

## A Level English Language

### Preparation for Year 12

#### ESSENTIAL TASKS

The following tasks are modelled on the programme of study that you will undertake as students of A Level English Language.

- Mini language investigation – the language of band names. For this task, you will investigate a specific aspect of language usage, considering the influences on, usage of, and wider implications of a specific form of language use. This will take the form of a short presentation to be delivered in the first week back.
- How does text A present views about women’s use of language, and ‘vocal fry’? For this task, you will consider the wider practical and social issues and discourses surrounding language use, and how the language that we use creates meanings and representations with wider social and political implications. You will analyse the text, before producing your own language discourse in the form of a feature article, responding to the issues raised.

#### OPTIONAL TASKS

- Join the public library and research the language section.
- Use BBC iPlayer or Spotify to listen to Michael Rosen’s programme Word of Mouth (the episode on pet names is particularly interesting).
- Read a selection of articles, journals, speeches or short stories from ‘Year 12 Recommended Reading List’. Many of these are available as free downloads.
- Read the review and comment section of a broadsheet newspaper; e.g. *The Guardian* or the *Times*.

#### CULTURAL ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

For more local book launches, talks, courses and workshops, visit [www.nottinghamcityofliterature.com](http://www.nottinghamcityofliterature.com)

## **MINI LANGUAGE INVESTIGATION**

The names that bands and artists use is often directly related to the message they wish to convey, the interests of their target audiences, and the meanings and representations associated with their genre of music.

Apply this to a specific genre: what does the word 'punk' mean to you? What do you associate with this style of music, its fans, fashions and message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvG3is7Bm1w>

What do the names of the following punk rock bands have in common? How has language been used to create the meanings and representations from the previous task?

- The Clash
- The Damned
- The Jam

If we were to analyse how rock bands use language to create their names, what would you expect to find?

Use the worksheet to create your own mini-investigation.

This will help you to understand how to analyse and interpret data to support a hypothesis.

## The language of band names

The following band names, all rock and metal bands, form the corpus (body of texts) for your investigation:

Iron Maiden	Def Leppard	Eagles of Death Metal
Led Zeppelin	Bullet for my Valentine	Sex Pistols
Panic! at the Disco	Wolf Alice	Avenged Sevenfold
Black Sabbath	System of a Down	Foo Fighters

### Activities

- Identify three semantic or lexical effects typically used in rock bands' names. Describe each one using accurate terminology and briefly explain the effects created in each case.
- Identify two phonological and/or graphological effects used in the band names. Describe each one using accurate terminology and briefly explain the effects created in each case.
- Identify three grammatical structures used in the band names. Describe each one using accurate terminology and briefly explain the effects created in each case.
- Analyse and evaluate the ways in which band names are used to engage the target audience.

In your response, you should consider:

- the context
- the tenor and the effect of the lexical choices
- how form/structure and choice of imagery are used to create impact
- any similarities and/or differences.

Use the corpus data and your answers to activities **A**, **B** and **C** to inform your answer.



## Mini Language Investigation

Use the boxes to consolidate your notes and plan your presentation.

**Box 1:** **Basic and general information about your topic - key people/language observations/places/facts**

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**Box 2:** **A piece of information you could save for part two (the discussion)**

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**Box 3:** **Possible questions you may be asked**

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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

**Box 4:** **Possible props - are you going to take anything in with you? Diagrams/pictures/objects?**

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## **LANGUAGE DISCOURSES**

The following source is an example of a language discourse – a story about the use of language and how it affects how users of language are perceived by others. Whether we realise it or not, the language that we use tells a story about us, our place in the world, our preferences, beliefs and the way that we view others and the world, as well as the ways that we want to be viewed. Our language is much like our clothing; it creates the impression of the self that we want to communicate to the outside world.

A familiar example of a language discourse is the view that young people's use of language, especially slang and sociolect, is causing language to decay. Whilst this depends on who you ask, the discourse itself is rooted in the belief that there is a 'correct' and 'incorrect' way to use language, and that any attempts to stray from the 'correct' usage of language must therefore be 'incorrect'. If young people refuse to speak 'correctly', then their language will only get worse. Many would take the complete opposite perspective, which is what makes this view a language discourse (story), as the discourse changes depending on who you ask.

