional Indigenous language, but at least 250 different language groups. Some of these language groups share some similarities, just as AAEs share some features.

Every AAE variety has local and unique features. Thus, when we talk or write about AAEs we recognise that there is more than one variety. Furthermore, when we study the development of these new Indigenous ways of speaking, we recognise that there is not one story that summarises their development. Instead, we can see that large-scale events and local histories converged to force a language shift.

AAEs are mostly spoken in the southern part of the continent. These are generally the areas that were occupied and colonised early, and where there were high numbers of colonists. English was widely used in such settings, ensuring First Nations people's exposure. Government policies during the twentieth century aimed to assimilate First Nations people into white Australian society, and this involved attempts to disconnect people from their culture and language.

Importantly, AAEs often maintain features of traditional languages. This is one of the ways that AAEs express First Nations people's identities. To this day, First Nations speakers of English can use AAEs as a means of showing their membership of a First Nations community or mob. They can add socially acquired language features to their AAE, innovating and augmenting their AAE to reflect their layered identities.

Diverse contextual factors have contributed to the present-day mosaic of AAEs. AAEs are now well recognised as a vibrant linguistic expression of contemporary identity for many First Nations people.

## Expressing meaning

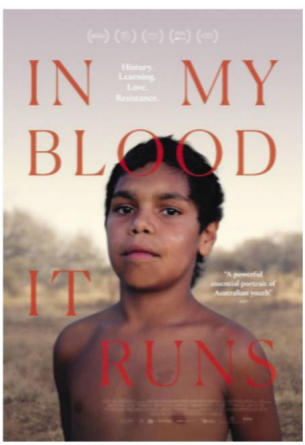
Some varieties of AAE exhibit linguistic differences compared to SAE, and some of these differences can be traced back to traditional Indigenous languages. Because of the presence of so many shared English words, it is easy for speakers of SAE and AAEs to believe that they understand each other perfectly. However, language is an expression of values, beliefs and attitudes so, if these are not shared by speakers (e.g. if they are from different cultural backgrounds), misunderstandings can arise.

Likewise, different speech communities have different practices. For some AAE speech communities, silence might be interpreted as positive and productive, perhaps indicating an appropriate level of respect. However, if AAE-speaking children from such a community use silence in this way in an SAE-speaking classroom, it might not be interpreted as respectful. Classroom practices with SAE are not necessarily the same as an AAE's social and cultural practices.

*Writing tip*

When writing about Aboriginal Australian Englishes, be sure to do so as a plural. There is not one Aboriginal Australian English.

Scan the code or click here to view the documentary *In My Blood It Runs*, which looks at challenges faced by a First Nations child in Australia.



