

## UNIT 3: LANGUAGE VARIATION AND SOCIAL PURPOSE

### AREA OF STUDY 1 – INFORMAL LANGUAGE

#### OVERVIEW

#### OUTCOME

On completion of this unit the student should be able to **identify** and **analyse** distinctive features of informal language in written and spoken texts

#### KEY KNOWLEDGE

You will need to understand the:

- Relationship between the *context* and the *features* of language in informal texts.
- Differences in the *nature* and *functions* of formal and informal texts.
- Role of Standard and non-Standard English in creating formal and informal texts.
- Role of *discourse features* and *lexical choice* in creating *cohesion* and *coherence* in informal written texts.
- Use of various *stylistic features* in informal speech and writing:
  - Phonological patterning
  - Syntactic patterning
  - Morphological patterning
  - Lexical choice and semantic patterning
- Use of features of spoken discourse and major discourse strategies by speakers and the ways in which cooperation can be achieved.
- Use of informal language for various *social purposes*:
  - Encouraging intimacy, solidarity and equality
  - Maintaining and challenging positive and negative face needs
  - Promoting linguistic innovation
  - Supporting in-group membership
- Conventions for the transcription of spoken English texts, including symbols, legend, and line numbers.
- Metalanguage to discuss informal language in texts.

## VARIATIONS IN LANGUAGE

Language varies according to the person **who** uses it and to whom. Individuals who use language have different characteristics and include aspects of the user such as:

Language use varies in different situations (**when**). Irrespective of who uses language, it is likely to be different when used in a:

It is also likely that language used will be different depending on what we use (**why**) it for:

Finally, based on **who** uses language, **when** it is used and **why** it is used, there will be variations in **what** language is used (phonological, morphology, lexicology, syntax, semantics, style and the overall structure of the discourse).

## REGISTER

Refers to social variation in language. It can refer to the difference in *style* – difference in formal and informal language. It is the choice that the language user makes depending on language use. Register is related to the use of language (lexicon, syntax, intonation, semantic intent) and specific content that creates a social and psychological distance between the speaker and the audience. It reflects the **degree** of that social distance we wish to have with others in specific settings.

## SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIABLES

As language users we make decisions about the kinds of language we use – often subconsciously. We think about who we will be addressing (**audience**) and the kind of relationships we need to create. We also assess the formality or informality of the occasion (**context**) and the reason for the speech or writing (**purpose**). We then make lexical choices that reflect our assessment of the linguistic situation. Hence, we as individuals use a wide range of language forms to serve various purposes – with friends we are informal and familiar; with employers or teachers we are more likely to be more polite and formal.

## STANDARD ENGLISH (SE)

Standard English is a form of English which has been accepted as a norm; a variety of language, some argue, that all speakers of a language should strive to use. It is also the variety of English with which other varieties of English are compared. Standard English is a variety of language which is used in academic, government and religious settings, and is often associated with the written mode. For these reasons, it is considered to be a prestigious variety. Hence, Standard English is seen as 'the' language and any differing ways of speaking and writing – often the varieties that are linked to particular speech groups or less powerful social groups – is seen as 'deviant' or 'substandard', thereby attracting negative attitudes not only to the language but also the speakers.

(**NOTE:** As language students, it is advisable that you use the term 'non-standard' as a more suitable and appropriate term than the loaded term 'substandard')

## ACCENT

While Standard English provides a norm for describing language variations in terms of vocabulary and grammar, the term **RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION (RP)** – sometimes referred to as the *Queen’s English* or *BBC English* – provides a standard form of pronunciation for all varieties of English. It is socially associated with respectability, good education and high social status. It is also the accent that is taught to English as Second Language speakers.

## ATTITUDES TO THE VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

There are two distinct approaches to language: *prescriptivism* and *descriptivism*.

As the terms suggest, *prescriptivists* believe that English is governed by a set of rules and everyone should use it because it is the ‘correct’ and ‘proper’ English. Since they believe that a form of English is the ‘best’, they do not welcome language change. Language change is seen as a form of language decay which erodes standards and leads to a corrupt form of English.

On the other hand, *descriptivists* observe language as it is spoken or written in different situations. They describe language and its variations according to the user, the use and the context. Since they see language as something that constantly evolves, they welcome language change.

