

College of Arts and Law

School of English, Drama, American and Canadian Studies

Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics

09-23625

Development, Discourse, Diversity

Assessment 1: 3000 Words

Deadline: Wednesday 14th January 2015

The deadline for submission of this assignment is 12:30 pm on **Wednesday 14th January 2015**

Development, Discourse, Diversity Summative Assessment 2014-15

This assignment has several purposes. The most obvious one is to test your knowledge and understanding of the material covered during the module. However, to give you the opportunity to demonstrate different kinds of knowledge, understanding and skills, the assignment is in three parts.

Parts A and B are conventional academic essays: you need to be familiar with the conventions of academic writing, so in these parts of the assignment you should write an academic essay of the kind typically expected at university. Part C is to be written as though for a new Glossary of Terms for people studying and/or teaching about English Language.

The word limit for this assignment is 3000 words, and you will receive a single mark for the whole assignment. You are advised to write approximately 1000 words for each Part. You can decide how much space to give to each term in Part C: your entries don't all need to be of exactly the same length.

Part A

Texts 1 and 2 (see p. 3-4) are both related to the topic of attitudes to accents. Compare and contrast these texts with reference to genre and register, drawing particular attention to the differences between spoken and written language that these texts exemplify.

Part B

The quotation below comes from research carried out in the early part of the last decade which suggests that, to some extent, British people are becoming more tolerant of linguistic variety, and that ideas about linguistic prestige may be changing.

A simple comparison of the rank orderings for social attractiveness and prestige shows that several accents attract rather similar evaluations in both dimensions. *A standard accent of English* and *An accent similar to my own* are both strongly favoured in both dimensions. *Birmingham English*, *Black Country English* (referring to the urban English Midlands, which includes Birmingham) and *Asian-accented English* are the three least prestigious varieties while also being three of the four least socially attractive varieties. On the other hand (still according to rank orderings), *Southern Irish English*, *Newcastle English* and *Afro-Caribbean English* are rated far higher on their relative scales for attractiveness than for prestige. Conversely, *London English*, *North American-accented English*, *South African-accented English* and *German-accented English* are all ranked higher for prestige than for attractiveness. In most of these cases, we presume that nationally identified language varieties are attracting positive prestige which need not be matched by the perception that they are attractive (Coupland and Bishop 2007: 80).

Discuss the differing ideas about linguistic prestige that are represented in Texts 1, 2 and 3, with reference to your own wider reading and reflections in your Language Awareness Journal.

Part C

This part of the assignment requires you to write in a slightly different genre, so that you can demonstrate your ability to make links between the concepts and terms used in descriptive linguistics and authentic examples of language in use. So, for Part C of the assignment, your task involves imagining that you are contributing to a new Glossary of Terms for people studying and/or teaching about English Language. This book must be original, and so cannot plagiarise from existing texts, but the entries will necessarily draw on sources that are already published. Its USP ('unique selling point') is that all the entries are illustrated with authentic examples contributed by the authors of each entry. You should use a formal style, but it should also be accessible to a general reader.

Take THREE technical linguistic terms, ONE from each of the lists below. (These terms may well coincide with the kind of terms you have collected in your Language Awareness Journal). Consult relevant source material (textbooks, specialist dictionaries of terms, notes from lectures and seminars etc.) and explain in your own words what the term means, giving as much detail and exemplification as you feel is necessary to demonstrate your understanding. Highlight and comment on any differences you find in the different explanations given. Then, drawing on: material provided during the module; Texts 1, 2 and 3, if appropriate; and observational examples from your Language Awareness Journal, explain how an understanding of the concept denoted by the term either helps to explain commonsense beliefs or everyday linguistic behaviour, or how it extends or challenges these.

LIST 1	LIST 2	LIST 3
'protolanguage' as a term used to refer to children's first utterances	'tenor' as part of register studies	Standard English
Child directed speech	'complicating action' in oral narratives	Inner Circle varieties of English

Guidance

In each part of the assignment, remember to pay attention to all the features of academic writing for assessment covered in the module, including punctuation conventions, citation and referencing practices, layout and presentation.