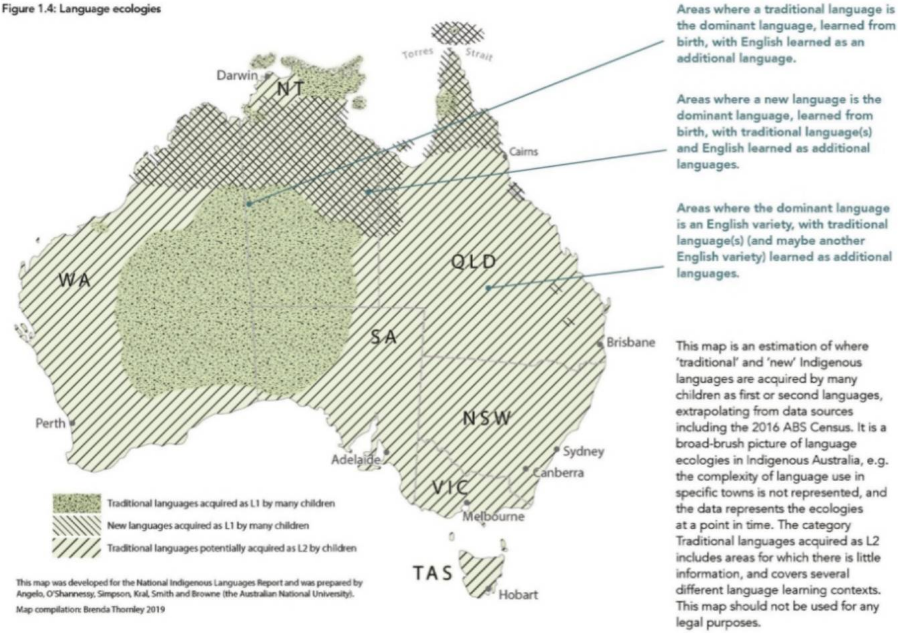
## Creole languages in Australia

The violent upheavals caused by invasion, occupation and colonisation had profound impacts on First Nations people and the Indigenous language landscape and resulted in the development of contact languages (pidgins and creoles).

Prior to colonisation, First Nations people were often multilingual, putting high cultural value on the learning of languages. However, colonisation disrupted intergenerational language transmission by dislocating language groups. New language communities developed new ways for community members to talk together, by drawing on all the language resources that people brought with them, developing new contact languages. In some places, such as the Roper River Mission (present-day Ngukurr) and in the Torres Strait, the contact languages known as pidgin languages developed into creole languages: **Kriol** and **Yumplatok** (also called Torres Strait Creole).

In the map below, dotted areas indicate where a traditional language is spoken as the main Indigenous community language, cross-hatching indicates where a contact language is spoken as the main language, and diagonal lines show where an English is spoken (AAEs or SAE).

Figure 1.4: Language ecologies




Source: 'Language ecologies' in National Indigenous Languages Report (DITRC 2020), p.18.

## Kriol

The Anglican Church Missionary Society set up the Roper River Mission on the banks of the Roper River at Mirlinbarrwarr, Arnhem Land, in 1908 (moved to the present-day site of Ngukurr community, Northern Territory, in the 1940s), to accommodate First Nations people seeking refuge from the violent frontier of the pastoral industry in that area. Around 200 First Nations people lived there in the early years, representing a number of different local language groups. The missionaries themselves spoke English. A pidgin contact language which had entered the area with the pastoral industry was available as a lingua franca.

The Roper River Mission ran a dormitory system for local children. This is thought to have hastened the development of a creole language, as the children were from different language groups, and were not constantly exposed to the traditional languages of their family. Within a decade of establishing the mission, children were noted to be speaking in ways similar to the Kriol of today. Kriol is a sophisticated language, a separate language from SAE, different at all levels: sound, word, endings, phrases, sentences and cultural. Until the 2021 Census, of the Indigenous languages spoken only in Australia, Kriol was spoken by the largest number of people, now just surpassed by another Indigenous contact language, Yumplatok.

Kriol is an English-based creole. This means that most Kriol words were historically drawn from English, though the way these words are used differs in phonology, semantics and syntax. For example, 'drand' in Kriol means being submersed or underwater. This sounds similar but carries a different (although related) meaning from the historically related word 'drowned' in English. So even though English provided the basis for some Kriol words, these inherited word forms have changed, to greater or lesser extents. Many words in Kriol hail from traditional languages, some local, some from the pastoral industry pidgin which had its origin in the first settlement in Sydney and brought Dharug language words with it.

Creoles differ fundamentally and profoundly from their major source language base – for Australian Indigenous creoles, this is English – particularly through phonology, morphology and syntax. In Kriol there are pronouns to mean 'both of us', 'both of you' and 'both of them' that do not exist in English. Kriol also doesn't have a verb that functions like the English auxiliary 'to be'; however, 'bin', which sounds very similar to the English 'been', is used to indicate past tense. Kriol has just four prepositions – 'la(nga)' indicating place or goal of movement; 'burrum' indicating origin or starting point; 'bla(nga)' indicating possession; and 'garram' indicating the use of an instrument – which is very different from the preposition system used in English.