## POLITENESS AND FACE NEEDS

### POLITENESS

Politeness is the term we use to describe the relationship between *how something is said* to an addressee and that addressee’s judgment of *how it should be said*. It refers to whatever *means* are employed to display *consideration of one’s addressee’s feelings (face)*, regardless of the social distance between the speaker and the addressee. It also refers to behaviour which actively expresses *positive concern* for others, as well as *non-imposing behaviour*.

### FACE NEEDS

We all have certain needs and two of these are the:

- Need for freedom (autonomy).
- Need to be valued (self-worth).

Since these needs are fragile, they require careful tending by all participants involved.

## **POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FACE**

There are two face needs:

- Negative face (autonomy): the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction (freedom to action and freedom from self-imposition).
- Positive face (self-worth): the positive consistent self-image or 'personality'.

In general, people co-operate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction.

## **FACE THREATENING ACTS**

There are certain acts that threaten face:

- Threats to negative face (autonomy):
  - Orders, threats, warnings etc.
- Threats to positive face (self-worth):
  - Expressions of disapproval, criticism, ridicule, complaints, reprimands, accusations, insults etc.

## FEATURES OF INFORMAL LANGUAGE – PHONOLOGY

METALANGUAGE	DEFINITION/EXAMPLE	ROLE OF THESE FEATURES IN AN INFORMAL TEXT
Elision	The omission of a phoneme in a speech. Words such as <i>handsome</i> and <i>mostly</i> are frequently pronounced with the omission of /d/ in <i>handsome</i> and /t/ in <i>mostly</i> . Elision is common in casual speech styles, particularly word boundaries. For example, <i>me and you</i> becomes [mi:ənju:] where the /æ/ has been reduced to /ə/, the unstressed vowel sound called <b>schwa</b> . The function words (pronouns, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions and the determiners) are reduced and attach to the preceding word: <i>it's</i> , <i>don't etc</i>	In an informal context, sounds are dropped, added or reduced. When participants are chatting with someone they are familiar with and in a comfortable surrounding, they tend to be relaxed and do not worry about clarity, especially when there is closeness, solidarity and shared common knowledge between the speaker and their listener(s). This sort of economy of speech would not be possible in a more formal setting owing much to the need to be clear and comprehensible. Another factor is our familiarity with the vocabulary. This encourages us to take shortcuts thereby enabling us to speak really fast.
Assimilation	Assimilation describes the process in which two phonemes occurring together are influenced by each other, making the sounds more alike. This frequently occurs in running speech at word boundaries, where utterances are unplanned and exchanges tend to be fast. For example, <i>I can go</i> is said [aɪkænɡəʊ] instead of [aɪ kæn ɡəʊ]. Another example is something called <b>flap</b> where the word <i>latter</i> is pronounced as <i>ladder</i> – the /t/ sound becoming /d/, where the tongue actually is ‘flapping’ against the teeth ridge.	
Vowel Reduction	This involves the substitution of a weaker vowel, usually schwa, /ə/, but sometimes /ɪ/ or /ʊ/, for a stronger one. This frequently happens in connected speech where many monosyllabic words, such as <i>to</i> , <i>for</i> , <i>and</i> , are lightly stressed, with the consequence that their vowel segments are reduced to schwa. Vowel reduction similarly occurs in polysyllabic words in those syllables that are unstressed. In <i>occurred</i> for example, the initial syllable /ɒ/ is usually reduced to /ə/ in running speech.	
Addition of sounds	In connected speech, sounds are also sometimes added. For example, the word <i>film</i> being pronounced as <i>filum</i> . Sometimes the word <i>family</i> is pronounced as <i>fambly</i> . In another example, the word <i>idea</i> is sometimes pronounced as <i>idea(r)</i> .	

