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# **A LEVEL** Delivery Guide

H470

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Theme: Language and Gender

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# Introduction

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

- Content: a clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
- Thinking Conceptually: expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
- Thinking Contextually: a range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected that best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

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**KEY** 

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# **Curriculum Content**

#### Language and gender

Students will analyse a text in terms of language and gender for both the AS Component 2 (Exploring contexts), Section B where it would be 50% of the mark for this component and also this analysis will also play a central role in the the A Level Component 2 (Dimensions of linguistic variation), Section B. Students will need to be familiar with concepts relating to the idea of language and gender in society. This includes the ways in which language and gender are represented in the media and literature.

#### Language in use

This delivery guide will also support teachers in delivering approaches to responding to the section on topical language issues, which is in Component 1, Section B of A Level English Language and in Component 2, Section A of AS Level English Language. The knowledge and skills acquired through the analysis and understanding of concepts relating to language and gender can be used across all answers in all components.



Activities	Resources
<b>Introducing language and gender</b> As society changes, so too does the language we use to communicate. The study of language and gender has been an area of interest for researchers over the years. From the language we use to address each other, the ways in which the sexes communicate with each other and the language used to represent gender in society, students find it an interesting topic to study as they find it is relevant to them.	
In the AS and A Level examinations, students are required to produce either a written or spoken text arguing for or against a statement regarding the effect of gender, technology or power on the use of language (when responding to the question on a topical language issue). Encouraging a sense of debate regarding language and social contexts is therefore important in class and engenders the skills of independence of thought that will help them in the exam.	
One of the best ways to begin the topic of language and gender is to start with a discussion of the perceived differences in the ways in which men and women communicate. In pairs or small groups, give students a list of statements: for example (see Learner Resource 1, which is included as an example of a way to generate debate) women talk more than men, women talk about feelings more than men do, men swear more than women, women are more polite than men, men interrupt more than women etc. The whole group can then discuss what they think about the statements they have been given.	Learner Resource 1
Teachers should also note that the Andrew Moore Language and Gender guide is available online and, as well as being a useful teaching companion for teachers, is an accessible resource for students.	
Andrew Moore Language and Gender Guide:	Click here
http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/lang/gender.htm#lakoff	
Gender in the media Representations of gender in the media and the ways in which males and females are perceived form an interesting area of study. Show students the websites Drive Like a Girl ( <u>www.drivelikeagirl.com</u> ) and Sheila's Wheels ( <u>www.sheilaswheels.com</u> ). Ask students what they think about the language used. A useful focus is also representation of gender, i.e. how is gender being represented in these websites? This may be being done through ideas and attitudes being expressed explicitly or it may be more subtle: for example, through what is implied rather than what is stated directly. Are underlying assumptions about masculinity or/and femininity being made? Do the texts challenge stereotypes or reinforce them?	Click here
Students can then source their own adverts to look at the ways in which gender is represented through language in advertising with a focus on the lexical choices and a discussion of pragmatics.	



Activities	Resources
Marked and unmarked terms Marked language is often considered to have less prestige associated with it than unmarked terms. For example, the male unmarked term 'major' has the suffix 'ette' added to it in order to become 'majorette'. There are many more examples of marked terms and their connotations: 'steward' and 'stewardess' for example. Students can also discuss terms that are used to describe males and females and the various connotations they have. Ask students to make a list of the marked and unmarked terms and their connotations.	
It could be worth asking students to read the following extract in The Guardian which is by the Oxford University Professor Deborah Cameron, from her book 'The Myth of Mars and Venus', which explores how important gender differences are in speech. It can be found at:	Click here
http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/oct/01/gender.books	
<b>Gender identity</b> Gender identity is something that should also be discussed in the context of language and gender. An interesting TED talk by Scott Turner entitled "Ending Gender" can provide a basis for discussion about gender identity. The talk raises interesting questions about language and the way in which we discuss both gender and sexuality.	
Ending Gender TED talk by Scott Turner:	
http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=TWubtUnSfA0	Click here
This powerful talk examines gender identity in modern society and also examines the language we use.	
Full Story – Gender Identity:	Click here
http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=KI_kcwkaNrI	
This documentary also raises some interesting ideas about language and gender identity and links well with the talk by Scott Turner.	