Kriol speakers' intonation most closely resembles that of speakers' local traditional Indigenous languages, and its phonology shows influences of traditional language sound systems applied to the English words. For example, the difference between voicing and not voicing a sound, which is important to

English ('big' versus 'pig'), is not a factor in most traditional languages. In this way, the English word 'properly' entered Kriol as /bˌabli/, with the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ replaced with its voiced equivalent /b/. 'Brabli' is also used differently from the English word, behaving as an adverb to modify an adjective, such as in the phrase 'brabli bigwan' meaning 'really big'.

Like all languages, Kriol is reflective of speakers' identity, culture, values and worldviews.

See pages 197–8 to read about the relationship between language and worldview.

## Develop your understanding 12.1

Kriol is in everyday use in Australia. Look at the following resources, then answer the questions.

Children's literature in Kriol is on the rise. Scan the code or click here to hear the story *Main Abija* ('My Grandad').

The Binjari Buk project produced bilingual books in Kriol and English. Scan the code or click here to find the story of why the First Nations women wanted to make stories in their language, Kriol, and in English for children in the Binjari community to read.

The hit children's book *Too Many Cheeky Dogs* has recently been translated into Kriol too. To look at an animated book reading of this and other books in Kriol, scan the code or click here.

The popular children's program *Little J and Big Cuz* now has two episodes in Kriol: 'Bigiswan Trip La Riba' (River Adventure) and 'Sineik Ai' (Serpent's Eye). Scan the code on the left or click here to view 'Bigiswan Trip La Riba', and scan the code on the right or click here to view 'Sineik Ai'.

The Northern Territory government released a music video for children to promote safety around the waterways. The song is called 'Be Crocwise'. Scan the code or click here to hear it in Kriol.

The Australian Human Rights Commission released a video in Kriol in March 2022, as part of its women's rights campaign: *From dreams, let's make it a reality*. Scan the code or click here to view the video.

1 What do you notice about Kriol, compared to SAE and to traditional languages?

2 What are some linguistic traits of Kriol that you can identify?

3 Provide an example of how Kriol expresses aspects of culture.

## Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole)


Yumplatok is the name of the English-based creole language which, according to the 2021 national Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021), is now the most commonly spoken Indigenous language. This creole is spoken across the Torres Strait, where it is also called Torres Strait Creole and Brokan/Broken, and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in communities in northern Cape York, where it has been called Cape York Creole, or been given a community name (Lockhart River Creole, Napranum Creole etc.). There are also communities who speak this creole in northern Queensland towns such as Cairns and Townsville. Due to the diverse histories, languages and cultures in this area, there are particular ways of speaking this creole that identify where speakers come from.

A major historical influence on Yumplatok and Cape York Creole varieties was the pidgin that developed primarily through the trade of labour from Melanesian and South Pacific islands to Queensland in the second half of the nineteenth century. South Sea Islander missionaries were also influential in spreading this pidgin. This pidgin is sometimes called Melanesian Pidgin or Beach-la-mar, which is a rendition of bêche-de-mer – sea cucumber or trepang – a marine creature that was harvested and traded for culinary use. The pidgin was the lingua franca among workers in this potentially lucrative but labour-intensive trade. Melanesian Pidgin entered the Torres Strait via this and other maritime industries with a multilingual workforce, such as trochus shell and, later, pearl diving. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and South Sea Islanders were often exploited in this work, indentured, with low pay and poor conditions.

In Australia, Melanesian Pidgin developed into the north-eastern creole varieties of Yumplatok and Cape York Creole. Due to different social and linguistic factors, in other countries Melanesian Pidgin developed differently. In Vanuatu it became Bislama (from Beach-la-mar), which is one of their national languages. In the Solomon Islands it developed into Solomon Islands Pidgin. It also had some influence on Tok Pisin, a national language spoken in Papua New Guinea.