## MORPHOLOGY

METALANGUAGE	DEFINITION/EXAMPLE	WHAT ROLE DOES THIS FEATURE PLAY IN AN INFORMAL TEXT?
Diminutives	<p>Diminutives or hypocoristics are shortened or modified forms of words like <i>ambo</i> for 'ambulance officer', <i>fierie</i> or <i>firie</i> for 'fire officer', <i>beaut</i> as a cover-all term of approval. Place names are also shortened, for example, <i>Brizzie</i> for 'Brisbane' or <i>Gabba</i> for the cricket ground of that name (Woolloongabba). Even hotel names are shortened, as in <i>The YJ</i> for 'The Young and Jackson's' in Melbourne. Sportspersons are often honoured: <i>AB</i> for 'Alan Border', <i>Thorpedo</i> for 'Ian Thorpe'. Some words have multiple alternative hypocoristics, for example, 'afternoon' is represented by <i>arvie</i>, <i>arvo</i>, <i>sarvo</i> etc.</p>	<p>This tendency to shorten or modify words shows some deep-seated relevance for Australian speakers – solidarity and playfulness. It also reflects values such as informality, mateship, good humour, egalitarianism and anti-intellectualism that are present in Australian English.</p>
Reduplication	<p>A structural repetition within a word, <i>baba</i>, <i>dada</i>, <i>pell-mell</i>. Words such as <i>nice-shmice</i>, <i>mumbo-jumbo</i>, <i>hankey-pankey</i>, <i>hocus-pocus</i>, <i>school-shmool</i> etc that produce a rhyming pattern are also examples of reduplication.</p>	<p>This again shows the playfulness, a part of informal language use.</p>

## LEXICOLOGY

METALANGUAGE	DEFINITION/EXAMPLE	WHAT ROLE DOES THIS FEATURE PLAY IN AN INFORMAL TEXT?
Ellipsis	Ellipsis refers to the omission of an element of language. As long as readers can easily recognise exactly what has been deleted, part of a sentence can be omitted to avoid repetition. For example, in response to a question one might ask <i>'How are you feeling?'</i> we can say <i>'Fine'</i> (without having to say <i>'I am feeling fine'</i> ).	This feature is used for the sake of economy and is a common feature in informal texts, especially in the spoken mode.
Shortening	Reduction of form (or shortening) is another feature of informal language. It is simply abbreviated versions of longer words. For example, <i>rents</i> for <i>parents</i> , <i>sec</i> for <i>second</i> , <i>bro</i> for <i>brother</i> etc.	Frequent everyday words are often clipped or cropped for speed and efficiency. Such reductions are tolerated in informal settings and not in formal contexts.
Slang	Slang is peculiar to a particular social group. It is an informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced or facetious figures of speech. Slang is language of highly colloquial and contemporary type. It often uses <i>metaphor</i> , and/or <i>ellipsis</i> and often manifests <i>word play</i> in which current language is employed in some special sense and denotation. Different cultures and social groups develop their own forms of slang.	It serves the dual function of solidarity and secrecy. It may be used in particular contexts to shock, upset or annoy.
Swearing	Swearing refers to strongly emotional use of taboo expressions in insults, epithets (or labels) and expletives. It appears regularly in the language of internet, creative writing, spontaneous public speech and private conversation.	Expletive function (letting off steam). Abuse and insult. Expression of social solidarity. Stylistic choice (the marking of attitude to what is said).