Present your references in a single list at the end of the whole assignment, in accordance with the Style Guide.

Use the feedback from your formative assignment to remind you of common errors which you can avoid making this time.

You should include your ID number on your work, but not your name. Number your pages.

You should submit the assignment both electronically, using Turnitin, and in hard copy. Think carefully about how to present your work: the hard copy will pass through several hands (submitted to, and sorted by, administrative staff; marked by one tutor, moderated by another).

TEXTS

1 A Midlands primary school has been accused of snobbery after banning pupils from
 2 talking or writing in their "damaging" Black Country dialect. Staff have drawn up a list
 3 of ten offending phrases * after introducing the "zero tolerance" policy against the
 4 use of local words. The controversial ruling was announced in a letter to parents
 5 claiming the harsh crackdown would "get children out of the habit" of speaking the
 6 way their parents do. But parents and local residents have criticised the move by
 7 Colley Lane Primary School, in Halesowen, West Mids, as "snobbish". The ban
 8 comes two months after a study was published claiming that accents from the
 9 Birmingham area make people seem less intelligent and untrustworthy. Outlawed
 10 phrases now include "I cor do that" instead of "I can't do that" and "It wor me" instead
 11 of "it wasn't me." The letter, which was posted to parents last Thursday, said:
 12 "Recently we asked each class teacher to write a list of the top ten most damaging
 13 phrases used by children in the classroom. "We are introducing a 'zero tolerance' in
 14 the classroom to get children out of the habit of using the phrases on the list. "We
 15 want the children in our school to have the best start possible: Understanding when it
 16 is and is not acceptable to use slang and colloquial language." We value the local
 17 dialect but are encouraging children to learn the skill of turning it on and off in
 18 different situations." Parent reacted angrily, claiming that the Black Country ban was
 19 "insulting." Alana Willetts, 30, an engineer whose nine-year-old son George attends
 20 the school, said: "I do not agree with this zero tolerance policy and am not the only
 21 one. "The teachers should be teaching the children about the Black Country and our
 22 dialect. "There are a lot of children who have no idea about local history. It's a very
 23 multicultural school, there are quite a few kids who don't speak English as a first
 24 language and know nothing of our history, they should be concentrating on that.
 25 "Some of my friends have gone on to be doctors and lawyers, I'm an engineer it
 26 doesn't affect you as a person. "I got a double A in my English GCSE and I have a
 27 Black Country accent. "I think it is patronising and insulting to say that people with a
 28 Black Country accent are disadvantaged. "All the parents are outraged, English is a
 29 living language, we can't all talk the same, we don't all speak in ye olde English and
 30 new words are being added to the dictionary every day." The Black Country includes
 31 the three Metropolitan Boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall and the southern
 32 parts of the city of Wolverhampton, but does not include Birmingham. Its most
 33 famous sons include Lenny Henry, who has recently been given the Freedom of his
 34 hometown of Dudley, and Noddy Holder. But Zheyen Kareem, 31, who has a seven-
 35 year-old boy at the school and moved to the UK eight years ago, supported the
 36 language ban. She said: "English is my second language so for me, as a parent, it is
 37 good if my child speaks English in the house and not slang picked up at school. "I
 38 believe it is good for their education." Yesterday the school, which caters for 592
 39 pupils aged 4-11, defended outlawing local dialect saying Black Country words and
 40 phrases contributed to a "decline in standards." Headteacher John White said: "If
 41 they can't say it, it is likely they can't read it, and even less likely they can write it.
 42 "We value the dialect but we want to encourage children to learn when to use and
 43 when not, like for a job interview. It is, of course, fine to use in other situations and
 44 we would celebrate that." The school was rated as either Good or Outstanding in a
 45 Ofsted inspection report in 2010.

