



Leaping into Language!

moving from GCSE to
A Level Language study



An English and Media Centre Student Resource

7. Textercise

One of the things you will quickly notice about the study of language at A Level is that you don't just look at serious, weighty books. You might have studied quite a lot of literary fiction on your English courses so far and even when it hasn't been literature, it has probably been what is broadly termed 'literary non-fiction'. On an A Level English Language course, you will analyse all sorts of language. This activity gives you a taste of that and asks you to think a bit more about the language around you all the time.


- On pages 17-19 you will find eight 'texts'. These might not be the kind of texts you've analysed before, but they are all worth analysing because they have been created to communicate in some way.
- Have a quick look at each text and think about the following:
 - What they are about
 - What they might mean – the ideas, messages, opinions, personalities being expressed
 - How they use different methods of communication: design, colour, vocabulary choices, structure, style, interaction.
- Choose three texts and use the questions below to make some quick notes about how they compare in their uses of language.
- Once you've done this, think about gathering your own set of texts from the world around you. Like these texts here, your texts could be written, spoken, online, serious, silly, informative, clever and/or important. Try to find at least five interesting texts and use the same questions to help you think about them.


Questions to ask about your choice of texts

- What is the language in each text designed to achieve? Do you notice any differences between the three you have chosen?
- How have visual elements been used in the texts? Any differences?
- If any of the three were originally spoken, do you notice anything distinctive about them?
- How easy or difficult is it to analyse some of these texts? Does it feel like you can analyse them in the same way as a piece of literature, for example?

While analysing these types of text might be a new experience for you, the ways in which you explore and analyse them will build on things you've done before. Some of that will take you back to the work you might have done at Primary school with grammar (verbs, nouns and phrases, for example) and some will build on the work you've just been doing for GCSE.

The Texts

<p>On tonight's show, we've got Fontaines DC live in the studio, old session tracks from The Chameleons, Ruthless Rap Assassins and Half Lazy plus all the usual mixture of weird, wonderful and just a bit wonky music from all around the world. Join me after nine tonight for the last of this week's Evening Shows.</p>	<p>A radio DJ presenting a trailer for a show.</p>
 <p>6. Serve</p> <p>Serve the spiced Moroccan soup in bowls with the remaining coriander sprinkled over. Dollop on some Greek yoghurt and finish with a sprinkling of dukkah. Add a sprinkle of the remaining chilli, if you want an extra kick.</p> <p>Enjoy!</p>	<p>Part of a recipe for a meal.</p>
<p>What refugees using our services say:</p> <p>“I want to say thank you and I really appreciate the effort you made towards making my life look beautiful, peaceful and secure.” – Resettled refugee</p> <p>“Refugee Action has been amazing with us. They helped us with everything – registering our children in schools, this was a priority for us.” – Dara</p> <p>“They help me a lot – Refugee Action is great. And I feel that they love me.” – Joseph</p> <p>“A lot of people in this country have helped me, including Refugee Action. Now I would like to change my career and help other people.” – Ade</p>	<p>A section of a charity leaflet from Refugee Action.</p>
<p>Play as a band of rebel cats trying to stop fascists from seizing control of the galaxy in this cooperative game!</p> <p>In the year three million, the animals of Earth's past inhabit the galaxy in advanced societies. Now, using fear and force, the regime known as the Rat Pack is sweeping into power across the planets. Together, a small group of cat rebels will try to stop these fascist forces from seizing power – while building a new galaxy where all species are free together.</p>	<p>A description of the boardgame, <i>Space Cats Fight Fascism</i> (TESA Collective games) on the back of the box.</p>