Yumplatok plays an important role in the Torres Strait as it provides a common language between all the islands. It was the language which Torres Strait Islanders used to organise their massive Maritime Strike of 1936 to protest against appalling working conditions and rates of pay, and for other, broader, social rights. Today, with certified interpreters in Yumplatok, and TSIMA (Torres Strait Islanders Media Association) radio broadcasts across the Torres Strait often using Yumplatok, there are signs of increasing recognition of this creole.

## Develop your understanding 12.2

The name Yumplatok was coined relatively recently, as an own-language term meaning 'our language'. If you are looking for information on this creole, be aware that some materials use alternative names for Yumplatok, including Torres Strait Creole, Broken, Cape York Creole and Lockhart River Creole.

Below are links to some videos showing Yumplatok in action.

Cairns West State School serves a linguistically diverse area, including a large population of Yumplatok speakers. The school released several videos for its community in 2021, teaching short phrases in Yumplatok. Scan the code or click here to view one of the videos.

The Department of Social Services released a video in Yumplatok to communicate the services available to people with a disability. Scan the code or click here to view the video.

1 What do you notice about Yumplatok?

2 What are some of Yumplatok's linguistic traits?

### Traditional languages

Australian traditional Indigenous languages provide many benefits to individuals, to communities and to Australia as a whole nation.

Traditional languages:

- link people to Country
- hold the key to kinship systems, tribal law and Indigenous spirituality
- strengthen understanding of sacred objects and rites
- link to wellbeing and health
- contribute to a shared understanding of history and knowledge of the land
- increase community engagement

- provide different perspectives and knowledge of various fields, contributing to conditions that foster innovation
- provide insights that may contribute significantly to future health and sustainability
- provide an income avenue for their speakers.

Many of these benefits of traditional languages contribute to overall better life outcomes for the speakers. Additionally, society as a whole benefits from appreciating and respecting traditional languages, by acquiring a better understanding of speakers of different languages and increased empathy for social and cultural issues they experience. Society also benefits from being exposed to different cultural beliefs that broaden our experience of the world, and acknowledging and appreciating differences. This can help to reduce prejudice and decrease xenophobia and 'othering' of Indigenous-language speakers.

## Develop your understanding 12.3

1 Consider the benefits of traditional languages listed above and on page 221. Write an 'I' next to those that might help the individual, a 'C' next to those that might help the community, and an 'A' next to those that help Australia as a nation.

2 As a class, or in small groups, think about some other benefits of having Indigenous traditional languages in Australia. Write them down. Label each to indicate who you think would benefit.

# Language shift and loss

The emergence of English as a world language threatens the existence of other languages. **Globalisation** drives a need for people all around the world to communicate with each other; and English, as one of the dominant world languages, is a common choice enabling efficient communication. Due to its cultural and economic status, English can marginalise speakers of minoritised languages with less communicative reach and economic status. It can displace these languages by disrupting their transmission and places an extra burden on their speakers, who must spend time learning the dominant language. As a result, there are languages all around the world that are under threat from larger, higher-status and economically more powerful languages. Unless these smaller and more marginalised languages are given special attention, they risk drowning in the ubiquitous presence of English or other dominant languages.

In Australia, traditional Indigenous languages are under threat. Even the twelve or so 'strong' traditional Indigenous languages, which are still being learned as main languages by children, are not immune. To consider the status of traditional Indigenous languages in Australia, we need to reflect on how language is used. The table below lists four different ways that we use language, with examples.

| Uses | Examples |
|---|---|
| To express our identity/spirituality | We use language to express who we are and what we believe in. We debate, discuss and explore ideas in our language. |
| For everyday interactions | We use language to talk to our friends, our family, our sports coaches or our teachers. |
| To make a living | We use language at our place of work. |
| To access services | We use language when we go the doctor, the dentist or the library. |

For languages to remain in common use, not only do speakers need regular interaction with a community of family and friends, they also need to use their languages in wider circles – for instance, when talking to teachers, work colleagues and service providers, and when discussing interests external to their community. In many places, including Australia, Indigenous language speakers have not been supported to use their languages in every area of their lives, and nor have English speakers been required to learn Indigenous languages. Consequently, few doctors, teachers, sports coaches and other service providers speak a traditional Indigenous language. This reduces the opportunity for speakers to use their traditional language across a wide range of settings, diminishing the role of the language in people's lives and consequently endangering traditional languages.

