

What do we mean when we talk about language?

‘What do we mean when we talk about language?’

Series of talks organised by the language centre that aims to support deeper understanding of the role of language in the university. Language is sometimes viewed as ‘separate’ from course content but, in reality, it is ‘the essential condition of knowing, the process by which experience becomes knowledge’ (Halliday & Martin, 1993, p.94). In other words, studying a particular discipline means learning to control the linguistic forms and structures that construct and communicate the relevant principles, knowledge and beliefs.

- What does language do? What is the function of language?
- What roles does context play in language?
- How does language influence disciplinary practices?
- What do we mean by academic language?
- What role can multilingualism play in the university?

Building Disciplinary Knowledge around Language

- Discussions with colleagues at the Language Centre
- Discussions with course teams
- Research papers
- Access to learning spaces (e.g. studios)
- Co-teaching with course teams
- Researching with course teams
- My own (continued) learning about what language can do in different contexts

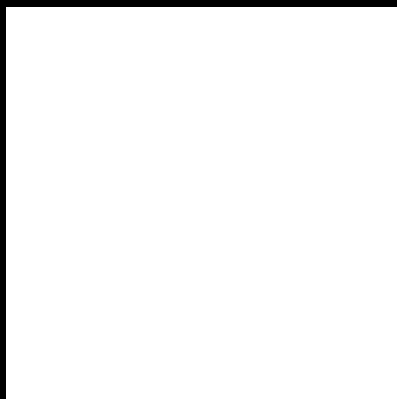
Outline

- The role of context
- What does language do?
- Academic language
- Genres
- Multilingualism





Role of Context



English Language Development

- **Weekly course-specific classes**
- Bookable tutorials: Online (via Teams)
- Language Development Online: Self-study course (Moodle)
- Bookable Academic English Skills courses

‘If you are a current UAL student and speak English as an additional language, we can help you with the language skills you need to be successful on your course.’

Weekly Language Development Classes

Help you understand and use specific language for your subject (e.g. assignments; vocabulary; texts; genres; styles).

- Reflecting on your work
- Expressing your opinion
- Explaining your work
- Working with others
- Reading/writing more critically
- Presenting your ideas
- Discussing others' ideas
- Asking questions
- Reading different kinds of texts
- Developing your writing style
- Working on assignments
- Developing an academic voice
- Learning to communicate more professionally
- Using sources

LCF Language Courses

- **MSc Psychology of Fashion**
- **BSc Fashion Management/MSc Strategic Fashion Management**
- **MA Menswear**
- **MA Womenswear**
- **MA Innovative Fashion Production**
- **BA Womenswear**
- **Graduate Diploma (Fashion Design)**
- **MA Fashion Futures; MA Footwear; MA Fashion Artefact; MA Pattern Cutting**



Language Theories/Concepts

We draw on theories/concepts from language, language learning, language teaching and from fields within Applied Linguistics and Education:

- Corpus Studies
- Semiotics
- Sociolinguistics
- Discourse Analysis/Critical Discourse Analysis
- Translanguaging
- English for Specific Purposes (ESP)
- **Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)**
- **English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**
- **Genre Studies**
- **Multilingualism**

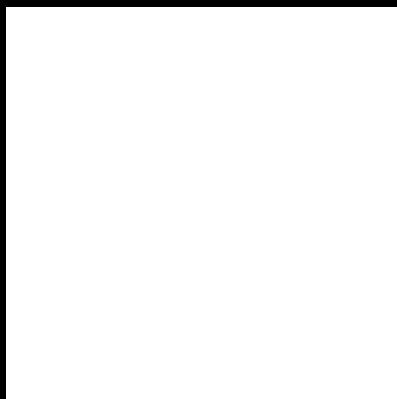
Main Aim?

‘How to make language and writing visible in meaningful ways in disciplinary activity’ (Lillis, et al., 2015, p. 4)

- Discuss how language operates in different contexts, disciplines and genres
- What kinds of language do students need to create, discuss, explain, critique...
- Share practices and examples



Language as 'Function'



Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

‘SFL studies language in its social context, understanding language as both shaping and resulting from social circumstances’ (Snow & Uccelli, 2009, p. 112)

‘Language is the essential condition of knowing, the process by which experience becomes knowledge’ (Halliday & Martin, 1993, p. 94)

- Language helps us make meaning (i.e. to do the things we want/need to do)
- What language choices do we make when doing different things?
- How is knowledge organized through language?
- How does language help students to learn?
- What do teachers need to know about language in order to help students with their learning process?

