

Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language 9093 – Glossary of terms

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Word and meaning

Term	What it means
Acronym	A word formed from the initial letters of two or more successive words (e.g. <i>UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</i>)
Amelioration	Where a word takes on a more positive connotation over time (e.g. <i>nice</i> originally meant <i>foolish</i>)
Antonym	A word with the opposite meaning to another word
Archaism	A word which is no longer in everyday use, or has lost a particular meaning in current usage
Backformation	The formation of a word from another one, from which it appears to be derived (e.g. the verb <i>to babysit</i> from the earlier <i>babysitter</i>)
Blending	Forming a new word by combining the beginning of one word with the end of another (e.g. <i>motel</i> from <i>motor</i> and <i>hotel</i>)
Borrowing	Introducing specific words or forms of words from one language into another (e.g. <i>pasta</i> from Italian into English, or <i>weekend</i> from English into French)
Broadening	Where the meaning of a word becomes broader or more inclusive than its earlier meaning (e.g. the earlier meaning of <i>dog</i> referred to a specific breed of dog rather than the whole species)
Clipping	Where a word is shortened to form a new variant (e.g. <i>advertisement</i> becomes <i>ad</i> or <i>advert</i>)
Coinage	The creation of new words (i.e. <i>neologisms</i>) in a language
Colloquial	The casual conversation of everyday language
Compounding	Forming a word from two or more units that are themselves words (e.g. <i>whiteboard</i> from <i>white</i> and <i>board</i>)
Connotation	The range of associated meanings brought to mind by a particular word, beyond its essential meaning (or denotation)
Conversion	Creating a new word by using an existing word in a different word class (e.g. the noun <i>green</i> in golf was converted from the adjective <i>green</i>)
Denotation	The primary meaning of a word, not including its connotations
Derivation	Creating a new word from an existing word, often with the addition of a prefix or suffix (e.g. <i>unwilling</i> derives from <i>will</i> with the prefix <i>un-</i> and the suffix <i>-ing</i>)
Eponym	The name of something that is also the name of someone credited with inventing or discovering it

Term	What it means
Etymology	A study of the history of a word and its earlier forms and meanings
Figurative language	Language which expands upon the basic or literal meaning of a word or phrase (e.g. simile or metaphor)
Hypernyms	Words for the categories into which hyponyms may be grouped (e.g. <i>furniture</i> is a hypernym of <i>table</i>)
Hyponyms	Words that are specific compared to their respective hypernyms (e.g. <i>spoon</i> is a hyponym of <i>cutlery</i>)
Idiom	Phrases generally understood in a language but which do not directly translate (e.g. <i>I caught the train <u>by the skin of my teeth</u></i> = I only just caught the train in time)
Intensifier	A word, often an adverb or adjective, which has little meaning by itself but is used to add force to other phrases (e.g. <i>really, very</i>)
Jargon	Words and phrases known primarily by a group of people – often within a particular profession – which enable them to exchange complex information efficiently. Jargon may be unintelligible to people outside the group who use it.
Lexis	The complete vocabulary of a language
Narrowing	When the meaning of a word becomes narrower or more limited than its earlier meaning (e.g. the earlier form of <i>meat</i> originally referred to all food but now generally only refers to food in the form of animal flesh)
Neology	The process through which new words (neologisms) are formed, including acronyms, blends, compounds and eponyms
Obsolete	In language, relates to words which are no longer in use and often no longer understood
Orthography	The part of the language concerned with letters and spelling
Pejoration	When a word takes on a more negative connotation over time (e.g. <i>silly</i> once meant <i>blessed</i>)
Root	The primary form of a word and word family, without prefixes or suffixes , which bears the major semantic content (e.g. the root of <i>unwanted</i> is <i>want</i>)
Semantic	Related to the meaning of words
Semantic field	A group of words that relate to a shared area of meaning (e.g. <i>needle, nurse</i> and <i>antibiotic</i> could be grouped within the semantic field of <i>medicine</i>)
Telescoping	The contraction of a phrase, word or part of a word – like a telescope being closed (e.g. <i>biodegradable</i> from <i>biologically degradable</i>)

