

Language

Aims

In this unit you will:

- use your dictionary to learn words related to the topic of language
- learn the names of the parts of speech
- investigate etymology
- read about style, and figures of speech, and investigate metaphors
- study concordance lines to find out about words that collocate with the words 'language' and 'origins'

Part One: About language and languages

1.1 Language words

TASK 1A Look at the words below. With the help of a dictionary, write an explanation of what each one means.

	<i>Notes</i>
mother tongue	
first language	
second language	
lingua franca	
vernacular	
local language	
indigenous language	
monolingual	
bilingual	
multilingual	
dialect	
accent	

1.2 Etymology

What does 'etymology' mean? It is the study of the origins and development of words. The word 'etymology' itself comes from Greek: 'etymon', which means 'true / original meaning', and 'logia' (talking about).

TASK 1B The words 'monolingual', 'bilingual' and 'multilingual' are formed from the combination of two words from classical languages. 'lingual', 'bi' and 'multi' come from Latin, while 'mono' comes from Greek. Add into each box at least two other examples of words containing the root:

mono = one	multi = many
bi = two	lingual = relating to language

1.3 Reading

Many people confuse the words 'dialect' and 'accent'. Here is an explanation of the difference from the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language:

Dialect or accent?

Accent refers only to distinctive pronunciation, whereas *dialect* refers to grammar and vocabulary as well. If we heard one person say *He done it* and another say *He did it*, we would refer to them as using different dialects, because a grammatical difference is involved. But the difference between *bath* with a 'short *a*' [a] and *bath* with a 'long *a*' [ɑ:] is a matter of accent, as this is solely a matter of pronunciation.

Usually, speakers of different dialects have different accents; but speakers of the same dialect may have different accents too. The dialect known as 'standard English' is used throughout the world, but it is spoken in a vast range of regional accents.

Crystal, D. (1995) Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language, Page 24

Q: In the dialect known as 'standard English', which is normal: 'he done it' or 'he did it'?

1.4 Writing: My country and the languages I speak.

TASK 1C Fill in the spaces, or circle suitable words, in the following passage:

The national language of my home country is This language has been spoken in my country since My country is monolingual / multilingual. Other languages that are spoken are

In school the medium of instruction is The main foreign language(s) that is/are studied is/are This is because

I speak as my mother tongue, and I also speak (a little, quite well, well, fluently). I consider myself to be monolingual / bilingual / multilingual.

When I speak English, I have a slight/moderate/strong accent.

1.5 Parts of speech:

Here are the main categories for parts of speech in English:

noun	verb	adjective	pronoun	determiner
preposition		adverb	conjunction	

Example:

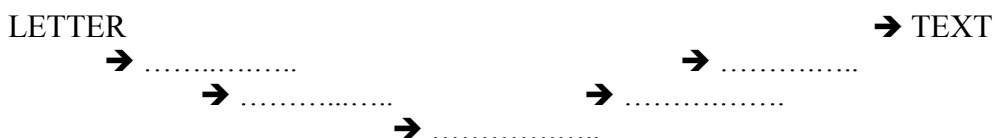
Pronoun	Verb	Determiner	Adjective	Noun	Preposition	Noun	Conjunction	Adverb	Verb	Noun
He	fried	the	green	leaves	in	butter	and	then	added	water

TASK 1D Can you name the parts of speech in the following sentence?

Quickly they ran into the woods.

TASK 1E Place the words in the box below in order, starting from the smallest unit and ending at the largest unit. The first and last points have been completed for you.

letter	paragraph	text	word
clause	phrase	sentence	



1.6 Language conventions

To make communication easier, humans have expectations of the kinds of language that will be used in a given situation. In academic writing, for example, it is conventional to use a more **formal** style of language, in comparison to the **informal** language used on a postcard that you send to a friend. Formal style tends to use many words of Latin or Greek origin.