Functional Approach: Class

- What is the function of this language? What do the words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs do?
- How is this language used to create/construct meaning in a particular context?
- What kind of language is needed to do different ‘things’?
 - Describe findings
 - Discuss previous writers’ work
 - Explain how you carried out a study (and why)?
 - Speak about your work
 - Ask questions (about a text)
- What (language) choices do you have?
 - Reporting verbs; linking devices



Example:

Writing about Findings/Results



Language Development Classes

1. **Session 1:** Language for research (Chapter 3)/Review of Formative Feedback on Literature Review
2. **Session 2:** Language for research (Chapter 3)/Being Critical
3. **Session 3: Language for describing findings (Chapter 4)**
4. **Session 4:** Language for describing findings (Chapter 4)/Using visual elements
5. **Session 5:** Language for Recommendations/Discussions (Chapter 5)/Incorporating sources
6. **Session 6:** Language for Recommendations/Discussions (Chapter 5)/Incorporating sources
7. **Session 7:** Reflective writing/Editing your work
8. **Session 8:** Q/A Session

Findings: Donnelly, Gee, and Silva (2020)

Comment on the verb forms/language choices/use of tables and sources below.

4. Findings and analysis

4.1. Sample demographics

Table 2 summarises the sample demographics. The sample consisted of 205 UK respondents of whom 66.8% were female and 31.2% were male with the remainder preferring not to disclose their gender. All respondents were UK residents and had purchased an item from a department store. Moreover, a major department store in the UK, House of Fraser identifies their core customer as ‘Jo’ - a middle-aged, mother of two (Hounslea, 2017), and therefore indicates that our sample is representative of department store shoppers in the UK. The distribution of age groups across the respondents was relatively equal with the largest group aged 45–54 (28.8%) and the smallest 65+ (5.90%).

Findings: Answers

4. Findings and analysis

4.1. Sample demographics

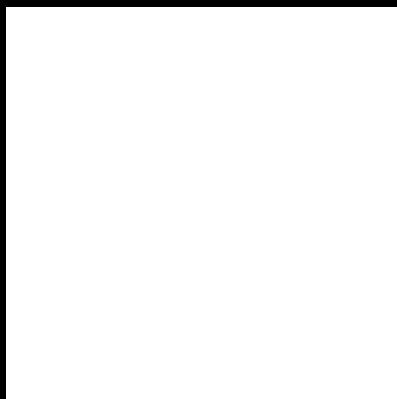
Table 2 [referring to the table in text] summarises the sample demographics [The information in the table will be explained here – present form]. The sample consisted of 205 UK respondents of whom 66.8% were female and 31.2% were male with the remainder preferring not to disclose their gender. All respondents were UK residents and had purchased [Use of past forms to explain what happened in the specific study] an item from a department store. Moreover, a major department store in the UK, House of Fraser identifies [Changes to present form as this explains a general idea about the company] their core customer as ‘Jo’ - a middle-aged, mother of two (Hounslea, 2017) [Supports this claim (justification)], and therefore indicates that our sample is representative of department store shoppers in the UK. The distribution of age groups across the respondents was [Returns to the study] relatively equal with the largest group aged 45–54 (28.8%) and the smallest 65+ (5.90%).

Research Findings: Sample 2

-
- Where might you see this section in the chapter?
 - What is the writer doing here?
 - What language is helping the writer do this?
 - Comment on the way the writer has:
 - Used verb forms
 - Referred to tables
 - Used formality



Academic Language



‘Academic language is ... no one’s mother tongue’

‘Academic language is a dead language for the great majority of French people, and is no one’s mother tongue, not even that of children of the cultivated classes. As such, it is very unequally distant from the languages actually spoken by the different social classes. To decline to offer a rational pedagogy is, in this context, to declare that all students are equal in respect of the demands made by academic language’

Bourdieu & Passeron (1995, p. 8)

Academic Language

- ‘...no simple definition of what academic language is...’ (Snow & Uccelli, p. 112)
- ‘... a complex, open and emergent social system that can change’ (Molinari, 2021, p. 49)
- ‘[there is] no single academic language, just as there is no single British English, but rather a number of varieties that share certain core features...[however it] is continually evolving as the sciences, disciplines, and subdisciplines themselves evolve.’ (Halliday, 1993 in Snow & Uccelli, p. 112)

Academic Writing Features: Students

What do you understand by the term ‘academic language’? How about ‘academic writing’?

- Formal
- Third person
- Need citation
- Not be subjective
- Citation = reference/source
- Fancy words
- Critical thinking
- Referenced text
- Authoritative
- Referencing other academic sources
- Academic and professional references required
- Well structured/organized
- Factual
- Reflective
- Terminology
- Evaluative
- Rigorous
- Format
- Professional
- Good grammar
- Logical
- Educational
- Different from spoken language

What makes a text ‘academic’?

