# Year 5 Transition Work for A-Level English Language

## Introduction

For A-Level English Language at St. Ambrose College, we follow the OCR specification. This specification allows you to develop a deep and broad understanding of how the English language works. You will engage creatively with areas of topical debate and explore how language is used in a variety of contexts.

You can access the full specification by following this link: <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171195-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-english-language-h470.pdf>

Throughout the course, you will be encouraged to approach the study of language with creativity and will learn to explore unseen texts from a range of perspectives. You will learn to apply linguistic terminology and critical perspectives, studying theories which allow you to see language with new eyes.

There are two exams and an NEA (non-examination assessment). The first exam, **Component 1: Exploring Language**, focuses on knowledge and understanding of the language levels and application of critical analysis skills. You will also produce your own piece of writing based on a particular topical issue, allowing you to express your creativity. The second exam, **Component 2: Dimensions of Linguistic Variation**, concentrates on a variety of contexts for further exploration of language in use: child language acquisition, language in the media and language change. **Component 3: Independent Language Research** (also called the **NEA)** encourages independence as you will focus on an area of particular personal interest to you, giving you some freedom in the aspects of language you will study.

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| **Component** | **Content Overview** |
| Component 1: Exploring Language | Section A: Language under the microscope |
| Section B: Writing about a topical language issue |
| Section C: Comparing and contrasting texts |
| Component 2: Dimensions of Linguistic Variation | Section A: Child language acquisition |
| Section B: Language in the media |
| Section C: Language change |
| Component 3: Independent Language Research | Section A: An independent investigation of language |
| Section B: The academic poster |

## Broadening your Literary Horizons

In order to help you develop the breadth of knowledge of literary genres and movements you need, it is necessary for you to read as widely as possible. This will also help you to discover your own interests and enjoyment, developing your confidence and skill as informed, independent readers and critics.

Keeping a record of your reading will help you to make and explore connections, comparisons and contrasts between the texts you have read and to contextualise your ideas about language use. It will also come in handy for revision purposes.

A wider reading portfolio may also provide evidence of your interest and enthusiasm for language study beyond the confines of the curriculum and, as such, be something you could take along to a university admissions interview if you wish to continue to study English language at under-graduate level.

Your reading log could take any form: a handwritten journal in a notebook, a scrapbook combining images and text, typed notes or even a blog – be as creative as you like.

## Task 1: General Introduction

Watch the following video clips:

* David Crystal – Will English Always Be the Global Language? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Kvs8SxN8mc> (you will become very familiar with David Crystal as he is by far the most prominent linguist – and by far the most engaging!)
* David Crystal – World Englishes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_q9b9YqGRY>
* David Crystal – What do you most enjoy about the English language? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqkIv79KBTw>
* Steven Pinker – Language Pragmatics <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKbp4hEHV-s>
* Lera Boroditsky – How Language Shapes the Way we Think <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKK7wGAYP6k&t=14s>

Read the following articles/pages:

* An article on some of the ways that language can be playful <https://medium.com/@omarscribbles/9-strange-but-interesting-uses-of-the-english-language-836d100faad7>
* Some fun facts about the English language <https://blog.lingoda.com/en/fun-facts-english-language>

Do some of your own research about language. Have a browse through the reading list in the appendix. You could even think about becoming familiar with the basic terminology. There are a plethora of resources available online to help you get started in language study.

## Task 2: Language Under the Microscope

Here are a few of the many ways the word ‘home’ is used in English. What are the different meanings of the word ‘home’ in these examples? How does the meaning of a word modify when it is placed alongside other words? Try to write a brief explanation for each one.

* the home front
* old people’s home
* Home Secretary
* homeland
* my home
* the home straight
* home run
* home-made
* at home

‘Home’ has many different meanings. It can be your country (homeland, the home front), the place where you live (my home), the conclusion of a difficult task (on the home straight) etc. Much of the meaning process relates to the associations you have with a word, which can be very personal to each person.

Can you think of any other examples of words where the meaning changes drastically depending on the connotations held by the phrase? Write down a few examples.

What does this tell you about the possibilities for the English language? Do you think all languages have this capability? Why or why not?

## Task 3: Writing About a Topical Language Issue – Key Assessed Piece

Think about your use of social media:

* Which apps/websites are the most popular amongst your age group? Why?
* Does a gender split exist anywhere? Do you think more girls use Instagram than boys?
* Do you adapt your language choices when you use each type of technology? (eg. do you change your spelling and grammar when texting people? What about when you send emails?)
* Why do you think people might do this?

