



**Altrincham College**  
**English Department KS5**  
**English Language Course Handbook**  
**&**  
**Key Vocabulary English Language**

*Helping our students to express their understanding with depth, clarity and creativity*

**The elements you need to succeed!**

# **A level English Language**

## **Course content**

### **Language, the individual and society**

#### **Textual variations and representations:**

The texts you study will be about various subjects, from various writers and speakers, for various audiences, for various purposes, in a variety of genres, using a variety of modes (written, spoken, electronic) from different times, from different places (global, national, regional).

You will explore how language is: shaped according to audience, purpose, genre and mode, shaped according to context, used to construct meanings and representations, used to enact relationships between writers, speakers and audiences or between participants within a text.

This exploration will include: methods of language analysis, how identity is constructed, how audiences are addressed and positioned, the functions of the texts the structure and organisation of the text, show representations are produced.

#### **Methods of language analysis**

- phonetics, phonology and prosodics: how speech sounds and effects are articulated and analysed
- graphology: the visual aspects of textual design and appearance
- lexis and semantics: the vocabulary of English, including social and historical variation
- grammar, including morphology: the structural patterns and shapes of English at sentence, clause, phrase and word level
- pragmatics: the contextual aspects of language use
- discourse: extended stretches of communication occurring in different genres, modes and contexts.

#### **Children's language development**

You will study: the functions of children's language, phonological, pragmatic, lexical, semantic and grammatical development, different genres of speech and writing,

different modes of communication (spoken, written, multimodal) theories and research about language development.

## **Language diversity and change**

You will study:

texts using different sociolects (to include social and occupational groups, gender and ethnicity) texts using different dialects (to include regional, national and international varieties of English) texts that use language to represent the different groups above, texts from different periods, from 1600 to the present day, written, spoken and electronic texts about a range of subjects, for various audiences and purposes in a variety of genres, items from collections of language data (eg dictionaries, online resources, language corpora) research findings (eg tables, graphs, statistics).

You will explore:

how language varies because of personal, social, geographical and temporal contexts, why language varies and changes, developing critical knowledge and understanding of different views and explanations, attitudes to language variation and change, the use of language according to audience, purpose, genre and mode, how language is used to enact relationships.

This will include: methods of language analysis how identity is constructed how audiences are addressed and positioned the functions of the texts the structure and organisation of the text how representations are produced.

## **Language discourses**

You will study a range of texts that convey attitudes to language diversity and change. The texts studied will include those written for non-specialist audiences.

You will explore how texts are produced to convey views and opinions about language issues and how they:

- represent language
- construct an identity for the producer
- position the reader and seek to influence them
- are connected to discourses about language.

## ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

**AO1:** Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.

**AO2:** Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use.

**AO3:** Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning.

**AO4:** Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods.

**AO5:** Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways.

# Exam Overview

## Paper 1

### Language, the Individual and Society

#### Section A: Textual Variations and Representations

##### Question 1

Text A: analyse how language is used to create meanings and representations. AO1  
AO3

##### Question 2

Text B: analyse how language is used to create meanings and representations.  
AO1 AO3

##### Question 3

Explore the similarities and differences in the ways that Text A and Text B use  
language. AO4

#### Section B: Child Language Development

Choose one question. There will be two questions each with data. The question  
consists of a statement which you will need to evaluate the view expressed by  
referring to the data and to ideas from your studies. AO1 AO2

## Paper 2

### Language Diversity and Change

#### Section A: Diversity and Change

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2 from Section A:

Question 1: Evaluate the idea that...

Question 2: Evaluate the idea that...

#### Section B: Language Discourses

Answer **both** Question 3 **and** Question 4 from Section B.

The question is based on two sets of data (typically articles).

Analyse how language is used in Text A and Text B to present views about the nature of language change. In your answer you should:

- examine any similarities and differences you find between the two texts
- explore how effectively the texts present their views.

