

**VCE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
UNITS 1 - 4**

ORIENTATION BOOKLET

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Animal vs. Human Communication

Unique Aspects of Human Language

Take a look at the list below, which outlines the unique features of human language:

- **Spontaneity** - Humans can initiate speech on their own. We don't need to have chocolate bars or dog biscuits dangled in front of us to make us speak.
- **Displacement** - Humans can discuss things beyond the here and now (i.e. the present moment).
- **Arbitrariness** - Human language is made up of arbitrary signs, symbols and sounds. In other words, the gestures, letters and noises we make are completely random. We just agree on what they symbolise.
- **Structure/Discreteness** - Humans are capable of combining and recombining language to create new forms.
- **Creativity/Productivity** - Humans are capable of combining the discrete parts of language to create an infinite number of messages.
- **Cultural transmission** - Humans pass down language from generation to generation. Children learn the language around them, regardless of race, genes or cultural heritage.

Do Animals Have Language? - Video

LINK: [Do animals have language? - Michele Bishop](#)

While watching this video, record the animals mentioned and which of the characteristics of language they demonstrated or were missing.

Animal Case Studies

Read the animal case studies provided in class. Evaluate each case study by identifying what aspects of the animal's communication resembles human language and what aspects don't.

Animal Case Study	Resemblance to Human Language	Problems with the Case Study
Washoe		
Nim Chimsky		
Koko		

Language Rules

Some Common 'Rules' of Language

1. Use active voice.
2. When writing, use a semicolon to join two ideas.
3. Avoid run-on sentences.
4. Begin every sentence with a capital letter.
5. 'i' before 'e' except after 'c'.
6. Pronoun choices should accurately reflect function, person, number, gender etc.
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Are You a Prescriptivist or a Descriptivist?

Read and discuss the list of common rules in English above. Then, write a response to the question below. Your response should be at least one paragraph:

Language and communication are about speaking properly and following the rules.

Do you agree?

Preparation for 2024

Units 1 – 4

1. Read your relevant study design section:

- **Everyone:** pgs. 11 - 21
- **U1+2:** pgs. 23 - 29
- **U3+4:** pgs. 30 - 38

2. Using the Study Design (pgs. 11 – 21) and the Quizlet Flashcards, create a set of physical flashcards for the following metalanguage terms:

Quizlet flashcard link: <https://quizlet.com/au/859415910/ches-english-language-sociolinguistic-variables-and-subsystems-flash-cards/?i=18jymm&x=1qgt>

- The Subsystems of Language, including:
 - **Phonetics and phonology**
 - **Morphology**
 - **Lexicology**
 - **Syntax**
 - **Semantics**
 - **Discourse and pragmatics**
- The sociolinguistic variables of language, including:
 - Function:
 - Referential (informing)
 - Emotive
 - Conative (commands)
 - Phatic (social)
 - Metalinguistic
 - Poetic
 - Cultural context (the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants and wider community)
 - Register (formality and defined by use e.g. legal register)
 - Audience and Authorial Intent
 - Purposes
 - Situational context:
 - Field
 - Tenor
 - Setting
 - Mode
 - Text type

Units 3 – 4 Only

Throughout Units 3 and 4 of English Language, you will need to be keeping up to date with language use in Australia and what people are saying about it. To kick this off, please complete the following:

- Locate one text that you would deem ‘informal’. This could be written or spoken. Some easy examples might be TV and email advertising, public social media accounts, junk mail, TV shows, YouTube videos etc. Be mindful of using linguistic evidence that might require consent (e.g. recorded conversation).
- Locate one article that discusses language as a topic. Ideally, it should be about Australian English, but this is not a requirement. Bring this along to our first tutorial next year.

Bored? Wanting to Excel? Take a Look at These!

Sources to Support Your Studies

Units 1 – 4:

VCAA English language: <https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/englishlanguage/Pages/Index.aspx>

Books:

- David Crystal’s “Encyclopedia of the English Language”

Units 1 – 2:

Books and Documentaries:

- The Adventure of English – Melvin Bragg
- The Stories of English – David Crystal
- The Story of English: How the English Language Conquered the World – Phillip Gooden
- The Story of English – Robert McCrum
- The Surgeon of Crowthorne: A Tale of Murder, Madness and the Oxford English Dictionary – Simon Winchester
- Lost for Words: Australia’s lost language in words and stories – Hugh Lunn
- Gift of the Gob: Morsels of English language history – Kate Burridge

Units 3 – 4:

Macquarie University ‘Australian Voices’ site: <https://www.mq.edu.au/research/research-centres-groups-and-facilities/healthy-people/centres/centre-for-language-sciences-clas/australian-voices>

Australian National Dictionary Centre: <https://slll.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/andc>

Books and Podcasts:

- Speaking our language: the story of Australian English – Bruce Moore
- Podcast collection – <https://linguisticdiscovery.com/podcasts/>