Sentence and grammar

Term	What it means
Active voice	Where the subject of a verb is performing the action involved (e.g. <i>She won the race</i>)
Adjunct	An optional or less-important part of a clause or sentence (e.g. <i>on the floor</i> in the sentence <i>I dropped the glass on the floor</i>)
Aspect	A form of the verb which explains its relation to time, particularly indicating whether an action is completed (e.g. the perfect – <i>had walked</i>) or incomplete (e.g. as in the progressive – <i>was walking</i> or perfect progressive – <i>had been walking</i>). Compare with Tense .
Clause	Part of a sentence, containing (at least) a subject and a verb phrase
Coordination	Connecting two or more independent clauses through the use of coordinating conjunctions
Declarative	See Mood
Grammar	Has a wide meaning, but generally relates to rules for the organisation of meaning in a language
Head word	The main word in a phrase (e.g. the noun <i>boy</i> in the noun phrase <i>the happy boy</i>)

Term	What it means
Imperative	See Mood
Interrogative	See Mood
Modality	The modality of an utterance refers to the attitude a speaker or writer takes to the idea being expressed (e.g. certainty, possibility, obligation, ability). Modality is usually conveyed by the use of the appropriate grammatical mood .
Mode	The format through which ideas or content are communicated to an audience. Modes include spoken (e.g. a conversation, a spontaneous speech), written (e.g. a novel, the text of a leaflet), electronic (e.g. an email, a blog), and image (e.g. a photograph), and can be combined in a variety of mixed modes (e.g. a prepared speech, a podcast).
Modification	Adding words to a head word in order to give more detail, either before (premodification) or after (postmodification)
Mood	A grammatical feature through which a speaker or writer can express modality (i.e. an attitude towards the content of an utterance), usually involving modal verbs such as <i>can</i> , <i>ought</i> or <i>might</i> . Moods include the indicative/declarative (making a statement), the interrogative (asking a question), the imperative (making a command), and the subjunctive (expressing wishes or uncertainty). Alternatively, 'mood' can also refer to the emotion or feelings evident in a text and the language used to create these feelings.
Morpheme	The smallest grammatical unit, from which larger ones can be formed (e.g. <i>unwanted</i> = <i>un</i> + <i>want</i> + <i>ed</i>)
Morphology	The study of words and the various forms they take
Noun phrase	A word (or group of words working together) which names a person, place or thing
Object	In grammar, the object is the thing or person acted upon by the subject (e.g. the phrase <i>the meal</i> in the sentence <i>The girl ate the meal</i>)
Parts of speech	See Word classes
Passive voice	Where the subject receives the action of a verb (e.g. <i>The ball was kicked</i>)
Phrase	A group of words that do not constitute a complete sentence
Prefix	A group of letters, usually conveying a particular meaning, which are added to the front of a word to give a new meaning (e.g. <i>un-</i> , <i>pre-</i> , and <i>with-</i>)
Sentence	Generally, a set of words that is grammatically complete, consisting of a main clause and sometimes one or more additional subordinate clauses
Subjunctive	See Mood
Subordination	Connecting two or more clauses , only one of which is independent
Suffix	A group of letters, usually conveying a particular meaning, which are attached to the end of a word to modify its meaning
Syllable	A single unit of pronunciation, containing a single vowel sound, which may form part of all of a word (e.g. <i>rain</i> has one syllable, while <i>sunshine</i> has two)
Syntax	The way words are ordered in a sentence
Tense	A grammatical feature (usually an inflection of a verb) that shows the relation in time between an event or action and an utterance about it (e.g. <i>We run</i> is in the simple present tense, while <i>We were running</i> is in the past progressive tense). Compare with Aspect .

Term	What it means
Word classes	<p>The grammatical groups into which words are divided. The basic word classes are noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition, interjection, conjunction, and determiners.</p> <p>Each word class consists of a number of subclasses, such as proper nouns, transitive verbs, predicative adjectives, adverbs of manner, possessive pronouns, spatial prepositions, volitive interjections, subordinating conjunctions, and definite articles.</p> <p>Also known as 'parts of speech'.</p>