<p>From the first time he was stopped and searched as a child, to the day he realised his mum was white, to his first encounters with racist teachers; race and class have shaped Akala's life and outlook. In <i>Natives</i>, he takes his own experiences – with education, the police, identity and everything in between – and uses them to look at the social, historical and political factors that have left us where we are today.</p> <p>‘Gripping . . . trenchant and highly persuasive’</p> <p>— METRO (BOOKS OF THE YEAR) —</p> <p>‘One of the most thoughtful books of the past year’</p> <p>———— EVENING STANDARD ————</p> <p>‘A potent combination of autobiography and political history’</p> <p>———— INDEPENDENT ————</p>	<p>The blurb from the back of a book (Akala's <i>Natives</i>, published by Two Roads).</p>
 <p>EASY OPEN: FLIP, SQUEEZE, RIP AND TIP</p> <p><i>Grain-free, Natural, Complete, Delicious</i></p> <p>(GB) INGREDIENTS/COMPOSITION: FRESH TURKEY (45%), FRESH DUCK (20%), GREEN PEAS (3%), CARROIS (1%), SEAWEED EXTRACT, YUCCA EXTRACT, FRUCTOOLIGOSACCHARIDE PREBIOTICS (0.5G/KG).</p> <p>NUTRITIONAL ADDITIVES: VITAMINS: VITAMIN A: 2500 MG/KG; VITAMIN D3: 200 IU/KG; VITAMIN E: 30 MG/KG. TRACE ELEMENTS: POTASSIUM IODIDE 0.8 MG/KG, CALCIUM SULPHATE PENTAHYDRATE 20 MG/KG, ZINC SULPHATE MONOHYDRATE 139 MG/KG, FERROUS CARBONATE 33 MG/KG.</p> <p>ANALYTICAL CONSTITUENTS: CRUDE PROTEIN 10.25%, CRUDE FAT 10%, CRUDE FIBRE 0.2%, INORGANIC MATTER 4%, MOISTURE 69%.</p> <p>BEST BEFORE/ BATCH NUMBER: SEE BASE</p> <p>FRESH INGREDIENTS LOCALLY SOURCED FAMILY-FARMED TURKEY FAMILY-FARMED DUCK FRESH VEGETABLES SOURCE OF ANTIOXIDANTS</p>	<p>A dog food carton.</p>
<p>And it's controlled beautifully by Jack Harrison who beats his man and whips a ball across the face of goal. It's an inviting ball aaaaand it's Ben White who gets on the end of it to put it past the keeper's outstretched hand. First goal of the season for the central defender and what a great team goal that was.</p>	<p>Part of a radio commentary on a football match.</p>



Rapture
@RaptureWitney

We're all feeling a bit sad that #RSD2020 has been postponed.

We thought it might cheer things up a teeny bit to share some throwback photos from past #RSD celebrations! 🥰



@RSDUK



11:27am · 18 Apr 2020 · Twitter for Android

2 Retweets 7 Likes

A tweet from a local record shop on Record Store Day.

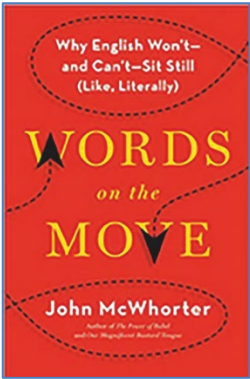
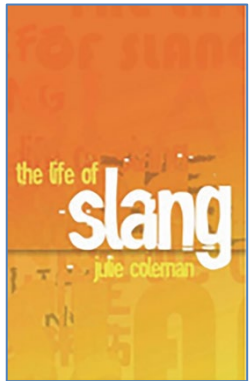
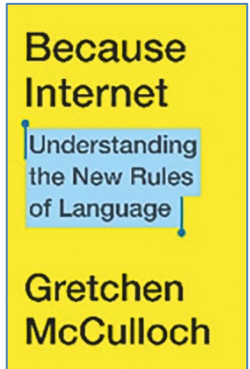
14. Language on the Page

A lot of really good books have recently been written by academic linguists and general language experts for the general public about what language is and how it works. We've suggested a few recent favourites below.

We're not expecting you to read all these books – but we won't stop you if that's what you want to do.

- Choose one or two and use the links here. Most of these will take you to the 'Look Inside' pages on Amazon which give you a sample to read, while others will take you to extracts or an Audible sample. A few take you to a review or an interview.
- Dip in and out of a few of them, looking for what they say about some of the main issues to do with English, making a note of some key quotations you could use further down the line.