TASK 1F Here are some examples of such words – can you think of informal equivalents for them?

construct (verb)	
conduct <i>research</i> <i>research</i>
perform <i>an experiment</i> <i>an experiment</i>
estimate	
transmit	

Because words of Latin and Greek origin are often used in academic writing, it is useful for you learn some of the Latin and Greek roots of these words. ‘Autobiography’, for example, comes from ‘auto’ (self) + ‘bio’ (life) + ‘graphos’ (writing), *writing about one’s life*.

TASK 1G Can you think of other English words which end in ‘-graph’ or ‘-graphy’? Write at least two in the box below, and write a guess of what the first part of the word means:

1	
2	

TASK 1H Now try to write at least two English words with the root ‘bio’ in them in the box below, and write a guess of what the other parts of each word means:

1	
2	

TASK 1I Finally, try to write at least two English words with the root ‘auto’ in them in the box below, and write a guess of what the other parts of each word means:

1	
2	

1.7 Figurative language

In English, you will find that there are many **fixed expressions**, and there also expressions which you can make changes to. There are many **similes**, for example, such as ‘as ancient as Rome’, which are conventional in English, but it is possible to change these (‘as ancient as the Pyramids’). The expression ‘all other things being equal’, however, is fixed; you cannot say ‘every other thing being the same’.

Similes and **metaphors** are figures of language, and **figurative language** can be acceptable in **discursive** writing but usually is not used in **technical** writing.

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which you use an expression to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity. For example, if you say ‘His eyes swept the table’, you do not mean that his eyes actually picked up a broom and started sweeping the table, but you mean that the motion of the man’s eyes was similar to the motion made when sweeping (that is, going from one side to the other).

TASK 1J Read the following paragraph, and underline any words or expressions that you think are metaphorical:

GCSE results for England to be published today are expected to show a marginal improvement on last year, with girls reasserting their supremacy by widening the gap in their performance over boys. This year girls are again soaring ahead of their male peers, the results will show. Last year boys closed the gap at GCSE level - the first reverse since GCSE results were published in 1988. But this will be shown today as a blip, with girls widening the performance gap by 0.1 points in most - but not all - subjects.

Source: EducationGuardian.co.uk 21/8/02
<http://education.guardian.co.uk/gcses2002/story/0,12348,778099,00.html>

You will learn more about metaphors later in this unit.

1.8 Concordance lines

On the next page you can see a set of concordance lines taken from a collection of newspaper articles.

The word ‘language’ appears at the center of each line. Look quickly at the concordance lines (you do not need to understand them in detail), and then answer the questions that follow.

however, take a far more restrictive line on drugs and bad language in films aimed at younger audiences.

with Mimi (the touching Simona Todaro) through both his body language and his singing is compelling. This is a man, at the office of the Riga railroad, fluency in a common language is possibly a matter of life and death.

re publishing openly racist leaflets exploiting, in emotive language, public disquiet about immigration.

bjective feeling is not possible. Nevertheless, in everyday language, feelings of being 'stressed' often appear to

itten in a difficult version of Ottoman Turkish, an extinct language with an extinct script that can be read by only

planning consultancy in Paris, and does not go in for fancy language. For the past two years his photograph has

extraordinarily instinctive writer with a delicate feel for language. The narrator of *The Hiding Place*, Dolores, is

g ("*The Axe*"), specifically the inadequacy of institutional language to accommodate reality. An office manager

ore importantly, it is because English is the international language of science. The Scandinavians and Finns

teacher of French and Wolof, the mostly widely spoken local language in Senegal. "We were the first band to

screen, just voice commands through a video in the local language. "We are targeting this at illiterate women,"

wed by Stephanie Merritt Choosing to write in a minority language is in itself a political act, asserting a

f his leadership, and would argue his case in more moderate language. Mr Clarke, who is still haunted by his

rating factor. To raise Albanian to the level of a national language would further widen the gulf between the two

guese; 56% of those polled said they knew only their native language. In Spain that figure was 53%, and in France

nce in 1991 Albanians have regularly criticised the lack of language rights for their community and discrimination

Slav supremacy. Albanian must be recognised as an official language for parliament, the courts and public service.