Watch this David Crystal video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVqcoB798Is&t=4s>

*“Technology is spoiling the English language.”*

Write a short piece in the style of a casual magazine column in response to this statement. As linguists, it is wise to take the approach of a non-judgemental spectator (a **descriptivist**) rather than focusing on upholding what is ‘correct’ in terms of language (a **prescriptivist**): however, you are free to argue from whichever side you like. It would be wise to do some research by reading around the topic – try googling the statement and see what you can find. Try to appeal to your audience – what age group does your magazine aim for? How will you adapt your language choices to suit your readers? Why are you making these choices? Be creative! Use the writing guide in the appendix to help you. There is an article in the appendix to start you off, as well as the articles linked below:

* <https://thebottomline.as.ucsb.edu/2015/04/omg-is-txting-ruining-english>
* <https://www.idgconnect.com/idgconnect/opinion/1011047/tech-ruining-language>

## Task 4: Comparing and Contrasting Texts

When you analyse a text linguistically, you are identifying and commenting upon the following: the features of a text; how it is structured; the words and sentence choices used; how it looks and how it communicates to the reader. You must also show your understanding of the specific text you are given. You should consider its situation and what features of speech and writing are contained within it.

Texts vary according to their context, or situation – their **audience**, **purpose**, **genre**, the **date** they were **written** or **spoken** and **by whom**. It’s very important when you start to analyse a text to pay close attention to its context. This will affect how the writer or speaker uses language and the meanings of the words and phrases they use. You should refer specifically to the text’s context when interpreting the meaning of specific features. When you begin to analyse a text, consider the following questions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Spoken text** | **Written text** |
| What is the purpose of the interaction? | What is the purpose of the text? |
| Who are the speakers? | Who has written the text? |
| What is their relationship to each other? | Do they have a vested interest in a product, group or service? |
| Is there a difference in the power or authority of the speakers? | Who is the intended audience of the text? |
| What is the gender of the speakers? | Where would the intended audience read or receive the text? |
| What are the speakers talking about? | When was the text written? |
| Where is the conversation taking place? | Could the text have been affected by a recent event? |
| You could consider to what extent the answers to these questions affect the way the speakers interact and the language that they use. | As in your analysis of a spoken text, you should consider to what extent the answers to these questions affect the language used by the writer and the meanings created as a result. |

In the appendix under ‘Task 4’, you will find **Text A** which is an extract from a transcript of a family mealtime conversation, recorded by Ella, aged 17. Laura is Ella’s mother, Daniel is her father and Joan is her grandmother. Joan is talking first about someone at her bowling club and then about how the department store Marks and Spencer looked after the health of its employees when she worked there in the 1950s. Laura also worked at the store, but more recently. **Text B** is an extract from an ‘Employee Welfare Timeline’ on Marks in Time, an official site created by Marks and Spencer which charts the history of the company. This text can be found by following this link and looking at **pages 5, 6 and 7** of the timeline: <https://marksintime.marksandspencer.com/download?id=3002>

Read both texts, and make some notes/annotations to answer the following questions:

* What connections can you make between the two texts? What contrasts can you identify?
* How formal is each text? Can you explain why they differ in this way?
* Can you identify any deviations from Standard English? Why is this significant?
* Are there any interesting lexical choices? Why have the speakers/writers chosen to use these words?
* What expressions are used? Can you see any idioms, for example? What is the effect of this?
* How do the speakers/writers relate to their listeners/readers? Is there a power dynamic? How do you know?

**Task 5: Child language acquisition**

Think of the world from a one-year-old baby’s point of view. Draw a timeline representing their typical day. What is the baby likely to be communicating about? Who might the baby be communicating with? How do they communicate their needs?

Have a go at answering the following questions. You may need to research some of the answers.

1. What was your first word? If you don’t know, try to find out by asking family or friends.
2. What words did you misunderstand when you were little? Were there any you mispronounced?
3. What difficulties do people face in trying to decipher a foreign language? Are these difficulties greater, or less, for an infant who finds themselves surrounded by adults speaking what will become their mother tongue?
4. Do you think some languages are more difficult than others?
5. Learning language is easier when you are young, i.e. before puberty. True or false?
6. Consider how important you think each of the following factors may be in helping children learn their native tongue. Put the ideas in rank order:
   1. imitating what they hear
   2. being carefully taught by parents
   3. being corrected when they make mistakes
   4. having lots of opportunities to interact with adults
   5. being clever enough to work out the rules of grammar.
7. What similarities and differences are there between learning to understand and speak your mother tongue, and learning to read and write it?
8. Which of these options do you think is the most efficient method of teaching children to read?
   1. teaching them how letters and letter combinations correspond to certain sounds
   2. reading stories with them and encouraging them to recognise whole words.
9. Is language unique to humans? Do you think any other animals communicate with language?
10. Are we ‘programmed’ to learn language by something unique in the human genetic make-up? Is language down to nature or nurture?
11. What comes first: our ability to have an idea or our learning to express it in words?
12. Does a child learn the concept of a ‘cup ‘ before they can say/use the word, or is it the other way round?
13. Can thoughts exist without the words to describe them?
14. Babies who can only say two words cannot communicate. True or false?
15. What is distinctive about the ways in which adults talk to children? Consider the words, intonation, speed, pitch and type of utterances.

