

Language Change

intro

How is LC assessed?

- * Language Change has its own question on Paper 2
- * It is a 30-mark question in Section A (the 'Diversity and Change' section)
- * It is optional as you could do the question on diversity instead
- * However...

How is LC assessed?

- * Section B (Language Discourses) could focus on Language Change issues for a total of 70 more marks (compare two texts on a language issue and write an opinion piece about it)
- * AND...
- * One of the texts on Paper 1 section A (compare how attitudes and values are represented in two texts) will be a 'historical text'
 - * This means the text could be written in any year between 1600 and the present time

How is LC assessed?

- * In the historical text, you will need to show an awareness of the **effect of historical context** on language e.g.
 - * look at how the syntax (word order) is structured differently because of the time period
 - * how meanings and expressions have changed
 - * how attitudes from the time period are represented
 - * as well as other contextual factors that you would look at anyway

Areas of LC

- * Terminology to describe how language has changed
- * Reasons for LC
- * Attitudes to LC
- * LC hot topics e.g. (non-)gendered pronouns, ‘literally’, apostrophes, technological advances

1600 - Shakespeare

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

- * Describe the ways in which this extract differs from a modern standard English text (use as many different frameworks as possible)

Semantic shift (meaning changes)

- * Many, many words used to mean something different
- * Often those older meanings are preserved in phrases or collocations (word pairings)
- * It is worth knowing a range of these to use as examples

Ways in which LC happens

- * Here are a few terms to describe semantic shifts:
 - * Broadening – the old meaning is kept and new meanings are added e.g. ‘novice’ used to be a ‘probationer in a religious order’ but is applied to many kinds of beginner e.g. a novice driver is someone who has not long passed their test
 - * Narrowing – meaning becomes more specific e.g. ‘meat’ used to be any food - preserved in the phrase ‘meat and drink’

Ways in which LC happens

- * Amelioration is when a word becomes more positive in (some of) its meanings e.g. 'wicked' coming to be slang like 'cool' (but it retained its original meaning so it has also broadened)
- * Pejoration is the opposite (becomes more negative) e.g. 'gay' meant happy and carefree then became a slur (then ameliorated again as attitudes to homosexuality became more positive, then became an insult meaning 'lame' and pejorated again)
- * Conversion is where words change word class e.g. 'Google' became 'to google'

There are many more terms...

- * Words can come into the English language in many ways as well as existing words gaining new uses:
 - * Borrowing from other languages e.g. gesundheit, cafe
 - * Coinage – create a neologism or new word e.g. photograph
 - * Proprietary names sometimes become concrete nouns or verbs e.g. if you ask for sellotape you don't expect specifically the Sellotape brand and you can Hoover your room without a Hoover

Independent study over the break

1. Find a short section of text (fiction or n-f) from 1600ish and translate it into modern English. Then analyse differences using as much linguistic comment as you can e.g. syntax, semantic shift (what sorts?) etc.
2. Research a word that has changed and any phrases, collocations or uses (previous or current uses) that illustrate the different meanings e.g. not quite ready vs quite tired
3. Find two articles that show differing attitudes to a 'language change' issue e.g. an article that criticises young people's language and one that objectively describes it or is positive about it. Or one about the change in 'literally' or one on the use of non-gendered pronouns etc. Analyse the language used to represent the change/issue, comparing the two texts.

BY 5/1 on your blogs, please

Attitudes

- * Across history, there have been people who dislike change in their language
- * These people who judge language use as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ are called ‘prescriptivists’
- * We try to describe not judge and be ‘descriptivists’
- * But even we often have linguistic bugbears – what are yours?