. Three out of four respondents say they speak at least one language other than their mother tongue, and 43% claim

. His rhetoric is about no surrender, and force as the only language "they" understand. The best hope is that he

ods to do that, physical abuse. They were made to learn our language . . . to read our books . . . learn to worship

and robbers are on first-name terms. They have their own language. The law-abiding seem to live on a different

sts say has helped put Spanish in the running as the second language of the Internet after English. But the region's

n for the silent majority. They have instructed me (in sign language) to say that they intend to claim the Fifth

norities now say in surveys that they can't speak the state language. But the urge to reassert Latvia's heritage,

normal EU standards on human rights. True, they used strong language about the behaviour of the far-right

upervised by mentors, and undergo a course in the technical language used in hospitals before beginning work on the

because English risks dilution through being adopted as the language of commerce and travel, we need more than ever

thing. The phrase "hitchhiker's guide to . . ." entered the language, and the only medium it has not been translated

up. This is not glamorous; it has not come wrapped in the language of equality or justice that the electorate

hurch. The Portuguese priests did not even try to learn the language or the culture of the place." During the war

ted from the company in Marseille. With no knowledge of the language or people, he is truly a stranger in a strange

ironmentalists and artists follow an orthodoxy in which the language of science has the greater prestige. In many

uncil, dealing mainly with people who want to improve their language skills before trying to migrate. The test is

200-700, but it is impossible to tell. No one speaks their language or knows where they came from, although DNA

TASK 1K Make a note in the table below of all the adjectives that are used in the concordance lines *before* the word ‘language’. Place these words into the table under the headings. An example has been entered into each box for you:

Judging the quality of language	Describing the social status of language
bad	official

TASK 1L In some of the lines, you can find the pattern ‘the language of’. Write down the examples in the box below:

the language of	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

Can you think of any other examples, from your own knowledge of English?

1 the language of

2 the language of

What kinds of nouns can be placed in the gap?

TASK 1M How many verbs are used with ‘language’? For example, in the last line, the verb ‘greet’ (+ someone + in) is used with ‘language’.

How many other verbs can you find in these concordance lines? Write them in the box below.

Before ‘language’	After ‘language’

Part 2: About Linguistics

This section is about linguistics, and some of the vocabulary is technical. The vocabulary that is focused on, however, is of general use to students in all subject areas.

2.1 Reading

Read the following passage, which comes from a university web page, then complete the matching exercise below. This extract explains the basic components of a Linguistics undergraduate course:

TEXT 1

Linguistics is concerned with the nature of human language and with the way in which verbal communication is carried on. This means that, whatever linguistics degree you do, the core of the programme explores our attempts to gain a better understanding of the key features of language: the human capacity to produce and recognise vocalised sounds, the way in which these are formed into the sound system of any one language, the ability that makes it possible for us to construct structured sentences and the nature of the structures that are found in human languages, the nature of meaning and how it is conveyed through our utterances. While no linguistics degree can do without these 'core' subjects of phonetics, phonology, syntax and semantics, they support and inform the unit in English Language, which offers you a comprehensive treatment of the linguistic system of English; and also the range of option units which relate to various aspects of language use and which will help to form and cater for your own particular interests and also your plans for your future life.