## Task 6: Language in the Media

Browse through online newspaper/magazine articles and collect some examples of the differences in the way that men and women are presented. Can you make any interesting statements about any patterns you have spotted? You might find it worthwhile to start by looking at how appearances are described according to gender. Some useful links to start you off:

* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/index.html>
* <https://www.thesun.co.uk/tvandshowbiz/>

Research and collect examples of how the military is represented in advertisements. These could be television, radio, print or billboard advertisements. What do you notice? Who are these advertisements aimed at? How do you know this? How to they appeal to them? Do you think these portray an accurate picture of what it’s like to be in the military? Do you notice any patterns in the lexical choices these advertisements employ? What about the types of sentences? Have a look at the videos below, and look in the appendix for further examples:

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sM3E4xFB0Y>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAMFQwebh6Q>
* <https://metro.co.uk/video/british-armys-new-recruitment-campaign-sees-stereotypes-1834012/?ito=vjs-link>

Write a 400-500 word piece one either of these research tasks. Your writing could focus on patterns you have spotted as well as considering the reasons why certain groups are presented in particular ways in the media. Remember to focus on clear examples of language use.

## Task 7: Language Change

Watch this video on dialects: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIi-Ug7qo74>

Look at the following words which come from a traditional Mancunian dialect. What do they mean in Standard English?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| barm/barmcake | ginnel | tea | dinner |
| dead (as in 'dead hard') | well (as in 'well bad') | sorted | brew |
| kecks | minging | mither | mint |
| sound | snide | buzzin' | muppet |
| pop | gaff | our kid | dibble |

Put these words into categories eg. food. Can you think of any explanations for the patterns you’ve found?

Search YouTube for some interview clips with well-known speakers of Mancunian English. Make sure you include the name and the word ‘interview’. Here are some suggestions:

* Liam Gallagher (of the band Oasis)
* Terry Christian (TV broadcaster)
* Jason Manford (comedian)
* Maxine Peake (actor)
* John Cooper Clarke (poet)
* Michelle Keegan (actor)
* Johnny Marr (guitarist, of the band The Smiths)
* Karl Pilkington (comedian)
* Suranne Jones (actor)
* Ryan Giggs (footballer)

Make notes of the differences you notice between the speakers. Try to rank them in order of ‘strongest’ to ‘weakest’ in terms of their Mancunian accent.

Are there any links between the speakers’ ages, social class, their actual place of birth or gender?

Do any of the speakers you have listened to use Mancunian dialect lexis? List any examples you have spotted. When do they use it and why or why not?

Watch these videos:

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWDKsHm6gTA>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hibYoYwGko>

Why do you think the Mancunian dialect is less common nowadays? Write a brief summary.

## Task 8: Independent Language Investigation – Key Assessed Piece

Research another English dialect etc. cockney or Jamaican English. This could be from the UK or another place in the world. Produce an academic poster explaining some of the key vocabulary and how it is different to Standard English, facts about where it originated, reasons why certain words emerged, how many people speak it, its use today, as well as any other interesting facts.

You can find a list of English dialects here:

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dialects_of_English>

Here are some useful links:

* <http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/lang/britishisles.htm>
* <http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/lang/dialectresearch.htm>
* <https://www.southamcollege.com/uploaded/subjects/English/eng_revision/Accent_Dialect_and_Social_Class_Revision_Booklet.pdf>
* <https://aggslanguage.wordpress.com/4-4-%E2%80%93-the-basic-variation-theorists-%E2%80%93-labov-trudgill-cheshire-millroy-bernstein/>
* <https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects>