Activities	Resources
Gender and metaphors Ask students to think of animal imagery that is used to describe men and women. What types of animals are attributed to women and which are attributed to men? Some ideas might be 'bird', 'chick', 'bitch' and 'cow' for women and for men 'stallion', 'wolf' and 'silver fox'. Ask students to consider the connotations that these words have and to consider other terms used to refer to males and females. For example 'crumpet' and 'tart' for females. Share the following chicken metaphor which has been taken from Janet Holmes' Learning about Language:	
"The chicken metaphor tells the story of a girl's life. In her youth, she is a chick, and then she marries and begins feeling cooped up, so she goes to hen parties and cackles with her friends. Then she has her brood and begins to hen peck her husband. Finally, she turns into an old biddy."	
Holmes, Janet (1994) Learning about Language: An Introduction to sociolinguistics. London: Longman p. 337	
<b>Studying speech</b> As well as analysing transcripts, students can gather their own data via a number of means. One way is to record a discussion amongst their peers (preferably mixed) about a topic of their choice. They could discuss the events of the weekend or another topic that is of interest to them. They should then listen to that conversation and make notes on conversational features such as overlapping, interruptions and use of non-standard English. What do they notice about the language and are there any differences between the language used by the males and the language used by the females?	
<b>Gender spotting</b> Ask students if they remember what toys they played with when they were younger. This can act as a catalyst for a discussion on gender and socialisation.	
Ask students to examine and analyse a range of adverts aimed at children. Students can look in catalogues and investigate the ways in which language is used to advertise games and toys for boys and girls. Is there a difference? This can lead to an interesting discussion about advertising in general and adverts which are aimed at males and those that are aimed at females. Show students examples of adverts that are aimed at men and of those aimed at women. Ask students to consider whether stereotypes are being reinforced or whether certain assumptions about gender are being made.	
The following newspaper article about a Swedish toy firm that was forced to create a gender-neutral Christmas catalogue shows the ways in which attitudes are changing towards gender.	Click here
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2238435/Swedish-toy-firm-Top-Toy-forced-gender-neutral-Christmas-catalogue.html	



Activities	Resources
Writing for women and men in the media Examining the language used in magazines that are aimed at women and in those that are aimed at men can also provide a good basis for analysis and discussion about language and gender. Students can gather their own data by finding advice columns in magazines aimed at women and those aimed at men and seeing if there is a difference between the problems discussed and the language used.	
Overt and covert prestige Overt prestige (the prestige that attaches itself to behaviour that is considered more socially desirable) and covert prestige (the prestige that comes from behaviour that goes against what are considered the conventions of respectable society) are key terms relating to language and gender. A lesson discussing these terms will enable students to explore ideas surrounding gender behaviour and in particular, language use.	
Non-standard forms are often attributed to male language use, and researchers such as Peter Trudgill and Jenny Cheshire found that women used more standard speech forms than did men.	
Ask students to consider why this might be the case. Are women more status-conscious than men? What are society's expectations of women? Do they differ between the sexes?	
A summary of the work of these theorists can be found at:	
https://aggslanguage.wordpress.com/4-4-%E2%80%93-the-basic-variation-theorists-%E2%80%93-labov-trudgill-cheshire- millroy-bernstein/	Click here
Language and gender in rap music This is also an area of study that students can consider. Rap music has often been considered degrading to women because of the portrayals of women. Ask students to analyse the lyrics of rap artists, both male and female, and ask them to consider whether there is a difference between the language used by the male and female artists. They could present their findings to the group.	



# **Thinking Conceptually**

#### Approaches to teaching the content

There are a number of ways in which the content for language and gender can be taught and, because this is a higher level of academic study, students should be encouraged to source and analyse a variety of materials, ranging from transcripts to novel extracts, in order to help them develop their confidence. This will also prepare A Level students for when they have to source their own data and materials for their language investigation. Students should also be encouraged to discuss theories and concepts in class, noting the limitations and flaws within them.

Learner Resource 2

A brief guide to some theorists is included in Learner Resource 2, although this guide should not in any way be regarded as listing the only theorists worth studying, but rather as a starting point.

## Common misconceptions or difficulties students may have

Students sometimes struggle with some of the theories relating to language and gender and sometimes regard them as 'discoveries' rather than outdated theories. For example Robin Lakoff's theories are based on investigations that were undertaken in USA in the 1970s. A discussion about research methodology can help students appreciate its limitations. Students should therefore be encouraged to enter into debates regarding the limitations of these ideas, for example regarding the theories of Robin Lakoff and Deborah Tannen. What are the issues with these investigations (aside from the fact that they are outdated)?