TASK 2A Using the information in Text 1, match the words in the left column with the correct definition in the right column by drawing lines to join them:

1 Linguistics	is the study of	A the way in which vocalized sounds are formed into the sound system of any one language
2 Semantics		B the ability that makes it possible for us to construct structured sentences, and the nature of the structures that are found in human languages
3 Phonology		C the nature of human language and with the way in which verbal communication is carried on
4 Syntax		D the human capacity to produce and recognise vocalised sounds
5 Phonetics		E the nature of meaning and how it is conveyed through our utterances

Figure 1 shows the different levels at which linguists work, and also the connections between linguistics and other disciplines:

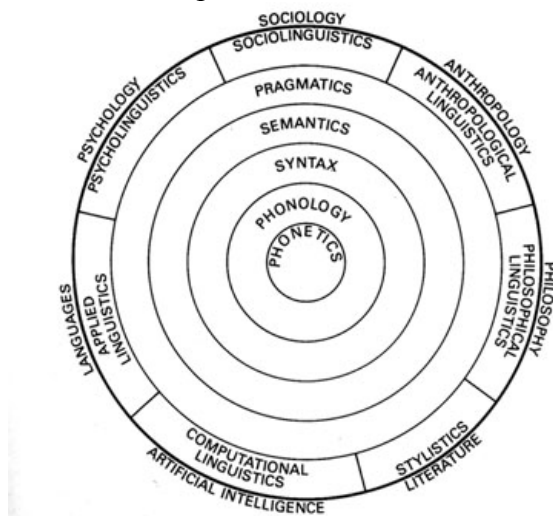


Figure 1 The scope of linguistics (Aichison 1990:15)

2.2 Reading: Phonetics and phonology

Text 2 explains the difference between the two areas of enquiry at the heart of the circle: phonetics and phonology, which are both connected with the study of sound ('*phonus*' is the Greek word for 'sound'). Read the passage and then answer the questions that follow:

TEXT 2

Phonetics is the study of how speech sounds are made, transmitted, and received. It is a subject that requires as its source of data a human being with an intact auditory mechanism and a functioning set of vocal organs. The person's particular language background is not strictly relevant: phoneticians would draw the same conclusions about the production and reception of speech whether they were dealing with speakers of English, Hindi, or Chinese.

By contrast, the primary aim of *phonology* is to discover the principles that govern the way sounds are organized in languages, and to explain the variations that occur. A common methodology is to begin by analysing an individual language, to determine which sound units are used and how they pattern — the language's 'phonological structure'. The properties of different sound systems are then compared, and hypotheses developed about the rules underlying the use of sounds in particular groups of languages, and ultimately in all languages.

The distinction between phonetics and phonology can be seen from a second point of view. The human vocal apparatus can produce a very wide range of sounds; but only a small number of these are used in a language to construct all of its words and sentences. Phonetics is the study of all possible speech sounds; phonology studies the way in which a language's speakers systematically use a selection of these sounds in order to express meaning.

There is a further way of drawing the distinction. No two speakers have anatomically identical vocal tracts, and thus no-one pronounces sounds in exactly the same way as anyone else. There is even a considerable amount of variation in the sounds of a single speaker. Yet when using our language we are able to discount much of this variation, and focus on only those sounds, or properties of sound, that are important to the communication of meaning. We think of our fellow-speakers as using the 'same' sounds, even though acoustically they

Vocabulary for Academic Purposes

are not. Phonology is the study of how we find order within the apparent chaos of speech sounds.

In its search for significant generalizations about sound systems, phonology is continually looking beneath the 'surface' of speech, to determine its underlying regularities, and to establish how these relate to other areas of language, notably syntax and morphology. Much of present-day phonological theory is thus concerned with the various kinds of abstract representation it is necessary to set up in order to explain the range and distribution of phonetic segments found in languages.

Crystal, D. (1995) Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language

TASK 2B Which of these statements are true of (1) phonetics, and which are true of (2) phonology? Write the number after the sentence.

- A It investigates how humans find order within the chaos of speech sounds.
- B It is the study of all possible speech sounds.
- C It looks for the regularities that underlie speech, in order that it can make generalizations about sound systems.
- D For data, it requires a human being with an unimpaired auditory mechanism.