# Appendix

## Task 1

Reading list

* David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*, 2003
* Alan Gardiner, *English Language A-level Study Guide*, 2000
* David Crystal, *Language and the Internet*, 2006
* David Crystal, *Begat: The King James Bible and the English Language*, 2010
* Carter and Cornbleet, *The Language of Speech and Writing*, 2001
* <https://aggslanguage.wordpress.com/> (following the links down the side will take you to a number of helpful articles to get you started)
* David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Language*, 2001
* Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand*, 1990
* Shirley Russell, *Grammar, Structure and Style*, 2001
* Howard Jackson and Peter Stockwell, *An Introduction to the Nature and Functions of Language*, 1996
* David Crystal, *The Stories of English*, 2005
* <http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/contents.htm#langa> (probably the most useful online resource available for free. This website is focused on a different exam specification so ignore the parts which are specific to that, but all of the content is well-explained and relevant)
* Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, 2003 (this is a prescriptivist’s approach to the English language and this is not necessarily a view you should aim to replicate, but it is still important to consider alternative perspectives to give you a rounded view of language study)
* Steve Thorne, *The Language of War*, 2006
* Allington & Mayor, *Communicating in English: Talk, Text, Technology*, 2012
* Doug Biber, *Variation across Speech and Writing*, 1991
* Peter Stockwell, *Sociolinguistics: A Resource Book for Students*, 2001
* Robert Lane Greene, *You Are What You Speak*, 2001
* Jean Aitchison, *Language Change - Progress or Decay?*, 2012
* Melvyn Bragg, *The Adventure of English*, 2004
* Adrian Beard, *Language Change*, 2004
* Llamas and Watt, *Language and Identities*, 2010

You should also be reading a range of other texts regularly and widely such as newspapers, blogs, vlogs, social media sites, reference books etc.

Do not feel as though you need to read **all** or even most of the texts on this list – that would be very expensive. See if your local library subscribes to any relevant publications which focus on linguistics, or see if they have any books available online. Some of these books are also available for much cheaper via Kindle which you can read via an app on your phone or on a computer. Some of them are partially available online, so try googling the title/author followed by ‘pdf’.

## Task 3

Writing guide

* Headline: Sum up the key issue of the debate in one line. Try to 'hook' the reader and clearly show which side you're on. Try to use techniques such as humour, facts/statistics, quotations etc.
* Opening: Define the scope of your argument. Technology is a broad area. Pick an aspect to focus on because you can't talk about it all!
* Explain and debunk: Explore why people think the opposite to you, and then explain why they're wrong. Link to other things you've read if possible.
* Draw everything together: Restate your case persuasively. Prove that you're right.
* Pithy one-liner: Sum up your argument in a humorous/creative way.

Telegraph article

“English language is changing faster than ever, research reveals” – May 2015

*Including new forms of social media terms which older Britons do not understand*

The English language is evolving faster than ever - leaving older Brits literally lost for words, research has revealed.

A detailed study has identified the social media language and mobile messaging terms that perplex millions of parents and which point to a future where emoticons may replace the written word.

Being 'on fleek', meaning 'looking perfect' is a popular term young kids are using that parents don't understand, as is 'bae' short for baby or meaning 'Before Anyone Else'.

The phrase, often championed by the likes of Kim Kardashian and Nicki Minaj, left 90 per cent of parents in the dark.

And 'fear of missing out' - commonly abbreviated to 'FOMO' - also leaves parents scratching their heads.

The study was led by the English language expert Professor John Sutherland was commissioned to mark the launch of the Samsung Galaxy S6 phone.

The results point to a seismic generational gap in how we use and understand modern informal text speak while also suggesting older style abbreviations and acronyms such as TXT are now so old they are considered antiquated by the younger generation.

The poll found that 86 per cent of all British parents think teenagers speak an entirely different language on social media and mobile messaging.

The top 10 also featured the popular Instagram term TBT (Throw Back Thursday), used for posting old images on the social media network, alongside the phrase 'Thirsty' used to describe people who are looking for attention.

The study also reveals the top ten now outdated text, social media and instant messaging which the under 16 generation would now consider outdated.

The poll found that 80 per cent of British parents believe that text speak has changed over time with a few terms such as LOL and OMG crossing generations to stand the test of time.

John Sutherland, Lord Northcliffe Professor Emeritus of Modern English Literature at University College London, said: "The Samsung Galaxy S6 Evolution of Text study provides us with a fascinating overview of how our informal language has evolved over the last 25 years and points to a future where we will see pictorial messaging in the ascendant.

"The limitation of characters on old handsets were a key factor in the rise of acronyms in text messaging such as TXT, GR8 and M8.

"However, technological evolution has meant that these words are now effectively extinct from the text speak language and are seen as 'antique text speak'.

"Smartphones like the Samsung Galaxy S6 give people a much a wider range of communication options which means we are no longer restricted to a limited numbers of characters.

"The use of audio and visual messaging has become more commonplace with the soaring popularity of social media and instant messaging apps such as Instagram, Vine and Snapchat.

"In fact we are moving to a more pictographic form of communication with the increasing popularity of emoticons. This harks back to a caveman-form of communication where a single picture can convey a full range of messages and emotions.

"In the future less words and letters will be used in messaging as pictures and icons take over the text speak language."

The study supports this theory revealing that four in 10 parents are already using emoticons to communicate in social media and mobile messaging.