- 1 * 1. "They was" instead of "they were."
- 2 2. "I cor do that" instead of "I can't do that."
- 3 3. "Ya" instead of "you."
- 4 4. "Gonna" instead of "going to."
- 5 5. "Woz" instead of "was."
- 6 6. "I day" instead of "I didn't."
- 7 7. "I ain't" instead of "I haven't."
- 8 8. "Somefink" instead of "something."
- 9 9. "It wor me" instead of "it wasn't me."
- 10 10. "Ay?" instead of "pardon?"

News piece in the *Daily Telegraph*, 14th November 2013. "Midlands primary school bans pupils from using Black Country dialect". Available at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10449085/Midlands-primary-school-bans-pupils-from-using-Black-Country-dialect.html>.

Text 2:

1 The division was the Second World War, without a doubt. Cause pre, pre the Second
 2 World War there wasn't that pressure [to change your accent]. But I think once,
 3 whether it was a political act or not, to knock down the back to backs and relocate
 4 people [.] I mean I know when I mean I was as I say I was bought up a council boy
 5 and I lived on a council estate and we were lucky enough to qualify for grammar
 6 school, but even my Dad, who you know there was nobody more passionate than my
 7 Dad about the Black Country as soon as e knew we went to grammar school e would
 8 say to us 'when yo goo to grammar school yo got to drop your dohs and your cors
 9 because yo cor spake like that at grammar school and you did experience that for a
 10 time until you thought well why am I doing this you know I am a council boy and I
 11 speak like this and I'm proud of it and then you just reverted back and they just took
 12 it or left it as far as we were concerned.

Taken from BBC Voices Black Country interview with Dudley residents (context is a
 discussion of prejudice against regional dialect in the classroom). Available at

<http://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects/BBC-Voices/021M-C1190X0005XX-0201V0>

Text 3:

1 Once, so long ago that it could have been in another life, I was required to take a
 2 voice test by the BBC. I had been previously recorded reading the Autocue and,
 3 confounded perhaps by barely submerged cadences from the East End, someone
 4 found cause to worry. So off I went to the chief voice trainer – a man whose honey-
 5 coated, phonetically immaculate delivery made him a legend inside the corporation
 6 and beyond. He listened as I read a script that he had rattled off that morning on the
 7 Today programme. I just about passed muster. "Your voice is not my voice," he said
 8 kindly. "But I think you'll do."

9 Do accents still matter? Last week Dr Alexander Baratta from the University of
 10 Manchester spoke of "accentism", where people are discriminated against because
 11 of how they speak, and likened it to racism. In a study, he asked people why they
 12 changed their accents and how it made them feel. A third of those questioned said
 13 they were "ashamed" about flattening out their accents. But what was the
 14 alternative? We all want to get ahead; for the most part, the best way to do that is to
 15 "fit in". Still, there is a price, the professor says. Facing the world with a voice that is
 16 not your own can "undermine your sense of being".

17 And perhaps that's right. But it must depend on the level of confidence and self-worth
 18 that existed at the outset. Think of all the migrants from years past who tinkered with
 19 their names to better enable them to make a success of life in Britain or America.
 20 They altered something pretty fundamental and survived with psyche intact. I've
 21 written of the friend who christened his children with traditional Asian names, then
 22 changed them to completely different British names "to make it easier for them". We
 23 are all chameleons when necessary.

24 Of course accents should not matter. No one should feel compelled to change the
 25 way they interact. If they do so because it works to their advantage, that's different.
 26 Then it's about choice, not obligation or coercion.

27 In multiracial, multilingual, multicultural Britain, the answer – as ever – is reasonable
 28 accommodation. The responsibility of the listener is to be tolerant, celebratory
 29 perhaps, and to adapt when necessary. The requirement on the speaker is to make
 30 themselves understood, whatever lilt they choose.

Comment piece by Hugh Muir in *The Guardian*, 14th July 2014. Available at

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jul/14/do-accent-matter-modern-britain>