Some Reading Suggestions

<p>John McWhorter: <i>Words on the Move</i> https://preview.tinyurl.com/wordsmove</p>	
<p>Julie Coleman: <i>The Life of Slang</i> (Short interviews about the book) https://youtu.be/DIqk6MdLWRw https://youtu.be/HkAwIVoNUx0</p>	
<p>Gretchen McCulloch: <i>Because Internet</i> https://tinyurl.com/cosinternet</p>	

[David Shariatmadari: *Don't Believe a Word*](#)

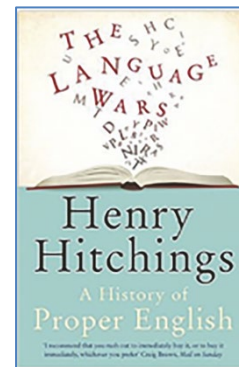
<https://tinyurl.com/notbelieve>



Henry Hitchings: *The Language Wars*

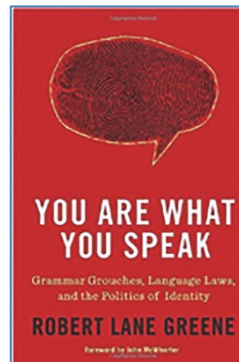
(A review)

See page 61 in the accompanying 'emagazine Resource Pack – Language'



[Lane Greene: *You Are What You Speak*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/vocabsticklers>



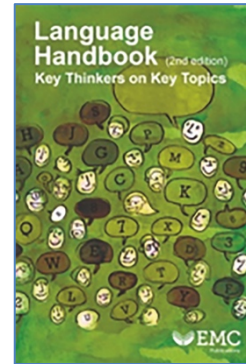
[Lane Greene: *Talk on the Wild Side*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/talkwildside>



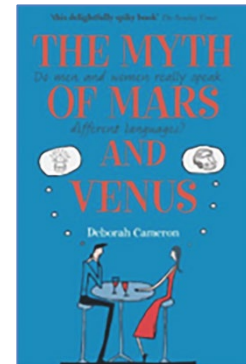
[Dan Clayton \(ed\): *EMC Language Handbook \(2nd edition\): Key Thinkers on Key Topics*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/emclang>



[Deborah Cameron: *The Myth of Mars and Venus*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/mythmarsvenus>



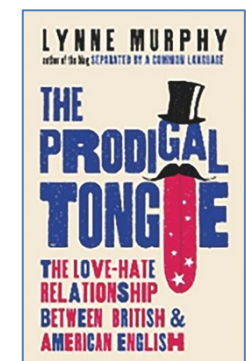
[Abby Kaplan: *Women Talk More Than Men... and Other Myths About Language Explained*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/womenmentalk>



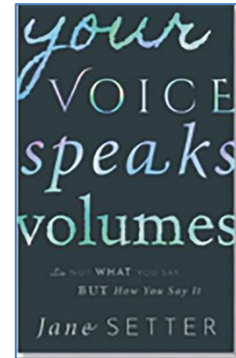
[Lynne Murphy: *The Prodigal Tongue*](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/prodigaltalk>



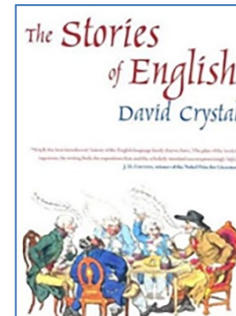
[Jane Setter: *Your Voice Speaks Volumes*](https://tinyurl.com/voicevolumes)

<https://tinyurl.com/voicevolumes>



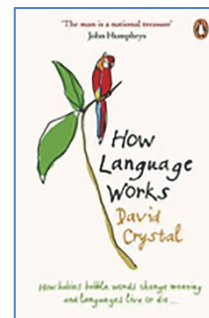
[David Crystal: *Stories of English*](https://tinyurl.com/crystalstories)

<https://tinyurl.com/crystalstories>



[David Crystal: *How Language Works*](https://tinyurl.com/crystalworks)

<https://tinyurl.com/crystalworks>



15. English Language for Your Ears

In the last few years, more and more linguists have been getting their ideas and interests out to the public through radio programmes and podcasts. In some cases, these are linked to big publishers and broadcasters (the BBC in the UK and Slate in the USA), while others are independently produced. There's now a really good range out there and plenty to choose from.