TASK 2C Match the words on the left with the meanings on the right:

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|--|
| 1 | systematically | A | attributes |
| 2 | properties | B | working properly |
| 3 | hypotheses | C | in a methodical manner; consistently |
| 4 | functioning | D | proposals intended to explain certain observations |

TASK 2D The sentences below are all false, but can be made true by replacing the word in bold with a different word from the text:

1. The person's particular language background is not **loosely** relevant
2. A common **theory** is to begin by analysing an individual language.
3. The human vocal apparatus can produce a very wide range of **images**.
4. Phonology is the study of how we find order within the **obvious** chaos of speech sounds.
5. Much of present-day phonological theory is thus concerned with various kinds of **concrete** representation

TASK 2E The writer uses the verb 'draw' twice. Write the two examples below. What is the meaning of the word in these two cases?

draw draw
The meaning is _____

TASK 2F In the first two texts, two metaphors are used to describe the study of language. One is that the linguist is an explorer, and the other is that languages are like buildings (structures).

How many examples of these metaphors can you find in the two texts? Write the examples in the boxes below:

Vocabulary for Academic Purposes

Explorer	Building

TASK 2G Here is a list of the verbs that are used in Text 2. Place them in the box below, according to:

- whether they describe what the linguist does, or
- whether they describe an action of human beings in general

transmit receive draw make discover explain
 compare determine discount use pronounce produce

Linguist	Human

Which of these verbs means ‘Find out or learn with certainty’

.....

Which of these verbs means ‘decide something is not worth consideration’

.....

2.3 Reading: Linguistic identity

You can tell a lot about people by the way that they speak. Both accent and dialect are features of what can be called 'linguistic identity'. Read the following text and then answer the questions that follow:

Text 3

The most widely recognized features of linguistic identity are those that point to the geographical origins of the speakers – features of *regional dialect*, which prompt us to ask the question 'Where are they from?' But there are several levels of response to this question. We might have a single person in mind, yet all of the following answers would be correct: 'America', 'The United States', 'East Coast', 'New York', 'Brooklyn'. People belong to regional communities of varying extent, and the dialect they speak changes its name as we 'place' them in relation to these communities.

Languages, as well as dialects, can convey geographical information about their speakers, but this information varies greatly, depending on the language of which we are thinking. The variation can be seen if we complete a test sentence using different language names: 'If they speak —, they must be from —.' If the first blank is filled by 'Swedish', the second blank will almost certainly be filled by 'Sweden'. But 'Portuguese' would not inevitably lead to 'Portugal': the second blank could be filled by 'Brazil', 'Angola', 'Mozambique', and several other countries. 'French' would give us the choice of about 40 countries, and 'English' well over 50. 'Dialect', by contrast with 'language', is a much more specific geographical term.

It is sometimes thought that only a few people speak regional dialects. Many restrict the term to rural forms of speech - as when they say that 'dialects are dying out these days'. They have noticed that country dialects are not as widespread as they once were, but they have failed to notice that urban dialects are now on the increase. Another view is to see dialects as sub-standard varieties of a language, spoken only by low-status groups – implicit in such comments as 'He speaks correct English, without a trace of dialect.' Comments of this kind fail to recognize that standard English is as much a dialect as any other variety – though a dialect of a rather special kind.

Crystal, D. (1995) *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*

TASK 2H Which of the following statements are true? Place a 'T' after the sentence if it is true, according to the text, or an 'F' if the statement is false.

1. The answer to the question 'Where are they from?' is simple.
2. Languages can communicate information about the geographical origins of speakers.
3. The geographical origins of Swedish speakers are easy to predict.
4. English is a dialect of Portuguese.
5. The number of dialects is clearly decreasing.