## SYNTAX/GRAMMATICAL

METALANGUAGE	CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE	NON-STANDARD USE (INFORMAL)	STANDARD USE (FORMAL)
Forming questions	Usually questions are formed by inverting the order of the subject and verb in a declarative sentence. For example: ' <i>It is raining</i> ' (declarative sentence) becomes ' <i>Is it raining?</i> '). Informal language is characterised by a lack of subject-verb inversion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What <b>they</b> <u>are</u> talking about?</li> <li>2. When <b>you</b> <u>would</u> like to go?</li> <li>3. What <b>you</b> doing? (lacks auxiliary verb)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What <u>are</u> <b>they</b> talking about?</li> <li>2. When <u>would</u> <b>you</b> like to go?</li> <li>3. What <u>are</u> <b>you</b> doing?</li> </ol>
Use of pronoun	Subject pronoun is used when it is clear who the actor of the sentence is. For example, the first person singular pronoun ' <i>I</i> '. Object Pronoun is used when a pronoun replaces the noun that receives the action of the verb (object). For example, the first person singular pronoun ' <i>me</i> '. Possessive pronouns are used to show ownership. For example, the first person singular pronoun ' <i>my</i> '.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My brother and <b>me</b> were late.</li> <li>2. That's where <b>me</b> heart beats from.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My brother and <b>I</b> were late.</li> <li>2. That's where <b>my</b> heart beats from.</li> </ol>
Negation	Negation is marked by individual words, such as <i>not</i> , <i>no</i> , <i>never</i> or by affixes within a word, such as <i>-n't</i> , <i>un-</i> , <i>non-</i> . Multiple negatives are used in many varieties of English to create emphasis. The most common form is the double negative.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I haven't done <b>nothing</b>.</li> <li>2. You didn't bring <b>no</b> presents.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I haven't done <b>anything</b>.</li> <li>2. You didn't bring <b>any</b> presents.</li> </ol>
Use of comparatives and superlatives	Adjectives inflect for grade and there are plain, comparative (when comparing two things – they are formed by adding the suffix <i>-er</i> to the adjective or add <i>more</i> ) and superlatives (when comparing three or more things - they are formed by adding the suffix <i>-est</i> to the adjective or add <i>most</i> ). Double comparatives and superlatives are used to add emphasis.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He is <b>more</b> smarter....</li> <li>2. His classes are much <b>more</b> easier to follow.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He is smarter....</li> <li>2. His classes are <b>easier</b> to follow.</li> </ol>



METALANGUAGE	CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE	NON-STANDARD USE (INFORMAL)	STANDARD USE (FORMAL)
Question tags	Question tags are a common device used for seeking confirmation. It generally consists of just an auxiliary verb + personal pronoun subject and it is the reverse of that of the clause to which it is attached. However, invariant tags are used informal language.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He can play golf, <b>or not?</b> (or) He can play golf, <b>yes or not?</b></li> <li>2. You didn't see him, <b>is it?</b></li> <li>3. He left, <b>isn't?</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He can play golf, <b>can't he?</b></li> <li>2. You didn't see him, <b>did you?</b></li> <li>3. He left, <b>hasn't he?</b></li> </ol>

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN SPOKEN LANGUAGE

	KEY ELEMENTS	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS
<b>Sociolinguistic Variables</b>	Locale	Where and when does the communication take place?
	Field (Subject matter)	What is being communicated about?
	Mode (Channel)	Is it spoken or written or e-communication?
<b>Speakers</b>	What do you know about the speakers?	Relationship of speakers or their relative status is important; turn-taking, topic management, holding the floor, adhering to the co-operative principles etc. are dependent on the relationship or relative status of the speakers.
<b>Function</b>	What is the purpose of the conversation?	Interactional; referential (informative) as in a lecture; phatic (social, informal communication); transactional (to get something done); expressive (reveal speaker's state of mind or attitude at a certain time).
<b>Topic Management</b>	Is there one clearly focused topic or are there many?	This will change depending on the participants and their relationships, purpose, context etc.
	How are the topics chosen?	Job interview, relating to the interest or experience of the speakers etc.
	Do you notice any topic shifts?	Who introduces the new topic?
	If there are topic shifts, do the speakers return to their earlier topic (topic loop)?	Are they connected or unconnected?

<b>Structure</b>	Can you identify examples of adjacency pairs?	Questions/answers? Greetings? Command and a response?
	What kind of opening is used?	Neutral? Self-related comment? Other-related comment? Social greetings? Hospitality tokens? Vocatives to personalise the discourse?
	How is turn-taking organised?	Dominant speakers? Equally shared turns? Overlapping? Efficient recognition of linguistic and paralinguistic clues signalling end of turn?
	What kind of closing is used?	Reference to something outside the speech encounter? Repetition? Delaying tactics? Formulaic utterances? Self-or other-related comments.
<b>Prosodic Features</b>	Do intonation patterns vary in order to convey the speaker's attitude?	To mark the end of grammatical utterances? To distinguish between new and old information? To indicate the end of turn?
	How do intonation patterns relate to the semantics of an utterance?	Varying the intonation pattern can convey different grammatical moods and attitudes of surprise, excitement, pleasure and so on; for example: Rising (question); Falling (statement or completion).
	Does the pitch change to reflect the speaker's involvement in the discourse?	Changes in pitch are usually linked to meaning and the speaker's relationship to the topic – a raised pitch often indicates excitement or enthusiasm; a lowered pitch marks a finale or anticlimax of some kind.
	Is emphatic stress used to highlight key words?	Change in stress can change meaning and marks words of importance.
	Does the volume change significantly to enhance the meaning of utterances?	Loud? Quiet? Increase or decrease in volume?
	Does the pace change?	Fast? Slow? Or getting faster or slower?
	What are the functions of the pauses?	To create emphasis? To dramatise an utterance? To mark hesitation? To allow speakers to breathe? To make it informal? Searching for a word? Ending an utterance?
Is the transcript marked by vocal effects or paralinguistics?	How do they relate to the words actually spoken?	