AO1,3,4

Question 4

Write an opinion article in which you assess the ideas and issues raised in Text A and Text B and argue your own views. AO2,5

## **NEA (Non-Exam Assessment)**

**Language Investigation (2,000 words excluding data) 50 marks.**

**Original Writing & Commentary (750 words each). 50 marks.**

- power of persuasion
- power of story telling
- power of information.

# Glossary of key terms and guide to methods of language analysis

## Phonetics, phonology and prosodics

At A Level you will describe and explore the sound system (phonology), the ways that sounds produced by users of that system are produced (phonetics), and how rhythm and intonation are used in speech. Studies include,

- the phoneme as a basic distinct unit of sound
- the different types of vowel phonemes (long, short and diphthongs)
- how consonant phonemes are formed in terms of voicing, place of articulation and manner of articulation
- how individual phonemes combine to form syllables
- how variations of the same phoneme may occur in pronunciations of certain words
- variations in speech patterns of individuals and groups in terms of regional accent, and as a result of accommodation
- the representation of the speech patterns of individuals and groups in different discourses;
- the use of sound iconicity (e.g. onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, consonance) for effect
- how speakers use variations in pitch, intonation, volume and speed depending on situational aspects
- how the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) can be used to represent and talk about the different aspects of the sound system.

## Key terms

This list is not exhaustive but attempts to give an indication of the terms which students are likely to encounter in their studies.

**Phoneme:** the basic unit of sound.

**Diphthong:** a vowel sound that is the combination of two separate sounds, where a speaker glides from one to another.

**Voicing:** the act of the vocal cords either vibrating (voiced) or not vibrating (unvoiced) in the production of a consonant sound.

**Place of articulation:** the position in the mouth where a consonant sound is produced.

**Manner of articulation:** the extent to which airflow is interrupted by parts of the mouth in the production of consonant sounds.

**Syllable:** a sound unit with a vowel at its centre.

**Accent:** a regional variety of speech that differs from other regional varieties in terms of pronunciation.

**Accommodation:** the ways that individuals adjust their speech patterns to match others.

**Sound iconicity:** the use of the sound system to mirror form or meaning.

**International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA):** an internationally recognised system of phonetic transcription.

## Lexis and Semantics

At this level students describe and explore the vocabulary system of English. Studies include,

- the denotative and connotational meanings of words
- how meanings are constructed through the use of figurative language such as metaphor
- sense relationships between words through the concepts of semantic fields, synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms and hyponyms
- how individuals and groups vary vocabulary choices according to audience and purpose, and how levels of formality may vary according to these contextual factors
- how speakers may use specialist registers and examples of jargon
- how speakers' sociolects and dialects reflect variations according to group membership and geographical region
- how variation in text design reflects variation in language use between individuals, groups, communities and nations
- how new words are formed through the process of neology, for example through blending, compounding, and the forming of acronyms, initialisms and eponyms
- how words and their meanings change over time, for example through narrowing, broadening, amelioration, pejoration, and semantic reclamation.

### Key terms

This list is not exhaustive but attempts to give an indication of the terms which students are likely to encounter in their studies.

**Denotative and connotational meanings:** the literal (denotative) and associated (connotational) meanings of words.

**Figurative language:** language used in a non-literal way in order to describe something in another's terms (e.g. simile or metaphor).

**Semantic fields:** groups of words connected by a shared meaning. Synonyms: words that have equivalent meanings.

**Antonyms:** words that have contrasting meanings.

**Hypernyms:** words whose meanings contain other words, (eg animal contains dog, cat and fish).

**Hyponyms:** words that can be included in a larger, more general category (eg the hyponyms car, bus, aeroplane as a form of the hypernym transport).

**Levels of formality:** vocabulary styles including slang, colloquial, taboo, formal and frozen levels. Jargon: a technical vocabulary associated with a particular occupation or activity.

**Sociolect:** a language style associated with a particular social group. Dialect: a language style associated with a particular geographical region.

**Neology:** the process of new word formation, including the following: blends, compounds, acronyms, initialisms, eponyms.

