

Teaching ideas: Occupational groups

This resource is designed to help you teach the Occupational groups topic for component 2 of the AS English Language specification (7701). These teaching ideas give you a way into the topic and more ideas for future lessons.

Lesson objectives

Students will:

- understand where Occupational groups fits in with other topic areas in this component and the rest of the specification
- consider the ways in which different occupations use different forms of language and why this might be
- begin to explore data gathered from different occupational groups and apply language frameworks and ideas from language study.

Prior knowledge needed

Students should have some knowledge of the following:

- language levels
- transcription conventions
- how to integrate concepts, theories and case studies into their written work.

Lesson preparation

Lesson 1

Teachers will need the following resources:

- A3 paper
- pens
- *Occupation cards* and *Function cards* printed out and cut up (1 set per group).

Lesson 2

Teachers will need the following resources:

- clips of various occupations from online/TV sources (eg Undercover Boss, The Call Centre, Motorway Cops, One Born Every Minute, Educating Cardiff, Rogue Traders)
- projector and screen
- handout from Almut Koester, *The Language of Work* (Routledge Intertext series, 2004 p.4).
- transcript of classroom talk. Some suggestions are:
 - All Talk (free BT educational resource featuring transcripts and videos) Section 4 School Talk on the [BT website](#)
 - pages 68-9 of *GCSE Spoken Language Skills* (Aslin, Clayton and Glozier, Nelson Thornes, 2013).

Activities

Lesson 1

Starter

Ask students to work in groups of 3 to 4 and to think about all the occupations, careers and jobs that they or close family members have had in the last 5 to 10 years. Students will need to write these down on the sheet of paper as a group. Ask students to think about what kinds of interaction with the public these roles have involved. They might want to think about some of the following and note them down on the sheet of paper:

- giving advice
- giving orders
- selling face to face
- selling over the phone
- explaining or demonstrating things to people
- assisting someone to do something physical
- interviewing or questioning members of the public.

Ask students to think about what kind of interaction is involved with co-workers (if there are any). They might want to think about some of the following and note them down on the sheet of paper:

- formal meetings (staff meetings/briefings)
- informal meetings
- casual chats
- detailed discussions
- giving and receiving orders/instructions

- sharing ideas
- motivating/encouraging others.

Activity 1

Use the *Occupation cards* and *Function cards* in each group as outlined below.

There are 2 sets of cards (suggestions provided - feel free to create your own), one with a list of occupations and one to be printed out in a different colour with a list of functions. The students work in groups of 3 to 4 to match the professions to the functions they think are most relevant (perhaps 3 to 5 functions per occupation, ranked in order of importance).

NB Some function cards will be needed for more than one career, so we suggest that you set them out first and do them one by one, noting down what they have decided on paper/photographing them on a phone.

Feedback – hopefully the students will have noticed that all occupational groups use language for a range of purposes, not just the most obvious ones.

It is also worth drawing out different contexts eg cashier in village shop vs cashier at large supermarket.

Activity 2

Take one occupation per group and see how it can be matched to all/most of the functions - a teacher may reassure/direct/praise/inform/support etc all in the course of the day.

Ask students in each group to act out scenarios in which each profession would be using language for different purposes. You could do this in a quick-fire/improvised style by calling out different functions which they then quickly act out.

Activity 3

Draw together work in a plenary - ask students to start grouping some of the different functions of language under different headings. Choose 5 to 6 occupations from those noted by groups in Activity 1 and ask students to answer the following questions.

When thinking about the language being used in Occupations 1 to 6, did you notice any of the following?

- specialised vocabulary only used in that job
- particular structures to the interaction (turn-taking patterns, length of turn, who gets to speak)
- shared goals or intentions.

Lesson 2

Starter

Ask students to come up with examples of TV shows that feature particular occupations (either reality TV or drama). Focus on *education and teaching* as an example occupation and ask students to think how the following might be relevant to this occupation. You could use the headings below to create a handout. This idea is adapted from Koester's *The Language of Work*, which itself focuses on work by *Drew and Heritage*):

- Are there shared goals for the speakers? If so, what are they? If not, why not?
- Are there turn-taking rules or restrictions? What kind of power relationships are apparent in these turn-taking structures?
- Are there any things which can't be said in this occupation?
- Is there a professional lexis/jargon used in teaching? Are there words and phrases that you only hear in this workplace?

Activity 1

Use clips of different parts of *Educating Essex/Cardiff/Yorkshire/The East End* (Channel 4) or *Jamie's Dream School* (Channel 4) to illustrate specific types of the talk from the starter activity. Ask students to group their observations under the same headings as above. What do they begin to notice about the ways in which language is used in schools and colleges?

Activity 2

Use a transcript of classroom talk to start analysing the ways in which language is used by the teacher(s). Give students the question "How can a person's language be affected by their occupation?" (based on the component 2 sample paper) as an overall point to return to. Ask students to group their observations into points about different language levels:

- vocabulary (especially specialist lexis)
- grammar (especially sentence/clause functions)
- discourse (especially the structure of turn-taking in the transcript)
- phonology (especially how emphasis and volume are used)
- pragmatics (how meanings are conveyed through the use of language in context).

Ask students to consider what other factors – beyond occupation – might be relevant to the language being used. For example, does it make a difference what gender or age the teacher is, what subject is being taught, or how many students are present?

Activity 3

Turn the notes and discussion points from Activities 1 and 2 into a collaborative answer to the question above (“How can a person’s language be affected by their occupation?”). Divide the class into groups of 3 to 4 and ask each group to take a particular section of the transcript and to write a paragraph consisting of at least five sentences in which they analyse and explain at least 2 language levels and link their observations back to the question at the end of their paragraph.

For example, a group focuses on the opening sequence and chooses to write about how the teacher uses specialist lexis (with examples) and a particular turn-taking sequence, before linking this back to the occupational context, the purposes of the talk and the involvement of the students.

Occupation cards

Here are the occupation cards which you can cut out and use in Lesson 1 of the Occupational groups resource.

solicitor	waiter
hairdresser	chip shop owner
film director	police officer
nurse	politician

traffic warden	paediatric nurse
welder	cashier
dog trainer	plumber
IT technician	judge
primary school teacher	zookeeper
secondary school teacher	lollipop person

Function cards

Here are the function cards which you can cut out and use in Lesson 1 of the Occupational groups resource.

to sell	to persuade
to enthuse	to inform
to explain	to advise
to warn	to control
to threaten	to reassure
to manipulate	to support

to demonstrate	to direct
to evaluate	to collaborate
to instruct	to challenge
to soothe	to mislead
to praise	to thank