

STAGE 1 ENGLISH
Function and Power of Language Study: LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

Language is a very powerful tool in society. Appropriate use of language is particularly important, and this varies according to the social context or occasion. For example, the spoken language you use in front of your parents is different to that which you use in front of your friends. In the same way the language that you use to SMS your friends is very different to the language that you use to write a formal English essay. It is very important that you recognise what kind of language is appropriate for any given situation.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE

Form, purpose, audience and social context are all very important in any conversation. You must keep in mind:

Who you are speaking to?

What the purpose is of your conversation?

What situation or context the conversation being held in?

PART A: 50 marks

1. In groups look at each of the following people and list how you would address them (ie. What sort of language would you use? Formal, informal, colloquial, technical, polite, etc.):

- ? Your mother or father
- ? Your teacher
- ? Your best friend
- ? Your customers
- ? Your basketball or Sports coach

We will use this information as the basis of a class discussion. Do we treat each of these groups in the same way?

What conclusions can you draw from this? (refer to form, purpose, audience and social context in your answer).

Write 150 – 300 words outlining what you have learnt from this activity.

10 marks

2. People feel uncomfortable when the rules of language are broken. Look at the following list and mark **AL** for appropriate language and **IL** for inappropriate language.

1. A man using a mobile phone sits on the bus next to an elderly woman. He continues his conversation about the great night at the pub and gets into an involved conversation about the girl he took home that night.
2. A woman accidentally bumps into another woman with her shopping trolley and apologises for her clumsiness.
3. When asked to clean up his bedroom by his mother a teenager swears loudly and storms out of the house.
4. Two friends are discussing an important personal issue privately in one of their bedrooms. They swear repeatedly during the course of the conversation.
5. An angry customer in the queue at Woolworths shouts loudly and aggressively at the checkout girl because he has been overcharged for an item.

Can you think of any occasions when you have been made uncomfortable by inappropriate language? Discuss in your groups.

Write a 150-300 word report on either your own example or a summary of the group discussion.

Include what the situation was and why it made you (or the group) uncomfortable. *10 marks*

3. Think of a social situation in which language is used inappropriately and either act it out in front of the class or make an audio tape of your script. Accompanying your script you will need to present a short explanation of the context behind your example (for example, the action is taking place in the lounge room of a private house. Present are a mother, a father and a teenage child.)

Length: 2-5 minutes

***Remember that the audience for this will be both the class and myself, so ensure that offensive language is edited appropriately.**

30 marks

PART B: 50 marks

Swearing is one aspect of language that is open to controversy. What one person considers to be swearing can be considered socially acceptable to another. For some people swearing is considered normal conversation and they cannot understand why others object to it. Others find even the mildest expletives offensive and they are equally entitled to their opinion. Over time the notion of “acceptable” swear words has undergone a transformation. The word “bloody” in the 18th century for example was considered highly offensive, but in the 21st century it is seen as quite mild. In a similar manner the word “bugger” was once considered to be a strong expletive that was not used in public. Recently an advertisement went to air in which this word was used in a comical sense by a talking dog. As a result of this advertisement the whole context of the word has changed in Australian society and “bugger” has become quite common in the Australian vocabulary with very few people taking offence. Over the years a number of such shifts in language have occurred.

The situations where offensive language is used has also undergone a change. Swearing in Australia has typically been associated with men, and it was never used in mixed company. You must have heard the line “not in front of the ladies” at some stage. This is another social context that has changed over the past few decades. *How relevant is this idea in today’s society?*

People form impressions of other people through a variety of stimuli. How they speak, how they dress, their body language, all this combines to create who other people think you are. *In your group think of a situation where swearing caused you to think badly of someone. Does everyone in your group feel the same way?*

4. Write a 200 – 500 word report on the role swearing plays in Australian society. In your answer you could discuss such things as what the definition of swearing actually is? When swearing is considered acceptable and when it is not? Whether the social situation you are in affects whether you swear or not? What words you consider offensive? Whether you swear regularly and if so, when and where? You could discuss the zero tolerance language policy at Roxby Downs Area School, what you think about it and your experience of it. What is your impression of people who swear consistently – do you think where and when they do it has any relevance to your reaction? You could talk about what affect different age levels have on your perception of swearing (compare swearing by an 8 year old to an 28 year old for example). You could talk about the difference between Australian swear words and those from other countries. Do males and females have different views on swearing? Are there any words that everyone finds offensive?

25 marks

5. Your next task is to design a survey for 8-10 people from a variety of age groups to document their reaction to everyday language. We will be studying ways in which to construct effective surveys in class over the next few days. Remember that different age groups will have different responses. Small children will answer differently from teenagers, and older adults will probably have a different view from younger adults. *Can you work out any kind of pattern or reason for this?*

Prepare a survey in which you seek feedback about how people think they use spoken language in everyday life. You could include the following:

- ? Are people aware that they use different types of language in different situations? (eg. Compare the language you use at home to that used in the supermarket, the pub or at work.)
- ? Are they aware of why they do this?
- ? How do they know what type of language to use in any given social situation or context?
- ? Do they swear and if so, when and where do they think it is appropriate (or doesn't it matter)?
- ? Are there any words that they find offensive? (**Be careful how you get them to record this!**)
- ? What, if any, swear words do they feel have become part of everyday life?
- ? etc.

Try and design a variety of questions so you can clearly see what people think about this issue. Check with me first before you start handing this survey out. **Remember that because this is a school assignment you will need to use symbols to represent words, rather than write obscenities out in full.** 5 marks

6. Your final task is to draw some conclusions from your surveys.
- a) Summarise your answers to all the surveys in an appropriate form (you may like to use graphs for this but remember that there is a specific way to set out effective graphs so that they can be clearly understood by the reader. Check this with your Maths teacher). Alternatively you may like to write your summary out in written form, or even display your information in pamphlet or poster form. The choice is up to you. 10 marks
 - b) Discuss, in 150-500 words, what you have discovered from your surveys. Do the results surprise you or are they what you expected? Do any patterns emerge according to the age group or gender you surveyed? Did you find out any interesting information from this study? If you had to do this task again would you have changed it in any way? 10 marks

This assignment is worth 40% of your total marks for this semester. To be successful you will need to ensure that you meet all deadlines.

<i>Criteria for Assessment</i>	<i>Well Done</i>	<i>Partly Done</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>
Ability to complete each area in appropriate form and register			
Demonstrated understanding of the relevance of form, purpose, audience and context			
Demonstrated understanding of how to create an effective survey			
Demonstrated ability to relate this assignment to their own experiences			
Appropriate presentation of playscript/oral presentation			
Accuracy and fluency of expression in an appropriate form or register.			
Ability to meet word count.			
Evidence of effective organisational and time management skills			
Ability to work effectively as part of a group			
Comment:			
Grade: _____			