



A level English Language

Who is this course for?

This very popular course is ideal for those students who enjoyed GCSE English and want to find out more about how language works. It appeals to students who are both analytical and creative in their thinking and writing. Although A level English Language builds upon those skills already acquired, this subject is quite different from GCSE and is more of an introductory course to the University academic discipline called 'linguistics' (the science of language). The course will build upon GCSE success, but it will not be assumed that students are experts. English Language links well with so many other A level courses, for example Psychology, Sociology, Media Studies, and Law.

What are the entry criteria?

Students must have a grade C in GCSE English Language and an average GCSE score of at least 4.6.

The English Department at Wyke Sixth Form College

With ten teachers the English Department provides a wide range of specialisms and enthusiasms, so much so that we have written a separate leaflet about the staff, available at open evenings and from the department.

We teach in The Wilson Building, in spacious classrooms which allow us to accommodate a variety of activities.

Language students are provided with a series of course booklets which support every aspect of the course and have been reviewed/endorsed by senior/chief examiners. Students also have access to the free online website Emagazine (specialist English journal) and the BKS online diagnostic tool and support materials to assist students in improving their spelling, grammar and punctuation.

The Department comprises:

Belinda Hakes (course leader for A level Literature and GCSE Language and Literature)

*Daniel Sproats

*David Green (course leader for A level Language)

*Dianne Wood (course leader for English Language&Literature A level)

*Eleanor Marsden

*Jamie Farrow

Jenny West

*Kerry Brant

Lesley May

*Meg Williams

*Teaching A Level English Language 2011-12

Exam Board

WJEC

Course Details

The course comprises two units for AS and two for A2 (weightings for each unit for the full A-level are shown in brackets).

AS Unit 1: The Language of Texts (30%)

Introduction to the language of a wide variety of written, spoken and multi-modal texts. Students will study and analyse a whole variety of texts from film reviews to children's literature, from political speeches to celebrity interviews. Students will acquire and apply a whole range of linguistic terms and tools in order to engage with a variety of different meanings. Assessment will take place by one 2½ hour examination in May.

AS Unit 2: Using Language (20%)

This coursework unit has two components: Original Writing (literary genre) and Exploring Spoken Language in a media context.

Original Writing & Commentary: students will study different short story genres (eg. revenge or horror) and dramatic monologues, and then creatively produce their own piece using their linguistic and literary knowledge. A commentary accounting for their linguistic decisions will then be produced.

Spoken Language in the Media: students will study concepts and theories surrounding spoken interaction. They will then choose a suitable media text (eg. scene from a soap opera, film, TV interview, radio phone-in programme). The dialogue will be transcribed and students will analyse a range of language features. Coursework is submitted in December and March.

A2 Unit 3: Language Investigation and Writing for Specific Purposes (non-literary) (20%)

Language Investigation: students will research, collect and analyse data in respect of a chosen language issue such as accent and dialects, language change, language and conversation or language and politics.

Writing for Specific Purposes: students will study a range of non-literary genres e.g. travel writing, sports journalism and broadsheet articles. Similar to AS, an analysis of key linguistic decisions made in producing the non-fiction text will be produced. Coursework is submitted in December and March.

A2 Unit 4: Analysing and Evaluating Spoken Language and Texts from Different Times (30%)

Students will analyse a range of spoken transcripts, including dialogue, monologue, scripted and spontaneous speech. They will also explore a range of historical written texts from 1500 to the present day, understanding how language and society have evolved over the centuries. Formal, final assessment is through one 2½ hour examination in June.

How the course is delivered

Students will have four 70 minute lessons per week. Based on this year's large AS intake, there were nine groups with an average of 21 students in each group. Similarly, we have five A2 Language groups with the same average number of students. We employ a variety of teaching and learning methods, including quizzes, games and puzzles, to reinforce the learning of linguistic knowledge. Students will be given the opportunity of one-to-one support in respect of coursework activities. For the first two terms, two lessons a week will focus on coursework activities and two lessons on exam-based work. Several timed essays and two formal mock exams will be set throughout the two years.

Departmental Enrichment

Students will have the opportunity of meeting past Wyke students who have progressed to the study of linguistics and English at university. There is a student mentoring scheme in which high achieving second year students support AS English Language students during lessons. Several lunch-time opportunities are available for students to develop their analytical skills further with some workshops focussing on sophisticated areas of grammatical analysis. Students can enrol on enrichment courses such as the college newspaper, which could develop their skills in journalism.

Student success

We had 100% pass rate for A2 and 96.84% at AS. 76% of students achieved grades A, B and C at A2 (25% A/B) and 51% received A, B and C grades at AS.

Out of 60 A2 students last year, just over 50% of students bettered their minimum target grades (MTG) by at least one grade providing a lot of value-added success. Similarly, 50% of AS students improved upon their MTGs.

Coincidentally, two AS and two A2 students bettered their MTGs by some three grades, which is excellent value-added achievement. One of the second year students was from Lithuania: her second language was English. She achieved a grade B and has now progressed to study forensic psychology at Teeside University.

Our 2011 AS English Language subject award winner improved upon his MTG of grade C by achieving a grade A due to hard work and interest in the subject. He is also a popular member of the College football team and has been recently recruited to become a student language mentor supporting this year's AS students.

What does this course lead to?

A level English Language assists students progressing on to many specialist undergraduate courses, including law, psychology, and sociology. As well as providing an excellent pathway onto English undergraduate courses, there are many other related pathways; students last year progressed on to journalism, broadcast journalism, creative writing, early childhood studies, digital media studies and many others. One student progressed on to study speech and language therapy at Birmingham City University and indeed, English Language provides the ideal scientific approach entirely suitable for careers in speech therapy.

Joanne Day is now in the second year of her undergraduate course in English Language and Linguistics at the University of York. She recently came back to Wyke to talk to our students about how A level prepared her for her degree course. She referred to sitting in lectures next to students who had not studied English Language and, how she felt personally empowered to help her peers and progress further, thanks to her time at Wyke.

Out of interest, a recent local radio station advertisement promoted MI6's recruitment drive for linguists – so here's your opportunity to become James Bond. (But don't tell anyone else other than your close family and of course, your English Language teacher!)

What can I do now that would help prepare me for this course?

Read, read, read. Collect any written texts you can get your hands on: newspaper articles, magazine problem pages, film/holiday/book reviews, text messages, children's stories (look for any Mr Men or Little Miss books), blog pages, interviews with celebrities in newspapers and magazines, advertisements. Keep these texts in a file and these will be used during your AS and A2 course to help you to get to grips with all the language (linguistic) terminology you will learn and apply. Take the opportunity to read some short stories as well, given that your first piece of coursework is where you can be creative in producing your own short story or dramatic monologue. Think about the intended audience (who will read the text?), the main purpose and any secondary purposes (inform, entertain, argue, persuade, etc) and also think about the nature of the vocabulary used and sentence lengths.

During Wyke Start (two introductory lessons to English Language), you will be exploring spoken language in a media context. Most of you will have been introduced to this topic at GCSE. Watch

and listen to a variety of media texts, for example, reality TV shows, TV and radio interviews with celebrities, soap opera and film scenes. Think about the language used by speakers in dialogue and how successful are they in interacting with other people.