## Develop your understanding 12.4

1 Work in pairs. Consider one of the scenarios presented in the table above, where you would need your own language to communicate with each other. Then imagine that you are no longer allowed to use your language.
   a What happens?
   b How do you achieve your goal?
   c How do you feel during the interaction?
2 Write down your reflections.

**Language shift** occurs when a speech community adopts a different language from that of their forebears. In the Indigenous language context, generations ago many families experienced a shift in their language use, from a traditional language to a variety of English. Another kind of shift, more common in northern Australia, is from a traditional language to a contact language such as Kriol or Yumplatok. **Language loss** occurs when a speech community is no longer able to interact in that language. Language shift often results in language loss. Some Indigenous language activists prefer the term 'sleeping' rather than 'lost', to emphasise that languages can be revived, and many First Nations people are working hard to reawaken/revive their traditional language. Given the strength of English on the Australian and world stage, proactive measures are needed to protect against future language loss.

Linguists Zulfadli A Aziz and Rob Amery (2016) suggest that the following social features are signs that a traditional language is less strong and a shift in language use might be underway.

- The language is only spoken by the older generations. Children speak the more dominant language, particularly with each other in informal contexts.
- There is a decrease in the number of fields in which the language can be used (e.g. fields such as media, advertising, religion, law, education, business and written communication).
- There are negative attitudes towards the language.
- There are high levels of intermarriage between partners of different language backgrounds.
- People use a language other than a traditional language, due to necessity.

In Australia, the threat of language shift and loss is very real for speakers of Indigenous languages. The violence and disruption of colonisation separated existing language communities and forced them to work in foreign language environments. Government policies removed First Nations people from their lands and children from their parents, preventing traditional Indigenous languages being passed down through generations. First Nations people who spoke their traditional language were often threatened, making them feel unsafe using their language or teaching it to their children. Speaking traditional languages was discouraged, and was not supported in the education system or other areas of life. Such policies and practices continued in Australia into the 1980s, significantly undermining the use of traditional Indigenous languages. Many are now lost, and others are highly endangered.

Today, there is continued marginalisation of Indigenous languages. First Nations people are often placed in a position where they need to use English, the default language of Australian institutions. The English language offers access and opportunities; many services – such as employment, banking and education – can only be accessed in English, so Indigenous speakers of traditional

languages and creoles are placed at a disadvantage if they are less proficient in English. This drives the use of English, at the cost of traditional languages, and the cycle is perpetuated. If more First Nations people learn English to access services in English, there is less need for service providers to extend their support of other languages.

## Language reclamation

There is such a strong tie between culture and language that it is practically impossible to separate the two. The act of **reclaiming a language** raises awareness of the related peoples and culture, and goes some way towards giving the marginalised language a greater voice in society. Bringing a language back into the daily lives of First Nations people is an intentional and political decision which recognises the Indigenous language community.

Because of widespread historical language shift, many First Nations people are actively engaged in increasing the number of native speakers of traditional languages and reviving languages where no native speakers remain. There are many reclamation projects around Victoria and the rest of Australia. These provide funding and expertise to Indigenous languages and focus on rebuilding and reintroducing the local traditional language back into the lives of their community.

One of the best documented and most successful reclamation projects is that of the Kaurna language (pronounced 'gahnuh') spoken around Adelaide in South Australia, supported by individuals including Kaurna teacher Jack Kanya Kudnuitya Buckskin and linguist Rob Amery.