Text and discourse

Term	What it means
Analogy	A comparison of two things which have some element of similarity. The similarity is often used to help clarify an issue or idea.
Anaphoric reference	Where a word refers back to an earlier part of a text for its meaning (e.g. in the following text, the underlined words refer anaphorically to 'David': <i>I recognised David immediately, even though I had not seen <u>him</u>, <u>my oldest friend</u>, in years.</i>)
Asynchronous communication	Where the medium of communication causes a delay between utterance and response (e.g. letter, email, online forum)
Audience	The readers and/or listeners of a text
Cataphoric reference	Where a word refers to a later part of a text for its meaning (e.g. in the following text, the underlined words refer cataphorically to 'Sarah': <i>Although I had not seen <u>her</u> in years, I recognised <u>my old friend Sarah</u> immediately.</i>)
Computer-mediated discourse	The specialist form of language between online users
Deixis	Language whose meaning is determined in part by contextual factors, such as who is using it, when, where and to whom (e.g. <i>this, that, now, you, tomorrow</i>)
Dialectical structure	A three-part argument, moving from <i>thesis</i> (an initial argument) to <i>antithesis</i> (the counterargument) and finally to a <i>synthesis</i> that combines the two
Direct speech	The use of the exact words spoken by a speaker/character
Discourse	Any spoken or written language that is longer than a single sentence
Discourse markers	Words or phrases which mark boundaries between one topic and another, where a writer or speaker wishes to change the subject
Discursive	A style in which facts and opinions are put forward and explored in order to develop an argument
Exophoric reference	Where a word refers to something outside a text for its meaning, typically as a consequence of a writer or speaker's expectations as to the knowledge already possessed by the text's intended audience
First person narrative	Where a character in a story narrates the events that they are experiencing. Recognised by the use of <i>I, we, us, our</i> .
Foregrounding	Using grammatical or syntactic devices to draw attention to a particular idea in a text
Form	<p>Generally, the specific type of whatever category is being considered (e.g. textual form, verb form, grammatical form).</p> <p>Used on its own, the word 'form' often refers to textual form. The division of texts into specific forms (e.g. speech, dialogue, poem, novel, website) involves categorising texts according to how their structural elements combine to create a unified and recognisable whole.</p> <p>Different forms of text can usually be subdivided into genres (e.g. persuasive speech, romantic novel, cooperative dialogue), depending on their content.</p>
Formality	The extent to which spoken or written texts either conform to standard conventions or employ more personal language strategies

Term	What it means
Genre	A subdivision of textual form determined by the text's content (e.g. fantasy novel, tragic play, ballad, online review, television commercial, formal report)
Implicature	A meaning that is suggested by an utterance, rather than being explicitly stated or directly entailed by the words used
In medias res	Beginning a narrative in the middle of the events without any build-up or initial explanation
Inference	The act of deducing implied meanings
Intertextuality	Where a text produces additional meaning by referring in some way to another text
Irony	When the intended meaning of a text or utterance differs radically from its literal interpretation
Metalanguage	Language which is used to describe or comment on language (e.g. <i>This translates as...</i> or <i>I meant to say...</i>)
Multimodal	Consisting of more than one mode
Narrative structure	The way in which a story is constructed
Omniscient narrator	Where the narrator in a story knows all the thoughts, actions and feelings of the characters
Perspective	Point of view
Pragmatics	A branch of linguistics concerned with the ways in which meaning can alter according to the context of utterance
Prose	Ordinary language, without a rhyming pattern or rhythmic structure
Protagonist	The main character in a literary work
Purpose	A writer or speaker's main aim when producing a text
Register	The variety of language used in a particular situation, particularly with regard to levels of formality
Second person narrative	When the reader is addressed directly, typically through the use of <i>you</i> , <i>your</i> , <i>yours</i> , etc.
Simile	A figure of speech which makes a comparison between two different things which have one point of likeness, usually using the words <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> (e.g. <i>she was as fast as lightning</i>)
Slogan	A short, direct and memorable phrase, frequently used in advertising
Structure	The way in which a text is ordered and organised
Style	The distinctive overall effect produced by interactions between form , structure and language
Third person narrative	Where the narrator of a story is not directly related to the events being narrated, and typically uses third-person pronouns (e.g. <i>he</i> , <i>she</i> , <i>they</i>) to refer to the characters involved
Tone	The emotion or attitudes associated with a spoken or written utterance
Topic sentence	A sentence which contains the essence of the entire paragraph. It is usually at the beginning of the paragraph and signposts the pattern of information and ideas which follow.
Topic shift	The point at which speakers move from one topic to another in conversation
Transactional	Writing or speech which aims to complete a transaction and produce a particular outcome (e.g. a letter claiming a refund; giving spoken directions to a destination)
Typography	The visual aspect of written language, including the size, colour and type of font used