Ask students to consider how they would conduct a language and gender investigation today if they had unlimited resources.

#### Conceptual links to other areas of the specification – useful ways to approach this topic to set students up for topics later in the course

The topic of language and gender links to language change, language and power, language and technology and child language acquisition. Therefore, students should not regard these topics as being self-contained and should understand that there are many links between them all. For example, a computer-mediated conversation between a parent and child could highlight some interesting ideas about language and technology, language and gender and language and power.



Activities	Resources
Language change Etiquette guides are also useful when examining language and gender. Gender roles have changed in society and it's sometimes difficult for students to appreciate this, so looking at etiquette guides from the past can give students an insight into gender roles and how they have changed over the years. The following guide, <i>The Ladies Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness</i> , was first published in 1875 and was written by Florence Hartley. It can be can be found online at:	
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35123/35123-h/35123-h.htm	Click here
Students can read sections and analyse the language used. They could consider the lexical and grammatical choices and compare the language with something written today. For example, an article or beauty advisory guide from a modern beauty magazine.	
Students can also watch an episode or a clip from the TV programme <i>Ladette to Lady</i> and discuss the differences in the language used by the so-called 'ladettes' and that used by the ladies who are tasked with turning them into ladies.	
Ladette to Lady:	Click here
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsFXHyKEfe4	
Balderdash and Piffle: Germaine Greer on the C word http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=XY-5a0vRzYg	Click here
Another interesting and entertaining documentary about both language and gender and language change is about the 'C word' from the BBC series <i>Balderdash and Piffle</i> . Teachers should be warned that this documentary obviously contains profane and sexually explicit language.	



Activities	Resources
Language and gender in the media The debate regarding sexism in society and in the media is something that appears time and time again. There are some interesting articles that students can read and which can form a basis for discussions about the topic of sexism and the language used. The following article about sexism in the media is taken from The Guardian and can be used as a basis for discussion and further investigation. Guardian Newspaper Article: Wives and Grandmothers First? It's time to fight this insidious sexism: http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/womens-blog/2014/apr/25/wives-grandmothers-insidious-sexism-women-news-ageism	Click here
The article about is about both sexism and ageism in the media and the language used in newspapers.	
<b>Child language acquisition</b> Language and gender is a topic that will be also be discussed in the Child Language Acquisition section and there are various ways in which to approach this. A discussion about the differences between the ways in which children are treated based on their gender is a good gateway into the idea of gender stereotypes from a young age. Students could investigate the language used by younger siblings or relatives or, if there is an opportunity to visit a nursery or primary school, students could analyse the ways in which language is used by younger children and observe whether there is a difference between the lexical and grammatical choices of the boys and girls.	



The study of language and gender is inextricably linked with the study of the position of men and women in society and how this has evolved over the years. Language and gender, therefore, remains a popular topic for student investigation and often students can use their own investigative skills, accompanied by their knowledge of language, to see if these theories hold true in their immediate sphere of influence and beyond.

When it comes to examining language and gender, there are many possible sources of information. From books to magazines to TV programmes, films and websites, the possibilities are endless. Discussions about language and gender should also be considered alongside other contextual factors such as age, class and occupation.



Activities	Resources
<b>Language in the media</b> A discussion regarding female and male journalism would provide an interesting basis for analysis on language use by males and females and whether there are any differences between them. Students can source examples of journalism written by a male and those written by a female and compare the language use.	
Language in the classroom The classroom can also provide a basis for investigation surrounding language and gender, particularly when considering the ways in which male teachers and female teachers might differ in terms of their language use. With prior permission, students could observe a teacher in the classroom. They should come up with a hypothesis first. For example, 'Female teachers are more polite when addressing pupils'.	
<b>Language in the home</b> Students should be encouraged to become 'language investigators' wherever they are. At home, for example, students can think about the language used in the home environment. How do their parents speak to the children in the home? Is there a difference between the language used towards the male children and the female children? Students could record a conversation in the context of the home (always highlight the importance of gaining permission before recording anything and discuss the issues that this tool poses). They can then examine the language used and this can then be used as a basis for discussion and further analysis.	
<b>Language and occupation</b> Students can consider language and occupation. They could consider language in particular occupations that may be dominated by a particular sex. Are there differences between the ways in which language is used? For example, is there a difference between the language use of a female doctor and the language use of a male doctor?	
Language of interviewers Analysing the differences between the language of a female interviewer and the language of a male interviewer could also provide a basis for discussion regarding language and gender. For example, students could compare the language used by a male interviewer such as Jonathan Ross with the language used by a female interviewer such as Ellen DeGeneres. Students will need to watch clips online and transcribe a few minutes of conversation for analysis. Is there a difference between their language use? Ask students to consider politeness strategies adopted by the interviewers.	



