**A’ Level English Language Independent Study Guide**

# Outline of Syllabus and Papers

**Paper 1 - Language, the individual and society**

**Section A - Textual variations and representations​**:

One contemporary text, another older. Q1 - analyse meanings and representations of one text

Q2 analyse meanings and representations of second text

Q3 comparison of the two texts

**Section B - Children’s language acquisition**

**Paper 2 - Language Diversity and Change**

**Section A​** - Essay on historical language change ​*(language change over time) ​*or on language variation within groups ​*(language and gender/class/ age/ social group)*

**Section B​** - Q3 comparing two texts on the same language controversy or issue; Q4 original writing on same linguistic issue , asking you to give and evaluate views on the same language issue covered in the Q3 texts

**Non-Examined Assessment**

Part A - Original Writing following a style model - to entertain OR to persuade OR to inform

Part B - Language Investigation on a topic / area of language study of your choice

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# Suggested Reading for Independent Study

Reading widely and generally with a critical eye will enrich your understanding of language. Visit the library to read and review the newspapers and magazines available. These articles will strengthen your analysis of such texts in the exams, give ideas for your NEA writing and comment articles.

There is a library of textbooks on English Language concepts and topics in C6. The books are reference only and available for reading when the room is free.

As part of your independent study, you should read and make notes from as many of the textbooks /books as possible. These texts will be especially useful for the theoretical aspects of your NEA Language Investigation where you need to link your data to specific linguistic theories and concepts.

How to read and make notes

No one is expecting you to read the book from beginning to end.

When reading academic textbooks, use the contents page and index pages to select relevant topics or areas of study so that your reading is focused; this will help you make notes under clear headings.

In addition, record title, author and publication to acknowledge sources. Your

Non-Examined Assessment will require a bibliography, so this is good practice.

Find time to read:

* Jean Aitchison’s ‘Language and Decay’
* Anything by David Crystal is essential reading. His book ​*‘Global English’* contains facts and ideas about the spread of English around the world and what this means for the state of the English language in the future. His ‘Stories of English’ describes and explains the development of English in all its varieties. He writes clearly and engagingly on all aspects of language and linguistics
* Another excellent writer is Lane Greene: writes for ​*The Economist​* about the politics of language ‘​*You Are What You Speak’, ​*and his descriptivist analysis of why grammar rules can never capture the extraordinary variety of ordinary usage ​*‘Talk on the Wild Side’ ​*is a fascinating, informative pitch for the descriptivist view of language. Here is a link to his short blog on how language changes can be systematic; an idea explained in more detail in

*‘Talk on the Wild Side’* [*https://aeon.co/essays/why-language-might-be-the-optimal-self-regulatingsystem*](https://aeon.co/essays/why-language-might-be-the-optimal-self-regulating-system)

* Books on gender by Jane Mills, Deborah Tannen, Jennifer Coates, Deborah

Cameron and Dale Spender

* Research studies on language and regional dialects and identity: Paul

Kerswill, Jenny Cheshire, Peter Trudgill, Basil Bernstein, William Labov

## Websites and blogs

EMC Text

EMag - online log-in details (hard copy in Library).

To expand your knowledge and embed the skills and concepts of the course, you should read as much as you can on the following websites which contain many articles, academic blogs and posts on topics directly relevant to your studies.

It is essential that you make notes on what you read. Again, make sure you record the names of particular writers, commentators or academics to acknowledge sources. It also means that you can quote particular ideas, views, research, etc as authoritative sources in an exam.

**1. Critical Discourse Analysis ​**is what you do when you analyse texts in terms of how the language used conveys ideas, meaning and representation. Reading the material on the following websites shows how CDA can be carried out on texts.

A study of two articles on bird flu in Korea [https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/cels/essays/writtendiscourse/Diffe ringOpinionsSThompson.pdf](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/cels/essays/writtendiscourse/DifferingOpinionsSThompson.pdf)

A study of reporting on war in Gaza - includes an explanation of CDA <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-017-0015-2>

Explanation of CDA and how it differs from other discourse analyses <https://www.sicotests.com/psyarticle.asp?id=215>

1. The following two links take you to the Sheffield University Department of Linguistics page. The second link focuses on Literary Linguistics in political speeches which some of you may want to look at [www.all-about-linguistics.group.shef.ac.uk](http://www.all-about-linguistics.group.shef.ac.uk/)

And

[http://all-about-linguistics.group.shef.ac.uk/branches-of-linguistics/literary-linguistics/literary-li nguistics-and-the-media/political-speeches/](http://all-about-linguistics.group.shef.ac.uk/branches-of-linguistics/literary-linguistics/literary-linguistics-and-the-media/political-speeches/)

1. ​<https://linguisticus.wordpress.com/>

This one is THE website for A’ Level Language: it is crammed with essential articles, from explaining technical grammar terms to exploring language controversies around language and identity. Bookmark it and make a point of reading a different article regularly.

The universalteacher website is aimed at students generally, but the links to Language are aimed at A Level students in particular and include papers/ pages on some of the major studies in dialect levelling, Standard English and Received Pronunciation <http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/lang/rp.htm>

Carry out regular searches and find articles on science/language sections in The Guardian. These articles will not only look at language from an interesting viewpoint, they will also provide good models of writing for you to ‘copy’ for NEA Original Writing and Q4 of Paper 2.

## Linguistic concepts: descriptivism and prescriptivism

Go online and find relevant articles and blogs on the ongoing conflict between descriptivists and prescriptivists, and make clear notes on who says and thinks what: Oliver Kamm

Simon Heffer

Lynn Truss

Lane Greene