

Teaching ideas: Language varieties

This resource is designed to help you prepare students for the Language diversity (3.2.1) and Writing skills (3.2.3) topics which are assessed in Paper 2 of AS English Language (7701). These teaching ideas give you a way of pulling together ideas from the different topics (occupation, region/nation, gender and social groups) and provide further ideas for revision and exam preparation.

Lesson objectives

Students will:

- revise key ideas about language varieties
- plan content for a range of different ideas across the topics
- consider what makes a good opinion article
- develop their skills of quick planning and drafting for the directed writing task.

Prior knowledge needed

Students should have some knowledge of the following:

- language levels
- language varieties topic areas (occupation, region/nation, gender and social groups)
- different opinions and attitudes towards various forms of language and their users.

Lesson preparation

Teachers will need the following resources:

Lesson 1

- A3 paper
- pens
- 5-6 copies of the starter sheet (one per group)
- a set of discussion cards copied onto card/laminated for each group (4 sets of cards with 4 different topic areas, each with 4 different

statements: 16 cards per group). If these are laminated, students can write directly onto them; alternatively, just copy them onto paper and recycle them afterwards

- a 6-sided die (or ignore this if you are happy to forego the illusion of randomness).

Lesson 2

- handout – extract from Oliver Kamm's *Accidence Will Happen*
- A3 paper
- pens
- classroom laid out with 4 to 5 sets of tables for a carousel activity.

Activities

Lesson 1

Starter

Ask students to split into groups of 3 to 4 at the start of the lesson. Each group will need a starter sheet, which has a simple grid on it split into the 4 topic areas for AS Language varieties (occupation, gender, regional/national dialects, social groups). The starter is designed to be a very quick refresher exercise to get students thinking about what they already know on these topics.

Choose one of the four topics and roll the die (or just call out a number between 1 and 6). Each group needs to come up with x-number of the following:

- occupation: name x occupational groups
- gender: give x examples of popular stereotypes about how women and men talk
- regional/national dialects: name x examples of these
- social groups: name x examples of different social groups.

Ask each group to call out their answers and write them on the board.

Do the same for each of the four categories.

Activity 1

This main activity is designed to get students thinking about each of the four topic areas and both the A01 language examples and A02 language concepts, theories and case studies they can include in answers about each topic. This is applicable to revision of both the Section A data and essay question and the Section B directed writing task.

Split the class into 4 groups and give each group a set of discussion cards. Each group should have a total of 16 cards covering the 4 topic areas.

Ask each group to shuffle the cards and take 6 out to discuss and work on together.

Each group needs to come up with an overall 1 to 2 sentence response to the statement, saying whether they agree or disagree with it, along with 3 A01 points (examples of language from a range of language levels) and 3 A02 points (concepts, theories, pieces of research) to support their response.

An example group response for the Language and Occupation statement card, "Some occupations use confusing jargon", might say something like "We agree that some occupations use confusing language, but in many cases this is necessary for those doing the job. For example, the medical profession uses technical jargon, as does the building trade".

A01 points: example of medical lexis is 'sub-cutaneous haemorrhage', example of builders' lexis is 'architrave', example of educational jargon is 'acronyms' and 'initialisms' such as SEN and OFSTED.

A02 points: ideas around discourse communities (Swales) and specialist lexis; ideas about specialist language and power dynamics (Drew and Heritage); campaigns against jargon (Plain English Campaign).

Set a time limit of 7 to 8 minutes per card per group and ask them to show you as they complete them.

Ask students to move on to the next card at the end of the time limit. The aim is to get this done fairly quickly with the emphasis on brainstorming rather than covering every angle comprehensively.

Spend a few minutes at the end of the lesson to pick up at least one card per group and to feedback on the ideas.

Summary of discussion cards:

Occupation

- Some occupations use confusing jargon.
- Some occupations use friendly and welcoming language to the public.
- Many occupations have a clear hierarchy and power structure reflected in the language they use.
- Some occupations should be forced to use clearer language.

Gender

- Women are more likely to cooperate in conversation than men.
- Men are more direct in their language than women.
- Women and men are more similar than different in their language use.
- Women's language is represented as weaker than men's in the media.

Regional/national varieties

- Some accents are just better than others.
- It's important for everyone to use Standard English at all times.
- All dialects should be equal.
- Prejudice against different varieties of English is natural and can't be stopped.

Social groups

- Some social groups deliberately use language to be different from the mainstream.
- People are good at switching between different types of language to mix with different social groups.
- Social class is a major influence on how people judge others on their voices.
- Working class speech is inferior to Standard English.

Lesson 2

Starter

Ask students to read the short extract from Oliver Kamm's *Accidence Will Happen*. Kamm is a leader writer and columnist for The Times and has written this to focus on what makes a good opinion article. Ask students to bullet point 5 pieces of advice from the extract.

Activity 1

This “consequences” activity is designed to get students working on writing a collaborative opinion piece on a topic for each group. Split the class up into 4 groups and allocate each group a topic area (eg group one is Language and gender, group two is Language and occupation etc). Give each group a statement card (from the starter activity or create your own from a sample paper).