Activities	Resources
Language and politics This is an interesting area of study and is inextricably linked with discussions regarding power. Men undoubtedly dominate the field of politics but there are some notable female political figures who are worth examining in terms of language and gender. For example, a speech delivered by Margaret Thatcher could be analysed and compared with one that has been delivered by a male politician.	
Margaret Thatcher Speech:	
http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/apr/30/conservatives.uk	Click here
A full copy of the speech delivered to the Conservative Party conference in Brighton in 1980 can be found via the link above.	
<ul> <li>Language and technology</li> <li>Students can examine the language used in internet chat rooms for a discussion and analysis of language and gender through computer-mediated conversations. There are many ways to approach this. For example, students could compare the Facebook pages of a male and a female. Are there any differences between the language used by the males and the females? Twitter can also be used as a basis for analysis regarding language and gender by comparing the Tweets of a male and a female.</li> <li>Blogging/vlogging</li> <li>Students can also focus on the language of blogs or vlogs. Students would have to transcribe a few minutes of a vlog for analysis. You could give students examples of blog posts written by men and women or ask students to source their own. What are the differences between the language used by the males and the females in these technology-mediated contexts? Are there differences in the topics discussed? Are there differences in the lexical and sematic choices? Is there a proliferation of taboo lexis in the ones written by males? These questions are not exhaustive and students will undoubtedly make some interesting observations.</li> </ul>	
<b>Texting</b> The language of texts is another area of analysis and investigation. Students could analyse and examine a series of text messages between males and females, males to males and females to females. Are there are any differences?	
<b>Chat rooms</b> One theorist, Herring (1996), identifies gender-specific differences in the use of language within chat rooms. According to Herring's findings, women use more emoticons such as smileys whereas men post longer messages, ask fewer questions and engage in self-promotion. Students can consider whether this is the case by conducting some research of their own.	





**Note to teacher**. This list of statements can be used in a number of ways. Students can be given the list in its entirety to discuss in pairs or small groups. The whole class can then be brought together to discuss ideas. Alternatively, pairs could be given an individual statement to discuss for two minutes. They could then join another pair to discuss their statements and so on.

Women talk about feelings more than men.
Men are more competitive.
Men swear more than women.
Men are more likely to interrupt than women.
Women spend more time on the phone than men.
Women lack confidence when talking.
Women know more words for colours than men do.
Women can't tell jokes.
Women are more polite than men.
Women use words like 'so' and 'lovely' a lot.
Men are more status conscious.
Women are less likely to voice their objection about something.
Women make more indirect requests than men.
Men like to solve problems whereas women seek sympathy.



- Do you think these words apply to males, females or both?
- What connotations do these words have? Are they positive or negative? Can you think of any more?

Name	Mostly male	Mostly female	Both
Crumpet			
Chick			
Honey			
Sweetie			
Tart			
Whore			
Bimbo			
Stallion			
Slag			
Slapper			
Silver fox			
Cow			
Bitch			
Bird			
Spinster			
Bachelor			



### Gender and semantics

The following terms are differentiated by sex but have gained different connotations (and sometimes denotations) over time. Next to each pair, note down what the differences might be between them and what they each connote. Think about whether they imply a different status or have certain values associated with them. Also, consider whether their meaning has changed over time.

Husband/wife	
Dog/bitch	
Mistress/master	
Dame/knight	
Bride/groom	
Madam/sir	
Queen/king	
Mrs, Ms/Mr	
Miss/Master, Mr	
Governess/governor	
Spinster/bachelor	
Tomboy/sissy	
Lady/Lord	
Lady/gentleman	
Matron/patron	



### Language and gender theorists

Examine the claims of language and gender theorists such as Robin Lakoff and Deborah Tannen and source some language data to see how true their claims might be. You could record a few minutes from a radio broadcast or a TV chat show and consider what is happening and why. You can use the following work sheet to help record your data.

### **Robin Lakoff**

How far does the data agree with Lakoff's claims about the differences between the ways in which males and females use language?

