



# Leaping into Language!

moving from GCSE to  
A Level Language study



An English and Media Centre Student Resource

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## Contents

<b>What This Pack Is and How to Use It</b>	<b>3</b>
1. Becoming a Student of Language	4
2. Leap Into Language – Language Profile	6
3. Which Accents?	7
4. Do We Need New Words?	10
5. Language Fingerprints	12
6. Key Events in Language History	14
7. Textercise	16
8. Running the Numbers	20
9. Explore <i>emagazine</i>	21
10. Opinions and Arguments	22
11. Opinions in the Media	24
12. emagClips: Linguists in the Frame	24
13. A Language Diary	25
14. Language on the Page	26
15. Language for your Ears	30
16. Online Resources	33
17. Explore a Uni-Style Lecture	35
18. Big Questions about Language	37
19. The Future – You and the English Language	39
<b>Answers</b>	<b>40</b>
Which Accents – Answers	41
Language Fingerprints – Answers	42
Key Events in Language History	45

## What This Pack Is and How to Use It

Are you thinking about studying English Language at A Level? The activities in this unit will give you a taste of what might be in store for you as a student of this subject and you might be surprised quite how different it is to the English you've been doing so far in your time at school.

Some of the activities ask you to step back and think about the nature of language and communication (in all its forms – not just writing), while others encourage you to try out some different ways of approaching your learning – whether that's reading, writing, discussing or listening to others. The activities will prepare you for the kinds of work you would do on an English Language A Level course and will hopefully be interesting in their own right.

Some of the activities are short, others might take a couple of sessions to complete, while others are much longer term – following a language podcast or reading a chapter in a book about language – but you'd be advised to start from the beginning as many of these activities build up in a sequence to give you a taste of different areas and a good overview of the whole course.

*Leaping into Language: moving from GCSE to A Level English Language* includes:

- This PDF of activities
- *emagazine* Resource Pack – Language (PDF)
- Leaping into Language audio (a zipped folder of 10 audio clips)

# 1. 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 know a bit about this but have never studied it	I've studied this	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 everyone has an accent but why some accents are liked more 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			

<b>What you might study</b>	<b>I know a bit about this but have never studied it</b>	<b>I've studied this</b>	<b>Would like to learn more about it</b>
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 situations 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:
  - What's your earliest language memory? Can you remember a nursery rhyme, song or picture book from when you were very little?
  - Have your family or extended family kept any records – video, audio, family memories – of any of your earliest words?
  - Have you kept any old school books from when you were learning to read and write?
  - 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.
  - Are there any words or expressions only you or your family use, which others don't really understand?
  - 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.
  - 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?
  - Do you ever look at or hear someone else using language in a way that you find is totally new or strange to you?
  - 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.

### 3. Which Accents?

Everyone has an accent. You might not think you do, but it's a linguistic fact. Accents are normally associated with particular regions and places but can also be linked to a person's social class – how 'posh' they sound, for example.

In this taster activity, you will access to the 10 audio clips included with this pack (LeapLangAudio.zip). Here you will find 10 examples of different people from around the British Isles reading the same bit of text.

- Listen to all 10 of them and use the map on the next page to mark where you think each speaker might be from.
- Write a quick comment (maybe just a few words) about each accent and how it sounds to you.
- Check the map (on page 41) to see if you were right about where the speakers were from.
- Now use the text of the extract (on page 9) and listen to three of the recordings (of your choice) again. Write down the numbers of the accent clips you have chosen in the relevant spaces. As you listen, use a highlighter to note the sounds that you notice as being different to how you might pronounce them.
- Think about the sounds that you have highlighted for each recording and see if you can notice any patterns in them. You might want to look back at your notes once you have done the activities in 9. 'Explore *emagazine*' and discovered a bit more about different UK and Irish accents.