Sound and spoken language

Term	What it means
Accent	The characteristic pronunciation associated with a geographical area or social group
Adjacency pairs	Dialogue that follows a set pattern, with an utterance from one speaker being followed by a response from the other
Agenda setting	Where one speaker determines the main topic of a conversation
Backchannelling	Where a listener gives minimal verbal or nonverbal feedback to the main speaker in a conversation, primarily to show they are listening while also allowing the main speaker to hold the conversational floor
Coalescence	The phonological process whereby two sounds merge into one (e.g. <i>assume</i> becomes pronounced as <i>ashume</i>)
Consonant clusters	A group of consonants without an intervening vowel (e.g. the clusters /sp/ and /ct/ in the word <i>aspect</i>)
Consonants	Sounds made with some restriction to the airflow, for example by the tongue, teeth or lips
Diphthong	A combination of two vowel sounds within a single syllable (see the IPA chart for examples)
Eye dialect	The use of nonstandard spellings to reflect the pronunciation of a character's speech
Fricative	Consonant sounds that are created by forcing air through a narrow opening in the vocal tract. Fricatives may be voiced (e.g. /v/, /z/) or voiceless (e.g. /f/, /s/).
Glottal stop	A plosive consonant sound produced by the momentary closure of the glottis (e.g. in the middle of <i>uh-oh</i>)
Interlocutor	A participant in a dialogue
Intonation	The rise and the fall of the voice while speaking
Manner of articulation	How the speech organs are used to affect airflow and thereby produce sounds
Micropause	A pause in speech, typically less than a second in duration
Nasal	When air passes through the nose to produce a sound. In English, /m/ and /n/ are examples of nasals.
Phatic communion	Polite fragments of discourse which act as 'icebreakers' to initiate conversations and ease social communication (e.g. Saying <i>How are you?</i> without expecting a detailed reply)
Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound in speech
Phonetics	The study of the physical production of speech sounds by humans (i.e. how speech sounds are <i>made</i>)
Phonology	The study of the cognitive aspects of sounds and sound patterns (i.e. how we attach <i>meaning</i> to speech sounds)
Pitch	A quality of the human voice determined by the rate at which the vocal folds are vibrated, ranging from low to high.
Place of articulation	When producing speech sounds, the point of contact within the vocal tract where airflow is restricted (e.g. 'labiodental' refers to contact between the lower lip and the upper teeth)
Plosive	Consonant sounds that are created by stopping the flow of air. Plosives (or 'stops') may be voiced (e.g. /b/, /d/ and /g/) or voiceless (e.g. /p/, /t/ and /k/).
Transcription	The act of producing a written record of spoken language, using symbols and markings to represent the distinctive nature of speech
Turn-taking	The process through which interlocutors speak one at a time in conversation, sharing the conversational floor
Utterance	A section of spoken language, preceded and followed by either silence or a change of speaker

Term	What it means
Vowels	Sounds made with no restriction of air through the vocal tract. Different vowel sounds are produced by altering the position of the speech organs.

Language analysis and language topics

Term	What it means
Accommodation	In a language context, the extent to which people adjust aspects of their speech to be more like the speech of others around them
Babbling	The first stage of language acquisition, where children begin to recognise, produce and experiment with vocal sounds. This stage typically occurs between birth and around 11 months.
Behaviourism	The idea that all behaviour can be explained as conditioned responses to stimuli in an individual's environment. See Reinforcement theory .
Bidialectalism	The ability to use two different dialects of the same language
Caretaker language	The simple style of speech used by those who look after infants and small children. Also known as child-directed speech (CDS).
CLA	Child language acquisition
Code-switching	Alternating between different varieties or registers of a language
Codification	The process through which a language is standardised
Cognitive development	The process through which children develop the mental capacity to process information, learn languages, and develop their conceptual and perceptual abilities.
Collocation	In corpus linguistics , the frequent appearance together in a given corpus of two lexical items (e.g. two high-frequency collocates of <i>chair</i> are <i>wooden</i> and <i>meeting</i>)
Concentric circles model	A theoretical model that visualises the spread of English in terms of three concentric circles. Developed by Kachru in the 1980s
Concordance	An alphabetical list of all the words used in a given text or corpus
Concordancer	A computer program used to automatically generate a concordance from a given text or corpus
Conditioning	A process whereby behaviour is changed or modified due to the repeated presence of a stimulus
Conservation	In psychology, the cognitive ability of a child to see that a particular quantity will stay the same, even if put into a differently shaped container
Convergence	A form of accommodation whereby speakers begin to adopt the language variety of other speakers around them
Conversational floor	The 'space' in which conversation takes place, occupied by the present speaker at any given time. In conversation, a speaker may use strategies to either hold the floor or offer it to others.
Cooperative Principle	The idea that speakers tend to act cooperatively in conversation, working together to ease communication. As developed by Grice in 1975, the principle consists of four maxims .
Corpus	A large and structured set of texts stored electronically (the plural is corpora)
Corpus data	The information stored in a corpus , comprising written texts and/or transcriptions of spoken language
Corpus Linguistics	The study of language data stored in corpora
Covert prestige	High status gained through the use of nonstandard language and behaviour
Creole	A natural language developed from a mixture of different languages, often as a development from a pidgin . Creoles are stable, fairly complex, and are acquired as native languages by children.