Hedges
Politeness
Tag questions
Emphasis on certain words
Empty adjectives



Hypercorrect grammar
Direct quotations
Special lexicons
luuh linn naratii yaa
'wh' imperatives
Prevalence of apologies
Use of modal constructions
(can, would, should etc)



# Learner Resource 1

Indirect requests
Expletives
Use of intensifiers
Humour



Now use Deborah Tannen's six contrasts against your data.

	Men	Women
Status vs. support		
Independence vs. intimacy		
Advice vs. understanding		
Information vs. feelings		
Orders vs. proposals		
Conflict vs. compromise		



# Learner Resource 2 Language and gender theorists



### **Robin Lakoff**

In 1975, Robin Lakoff published an account of women's language, which is often cited in discussions about language and gender theory. The book is called *Language and Woman's Place* and in an article called *Woman's Language*, Lakoff made a number of claims about the language women use and what makes it different to the language used by men. She stated that women's language consists of a prevalence of the following:

- Hedges: using phrases like "sort of", "kind of".
- (super) polite forms: "Would you mind...", "If you don't mind."
- Tag questions: "You're going to lunch, aren't you?"
- **Speaking in italics:** Emphasis is placed on certain words such as 'very' and 'so', emulating the written function of italics.
- Empty adjectives: 'lovely' and 'adorable'.
- Hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation.
- Whereas women use direct quotations, men paraphrase more often.
- Men and women have special lexicons. Whereas women have more words for colours, men have more words for sports.
- Women speak less frequently than men.
- Women overuse qualifiers in conversation.
- Apologies: Women apologise more.
- Expletives: Women avoid expletives and taboo lexis.
- Humour: Women lack a sense of humour and can't tell jokes.
- Indirect requests: Women use more indirect requests.
- Modal Constructions: Women use more modal constructions such as "Should we open the door to let in some air?"
- Intensifiers: Women use more intensifiers such as "I'm so happy you could make it."
- Imperatives: Women use more 'wh' imperatives such as "Why don't we go out to dinner?"

Of course, these statements are open to debate and students may vehemently disagree about some of them. Also, some forty years have passed since this research took place, so it could be deemed outdated (and sexist?). Students should be encouraged to research these claims in class, amongst their peers and at home to see how relevant they are in today's society.

### Dale Spender, Pamela Fishman, Don Zimmerman and Candace West

### **Dominance Theory**

The dominance theory is that men are more likely to interrupt than women when engaged in mixed-sex conversation. Again, this study was conducted in 1975 on a small sample of conversations, which were undertaken at the University of California. All participants were under 35, white and middle class. Unsurprisingly, the conclusion than men are more dominant because of the fact that in 11 conversations between men and women, men used 46 interruptions whilst women used only two, has led to criticisms of the study and its claims. Students should be encouraged to consider what some of those criticisms could be.



### **Deborah Tannen**

### **Difference Theory**

One oft-cited work when discussing language and gender is *You Just Don't Understand* by Professor Tannen, published in 1990. She summarized her book in an article in which she states that there are a series of contrasts between the ways in which males and females communicate.

### Status vs. support

Tannen claims that men grow up in a world in which conversation is competitive and therefore strive to ensure that others don't dominate them. Women however, use conversation to gain support and confirmation rather than status.

### Independence vs. intimacy

Tannen claims that due to the fact that men are concerned with status, they focus more on independence. Women, on the other hand, think in terms of intimacy, seeking support and closeness from their partner.

### Advice vs. understanding

Men like to find solutions whereas women seek sympathy and understanding. Whilst a man might seek to find a way of solving a problem that their wife or girlfriend might have, Tannen claims that what the wife or girlfriend really wants is sympathy.

### Information vs. feelings

Men exchange information briefly, for example in a telephone conversation to arrange a meeting. However, women will spend an hour on the telephone talking about feelings and emotions.

### Orders vs. proposals

Tannen claims that men make orders by using more direct imperatives whilst women suggest things in more indirect ways.

### Conflict vs. compromise

Whilst men are more likely to voice their opposition to a suggestion in the workplace or home, according to Tannen, women are less likely to object and assert themselves. They might delay their opposition to the suggestions and complain later.

Students and teachers can use Tannen's claims for discussion and debate. They can also see how much they link or contradict Robin Lakoff's earlier claims about the differences between male and female language use. Students should be encouraged to conduct their own investigations to see how far they agree.





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