- Have a browse through the suggestions here and listen to one or two in more detail. Most of the radio programmes can be accessed directly through the link provided and the podcasts through the links or via an app like Spotify.
- If possible, use the platform recommended and validated by your school to share what you listened to with friends. Which podcast would you most recommend and why?
- Follow up the suggestions from your classmates.
- Keep listening to any of the podcasts you enjoyed (or try out some others), follow the ones you like on Instagram or Twitter and let the presenters know what you thought. Many of these podcasts will engage with their listeners and pick up ideas that you want to discuss, so get involved.

The BBC's [Word of Mouth](#) programme presented by Michael Rosen, has a huge archive of previous programmes all available for download. Some recent highlights have been selected for you here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qtnz/episodes/player>

- [A Debate About American English](#)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08g5533>
- [Will Emoji Be the Future of English?](#)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08ffvp6>
- [The Language of Lying](#)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dfpy>
- [Romani Language](#)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00050qw>
- [Black British Identity and Black-related Words](#)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0004l93>
- [Solving Crime with Language](#)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00027n6>
- [Language, Gender and Trans Identities](#)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09r4k4l>

[Lexicon Valley](#), presented by John McWhorter can be found here and a few particularly relevant ones have been highlighted below:

<https://slate.com/podcasts/lexicon-valley>

- [Women's Language](#)
<https://slate.com/podcasts/lexicon-valley/2020/03/vocal-frywomen-language>
- [Like, Sort Of...](#)
<https://slate.com/podcasts/lexicon-valley/2019/11/politeness-in-the-english-language>
- [Language on the Internet](#)
<https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/07/john-mcwhorter-and-gretchen-mcculloch-on-because-internet.html>

The BBC's **Seriously** podcast isn't just about language but you'll find a few interesting language programmes on there, including this one featuring Susie Dent on American English:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08qxd02>

Another BBC programme, **The Verb** often has language issues up for discussion. A few selected episodes are:

- [Puns and Wordplay](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dj45)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dj45>
- [Sports Writing](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000c2ls)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000c2ls>
- [How to Write Out Sexism](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0002zyh)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0002zyh>

Other podcasts include the following:

The Language Revolution



<https://thelanguagerevolution.co.uk/>

Accentricity



<https://www.accentricity-podcast.com/>

The Vocal Fries



<https://vocalfriespod.com/>

The Allusionist



<https://www.theallusionist.org/>

Lexitecture



<http://www.lexitecture.com/>

Lingthusiasm



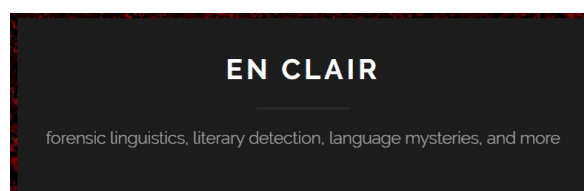
<https://lingthusiasm.com/>

Talk the Talk



<http://talkthetalkpodcast.com/>

en clair



<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/enclair/>

16. Online Resources for English Language

Many linguists and university linguistics departments have an online presence that's accessible and interesting for the general public, as well as those who are studying language at school, college or university. Along with these, you can find online resources from the BBC, British Council and British Library. A few of these have been selected for you below. They start with the most accessible and move on to ones that are a little more complex or demanding in nature. Dip into a few of these and see what you make of them. They are all interesting in different ways!

Perhaps once you have had a look at the few of them, you could write a short report on two or three that you were particularly interested in. What grabbed you? What else would you like to know more about? Were there any ideas you'd like to challenge and argue about?

British Library

- British Accents and Dialects: <https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects>
- English Language and Literature Timeline: <http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/evolvingenglish/accessvers/index.html>
- Texts in Context: <http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/texts/context.html>

The Open University has always been good for this, and recently one of their linguistics lecturers, Philip Seargeant, posted a link to a range of their online resources

- What is Language? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwG9SNeCof8>
- The History of English in 10 Minutes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3r9bOkYW9s>
- A Brief History of Emoji: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTXLuZHYf4>
- Narrative in Journalism and Politics: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCP_ifjRZgA
- Filter Bubbles and Fake News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaolE1blpWk>
- Why Do We Swear? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsFm-pN_XJO

The dictionary makers (lexicographers) are also very good at making their work with the English language really accessible.