Vocabulary for Academic Purposes

TASK 2I How many different forms of the word ‘vary’ can you find in the text?
Write them in the box below:

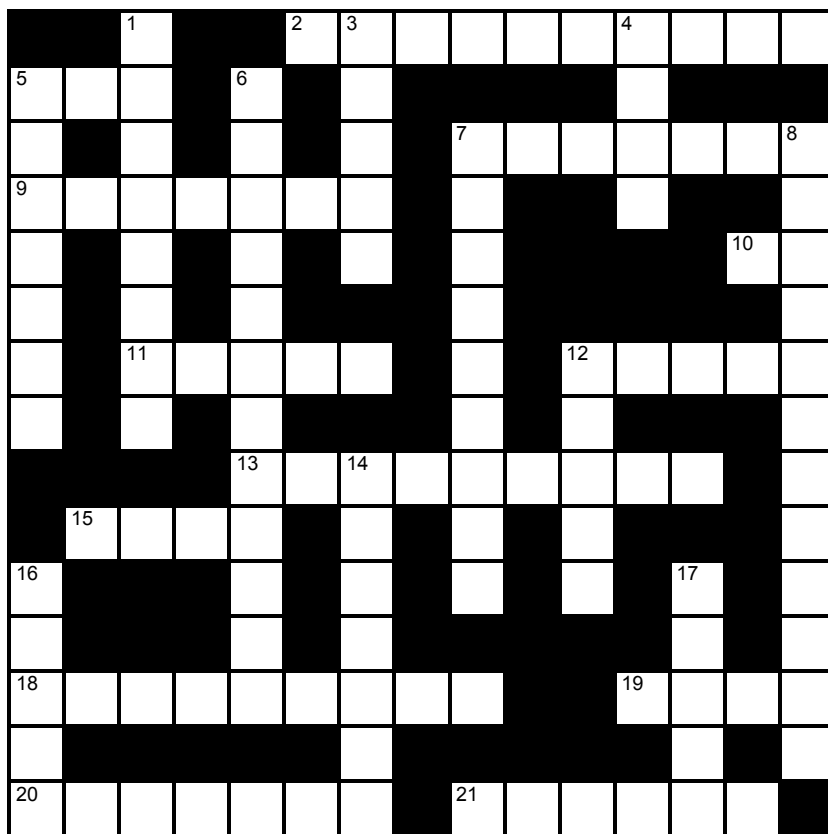
TASK 2J The following expressions refer back to previous parts of the text. In the space next to the words, explain what the word(s) refer(s) to. The first one has been done for you, as an example:

this question	‘Where are they from?’
this information	
the variation	
the term	
comments of this kind	

TASK 2K Use your dictionary to find a word or expression that is the opposite of the following:

implicit
widespread

on the increase.....



TASK 2N As a test of your learning, try this crossword. Most of the answers can be found in this unit.

Across

- 2 Basic or essential attributes shared by all members of a particular class (10)
- 5 A diagrammatic representation, used in geography, for example (3)
- 7 The study of the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences (7)
- 9 Distinctive manners of pronouncing (7)
- 10 Short for 'for example' (from Latin *exempli gratia*) (2)
- 11 Hindi is the national language of this country (5)
- 12 Having or using the power to produce speech or sound (5)
- 13 The noun form of 'receive'; in communication, this is the opposite of 'production' (9)
- 15 What is given; a collection of facts from which conclusions may be drawn (4)
- 18 The study of how speech sounds are made, transmitted, and received (9)
- 19 Actual; opposite of 'imagined' or 'false' (4)
- 20 A manner of speech characteristic of a particular person or class (7)
- 21 A figure of speech that expresses a resemblance between things of different kinds (for example, 'as easy as ABC') (6)

Down

- 1 The opposite of 'general' (8)
- 3 To use again (5)
- 4 A clock shows the (4)
- 5 Semantics is the study of (7)
- 6 Relatively large in amount or degree (12)
- 7 The adjectival form of 'geography' (12)
- 8 Features that occur again and again, consistently (12)
- 12 Can be active or passive. (5)
- 14 The standard or high status form of a language is thought to be(7)
- 16 Similar to 'swift' or 'quick' (5)
- 17 Opposite of 'urban' (5)

Language – Teacher’s Key

TASK 1A The following definitions come from the Cambridge International Dictionary of English