**Semantic change:** the process of words changing meaning, including the following: narrowing, broadening, amelioration, pejoration, semantic reclamation.

## Grammar

At this level students describe and explore word formation (morphology) and order and structure within the larger units of phrases, clauses and sentences (syntax). Studies include,

- how root morphemes combine with affixes to show tense or number (inflectional function), or to form new words (derivational function)
- how head words in phrases are modified to form larger structures to provide more detail about people, places, objects or events
- how elements are arranged in clauses to support meaning and to achieve different kinds of effects
- how point of view can be grammatically realised in different ways through writers' and speakers' use of the active or passive voice
- how English verbs show the concept of time through tense and aspect
- how single clauses form multi-clause structures through co-ordination and subordination, and how in writing, these represent different types of sentences
- how clauses and sentences function in different ways, for example to form statements, form questions, give commands or make exclamations

## Key terms

This list is not exhaustive but attempts to give an indication of the terms which students are likely to encounter in their studies

**Morpheme:** the smallest grammatical unit, either a root or an affix.

**Root morpheme:** a morpheme that can stand on its own as a word. **Affix:** a morpheme that combines with a root morpheme to create a new word.

**Phrase:** a group of words centred around a head word.

**Head word:** the central word in a phrase which gives the phrase its name (e.g. noun phrase, adjective phrase) and may be modified by other words.

**Modification:** the adding of additional words to provide more detail to a head word in a phrase either before it (pre-modification) or after it (post-modification).

**Clause:** a group of words centred around a verb, which may be either grammatically complete (main clause) or incomplete (subordinate clause).

**Active voice:** a clause where the agent (doer) of an action is the subject. **Passive voice:** a clause where the patient (the entity affected by an action) is in the subject position, and the agent either follows or is left out.

**Tense:** how the time of an event is marked (usually through verb inflection): past, present & future.

**Aspect:** another element of marking the time of an event, by specifying whether they are progressive (ongoing) or perfective (completed).

**Coordination:** the joining of two or more independent clauses via co-ordinating conjunctions. Single words and longer phrases can also be co-ordinated.

**Subordination:** the joining of two or more clauses where only one is independent (the main clause) and the others dependent (subordinate clause/clauses).

**Sentence:** a larger unit of meaning, which may be formed of a single clause (simple sentence) or several clauses (compound or complex sentences).

**Sentence function:** the purpose a sentence fulfils in communication: as a statement, question, command or exclamation. These are also referred to in many grammar books as (respectively): declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives.

**Word class:** the grammatical category into which words can be placed, including noun, adjective, verb, adverb, determiner, pronoun, preposition, conjunction.

## Pragmatics

At this level students describe and explore the implied meanings of English and how language use creates meanings in interactional contexts. Studies include,

- the implied meanings of words, utterances and speech acts in their specific contexts
- face, politeness and co-operation in language interaction
- how text receivers draw inferences from others' language uses
- the influence of different contexts on the meanings of communicative acts
- how attitudes, values and ideologies can be signalled through language choices
- how language is used to enact and reflect relationships between people.

### Key terms

This list is not exhaustive but attempts to give an indication of the terms which students are likely to encounter in their studies.

**Implicature:** an implied meaning that has to be inferred as a result of a conversational maxim being broken.

**Inference:** the understanding of implied meanings. Irony: using language to signal an attitude other than what has been literally expressed.

**Deixis:** words that are context-bound where meaning depends on who is using them, and where and when they are being used.

**Speech acts:** communicative acts that carry meaning beyond the words and phrases used within them, for example, apologies and promises.

**Politeness:** the awareness of others' needs to be approved of and liked (positive politeness) and/or given freedom to express their own identity and choices (negative politeness).

**Face:** the concept of how all communication relies on presenting a 'face' to listeners and audiences, and how face-threatening acts (the threat to either positive or negative face) and the management of positive and negative face needs contribute to interaction.

**Cooperative principles in conversation:** how interaction is generally based upon various kinds of cooperative behaviour between speakers.