Term	What it means
Critical discourse analysis (CDA)	A method for studying discourse that treats language as a form of social practice
Cultural imperialism	The way in which large and/or powerful countries or institutions impose their culture and values on smaller and/or less powerful ones
Cultural transmission	In linguistics, the way language is passed on from one generation to the next
Descriptivism	The view that no use of language is incorrect and that variations in language should be acknowledged and recorded rather than corrected
Diachronic	In linguistics, this refers to language change over time. Compare with synchronic .
Dialect	A language variety specific to a particular geographical region, including lexical and grammatical features
Divergence	Where people make their language more distinctively different from other speakers around them
Early Modern English	The period between approximately 1500 and 1800, marked by a relatively sudden and distinctive change in pronunciation and the increased inclusion of vocabulary of continental European and classical origin
Egocentric	Thinking only about oneself
Elaborated code	Language use intended to be understandable to all, without the expectation of shared assumptions and understanding between participants. Compare with restricted code .
Empiricism	In linguistics, the idea that all language is learned rather than innate
Estuary English	A dialect and/or accent which originated in the areas around the River Thames in London, and which has since spread more widely throughout England
Exclusion	Where members of a social group use language that makes certain other groups or individuals feel like they are not included or welcome
Face	In politeness theory, an individual's sense of their own self-image and how they are perceived in social contexts. Brown and Levinson (1987) divide this concept into positive face and negative face
Face-threatening acts	Verbal and nonverbal actions by participants in a conversation that undermine or challenge the speaker's face
Feedback	Verbal and nonverbal signals given by listeners to in response to a speaker's utterances
Flouting a maxim	Failing to obey one of the principles (maxims) of ordinary cooperative conversation
Frequency	In corpus linguistics , the number of times an item (e.g. an <i>n</i> -gram) appears in a given corpus
Functional theory	The idea that languages arise and evolve according to the changing needs of the communities within which they are used
Genderlect	A variety of language considered to be (at least in part) determined by the user's gender
Global (world) language	A language used across the world for written, spoken and digital communication, typically coexisting with local languages. English is recognised as the predominant global language of the 21 st century.
Great vowel shift	A gradual, widespread and enduring change in the pronunciation of English vowels , occurring broadly between the period of Middle English and Early Modern English
Heuristic function	Using language to learn about one's environment
Holophrastic	An early stage of language acquisition, typically between 11 and 18 months, wherein a single word is used to express a complete idea
Idiolect	An individual's distinctive and personalised use of language