## Task 4

Text A

JOAN: (2) he’s got a horrible (.) you know very // thick

LAURA: // beards you know are all the rage at the moment

DANIEL: yeah they really are

LAURA: have // you noticed

DANIEL: // but people love to grow // beards now

JOAN: // oh God

LAURA: I like beards on some people

JOAN: I think it makes you look ever so old

LAURA: Lots of people have got beards

DANIEL: I can’t imagine lying in bed (1) lying against the pillow (2) ahah with a beard (1) sort of itching round my throat and chin

JOAN: oh no

*[text omitted. DANIEL has left the room]*

JOAN: At Marks and Spencer’s you always used to have the dentist the doctor (1) hairdresser didn’t you Laura

LAURA: yep

JOAN: used to get a free new toothbrush every time they come

LAURA: huh

ELLA: cool

JOAN: don’t anymore though that’s all been wiped out (3) that was when it was owned by Sieff.

LAURA: yeah

JOAN: you used to be able to get a really good meal for 5p // didn’t you

LAURA: // yeah

JOAN: and afternoon snacks

LAURA: yep

JOAN: and all the meals was all home cooked weren’t they

LAURA: yep (2) they also used to have the sort of umm (2) breast (.) clinic come // round didn’t they

JOAN: // that’s right

LAURA: it wasn’t (2) // on the NHS.

JOAN: // yeah I was off sick when it come to our unit so a few weeks later I went up to Harley Street and had it done.

JOAN: but I don’t think they have anything like that now do they

LAURA: I don’t think so

JOAN: quite a lot of elderly people work in the Marks and Spencer’s in // Cranleigh

LAURA: // yeah loads

JOAN: yeah

LAURA: I don’t think they’re doing very well at the moment are they

JOAN: well I was telling Daniel (.) when I got my (.) when I got my bank statement they usually send me a letter to tell me about my shares (.) I mean I don’t know if it got mislaid or something I looked at my bank statement and I thought ooh what’s that fifty odd pound there and it was my shares

LAURA: // oh right

JOAN: // so they must have done well last year

LAURA: oh right

JOAN: I noticed Dad’s pension’s on there (referring to her late husband, Laura’s father) two pound fifty a week (2) I get one hundred and two pound a year from Dad’s pension

**TRANSCRIPTION KEY**

(.) micropause // overlapping speech (1/2/3) pause in seconds

## Task 6

Article

“How Twitter language reveals your gender — or your friends’”

*Social media is giving linguists new insight into how speech varies.*

By Ben Zimmer, November 04, 2012

WHEN A GROUP of young sociolinguists started an annual conference called New Ways of Analyzing Variation four decades ago, they focused on variation of the spoken kind, looking at how speech patterns relate to group identity. But at the 41st gathering of NWAV a week ago, at Indiana University Bloomington, papers on traditional ways of speaking shared the limelight with something the founders couldn’t have predicted: the 21st-century terrain of computer-mediated language.

Twitter, in particular, merited a whole panel, with papers on the medium’s changing slang (are your Twitter followers “tweeps,” “tweeple,” or “tweeties”?) and on the way that the Spanish verb “gustar” (meaning “to like”) gets used in different parts of the Spanish-speaking Twittersphere. A third paper crunched through millions of tweets to detect gender differences in language use, not just in dictionary words but in such electronic shorthand as “xoxo” (for hugs and kisses) and emoticons.

Twitter is a new world for linguists. Like text-messaging, tweets capture a casual, speech-like discourse in writing. Creating a massive corpus of millions of messages is relatively effortless, simply by taking advantage of the “firehose” of tweets that Twitter’s streaming service makes available—and who influences whom is much more apparent than in daily life. As such, the new medium is illustrating phenomena that language researchers have never had such easy access to before now.

Twitter’s mountains of language data aren’t just of scholarly interest. Being able to mine tweets for their writer’s gender, it turns out, has commercial appeal for advertisers. While the sociolinguists were gathering in Bloomington, Twitter announced that it was beginning to use “contextual signals” to determine just this, so that an advertiser could promote “a new line of cosmetics without having its message delivered to men not likely to be interested in that content.” The scholars doing research on Twitter and gender, meanwhile, want to analyze those same “contextual signals” for a deeper understanding of gender differences in language and our expectations of how men and women speak and write.

Tyler Schnoebelen, who recently completed his PhD in linguistics at Stanford University, told the NWAV crowd how he and his colleagues plumbed Twitter to create a corpus of more than 9 million tweets from English speakers in the United States. There’s no gender checkbox on Twitter, but by looking at the distribution of given names in census data, they were able to assign genders with a high degree of accuracy. (You’re not likely to find many men going by “Annette” or women named “Eugene.”)

They then looked at which bits of tweeted language skewed male and female. In line with previous research on gender and discourse, women were found to use more pronouns, emotion terms (like “sad,” “love,” and “glad”), and abbreviations associated with online discourse (like “lol” and “omg”). Women also rate highly on the use of emoticons and “backchannel sounds” (like “ah,” “hmmm,” “ugh,” and “grr”).

