

## A-Level English Language Bridging Work

The bridging work tasks relate to these aspects of the English Language Course.

### 1. Child Language Acquisition

- *Find out about your own language use as a baby and young child.*
- *Conduct a language investigation on children's language development.*

### 2. Language Variation

- *Find out about attitudes to accents.*
- *The connection between language and culture.*
- *Conduct an investigation into accents.*

### 3. Language Change

- *How has language changed in the last 80 years?*
- *How is language changing now? Conduct an investigation.*

## 1. Child Language Acquisition

### Learning to Talk

What do you know about the way you learned to talk? What about younger relatives or other babies you know?

Included in the boxes below are some of the things you might remember about learning to talk from birth to about age 3.

**Answer the questions with your memories or ask people who knew you when you were a baby or toddler.**

**Then answer this question:**

**What were the biggest influences on your language as you began to speak?**

Did you have any favourite songs or nursery rhymes?  
Eg. The Wheels on the Bus

What were your favourite stories? Eg. Dear Zoo or The Hungry Caterpillar

What was your first word?

Did you have your own names for people, pets or toys?

Did you mispronounce words?

Does your family have special words for things that come from when you were a baby?

Did you have television programme that you liked? Did it influence the way you spoke?

Did you have an imaginary friend?

Which toys did you enjoy playing with?

## Conduct your own investigation. The Wug Experiment

Some researchers believe that as children learn to speak, children are NOT simply copying what they hear. They believe that children have an in built ability to use grammatical rules.

For example: a grammatical rule in English is that plurals end in -s ( with a few exceptions such as 'sheep')

One dog

Two dogs

Do children know this rule? How could you find out?

This is an experiment that two researcher called Berko and Brown conducted on young children under the age of 3.

**If you know some young children you could try this out. It might even work over Skype.**

**Write down the results of your investigation. What are your conclusions?**



This is a Wug.



Now there is another one.

There are two of them.

There are two \_\_\_\_.

Photo courtesy of Jean Berko Gleason

Children were shown a picture of an imaginary animal and were told it was a called a wug.

It was important that they had not heard the word before, like the word 'dog'.

They they were shows a picture of two of the animals and asked to complete the sentence:

'There are two .....

If the children said two 'wugs', it showed that they knew the grammatical rule, that plurals end in -s.

## Language Variation

### 2. Find out about attitudes to accents.

Everyone has an accent! You might have an accent that corresponds to your home region. If you think your accent does not identify where you grew up, you might have a received pronunciation accent (R.P), this is sometimes called a BBC accent.

A person's accent might make other people make assumptions about their:

- Class
- Region
- Age
- Social group



**What is your attitude to accents? Can you finish these sentences or not?**

1. My favourite accent is .....
2. I really dislike the .....accent.
3. The most friendly accent is.....
4. The most untrustworthy accent is.....
5. People who have this accent sound stupid.....
6. People with this accent sound intelligent.....

If you found that you make judgements on people based on their accents, you are not alone! The vast majority of people do. Just look at the results of this survey about which accent is friendliest.

	Very friendly	Fairly friendly	Neither friendly nor unfriendly	Not very friendly	Not at all friendly	Don't know	NET: Friendly	NET: Unfriendly
Devon	21%	44%	24%	3%	1%	8%	65%	4%
Newcastle	19%	38%	26%	9%	4%	5%	56%	13%
Edinburgh	14%	38%	28%	11%	3%	5%	51%	15%
Cardiff	13%	38%	30%	9%	4%	6%	51%	13%
London (Cockney)	13%	36%	29%	14%	6%	3%	49%	19%
Liverpool	12%	31%	28%	16%	9%	4%	42%	26%
Belfast	10%	30%	29%	16%	8%	7%	41%	24%
Received Pronunciation / Queen's English	11%	27%	35%	17%	7%	4%	38%	23%
Manchester	9%	29%	36%	17%	4%	5%	38%	21%
Birmingham	8%	28%	37%	15%	6%	5%	37%	21%

Some people believe that making judgements based on accents is accentism, a type of discrimination.

- In your opinion, does accentism exist?
- Have you been affected by accentism?
- Have you ever tried to change your accent? Why?
- Do you know people who change their accents in certain situations? How and why do they do this?
- Why do you think people make these judgements?
- Should accentism be treated like other forms of discrimination? Why/why not?

## Language and Culture 1

'Word of Mouth' with Michael Rosen and Jeffrey Boakye

[BBC Radio 4 - Word of Mouth, Jeffrey Boakye on black-related words](#)

*In this podcast, Michael Rosen discusses the connections between language, identity and race with Jeffrey Boakye. He had recently published a book 'Black, Listed' in which he discusses the significance of particular words in his life.*

1. What is problematic about the word 'black' to describe a person's race?
2. What does the word 'auntie' mean in Jeffrey Boakye's family? Is this different in your family?
3. What were the language influences on Jeffrey Boakye growing up?
4. Why did Jeffrey try not to use Caribbean dialect as a child?
5. What problems did he encounter by not using the same dialect as his friends?
6. As someone about to embark upon a study of English Language, what do you think this discussion reveals about the importance of the language we use?