‘...the modern-day imaginary of what makes writing ‘academic’ celebrates objectivity, linearity, some linguistic standards rather than others, prose and impersonality at the expense of other epistemic virtues, such as creativity, public and popular engagement (to democratize knowledge), recursiveness and composition, multilingualism and multimodality. (Molinari, 2022, p. 57)

Secondary Research

- Final project
- Source usage
- Specific purpose
- Refers to visuals
- Impersonal

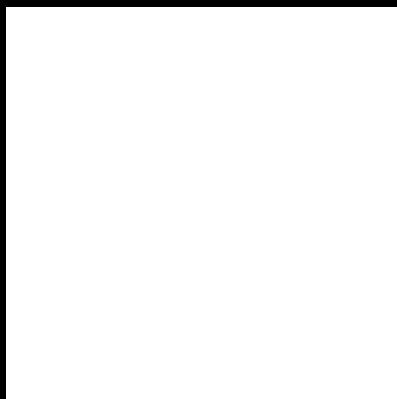
‘This section describes’

Sketchbook Annotations

- Concise
- Source usage?
- Full sentences?
- Explaining
- Reflecting
- Evaluating
- Fits requirements of the discipline



What about other languages?



Multilingualism

How many languages exist in your workshop, classroom, seminar, lectures?

- Is English an L1/L2/L3?
- What languages are used?
- How are these languages used?

How might we draw on different languages to help us/students do different things?



Translanguaging

- Different languages - not seen as separate but as part of linguistic repertoire
- Languages seen as a resource rather than a barrier
- Build on what students already know

[it] is about activating multilingual speakers' resources so as to expand language and content learning (Cenoz & Durk Gorter, 2022)

Multilingualism as Resource

- **Explain the following terms?**
 - Craft
 - Craftsman

- Process of doing something in a professional/skilled way
- Linked to ‘classical idea’ – doing craft (e.g. pottery/metals)
- Traditional – ‘preserves the nativity’
- Nurtured skill
- Outcome of man-made process
- Never quick
- Good quality
- Heritage

Multilingualism as Resource

- **How would you say these terms in another language that you know?**
- **Are there any other meanings?**

- Lithuanian: '*amatas*' - preserving the culture/mastering the skill of making something
- Italian: '*fare*' (do); '*mestiere*' (job) - sophisticated/mastered – a literal sense of skill '*abilita*'
- Chinese: 手工 ('shougong'); 工艺 ('gongyi') - technique (classical/traditional); the 'craftsmanship' (something to do with handmade)

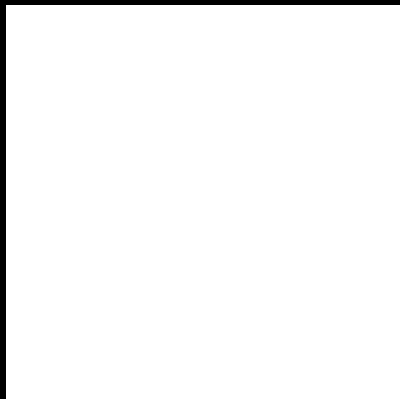
Blue

- The word “蓝” in Chinese means blue and the word “青” (Ching) in Chinese also means blue but contain green in it, like cyan. In ancient China, “青” sometimes can also mean black which is different from today.
- The interesting thing is “青” (same as “青い” (Aoi) is also a Japan character usually means blue.





Genre



Reading: Text A

What kind of writing is this? Where do you think you might see this type of writing? How easy is it (for you) to read/understand?

The potential for laccase (EC 1.10.3.2) to be used within the area of textile coloration, specifically for the generation of decorative surface pattern design, remains relatively unexplored. The current study presents a novel process for the coloration of wool and nylon 6,6 fibres via laccase oxidation of aromatic compounds as an alternative to conventional dyeing methods. Emphasis was placed on producing a diverse colour palette, which was achieved through the investigation of three different aromatic compounds as laccase substrates: 1,4-dihydroxybenzene, 2,7-dihydroxynaphthalene and 2,5-diaminobenzenesulphonic acid.

