

ENGLISH LANGUAGE A-LEVEL READING LIST

Introductions and general interest:

How Language Works, how babies babble, words change and language live or die...David Crystal (Penguin books) Our hero (along with Chomsky)!

English Language for Beginners (Lowe and Graham - this is out of print but we have a copy in the English office)

Linguistics for Beginners (Terrence Gordon, For Beginners)

Alphabetical: How Every Letter Tells a Story, Michael Rosen (John Murray)

How Language Works, The Stories of English, The Story Of English in 100 Words, all Penguin.

Text Analysis and Representation, Ian Cushing, (Cambridge University Press)

Power

Politics and the English Language, George Orwell - a classic, this essay focuses on political language.

Unspeak, by Steven Poole (Abacus) - a critique of modern political language in the tradition of Orwell.

Manufacturing Consent, Edward S Herman and Noam Chomsky (Vintage). This is compelling indictment of the news media's role in covering up errors and deceptions in American foreign policy of the past quarter century. Not really language focused, but worth a read if you are interested in politics (Other key texts include How The World Works and Hegemony or Survival. If these seem daunting, Chomsky for Beginners is a good introduction)

Gender

Language, Gender and Feminism, theory. Methodology and practice. Sara Mills and Louise Mullany (Routledge 2011).

Language and Gender, Felicity Titjen (Cambridge University Press) Useful and true to OCR

Language and Gender 2nd edition, Mary Talbot (Polity Press 2010)

Sexed Texts, Language, Gender and Sexuality, Paul Baker (Equinox Publishing Ltd)

The Myth Of Mars And Venus, Deborah Cameron (OUP) Dr. Cameron challenges the idea that sex-differences might have biological rather than social causes. (see also her book Verbal Hygiene).

Men, Women and Language, Jennifer Coates (Routledge.) An excellent sociolinguistic account of language and gender.

Delusions of Gender, Cordelia Fine (Icon books) The book for you if you are interested in a psychological or scientific perspective on gender.

Man-Made Language, Dale Spender (find the introduction at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ot/spender.htm>). One of the classics. Published in 1980, it is still as relevant today as it was then.

Misogynies, Joan Smith (The Westbourne Press) first published in 1989, this is now a classic feminist text. In this collection of stinging essays Joan Smith explores the phenomenon of women-hating in politics, religion, history, literature, and popular culture on both sides of the Atlantic.

Language Change

The Adventure Of English, Melvyn Bragg (Sceptre) Bragg's new-ish history of the language (a spin off from his tv series) is readable and entertaining.

Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular, William Labov (University of Pennsylvania Press). First published in 1973, Labov's study looked at educational under-achievement in the inner city and located the problem not in the children, but in the relations between them and the school system. You can also read an edited version of his study here: <https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/95sep/ets/labov.htm>

A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess is fascinating. Burgess, a ployplot who loved language in all its forms, created Nadsat as a fictional argot for his teenage characters in the novel.

Acquisition

How Children Learn: From Montessori to Vygotsky - Educational Theories and Approaches Made Easy, Linda Pound (Step Forward). Particularly useful if you are thinking of going into teaching.

Children's Minds, Margaret Donaldson (Harper Collins) Margaret Donaldson's influential work on child development shows that context is key when it comes to the development of language and thought, and how the right support can ensure children are skilled in these areas before they even start school.

Play and its role in the Mental Development of the Child, Lev Vygotsky. A classic psychology text, which can be found here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/1933/play.htm>