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN SPOKEN LANGUAGE

	KEY ELEMENTS	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS
<b>Lexis</b>	What marks the informality of the utterances?	Conversation lexis (' <i>yeah</i> ', ' <i>cos</i> ', ' <i>all right</i> '); Colloquial idiom (' <i>in a minute</i> ', ' <i>the thing is</i> ', ' <i>as far as I can see</i> '); Clichés (' <i>that's life</i> '); Hyperbole (' <i>on and on and on</i> ', ' <i>really stupid</i> ', ' <i>thousands</i> '); Deictic expressions (' <i>this one</i> ', ' <i>over there</i> ' or ' <i>right now</i> ') are used to give extra information.
	Subject specific lexis?	Can you identify the semantic field?
	Evidence of abbreviated code?	Shared understanding or knowledge
<b>Grammar</b>	Clause structure	Simple? Compound? Complex? Coordinated clauses? Subordinated clauses?
	Grammatical features typical of spoken conversation	Is looser and more rambling than that of written language? Frequent use of minor sentences and co-ordinated clauses? Phrasal verbs (' <i>eat out</i> ', ' <i>end up with</i> ')? Contracted forms? Noun phrases are simple? Adverbial intensifiers like <i>very</i> and <i>a bit</i> are used frequently? Ellipses occur frequently? Internal linkage is created through pronoun referencing, cross-referencing of determiners and ellipsis? Tag questions maintain the pace of spoken discourse.
<b>Non-Fluency Features</b>	Overlapping	How long do they last? What causes them? How do participants respond?
	Voiced hesitations	Are they preventing interruptions? Prolonging a turn? Providing thinking time?
	False starts or repetitions	Are there false starts or repetitions? Why?
<b>Dealing With Problems</b>	Are there repairs?	Self-corrections?

## UNIT 3: LANGUAGE VARIATION AND SOCIAL PURPOSE

### AREA OF STUDY 2 – FORMAL LANGUAGE

#### OVERVIEW

#### OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to **identify** and **analyse** distinctive features of formal language in written and spoken texts.

#### KEY KNOWLEDGE

You will need to understand the:

- Relationship between the *context* and the *features* of language in formal texts.
- Differences in the *nature* and *functions* of formal and informal texts.
- Features and functions of formal writing and formal speech as represented in a range of texts from literature and the public domain.
- Role of *discourse features* and *lexical choice* in creating *cohesion* and *coherence* in formal spoken and written texts.
- Use of various *stylistic features* in formal speech and writing:
  - Phonological patterning.
  - Syntactic patterning.
  - Morphological patterning.
  - Lexical choice and semantic patterning.
- Use of formal language for various *social purposes*:
  - Maintaining and challenging positive and negative face needs.
  - Reinforcing social distance and authority.
  - Establishing expertise.
  - Promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport.
  - Clarifying, manipulating or obfuscating.
- Metalanguage to discuss informal language in texts.

## WHAT IS FORMAL LANGUAGE?

**Formal English** is the language of dissertations, research journals, legal opinions, and Nobel Prize acceptance addresses. It asks more of its audience. It is sober, circumspect, and self-conscious. Its vocabulary is refined if not specialised. It is the hardest language to produce, not just because of its elevated content but also because even at its best it can be stiff and flat, and at its worst, arcane and stuffy.

Some of the characteristic features of formal language:

- **It minds its words:**

Word choice probably exerts the biggest influence on formality of expression. Formal writing usually employs a more advanced vocabulary and appeals to a wider-ranging, more enriched experience. *Receive* is more formal than *get*, *purchase* than *buy*, *peruse* than *read*.