(Prajapati, et al., 2018)

Abstract: Comments

The potential for laccase (EC 1.10.3.2) to be used within the area of textile coloration, **specifically for** the generation of decorative surface pattern design, **remains relatively unexplored**. The **current study presents** a **novel process** for the **coloration of wool and nylon** 6,6fibres via laccase oxidation of aromatic compounds as **an alternative to** conventional dyeing methods. Emphasis **was placed** on producing a diverse colour palette, which **was achieved** through the investigation of three different aromatic compounds as laccase substrates: 1,4-dihydroxybenzene, 2,7-dihydroxynaphthalene and 2,5-diaminobenzenesulphonic acid. Reaction processing parameters such as buffer systems and pH values, laccase and aromatic compound concentrations, and reaction times **were investigated**, all in the absence of additional chemical auxiliaries. Enzymatically dyed fabrics **were tested** against commercial standards, **resulting in** reasonably good colour fastness to wash. **To demonstrate** the coloration and design potential by laccase catalysation of aromatic compounds, specially constructed fabrics using a combination of undyed wool, nylon and polyester yarns **were dyed** using the one-step laccase-catalysed coloration process. The use of different fibre types and weave structures **enabled** simple colour variations **to be produced**. Shadow, reserve and contrasting effects **were achieved** with the laccase-catalysed dyeing process developed. **Important advantages** over conventional processing methods **include** the use of simpler and milder processing conditions that **eliminate** additional chemical use and **reduce** energy consumption.

Reading: Text B

What kind of writing is this? Where do you think you might see this type of writing? How easy is it (for you) to read/understand?

In our research we used enzymes to synthesise textile dyes and pattern fabrics using ambient processing conditions, such as temperatures as low as 50°C at atmospheric pressure. We now have ways to create many different colours with just a slight alteration of processing conditions, reacting enzymes and compounds together in various different conditions in a technique that eliminates the need to use pre-manufactured dyes.

(Prajapati, 2019)

Genre

- Genre is a term for grouping texts together, ‘representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations.’ (Hyland, 2004, p. 4)
- A genre comprises a set of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. Exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience (Swales, 1990, p. 58)

Genre: BAWE Corpus

- **British academic writing (BAWE) is a 6.5 million-word corpus of successful student writing in English.**
- **BAWE analysis led to a genre family classification of university student writing**
- **compiled to enable identification of linguistic and generic features**
- **identification of thirteen genre families**
- **student writing differs across genres, disciplines and levels of university study**

- Explanation
- Critique
- Essay
- Literature survey
- Methodology recount
- Research report
- Case study
- Design specification
- Problem question
- Proposal
- Narrative recount
- Empathy writing

(Nesi & Gardner, 2012)

Genre Practices at UAL?

- What would a list of genre practices look like at UAL?
 - Dissertation
 - Commentary
 - Portfolio
 - Project



Advice/Suggestions



How to make use of language in your classes?

1. Talk about language on your course
 - Talk to library about glossaries, encyclopaedias, dictionaries – add to reading lists
 - Course work: create glossaries; define terms; categorise general-academic-specific terms; present on terms; translate to find deeper meanings
 - Prepare weekly/course key terms
2. Discuss the discourse and language (forms) used in your field.
 - How does language help to create knowledge in your field?
 - Why is this writing formal? Not using personal forms? Using complex/simple sentence structures
3. What different genres of writing and speaking are used in your discipline?
 - What does a reflection, an abstract, a report or an introduction to an essay ‘look like’ in your context?
 - Talking about your work, presenting your work, ‘Crits’

How to make use of language in your classes? (2)

3. Language tutors

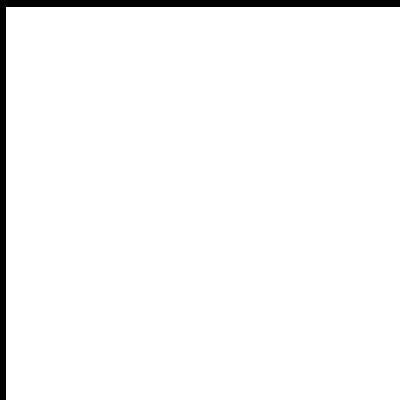
- Language of the brief
- Describing genres (esp. assignments)
- Challenges that students may have with language (speaking about their work, reading around the subject)
- Co-teach sessions

4. Research

- Explore the language uses/practices in your discipline



Resources



Future Talks

- Dr Ursula Wingate, King's College London: Collaboration with subject lecturers: EAP practitioners' double role in student support and teacher education

Date: Friday December 9

2023 Talks

- Professor Constant Leung, King's College London: Academic Writing: Situated Enactment of Argument, Genre and Knowledge Structure [January 27]
- Dr Tracey Costley, University of Essex: Multilingual Spaces and practices [February 24]
- Professor Bojana Petric (Birkbeck, University of London) [April 28]
- Dr Lena Grannell, UCL: Feedback and speakers of English as an additional language [TBC]
- Website: Language Resources (Upcoming)

Contact: English Language Development



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Questions?