Men, on the other hand, have higher frequencies of standard dictionary words, numbers, proper nouns (especially the names of sports teams), and taboo words. Simply by looking at these different rates of word usage, Schnoebelen and his colleagues, David Bamman of Carnegie Mellon University and Jacob Eisenstein of Georgia Tech, can predict the gender of an author on Twitter with 88 percent accuracy.

But Schnoebelen, Bamman, and Eisenstein didn’t stop there, even if such a high level of accuracy in pinpointing gender would be good enough for, say, L’Oréal. They wanted to go beyond the standard binary stereotypes of “Men Are from Mars, Women are from Venus” to understand how “male” and “female” linguistic markers actually work in the world, at least online.

They found that even though you can categorize certain words as having a higher male or female probability, it’s easy to find large swaths of Twitter users who go against these trends. By grouping people by their style of usage, they could find, for example, a cluster of authors that is 72 percent male but nonetheless favors the nonstandard spellings that are supposedly a hallmark of “female” language.

Digging deeper, the researchers looked at the social networks that people create on Twitter, making connections by “following” and replying to other users. When you take these networks into account, the gender picture gets even more complex. It turns out that the statistical outliers (men who use language that’s associated with women, and vice versa) are more likely to have networks skewing to the other gender. A man who favors emoticons is more likely to have a high proportion of women in his network. And a woman who frequently mentions the names of sports teams likely has a lot of male friends. The takeaway from Schnoebelen’s presentation is that a simple binary model of gender isn’t sufficient in understanding the welter of language styles in the Twittersphere—or, by implication, in everyday life.

****While this research has broad implications for thinking about the language styles used by men and women, it also tells us something about the peculiar mode of discourse that is tweeting. Unlike more settled genres of interaction, Twitter has yet to establish well-defined norms of usage. It’s the Wild West of language, which makes it both exciting and daunting for linguistic scholars. Lying somewhere in the gray zone between speech and writing, Twitter-ese can shine a light on how we make up the rules of language use as we go along.

Military Adverts



## Task 8

Bill Bryson chapter

Bill Bryson – *The Mother Tongue:* *English & How It Got That Way*

Excerpts from Chapter 5: Where Words Come From

If you have a morbid fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth, there is a word for it: arachibutyrophobia. There is a word to describe the state of being a woman: muliebrity. And there's a word for describing a sudden breaking off of thought: aposiopesis.

If you harbor an urge to look through the windows of the homes you pass, there is a word for the condition: crytoscopophilia. When you are just dropping off to sleep and you experience that sudden sensation of falling, there is a word for it: it's a myoclonic jerk. If you want to say that a word has a circumflex on its penultimate syllable, without saying flat out that is has a circumflex there, there is a word for it: properispomenon.

In English, in short, there are words for almost everything. Some of these words deserve to be better known. Take velleity, which describes a mild desire, a wish or urge too slight to lead to action. Doesn't that seem a useful term? Or how about slubberdegullion, a seventeenthcentury word signifying a worthless or slovenly fellow? Or ugsome, a late medieval word meaning loath-some or disgusting? It has lasted half a millennium in English, was a common synonym for horrid until well into the last century, and can still be found tucked away forgotten at the back of most unabridged dictionaries. Isn't it a shame to let it slip away?

Our dictionaries are full of such words—words describing the most specific of conditions, the most improbable of contingencies, the most arcane of distinctions. And yet there are odd gaps. We have no word for coolness corresponding to warmth. We are strangely lacking in middling terms—words to describe with some precision the middle ground between hard and soft, near and far, big and little. We have a word to describe all the work you find waiting for you when you return from vacation, backlog, but none to describe all the work you have to do before you go. Why not forelog?

And we have a large number of negative words—inept, disheveled, incorrigible, ruthless, unkempt—for which the positive form is missing. English would be richer if we could say admiringly of a tidy person, "She's so sheveled,"or praise a capable person for being full of ept or an energetic one for having heaps of ert. Many of these words did once have positive forms.

Ruthless was companioned by ruth, meaning compassion. One of Milton's poems contains the well-known line "Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth." But, as with many such words, one form died and another lived. Why this should be is beyond explanation. Why should we have lost demit (send away) but saved commit? Why should impede have survived while the once equally common and seemingly just as useful expede expired? No one can say.

So where do all these words come from? According to the great Danish linguist Otto Jespersen words are for the most part formed in one of four ways: by adding to them, by subtracting from them, by making them up, and by doing nothing to them. Neat as that formula is, I would venture to suggest that it overlooks two other prolific sources of new words: borrowing them from other languages and creating them by mistake. Let us look at each in turn.