- **It follows a roadmap:**

Formal writing usually defines its subject and provides the schema it will follow in discussing it. A pattern or thought syllabus is laid out, often progressing through discrete stages that are understood or agreed on in advance between writer and audience—for instance, the familiar Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion (IMRAD) plan favoured by many professional groups and their technical publications.

- **It observes a more intricate sentence and paragraph design:**

The sentences of formal writing are likely to be longer than those in other types of writing. They often employ parallel constructions that balance dependent and independent clauses. Paragraphs are sequenced skilfully and logically, and greater thought is applied to topic-sentence linkage and transitions from paragraph to paragraph.

- **It doesn't cut corners:**

The more formal the language, the fewer the contractions, elliptical shortcuts, and word truncations: *has not*, *will not*, *are not*, *you are*, *he will*, *she is*, *they would*, *let us*, for *hasn't*, *won't*, *aren't*, *you're*, *he'll*, *she's*, *they'd*, *let's*.

- **It prizes information over effect:**

Formal writing is more factual and less personal. Formal writing is plainer, greyer, more matter-of-fact, less adorned with figures of speech, less regional, and usually less colourful.

## FEATURES OF FORMAL LANGUAGE

### PHONOLOGY

Formal texts use a range of devices for playing on the patterns and sounds of words to create certain stylistic effects. These are chosen to enhance the meaning to be conveyed to the audience.

	Definition/Example(S)	Role of This Feature in Formal Texts
<b>Alliteration</b>	The repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds, generally in the initial position/beginning of words. For example, ' <i>Help Labour <b>B</b>uild a <b>b</b>etter <b>B</b>ritain</i> '.	Used a lot in advertisements, captions and headlines to make the text more eye-catching and memorable
<b>Assonance</b>	The repetition of the same or similar vowel sounds in the medial position. For example, ' <i>doom/wound</i> and <i>gleam/sheen</i> '.	This is a poetic device which is used to make words sound sonorous and musical and is often used to create a grave or pensive tone.
<b>Consonance</b>	The repetition of a consonant in the medial or final position. For example, ' <i>Beanz Meanz Heinz</i> '.	This device draws attention to a product name in advertising or enhances meaning.
<b>Onomatopoeia</b>	It refers to a sound of word that directly links to the meaning. For example, ' <i>The books fell on the table with a loud thump.</i> '	The emphasis on the sound quality focuses the reader's or listener's attention on the aural aspects of the discourse, thus creating another dimension to the meaning.
<b>Rhyme</b>	It refers to exact or partial repetitions of sound, usually at the end of a poetic line. For example, ' <i>Do not go gentle into that good <b>night</b>/Rage, rage against the dying of the <b>light</b></i> '.	This kind of sound patterning can be used to draw attention to certain words. It creates a kind of end focus and be used in a conclusive way to signal the end of a poem or a speech dramatically.

## LEXICOLOGY & MORPHOLOGY

Formal texts often involve careful lexical choices. It can be influenced by the context or audience or governed by the subject-specific nature of a topic which requires technical or specialised lexis. Formal language also includes lexemes that are elevated and prestigious or considered to be of 'high' style.

Some of these elevated lexemes or stylish words come from Latin or French. It is important here to consider the influence of French and Latin on English.

Most of the French words that were introduced into the English language belong to the domains of art, fashion, law, administration, religion, military, food and drink, etc. These words carried prestige, class and style and were associated with aristocracy. They contributed to the creation of a system of stylistic levels of English. French words that had similar meanings began appearing side-by-side with native English words, but usually diverging in meaning and style. The French words were considered to be more refined, nuanced and stylish to the English counterpart. For example, *stink* and *stench* are English, *aroma* and *fragrance* are French; *house* is English, *mansion* is French; *bloomers*, *drawers* and *girdle* in English are *lingerie*, *petticoat* and *negligee* in French.

Latin words were also introduced into English. Most of these words were professional or technical terms, belonging to the domains of religion, medicine, law and literature. They also included words which were borrowed by a writer in a deliberate attempt to produce a 'high' style. For example, *client*, *testimony*, *homicide*, *prosecute* etc. (administration and law); *library*, *solar*, *scribe* etc. (Science and learning); *diocese*, *immortal*, *pulpit*, *requiem* etc. (Religion)

This simultaneous borrowing of French and Latin words led to a highly distinctive feature of Modern English vocabulary – sets of three items all expressing the same fundamental notion but in differing meaning or style.