### Kaurna


Approximate extent of Kaurna territory, based on the description by Amery in *Warrabarna Kaurna!: reclaiming an Australian language*

The coastal area was very fertile, so it was well populated by British colonists, who were initially encouraged to learn the Kaurna language. During this time, two Lutheran missionaries, Christian Gottlob Teichelmann and Clamor Schürmann, documented words and sentences in the Kaurna language. Furthermore, a school was established for Kaurna children, where they learned to read and write their own language. Thanks to these efforts, Kaurna People have access to detailed material in Kaurna and have worked with linguists to reconstruct the Kaurna language.

The process of returning the Kaurna language to the community began in 1989 and 1990, with a small number of people singing some songs written in Kaurna. Nursery rhymes and other children's songs were added to this collection, which was released on cassette. As technology improved, the songs were released on CD and then as an internet resource.

Kaurna has been taught at Kaurna Plains School since 1992, and has now extended to other schools at all levels, including in the Department of Education and Childhood Development's School of Languages and the University of Adelaide.

Naming things became the next important step to revitalising Kaurna. There are bilingual signs for towns, buildings, organisations and other places of interest around the area and, in 2007, these names were added to a website with sound. Dictionaries have been produced, as well as the learner's guide, *Kulurdu Marni Ngathaitya (Sounds Good to Me): A Kaurna Learner's Guide* (Amery and Simpson 2013).

In 2010, in an effort for people to have better access to the spoken language, two two-hour radio programs that incorporate Kaurna teaching and entertainment were created. The aim was to increase access in the region to the language in its natural spoken form.

The current process of reclamation and revitalisation of Kaurna has been underway for over thirty years. Its reclamation has been considered a success, because Kaurna has become a functional part of people's daily lives. Early documentation and resources made this possible, and Kaurna People, linguists and other members of the community still work very hard to continue to make the language as accessible as possible.

However, if we consider how we use our language every day and the signs of a language under threat (see page 224), Kaurna is still not safe. Active work is needed to maintain Kaurna in the community.

## Develop your understanding 12.5

1 Create a short dialogue in Kaurna using the YouTube clip below and other Kaurna language resources that you can find.

Scan the code or click here to view the YouTube clip.

2 What do you notice when you create your dialogue?

3 Write a short paragraph reflecting on your feelings about using the Kaurna material.

4 Describe a specific language feature of Kaurna that you needed to understand in order to create a more linguistically accurate sentence. Reflect on why accuracy is important when using a language.

# Language maintenance

Of the 167 Indigenous languages represented in the 2021 Census, only around twelve are considered 'strong', because they are learned as a first and main language by children. There are profound challenges to keeping these languages strong for future years. The process of keeping a language strong is called **language maintenance** and means ensuring speakers of any age can continue to use their language as often as possible and in as many ways as possible, to ensure its survival. Positive attitudes and adequate services clearly contribute to its continued use.

Several organisations work towards or support language revitalisation and maintenance in Australia, including the following.

- The Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) website provides resources to Indigenous groups who wish to undertake their own project in language revitalisation and maintenance. Enabling Indigenous groups to control their own language projects means that important language-culture connections can be identified.

Scan the code or click here to view the PBC website.

- AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) works to recognise and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultures. Part of this work is to support revitalisation programs as well as to research and advise government policy on First Nations languages. AIATSIS supports a number of projects, such as the development of dictionaries for First Nations languages.

Scan the code or click here to view the AIATSIS website.

- The Australian Government has now included a target about strengthening Indigenous languages and is working with a national body, First Languages Australia, in this endeavour.

Scan the code or click here to view the First Languages Australia website.

- VACL (Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages) is a state-based program that supports language projects, such as the 'Creative revival of Indigenous languages' project, which organises festivals and other arts collaborations celebrating Indigenous languages of Victoria.

Scan the code or click here to view the VACL website.