1. WORDS ARE CREATED BY ERROR.

One kind of these is called ghost words. The most famous of these perhaps is dord, which appeared in the 1934 Merriam-Webster International Dictionary as another word for density. In fact, it was a misreading of the scribbled "D or d," meaning that "density" could be abbreviated either to a capital or lowercase letter. The people at Merriam- Webster quickly removed it, but not before it found its way into other dictionaries. Such occurrences are more common than you might suppose. According to the First Supplement of the OED, there are at least 350 words in English dictionaries that owe their existence to typographical errors or other misrenderings.

Many other words owe their existence to mishearings. Button-hole was once buttonhold. Sweetheart was originally sweetard, as in dullard and dotard. The process can still be seen today in the tendency among many people to turn catercorner into cattycorner and chaise longue into chaise lounge.

Sometimes words are created by false analogy or back-formation. One example of this is the word pea. Originally the word was pease, as in the nursery rhyme "pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold." But this was mistakenly thought to signify a plural and the word pea was backformed to denote singularity. A similar misunderstanding gave us cherry (from cerise). Finally, erroneous words are sometimes introduced by respected users of the language who simply make a mistake. Shakespeare thought illustrious was the opposite of lustrous and thus for a time gave it a sense that wasn't called for.

2. WORDS ARE ADOPTED.

This is of course one of the glories of English—its willingness to take in words from abroad, rather as if they were refugees. We take words from almost anywhere— shampoo from India, chaparral from the Basques, caucus from the Algonquin Indians, ketchup from China, potato from Haiti, sofa from Arabia, boondocks from the Tagalog language of the Philippines, slogan from Gaelic. You can't get much more eclectic than that. And we have been doing it for centuries. According to Baugh and Cable [page 227] as long ago as the sixteenth century English had already adopted words from more than fifty other languages—a phenomenal number for the age. Sometimes the route these words take is highly circuitous. Many Greek words became Latin words, which became French words, which became English words.

Garbage, which has had its present meaning of food waste since the Middle Ages, was brought to England by the Normans, who had adapted it from an Italian dialectal word, garbuzo, which in turn had been taken from the Old Italian garbuglio (a mess), which ultimately had come from the Latin bullire (to boil or bubble).Sometimes the same word reaches us at different times, having undergone various degrees of filtering, and thus can exist in English in two or more related forms, as with canal and channel, regard and reward, poor and pauper, catch and chase, cave and cage, amiable and amicable. Often these words have been so modified in their travels that their kinship is all but invisible. Who would guess that coy and quiet both have the same grandparent in the Latin quietus, or that sordid and swarthy come jointly from the Latin sordere (to be soiled or dirty), or that entirety and integrity come from the Latin integritus (complete and pure)? Often words change meanings dramatically as they pass from one nation to another. The Latin bestia has become variously biscia (snake) in Italy, bitch (female dog) in England, biche (female deer) in France, and bicho (insect) in Portugal. [Cited by Pei, page 151]

Although English is one of the great borrowing tongues— deriving at least half of its common words from non-Anglo-Saxon stock—others have been even more enthusiastic in adopting foreign terms. In Armenian, only 23 percent of the words are of native origin, while in Albanian the proportion is just 8 percent. A final curious fact is that although English is a Germanic tongue and the Germans clearly were one of the main founding groups of America, there is almost no language from which we have borrowed fewer words than German. Among the very few are kindergarten and hinterland. We have borrowed far more words from every other European language, and probably as many from several smaller and more obscure languages such as Inuit. No one has yet come up with a plausible explanation for why this should be.

3. WORDS ARE CREATED.

Often they spring seemingly from nowhere. Take dog. For centuries the word in English was hound (or hund). Then suddenly in the late Middle Ages, dog-----a word etymologically unrelated to any other known word—displaced it. No one has any idea why. This sudden arising of words happens more often than you might think. Among others without known pedigree are jaw, jam, bad, big, gloat, fun, crease, pour, put, niblick (the golf club), noisome, numskull, jalopy, and countless others.

Other words exist in the language for hundreds of years, either as dialect words or as mainstream words that have fallen out of use, before suddenly leaping to prominence—again quite mysteriously. Scrounge and seep are both of this type. They have been around for centuries and yet neither, according to Robert Burchfield [The English Language, page 46], came into general use before 1900.