- A person's mother tongue is the first language that they learned when they were a baby
- A person's first language is the language they learn from their parents as they are growing up.
- A second language is a language that a person can speak which is not the first language they learnt naturally as a child.
- lingua franca: a language which is used for communication between groups of people who speak different languages but which is not used between members of the same group
- vernacular: the form of a language that a regional (or other) group of speakers use naturally, esp. in informal situations
- local language: a language used in (usually) a small area of a country
- indigenous language: a language that is native to a country, that originated in that area
- monolingual: speaking or using only one language
- bilingual: (of a person) able to use two languages for communication, or (of a thing) using or involving two languages
- multilingual: (of people or groups) able to use more than two languages for communication, or (of a thing) written or spoken in several different languages
- dialect: a form of a language which is spoken in a particular part of a country and contains some different words, grammar and pronunciation, from other forms of the same language
- accent: the way in which people in a particular area, country, social class, etc. pronounce words

TASK 1B Here are some of the possibilities:

mono: monogamy, monogenetic

multi: multicultural, multiplication

bi: bicycle, bimetallic

lingual: trilingual, audiolingual

TASK 1C The answers will depend on the student

TASK 1D Quickly ADV they PRONOUN ran VERB into PREPOSITION the DETERMINER woods NOUN

TASK 1E letter → word → phrase → clause → sentence → paragraph → text

TASK 1F make, do, do, guess, send (other answers are possible)

TASK 1G For example, 'autograph', 'photography', 'telegraph'

TASK 1H For example, 'biology', 'biosynthesis', 'biochemistry':

TASK 1I For example, 'automobile', 'autocracy', 'automatic'

TASK 1J The answers are not fixed, as this depends on your interpretation of what is metaphorical, and what is not. A suggested reading is:

GCSE results for England to be published today are expected to show a marginal improvement on last year, with girls reasserting their supremacy by widening the gap in their performance over boys. This year girls are again soaring ahead of their male peers, the results will show. Last year boys closed the gap at GCSE level - the first reverse since GCSE results were published in 1988. But this will be shown today as a blip, with girls widening the performance gap by 0.1 points in most - but not all - subjects.

TASK 1K The categories are not watertight, and this activity should lead to discussion and perhaps disagreement. Suggested answers are:

Judging the quality of language: bad, strong, emotive, fancy, moderate

Describing the social status of language: official, institutional, international, traditional, national, native, state, fancy

Describing a kind of language that is not verbal: body, sign

TASK 1L the Internet, science, the place, commerce, travel, equality

The kinds of nouns that can be placed in the gap are words that describe a field of discourse – a subject area (law, medicine, economics), for example, or an activity (travel)

TASK 1M Before: speak, use, learn, have, improve, adopt as, know, recognize as a language, argue one's case in language, write in a language, instruct in

After: can be read (use of passive voice), accommodate, has

In other words, 'language' hardly ever controls a verb.

TASK 2A 1C, 2E, 3A, 4B, 5D

TASK 2B A2, B1, C2, D1

TASK 2C 1C, 2A, 3D, 4B

TASK 2D strictly; methodology; sounds; apparent; abstract

TASK 2E Draw a conclusion, draw a distinction. They are equivalent to 'conclude' and 'distinguish'.

TASK 2F

Explorer: explore, discover, search, look beneath

Building: structure, form into a system, set up, construct

TASK 2G

Linguist: draw, compare, discover, determine, discount, explain

Human: transmit, receive, pronounce, produce, make, use

Determine

Discount

TASK 2H 1F, 2T, 3T, 4F, 5F

TASK 2I variation, varying, variety

TASK 2J

this information: geographical information about the speakers

the variation: this information

the term: 'dialect'

comments of this kind: comments like 'He speaks correct English, without a trace of dialect'

TASK 2K implicit: explicit; widespread: rare (?); on the increase: decreasing

TASK 2L class, working-class, colonial, political, dubious, ethnic, human

TASK 2M owe, trace

TASK 2N