- **The Oxford Dictionary** blog: <https://public.oed.com/blog/>
- **Macmillan Dictionary** blog: <http://www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/>
- Australia's **Macquarie Dictionary** blog: <https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/blog/>
- The US's **Merriam-Webster Dictionary**: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Queen Mary University London (QMUL)

Resources aimed at students, teachers and the general public on accent attitudes, changing language in the UK and lots more.

- Accent Bias in Britain Project: <https://accentbiasbritain.org/>
- Teach Real English Resources: <http://www.teachrealenglish.org/>

University of York

Lots of very useful resources on aspects of language use and how people feel about it

- The York English Language Toolkit: <https://englishlanguagetoolkit.york.ac.uk/>

University College London (UCL)

Helping you understand what grammar is and how it works.

- Englicious Grammar Resources: <http://englicious.org/>

Lancaster University

- Corpus-based teaching resources that explain how you can use technology and digital databases to track changes and variations in English:
<http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/bnclab/search?display=resources>

Tony Thorne's *Language and Innovation* pages

- Tony Thorne is a linguist at King's College London who collects and tracks slang usage, among other things: <https://language-and-innovation.com/>

Deborah Cameron's *A feminist guide to language* blog

- Deborah Cameron is one of the country's leading experts on language and gender and her blog is funny, thought-provoking and insightful: <https://debuk.wordpress.com/>

17. Experience a University-style Lecture

OK... so you're thinking of heading into an A Level rather than a degree but it's always interesting to see what's further down the path, should you choose to take it. As more and more universities provide material online and reach out beyond their own students to the wider community, you will find lots of interesting and accessible resources available, including lectures and MOOCs (interactive, self-taught online courses).

Some lectures and talks have been chosen to give you a taste of a few interesting areas.

- Watch a few minutes of these and choose a couple to watch all the way through. Don't worry about making notes at this stage; just follow the line of argument and think about the ideas being offered.
- Once you have listened to a couple of lectures, try to jot down a few notes at the end. What were the key ideas? Did you understand the arguments being made? Were there any things you weren't sure about and might need to look up?
- If you can, arrange with a classmate to listen to the same lecture and swap notes via the platform recommended and validated by your school. Sometimes, two of us can listen to the same lecture and come away with very different ideas or see a different importance to the points being made.
- Many of the links from the TED talks offer suggestions for other language-based lectures. Follow a few of those links and keep a note of which of these you found interesting, and some key ideas from them. Many of these could come in useful later on in the course.

emagClips

- Professor Tim grant on Forensic Linguistics

<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/video-clips/clip-listing/leaping-into-language-emagclips>

TED Talks

- Lera Boroditsky on the links between language and thought
https://www.ted.com/talks/lera_boroditsky_how_language_shapes_the_way_we_think
- John McWhorter on digital language and texting
https://www.ted.com/talks/john_mcwhorter_txtng_is_killing_language_jk
- Deb Roy on children's language development
https://www.ted.com/talks/deb_roy_the_birth_of_a_word
- Anne Curzan on what makes a word 'real'
https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_curzan_what_makes_a_word_real
- Erin McKean on making up new words
https://www.ted.com/talks/erin_mckean_go_ahead_make_up_new_words
- Claire Bower on where English comes from
https://www.ted.com/talks/claire_bower_where_did_english_come_from
- John McWhorter on made-up languages in sci-fi and fantasy
https://www.ted.com/talks/john_mcwhorter_are_elvish_klingon_dothraki_and_na_vi_real_languages

And others

David Crystal interviewed by Cambridge University Press

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59GMlpAdVok>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8jofTbIxM>

Online Courses

If you are feeling like you really want to immerse yourself in some language study over the next few months (And why not?) **Future Learn** have a selection of online courses you can sign up for, including some excellent ones on Language and Linguistics. Here are a few we would recommend:

- Understanding English Dictionaries
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/understanding-dictionaries>
- An Introduction to Sociolinguistics: Accents, Attitudes and Identity
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/accents-attitudes-and-identity-an-introduction-to-sociolinguistics>
- Introduction to Intercultural Studies: Language and Culture
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/intercultural-studies-language-culture>

18. Big Questions

Linguists are always asking questions about the nature of language and exploring how it's used. In *emagazine* we have interviewed a number of linguists and language experts about the work they've been doing and the questions they think need answering. Here are a few extracts that we think you'll find interesting.