Term	What it means
Illocutionary act	Performing a specific act by the use of certain words. For example, the utterance <i>I deny the accusation</i> is not merely a statement, but also constitutes the denial itself. Likewise, while the utterance <i>Do you have any juice?</i> is superficially a locutionary act , literally asking whether the listener has any juice, it also has the illocutionary force of requesting to be given some to drink.
Imaginative function	Using language to create stories or other imagined notions
Imitation theory	The idea that children acquire language by copying other speakers
Inclusion	Where members of a social group actively choose to use language that makes certain other groups or individuals feel included
Inflection	Any form or change of form which distinguishes different grammatical functions of the same word (e.g. adding -s to indicate a plural form)
Innatism	The general idea that children are born with existing knowledge or ideas, often said to include linguistic rules, categories and structures
Instrumental function	Using language to express one's needs
Interactional function	Using language to engage with others
Isogloss	The loose geographic boundary that marks the prominent use of a particular linguistic feature (e.g. that which surrounds speakers whose dialect includes the <i>pin-pen</i> merger, in the southern and midwestern U.S.)
Labov's narrative model	The theory that spoken storytelling typically conforms to a particular structure
Language Acquisition Device (LAD)	The theory that humans possess an innate system that allows the spontaneous development of language. Developed by Noam Chomsky.
Language Acquisition Support System (LASS)	A system of support from caregivers to children that helps them develop language and become sociable. Developed by Jerome Bruner.
Language death	A situation where there are no remaining native speakers of a language or a dialect
Language family	A group of languages which are related in structure and have evolved from a common protolanguage . The modern English language is a member of the West Germanic language family.
Language of thought hypothesis	The idea that thought takes place in a mental language, such that representations in the mind are structured in sentence-like form
Language revitalisation	Efforts by governments and agencies to ensure a language is spoken by a new generation of children who will take the language forward. Adults are also encouraged to learn the endangered language.
Language shift	The process over time where members of a language community gradually come to speak an entirely different language
Late Modern English	The name given to English written and spoken from approximately 1800 until the present day
Lemma	In linguistics, the dictionary form of a group of words (e.g. <i>play</i> is the lemma of <i>plays</i> , <i>played</i> , <i>playing</i> , etc.)
Lingua franca	A common form of communication which is used over and above local languages or dialects in order to allow communication between groups of people who speak different languages. English is a lingua franca in many countries, as well as internationally.

Term	What it means
Linguistic determinism	A strong form of linguistic relativism , which proposes the idea that the structure of a language fully determines the thought processes of its speakers
Linguistic imperialism	Imposing one language, usually a language associated with power and control, upon the speakers of another language
Linguistic prestige	The degree of respect and value given to a particular style of language by a speech community
Linguistic reflectionism	The opposite of linguistic determinism , expressing the view that language reflects the thoughts and ideas of an individual or culture
Linguistic relativism	The idea that the structure of a language affects a person's view of the world
Linguistic universalism	The idea that all humans share common foundations of thought, despite surface-level variations among different languages
Loanword	A word adopted from one language into another without translation (e.g. <i>cliché</i> from French into English)
Locutionary act	The performance of an utterance , understood according to its surface meaning. Compare with illocutionary act .
Maxim	According to Grice's cooperative principle , speakers generally follow four rational principles in normal conversation. These are known as the maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner.
Middle English	The spoken and written language, which evolved from the fusion of Norman French and Old English dialects . Prominent in England and other parts of the British Isles between approximately 1100 and 1500.
Multilingualism	The ability of a speaker or community to use more than one language
Mutual Information score	In corpus linguistics , a measure of how frequently words appear together compared to how often they appear separately
Nativism	A development of innatism , involving the claim that humans are born with certain skills or abilities, such as the capacity to learn languages
Negative face	The desire to have one's perceived rights and freedoms respected by others
Negative politeness	Conversational strategies used to help one's interlocutor to maintain their negative face
<i>n</i> -gram	A series of <i>n</i> items from a given sample of text or speech. The term is used to refer to items containing <i>n</i> words (e.g. <i>English</i> is a 1-gram; <i>English Language</i> is a 2-gram; <i>English Language and Literature</i> is a 4-gram)
<i>n</i> -gram graphs	Line graphs displaying the changes in usage frequency for particular <i>n</i> -grams over a time period. The graphs are based on data from a specific corpus .
Nonstandard English	Forms of English that differ from Standard English in some way, and which are often associated with variations in geographical or social context
Old English	The earliest form of the English language, brought to Britain by Anglo-Saxon settlers in the 5 th century and predominant there until approximately 1100
Overextension	When a language-acquiring child uses a word more broadly than is standard (e.g. using the word <i>dog</i> to refer to another animal)
Overt prestige	High status gained through the use of standard language and behaviour
Patois	A loose term for a nonstandard language or dialect . Some people may regard a patois as having a low status
Perception	Recognition and interpretation through the senses
Perlocutionary act	A speech act notable for the effect it produces on the listener (e.g. persuading them to do something)
Personal function	Using language to express thoughts about oneself