Many words are made up by writers. According to apparently careful calculations, Shakespeare used 17,677 words in his writings, of which at least one tenth had never been used before. Imagine if every tenth word you wrote were original. It is a staggering display of ingenuity. But then Shakespeare lived in an age when words and ideas burst upon the world as never before or since. For a century and a half, from 1500 to 1650, English flowed with new words. Between 10,000 and 12,000 words were coined, of which about half still exist. Not until modern times would this number be exceeded, but even then there is no comparison. The new words of today represent an explosion of technology—words like lunar module and myocardial infarction—rather than of poetry and feeling. Consider the words that Shakespeare alone gave us, barefaced, critical, leapfrog, monumental, castigate, majestic, obscene, frugal, radiance, dwindle, countless, submerged, excellent, fretful, gust, hint, hurry, lonely, summit, pedant, and some 1,685 others. How would we manage without them?

4. WORDS CHANGE BY DOING NOTHING.

That is, the word stays the same but the meaning changes. Surprisingly often the meaning becomes its opposite or something very like it. Counterfeit once meant a legitimate copy. Brave once implied cowardice—as indeed bravado still does. (Both come from the same source as depraved.)

Crafty, now a disparaging term, originally was a word of praise, while enthusiasm which is now a word of praise, was once a term of mild abuse. Zeal has lost its original pejorative sense, but zealot curiously has not. This drift of meaning, technically called catachresis, is as wide- spread as it is curious. Egregious once meant eminent or admirable. In the sixteenth century, for no reason we know of, it began to take on the opposite sense of badness and unworthiness (it is in this sense that Shakespeare employs it in Cymbeline) and has retained that sense since. Now, however, it seems that people are increasingly using it in the sense not of bad or shocking, but of simply being pointless and unconstructive.

According to Mario Pei, more than half of all words adopted into English from Latin now have meanings quite different from their original ones. A word that shows just how wideranging these changes can be is nice, which was first recorded in 1290 with the meaning of stupid and foolish. Seventy-five years later Chaucer was using it to mean lascivious and wanton. Then at various times over the next 400 years it came to mean extravagant, elegant, strange, slothful, unmanly, luxurious, modest, slight, precise, thin, shy, discriminating, dainty, and—by 1769—pleasant and agreeable. The meaning shifted so frequently and radically that it is now often impossible to tell in what sense it was intended, as when Jane Austen wrote to a friend, "You scold me so much in a nice long letter . . . which I have received from you."

This drift of meaning can happen with almost anything, even our clothes. There is a curious but not often noted tendency for the names of articles of apparel to drift around the body. This is particularly apparent to Americans in Britain (and vice versa) who discover that the names for clothes have moved around at different rates and now often signify quite separate things. An American going into a London department store with a shopping list consisting of vest, knickers, suspenders, jumper, and pants would in each instance be given something dramatically different from what he expected. (To wit, a British vest is an American undershirt. Our vest is their waistcoat. Their knickers are our panties. To them a jumper is a sweater, while what we call a jumper is to them a pinafore dress. Our suspenders are their braces. They don't need suspenders to hold up their pants because to them pants are underwear and clearly you don't need suspenders for that, so instead they employ suspenders to hold up their stockings. Is that clear?)

Sometimes an old meaning is preserved in a phrase or expression. Neck was once widely used to describe a parcel of land, but that meaning has died out except in the expression "neck of the woods."

Tell once meant to count. This meaning died out but is preserved in the expression bank teller and in the term for people who count votes. When this happens, the word is called a fossil.

Sometimes words change by becoming more specific. Starve originally meant to die before it took on the more particular sense of to die by hunger. A deer was once any animal (it still is in the German tier) and meat was any food (the sense is preserved in "meat and drink" and in the English food mincemeat, which contains various fruits but no meat in the sense that we now use it).

5. WORDS ARE CREATED BY ADDING OR SUBTRACTING SOMETHING.

English has more than a hundred common prefixes and suffixes- -able, -ness, -ment, pre-, dis-, anti-, and so on—and with these it can form and reform words with a facility that yet again sets it apart from other tongues.

We are astonishingly indiscriminate in how we form our corn-pounds, sometimes adding an Anglo-Saxon prefix or suffix to a Greek or Latin root (plainness, sympathizer), and sometimes vice versa (readable, disbelieve).

This inclination to use affixes and infixes provides gratifying flexibility in creating or modifying words to fit new uses. As well as showing flexibility it also promotes confusion. We have at least six ways of expressing negation with prefixes: a-, anti-, in-, , im- , it-, un-, and non-. It is arguable whether this is a sign of admirable variety or just untidiness. Finally, but no less importantly, English possesses the ability to make new words by fusing compounds— airport, seashore, footwear, wristwatch, landmark, flowerpot, and so on almost endlessly. All Indo-European languages have the capacity to form compounds. Indeed, German and Dutch do it, one might say, to excess.

**But** English does it more neatly than **most** other languages, eschewing the choking word chains that bedevil other Germanic languages and employing the nifty refinement of making the elements reversible, so that we can distinguish between a houseboat and a boathouse, between basketwork and a workbasket, between a casebook and a bookcase. Other languages lack this facility.