Perhaps you could come up with your own questions for linguists. Make a note of any of the big questions (or even little questions!) about language that you want to ask and send them to us at the @EngLangBlog Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/EngLangBlog>) – we can then put them to our panel of experts.

David Shariatmadari, Guardian writer and editor and author of *Don't Believe a Word: The Surprising Truth About Language*.

emagazine: What's so great about Linguistics? Would you encourage A Level students to study it?

Linguistics is really cool! If you like learning quirky facts about language, then look no further. It can be quite technical, but there's a lot of fun too. If you've ever asked any of the big questions about language – what makes languages different? What makes them the same? Does the language you speak shape your thought? Why are words the way they are? – then I think you should seriously consider studying Linguistics.

emagazine 87, February 2020

Devyani Sharma, Professor of Linguistics, Queen Mary University London and co-investigator on the Accent Bias in Britain project.

emagazine: Why is accent bias a problem? If we like one accent over another is that necessarily a problem?

All humans have biases – simplified ways of thinking when we need to process our thoughts quickly. Accent is no exception: we all have automatic associations with accents, and we might use those to make snap judgments about a person's social background. These automatic stereotypes and preferences – whether positive, negative, or neutral – are referred to as accent bias. Such biases are a natural and universal part of human cognition. We can't process our complex social world without sometimes relying on fast judgements.

But when we rely on these simple stereotypes to judge unrelated traits, like intelligence or competence or trustworthiness, our cultural baggage becomes discriminatory. Accent bias becomes accent discrimination.

The accent we grew up with is unrelated to the knowledge and expertise that we might acquire. If we judge people by their accent, we risk discriminating against well-qualified people because of their social background. Often those people already face other forms of discrimination, so this is a serious problem for social justice.

emagplus for magazine 87, February 2020

Henry Hitchings, author of *The Language Wars* and *The Secret Life of Words*.

emagazine: Is there a danger of the English language spiralling out of control at an ever greater speed because of technology? Should we be worried?

I don't believe it's going to spiral out of control. I do think, though, that changes - not just linguistic ones, but social ones also - are happening rapidly, and, while there are countless ways in which technological innovation benefits us, there are costs involved that we haven't yet fully understood. If we take the internet, for instance, it's prompting changes in the ways we think about a lot of important issues - for instance, community, privacy, ownership, authorship and sex. Some of those changes are positive, but others aren't. We should be concerned about the sheer speed of change, definitely. I say 'concerned' rather than 'worried' because worrying achieves nothing; we have to engage with these matters, rather than fretting about them.

emagazine 53, September 2011

John McWhorter, Professor of Linguistics at Columbia University, language podcaster and author of several books on language.

emagazine: Is there a political element to your work as a linguist? Is linguistics a scientific, neutral discipline, or is there room for bringing to bear one's own political and social beliefs?

Linguistics is, in many of its facets, highly sociopolitical. One mission of linguistics, which I applaud, is helping the public to understand that it doesn't make scientific sense to suppose that most people speak their native language 'badly.' As an outgrowth of that, I would venture that the subfield of sociolinguistics tilts significantly towards exploring the speech of the disempowered – there is only so much explicit interest in how affluent, straight white men talk! My own work as a linguist is sociopolitical where I write on Black English for the general public; that, however, is not what I usually work on in the academic sense. Most of my academic linguistic work is just geeky exploration of issues relating to how language changes and how languages come together in the structural sense, with the social part marginal. I adapt as I need to.

emagazine 79, February 2018

David Crystal, Professor of Linguistics, author of too many books on language to count and all-round language guru.

emagazine: What do you predict or anticipate to be the biggest new developments of the English language over the next few decades?

It's never possible to predict the future, when it comes to language. Who would have thought, a year ago, that 2020's 'words of the year' were going to be words like *self-isolate* and *lockdown*? Or, a decade ago, that there would be a new suffix in *English*, *-exit*? These are tiny details, but the same applies to bigger issues. Language reflects society, so any question about the future of language is actually a question about the way society (in the broadest sense, including politics, economics, religion, culture...) is going to change.

emagazine 89, forthcoming September 2020