Term	What it means
Pidgin	A simplified mixture of languages, used to communicate between people who do not speak the same language. Over time, a pidgin may develop into a creole .
Politeness strategies	Methods used by speakers to minimise the negative effects of face-threatening acts
Positive face	An individual's self-image, and the desire that others approve of it
Positive politeness	Conversational strategies used to help one's interlocutor to maintain positive face
Post-telegraphic stage	The stage in CLA when children are able to speak using multiclausal sentences and more complex grammar, typically beginning at around 36 months
Prescriptivism	The view that language should have a strict set of rules that must be obeyed in speech and writing
Prestige	The degree of respect accorded to a particular language or dialect in a language community. Standard forms often command overt prestige by reference to notions of 'correctness', while nonstandard forms can gain covert prestige .
Protolanguage	A hypothesised 'ancestor' language, from which more recent languages are derived. A protolanguage shared by many of the world's languages (e.g. English, Spanish, Russian, Hindi and Persian) is Proto-Indo-European (PIE).
Random fluctuation theory	The idea that language changes because of its essential instability, and in response to effectively random variations in the environments and contexts in which it is used
Received Pronunciation (RP)	The accent most closely associated with Standard English . Unlike other accents of English, RP is seen more as an indicator of status rather than being linked to a geographical area
Reduplication	Where sounds are repeated with identical or only very slight change. This may be a characteristic of infant speech (<i>da-da</i>) or certain other categories, including rhyming (<i>walkie-talkie</i>), exact (<i>bye-bye</i>), and ablaut (<i>chit-chat</i> , <i>hip-hop</i>) reduplications.
Regulatory function	Using language to affect the behaviour of others
Reinforcement theory	The behaviourist idea, developed by B.F. Skinner, that children acquire and develop language through positive and negative feedback to their attempts at communication
Representational function	Using language to share or request information
Restricted code	Language use that assumes some shared assumptions and understanding between participants, and which might not be fully comprehensible to all
Self	An individual's idea of themselves as a unique and unified entity, separate from both other people and the external world
Self-esteem	Belief in one's own abilities and worth as a person
Self-identity	The characteristics, physical and psychological, which a person sees as making up their sense of self throughout their life
Semantic change	The process through which words take on different meanings, including amelioration , broadening , narrowing , pejoration , and telescoping
Sociolect	The variety of language shared by people in a particular social group
Sociolect continuum	The idea that certain varieties of a language (particularly in post- creole language communities) exist along a continuous scale from the most standard forms (acrolects) via intermediate forms (mesolects) to the least prestigious forms (basilects)
Speech act	An utterance that also serves a performative function, including locutionary , illocutionary and perlocutionary acts
Speech community	A group of people defined by their shared linguistic norms and expectations

Term	What it means
Standard English	The dialect of English most widely accepted as the national norm in a given speech community (e.g. British English, Standard Singapore English, General American). Often associated with (sometimes contested) notions of formality and 'correctness'
Status	The perceived position of a person's authority and influence in relation to those around them
Substrate language	A language with lower power or prestige than others in a multilingual community (e.g. an indigenous language in a community that has been colonised by speakers of a superstrate language)
Substratum theory	The idea that elements of a substrate language can interfere with the superstrate language that replaces it, thus resulting in a distinctive new dialect
Superstrate language	A language with greater power or prestige than others in a multilingual community (e.g. the language of colonisers in a community of indigenous speakers of a substrate language)
Synchronic	In linguistics, this refers to the characteristics of a language at a given point in time. Compare with diachronic .
Telegraphic stage	The stage in CLA when children are able to speak using two- to three-word utterances which contain enough information to make sense, but no more. This stage typically occurs between 18 and 36 months.
Theory of lexical gaps	The idea that languages develop by inventing, adapting or borrowing words to fill gaps in usage
Transmission	In language terms, the learning and passing on of information between people in a group
Tree model	In historical linguistics, the method of visualising the relationship between languages in a form similar to a family tree
Underextension	When a language-acquiring child uses a word more narrowly than is standard (e.g. using the word <i>cat</i> to refer only to the family cat, and not to other cats)
Varieties of English	Regional and national forms of English with distinctively different features (e.g. British English, Estuary English, Australian English, Hinglish, Standard Singapore English)
Virtuous errors	Linguistic 'mistakes' made by young children involving the application of regular grammatical rules to irregular forms (e.g. <i>I runned</i> and <i>two sheeps</i>)
Visual and spatial processing	The cognitive ability to understand relationships between objects and to visualise images and ideas in the imagination
Wave model	In historical linguistics, the idea that languages evolve through local innovations that expand outwards in 'waves' from their point of origin, and so spread their influence to neighbouring languages and dialects
Word sketch	A page summary of word information derived from a corpus

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