## COMPOUNDING

Compounding involves the combination of two or more free morphemes (free morphemes are those that can occur on their own as separate words). For example, *gentleman*, *outpatient*, *baby-sit*, *stress-free*, *skin-deep*, *over-react*, *underachieve*, *sleepwalk*. Sometimes compounding happens when two nouns are taken from Latin or Greek: *pathology*, *optometry*, *psychology* etc. Such words appear in more learned and scientific texts.

## AFFIXATION

Affixation resembles compounding, but it involves bound morphemes (bound morphemes are those that cannot occur on their own as separate words), such as prefixes and suffixes. For example, morphemes like '-y', '-ment', '-ed', 'un-'. Very often the effect of affixation is to change the part-of-speech category of the word – to form a noun from adjective or verb, to form a verb from a noun or adjective. For example, '**be**-friend' or '**en**-danger' are nouns '*friend*' and '*danger*' that are changed to verbs by adding the prefixes '**be**-' and '**en**-'. Some affixes are highly productive and achieve popularity. For example, all the '-ise' words: *prioritise*, *personalise*, *diarise* etc.



## INITIALISM

Initialism is when words are created from the initial letters of a sequence of words (or, in some cases, of parts of words). There are two types: **acronyms** are formed by initialism in a way that picks initials that spell out a pronounceable word (for example, *NATO* – *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). An **abbreviation** is pronounced simply by uttering all the letters (for example, *CIO* – *Chief Information Officer*).*

## SEMANTICS

- Words have varying degrees of formality and status within the language. Words that belong to the same semantic field have different meanings associated to each of them because some words are newer or more 'posh' than the other. For example, the following words all have similar meanings, but differ in association because they belong to separate styles of English:
  - *Domicile* (official/technical)
  - *Residence* (formal)
  - *Abode* (archaic/poetic)
  - *Home* (general)
  - *Digs* (colloquial)
  - *Gaff* (slang)
- Words also have different shades of meaning. While words have a denotative meaning, some words have connotative meaning. Connotation refers to the socially acquired meaning of a word. It offers an insight into social attitudes of the time. For example, the words *black*, *white* and *coloured* have various connotations, especially when talk about 'race'.
- Certain words have a tendency to occur together. These words are called collocations. For example, a word like *clear* can be found with a number of nouns: ***clear sky***, ***clear conscience***, ***clear idea***, ***clear road***. In each of these examples, the word *clear* has a slightly different meaning because of the word that it accompanies.

- Figurative or Metaphorical Language is an important part of formal texts because it allows a speaker or writer to combine everyday language with devices that create special semantic effects. Some of these are:
  - Metaphor is used to compare or describe one thing in terms of another, creating an implicit comparison. It usually involves substituting one thing with the other. For example, 'The old man was a **cunning fox**'; The child was a **mischievous young monkey**.
  - Simile is an explicit comparison between two things by using a marker such as the prepositions *like* or *as*. For example, 'The teacher did not miss anything; she had **eyes like a hawk**'; His brain was **as sharp as a tack**'.
  - Personification is the term used when an object or idea is given human qualities. For example, 'The **winter settles** down.'
  - Oxymoron uses two apparently self-contradictory statement which contains some kind of deeper meaning below the surface. For example, '*delicious poison*'; '*Robin Hood was an honest thief*.'

## SYNTAX

### PHRASE

Phrase is a single word or group of words that act together as a unit but that do not contain a finite verb (a verb that is marked for tense, number and person). It functions in a sentence like a single part of speech. It cannot stand as a sentence on its own because its message is not complete.

Noun Phrase	<b><i>A long walk through the bush</i></b> is good exercise.
Adjectival Phrase	I like the flowers <b><i>in your garden</i></b> .
Phrasal Verbs	The manager <b><i>brought up</i></b> the same arguments.
Adverbial Phrase	The students worked hard <b><i>to pass their examination</i></b> .
Prepositional Phrase	The driver <b><i>of the bright-red sports car</i></b> .