## Language and Culture 2

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b08n4hmh>

**Listen to the Podcast, 'The Lost Cockney Voice' (the link is above)**

**Answer these questions.**

Why did Cole Moreton change his accent from East London to RP?

Why does he call his Nan's lost accent 'The Queen's Cockney'?

What influences were there on Cole's Nan's accent?

What is your response to the English lesson given to new immigrants?

Why did the Cockney accent start to disappear after the war?

In recent years, why has the London accent changed?

What is Multicultural London English (MLE)?

How is MLE different from Cockney?

What are the current attitudes to MLE?

## Mini Investigation

Show people this picture and ask them to tell you what it is. Note down how they say the word then ask them where they grew up.

**Does your research come to any conclusion about accent and region?**



1. Barth – with a long ‘a’ sound as in ‘far’ and a ‘th’ sound at the end
2. Bath – with a short ‘a’ sound as in Math and a ‘th’ sound at the end
3. Barf – with a long ‘a’ sound and a ‘f’ sound at the end
4. Baf -with a short ‘a’ and a ‘f’ sound at the end.

### 3. How has language changed in the last 80 years?

Language is changing all the time. New words are invented and others fall out of use. Accents are also continually changing. (See task 2 for information about accents)

Social attitudes, for example to sexism, racism or social class, also influence the language that is thought to be rude or offensive.

#### Government Advice Films

In this activity, you are going to examine how language has changed since the 1940s.

**The government regularly issues official announcements to the public. These three films aim to inform, advise and warn the general public.**

The first film from 1940 gives reassuring advice about how to protect your home in the event of a German air raid. It was made by Pathe films to be shown in the cinema. The voice over speaker has an accent that has almost completely disappeared, it is called elevated RP and was mainly used by the upper classes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjWfR7mdAaE>

In the 1970s, the government made many public information films warning the public about the dangers they faced in many different situations. This one warns smokers about the dangers of not putting out cigarettes safely. You will notice that the speaker is not as posh as in the 1940 broadcast. Why might this be?

[COI Smoke Kills 1970s UK Public Information Film - YouTube](#)

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the government is still advising its citizens on how to stay safe. In this case, how to act during a terrorist attack.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDiv-PwEde4>

Watch each video and fill in this chart about the **voice over** for each video.

	1940	1970	2015
<b>Gender of speaker</b>			
<b>Can you tell where the speaker comes from in Britain? If so, where?</b>			
<b>Can you make a judgement about the social class of the speaker?</b>			
<b>How would you describe the tone of the speaker. Eg. Friendly, fierce, reassuring, bossy.</b>			
<b>Are any words used that are no longer in use today? If so, what are they?</b>			

Using the information on the chart, summarise how language has changed since 1940.

## 4. How does your language change on social media?

Read this article (link below)

### ‘C ya l8tr bbz’ – Language, Communication and Technology

PhD student Christian Ilbury explores the relationship between evolving technology and the linguistic choices we make on social media, offering insights from his current research that explode myths about spelling, abbreviations and other aspects of ‘txtspeak’.

[emag\\_ci\\_languagecommunicationonline.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](http://emag.ci.languagecommunicationonline.pdf)

#### Conduct your own investigation into your use of ‘netspeak’

In his article, Christian Ilbury examines the ways that people use informal ‘netspeak’. You can investigate your use of language in these contexts.

Find some examples of messages or including texts and emails you have sent and received in the past few weeks. See if you can find a few examples in the following groups:

- Friends
- Older family members
- Family members around your age
- Other adults eg. Work colleagues, teachers

**Go through your messages and put a tick in the box each time you find an example of these features.**

**Emoji** - 😊

**Politeness** – eg. A greeting. A polite enquiry. How are you? A polite signing off.

**Initialism/acronym** – letters used to stand for a phrase or letter. Eg.LOL, k

**Correctly punctuated sentence.** With capital letter and full stop/exclamation mark/ etc

**Phonetic spelling** ( words spelt as they sound) – eg. Nite, yeah,

**One word message** – the complete message is just one word

	emoji	Politeness	Initialism/acronym	Correctly punctuated sentence	Phonetic spelling	One word message
<b>Friends</b>						
<b>Older family members</b>						
<b>Family members around your age</b>						
<b>Other adults</b>						

**Look at the data you have collected. What conclusions could you draw about how you change your language when communicating with different audiences?**