Set the classroom up so that it is accessible for students moving around from table to table.

Round 1: the subeditorial round

In this round students will need to consider the layout, design and placement of their article.

- Where will it appear?
- Which publication?
- Online or in print?
- What is the headline going to be?
- What is the standfirst/strapline going to say?

- Will there be images or charts? If so, of what?
- Who is writing it and how are you going to introduce them?

The group will need to rough out their design on a sheet of A3 paper.

At the end of the round, the students need to present this to the other groups to inform them what they have decided about the layout, design and placement of the article.

The groups then move tables (as per the game “consequences”) for round 2, and continue working from where the previous group left off.

Round 2: the introduction round

In this round students will need to draft their first two paragraphs together.

They need to think about the following:

- what is the first sentence?
- how can it be made engaging and arresting?
- what is the 'peg' for this article? (Remind students of the Kamm extract)
- how can the opening be linked to something that has happened recently in the wider world?

The groups then move tables for round 3 and continue working from where the previous group left off.

Round 3: the ideas round

In this round students will need to draft out the key A02 ideas that they will incorporate. They will need to think about the following:

- which linguistic theories and concepts will you explain?
- which case studies or pieces of research will you refer to?
- how will you introduce your ideas to a mainstream, non-specialist audience?
- which examples of language will you incorporate?

The groups then move tables for round 4 and continue working from where the previous group left off.

Round 4: the alternative views round

In this round students will need to come up with ideas that contradict the original viewpoint. Play devil's advocate and come up with as many conflicting ideas as possible. Ask students to think of provocative counter-positions to each of the original ideas.

Round 5: the conclusion

By now the students should be back at their original table and will be able to see how their original ideas from the subeditorial round have been taken forward by the other groups. They need to consider:

- how will you finish off the article? Think of a way to round off your piece that makes a reader want to read your work another time.
- can you link it to your introduction and key points that you have covered?

If you give the students 7 to 8 minutes per round, it should allow for a maximum of 40 minutes for the activity, with time for a feedback session at the end where each group reads out the key sections.

A follow-up activity could be for each student in each group to copy/photograph the work and then write it up in their own way for homework.

Starter sheet

This is the starter sheet for use in Lesson 1 of the Language varieties resource.

Language and occupation	Language and gender
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
Language and region/nation	Language and social groups
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6

Discussion cards

These are the discussion cards which you can cut out and use in Lesson 1 of the Language varieties resource.

<p>Some occupations use confusing jargon.</p>	<p>Some occupations use friendly and welcoming language speaking to the public.</p>
<p>Many occupations have a clear hierarchy and power structure reflected in the language they use.</p>	<p>Some occupations should be forced to use clearer language.</p>
<p>Women are more likely to cooperate in conversation than men.</p>	<p>Men are more direct in their language than women.</p>

<p>Women and men are more similar than different in their language use.</p>	<p>Women's language is represented as weaker than men's in the media.</p>
<p>Some accents are just better than others.</p>	<p>It's important for everyone to use Standard English at all times.</p>
<p>All dialects should be equal.</p>	<p>Prejudice against different varieties of English is natural and can't be stopped.</p>
<p>Some social groups deliberately use language to be different from the mainstream.</p>	<p>People are good at switching between different types of language to mix with different social groups.</p>

Social class is a major influence on how people judge others on their voices.

Working class speech is inferior to Standard English.

Kamm pundit extract

Here is the extract from Oliver Kamm's *Accidence Will Happen*, for use in Lesson 2 of the Language varieties resource.

Extract

“I’m a pundit. Every day, the Comment desk of a newspaper receives unsolicited articles for publication. Lots of them. Vanishingly few are of publishable quality, however great the knowledge of the aspiring contributor. The principal reason is that they just don’t read fluently. They’re verbose, and not only in being typically far longer than any newspaper could publish. They lack structure and argument, being mainly a series of assertions and unrelated digressions. And the most besetting problem is that they are dull.

It’s as if the writer, aware of the responsibility of addressing the public, can’t talk naturally but adopts a tone of affected gravity. You can tell that from the first paragraph and sometimes from the first sentence. I’m less hostile to the cliché *it goes without saying that* than the sticklers who typically deride it (*if it goes without saying, why say it? Hahahahahaha...*). It’s an idiom. But it’s a terrible way to start the argument of a case. And if you make it through to the end, you’ll generally find an equally feeble conclusion, along the lines of: *Will X happen or will Y? Only time will tell...* There is no ‘peg’ for the article – a piece of news or an insight that would allow the reader to catch quickly the flow of the argument. There is no arresting metaphor or perception. It’s like reading the transcript of an accountants’ convention.

This isn’t how people naturally talk. It’s merely how they think they ought to write for a serious audience. The condition carries over to public speaking. People who are unused to giving a speech often write it out beforehand, peppering it with phrases that they believe convey seriousness but are merely dull and hackneyed.”

© *Accidence Will Happen*, Oliver Kamm, The Orion Publishing Group, London.