Read the source, identifying how it does each of the following:

- Raise issues surrounding language
- represent language
- construct an identity for the producer
- position the reader and seek to influence them
- are connected to discourses (stories) about language.

Once complete, produce your own short feature article responding to this discourse: do you agree or disagree with it? What points will you make to support your perspective? Are there any wider social issues at play that affect these discourses? How might you use the persuasive techniques that you used at GCSE to convince your readers to agree with you?

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## Young women, give up the vocal fry and reclaim your strong female voice

Naomi Wolf

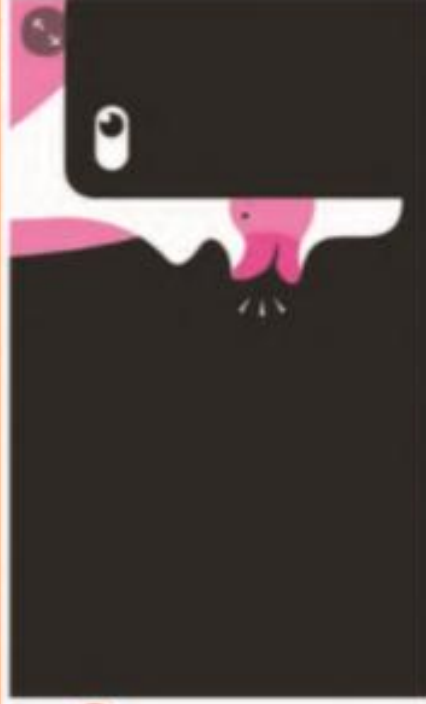


What's heart-breaking about the trend for destructive speech patterns is that yours is the most transformational generation – you're disarming your power

Friday 24 July 2015  
 16.07 BST



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**C** A study found that this speech pattern makes young women who use it sound less competent, less trustworthy, less educated and less hireable. *Illustration: Hanna Bar*

Patriarchy is inventive. The inmate a generation of women has figured out how to not be enslaved by Ideology A, some new cultural pressure arises in the form of Internalisation B, making sure they don't get too far too fast. The latest example: the most empowered generation of women ever – today's twentysomethings in North America and Britain – is being hobbled in some important ways by something as basic as a new fashion in how they use their voices.

This demographic of women tends to have a distinctive speech pattern. Many commentators have noticed it, often with dismay. *Time* magazine devoted a column to the mannerism called *vocal fry*, noting a study that found that this speech pattern makes young women who use it sound less competent, less trustworthy, less educated and less hireable: "Think Britney Spears and the Kardashians."

"Vocal fry" is that guttural growl at the back of the throat, as a Valley girl might sound if she had been shouting herself hoarse at a rave all night. The less charitable refer to it privately as painfully nasal, and to young women in conversational sounding like ducks quacking. "Vocal fry" has joined more traditional young-women voice mannerisms such as run-ons, breathiness and the dreaded question marks in sentences (known by linguists as uptalk) to undermine these women's authority in newly distinctive ways. Slate notes<sup>1</sup> that older men (ie those in power over young women) find it intensely annoying. One study by a "deeply annoyed" professor, found that young women use "uptalk" to seek to hold the floor. But does cordially hating these speech patterns automatically mean you are anti-feminist?

Many devoted professors, employers who wish to move young women up the ranks and business owners who just want to evaluate personnel on merit flinch over the speech patterns of today's young women. "Because of their run-on sentences, I can't tell in a meeting when these young women have said what they have to say," confided one law partner.

"Their constant uptalk means I am constantly having to reassure them: 'uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh'. It's exhausting."

I myself have inadvertently flinched when a young woman barraging a group with uptalk ran a technology-based conference call: "We'll use Ruby on Rails? It is an MVC framework to support databases?" Well, will we?

One 29-year-old woman working in engineering told me it was easier for gatekeepers in her male-dominated field to disregard running-on, softspoken, vocally frying and uptalking women. "It is difficult for young women to be heard or even responded to in many male-dominated fields if they don't strengthen their voices. That kind of disregarding response from men made me feel even softer and even lesser – in a vicious circle of silencing," she said.

<sup>1</sup>Slate: An online magazine of news, politics, technology and culture