- Various schools, TAFE colleges and universities around Australia teach Indigenous languages as part of their language program.

## Develop your understanding 12.6

From the 2020 National Indigenous Languages Report, the following traditional Indigenous languages are considered strong, because they are still acquired by children as their first and main language: Western Desert languages, Yolŋu Matha, Warlpiri, Arrernte, Alyawarr, Anmatyerr, Murrinh-Patha, Bininj Kunwok, Anindilyakwa, Burarra, Wik Mungkan and Mawng (DITRC 2020, pp. 51–2).

Choose one of these languages and research the following information.

1 Where is the language spoken?

2 How many current speakers are there?

3 What language programs are underway to maintain this language?

## Writing English Language essays

English Language essays are exploratory essays that discuss key ideas in linguistics. They should be formal and objective, and use relevant linguistic evidence and examples to support each idea explored. When developing your essay, you should refer to published research from linguists. The ability to use metalanguage is essential.

In terms of structure, English Language essays are similar to regular English essays. They should contain an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion. However, there are also some specific rules that you should follow.

- Don't include any examples or evidence in the introduction.
- Don't provide definitions for the metalanguage.
- Ensure you include contextual information with your evidence and examples.

One major difference between an English Language essay and an English essay is the way in which the essay topic is presented. In English Language, you are often provided with an essay question alongside pieces of stimulus material related to the topic. In your essay, you should aim to address all parts of the question and to incorporate references to the stimulus material. The essay topic and stimulus material allow you to draw on the knowledge you have developed about language throughout the course as well as your wider reading.

Taking the time to deconstruct the key words in the essay topic and break down the stimulus material will ensure you understand the nature of the topic, and will stimulate your mind to generate content for your body paragraphs. The best essays are ones that contain relevant evidence and examples that allow you to demonstrate your understanding of the essay topic.

A checklist has been provided on the following page to assist you when planning, drafting and writing your essays.

Scan the code or click here to view an example of an essay topic with accompanying stimulus material on the evolution of the English language, along with an essay plan and a sample essay.

Scan the code or click here to watch a video about essay writing in VCE English Language, on our webpage of further resources.

## Checklist for essay writing

| | |
|---|---|
| **Planning** | **Assessing the essay topic and stimulus material**<br>☐ Break down the essay topic and identify what is being asked of you.<br>☐ Identify the ideas presented in the essay prompt.<br>☐ Construct a contention or take a clear stance.<br>☐ Synthesise the main ideas, and connect them to the key knowledge from the relevant area of study.<br>**Planning your essay**<br>☐ Decide which language subsystems are most appropriate for you to discuss in your essay.<br>☐ Select relevant language examples to discuss.<br>☐ Use bullet points to plan the content you will include in each of your main body paragraphs.<br>☐ Ensure your plan will enable you to demonstrate key knowledge from the relevant area of study.<br>☐ Use accurate metalanguage in your plan. |
| **Introduction** | ☐ Include a unique and thoughtful opening sentence to capture your audience's attention.<br>☐ Assert your contention or stance in response to the essay topic.<br>☐ Summarise your contention and main arguments.<br>☐ Include a clear outline of the ideas you will discuss in the essay. |
| **Main body paragraphs** | ☐ Use clear topic sentences at the beginning of each body paragraph, to assert each paragraph's key idea.<br>☐ Substantiate the discussion with examples, with clear connections to the relevant subsystems.<br>☐ Refer to the ideas presented in the stimulus material.<br>☐ Make sure your essay remains cohesive throughout the body paragraph – avoid going off-topic. |
| **Conclusion** | ☐ Draw a conclusion based on the ideas examined in the body paragraphs: if we accept this premise, what are the implications? |
| **Use of language** | ☐ Make sure you consistently use the metalanguage relevant to the topic.<br>☐ Use Standard English conventions such as correct spelling and grammar.<br>☐ Use a variety of different sentence structures, for fluency and cohesion. |

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