

Becoming a Student of Language

What does an A Level in English Language involve and what does it mean to be a great student of English Language? This activity will help you find out what's involved in the A Level and beyond and the ways of learning that will help you succeed in your exams and non-exam work, but more importantly than all that: how to enjoy and get the most out of the course. You might be in for a surprise or two along the way...

- Use the table below to get a sense of what might be involved in the A Level English Language course. Tick the things that sound like you might find them interesting and then tick any that you have already studied or learned about at some point in your education (whether at Primary, Secondary or just out of your own interest).
- Select three of these areas for language study that you most want to study in greater depth. Write a paragraph or two explaining what you already know (either through study or general knowledge), and a paragraph explaining what you would like to know more about and why.

What you might study	I've studied this	I know a bit about this but never studied it	Would like to learn more about it
How children start to say their first words			
The ways in which women and men use language in similar and different ways			
Why some accents are more liked than others			
How social media language has developed rapidly in the last couple of decades			
Where new words come from and why			
Why people in India, Nigeria, USA and New Zealand all have their own ways of speaking English			
How people in conversation interrupt and overlap with each other and how that works			
How slang develops and how it's been around for hundreds of years			

Why some words in the language are particularly offensive and make others feel angry or upset			
How writers use language to persuade and influence their readers			
Why some jobs and occupations develop their own specialist vocabulary and expressions			
How people switch and shift the ways they use language in different situation and with different people			
How English has changed from something that only the common people spoke to being the language of all parts of society			

2. Leap into Language – Language Profile

One of the most interesting aspects of studying language is that you learn more about your own language use, so let's make this first task all about you...

- Create a 'language profile' of yourself by answering the following questions and then writing them up as a set of bullet points that highlight what you think are the most interesting and important aspects of the language you use:

- o What's your earliest language memory? Can you remember a nursery rhyme, song or picture book from when you were very little?

- o Have your family or extended family kept any records – video, audio, family memories – of any of your earliest words?

- o Have you kept any old school books from when you were learning to read and write? o Where were you born and where in the UK, or the wider world, are your family from? Go back a few generations if you like and think about any other languages that your family members might speak, or other places your family members might have lived.

o Are there any words or expressions only you or your family use, which others don't really understand?

o Do you or your friends at school use language in any ways that you notice as being different from other people around you? These could be other people in your year, your teachers, your family, whoever.

o Do you listen to or watch anyone on TV, online or in films or music videos who uses language in a way that interests or annoys you?

o Do you ever look at or hear someone else using language in a way that you find is totally new or strange to you?

o Have your teachers or family ever talked to you about the way you speak?

One of the most useful resources for language on this course is you. Language is made up of so much more than the words we see printed on a page, so when you are thinking about language, come back to these ideas here to keep the range wide. We are often told there is a right way and a wrong way to use language, but the more you study about language, the more you'll realise that it's more complicated and interesting than that. And you'll also start to build up a bigger picture of the different influences on your own language identity as this course goes on – all the factors that influence who you are linguistically and how you can choose to behave with language in different situations.