



Beckfoot School Sixth Form

A Level English Language Summer Work



My Language Biography

We all have a different experience of language. The questions below are to get you thinking about language and the kinds of things we will study. Respond to each in as much detail as you can. Different people will produce different amounts for each question, and that's fine.

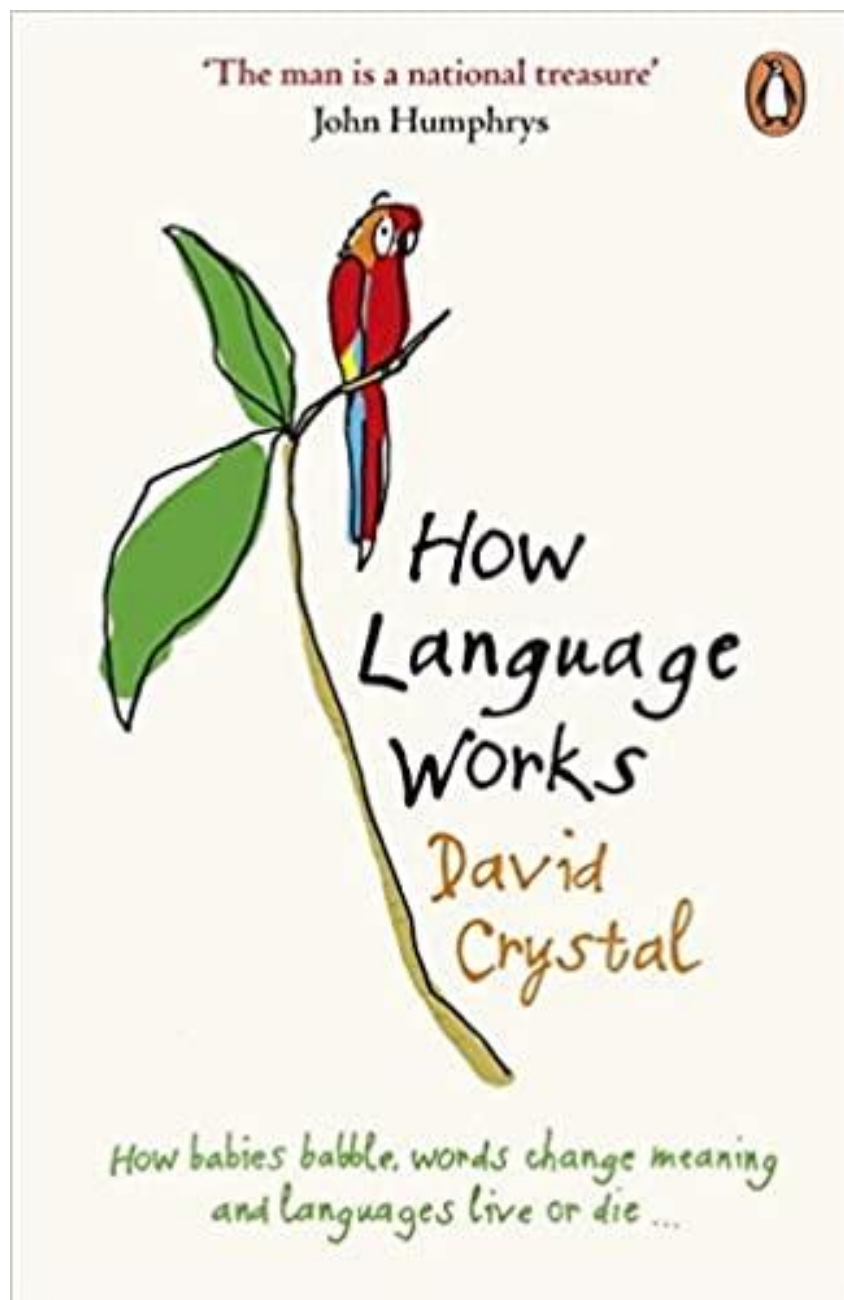
- 1) What were your first words? Ask a parent or carer if you don't know. Can they remember?
- 2) What important conversations and discussions do you remember? How much of them can you remember? Words? Sentences? Think as far back into the past as possible!
- 3) Do you recall listening to any important/inspiring speeches? When/where were you? What do you remember about them?
- 4) What books (or other written texts) have had an effect on you as you have grown up? What effect have they had and why do you think this is?
- 5) Do you speak a regional variety of English? What are the distinctive features of your accent (the way you pronounce things) and dialect (the words you use)? Have you ever had these pointed out to you? When and by whom?
- 6) Do you speak any other languages as well as English? Which do you consider your first language? Are there any words you know from other languages that you struggle to translate into English?
- 7) Why did you choose to study A Level English Language?

We will discuss our different experiences of language early in the course. We look forward to hearing your thoughts!

Pre-Reading

The following pages are an extract from *How Language Works* by David Crystal. The whole book is an excellent introduction to the study of language. You could do a lot worse than read the whole book before September, but it is an expectation you read these pages carefully before the course starts.

Reading passively is not enough. Read actively, take notes and learn the key ideas. In the first week of the course, we'll quiz you to check your knowledge. This is stuff you absolutely need to know as a student of language!



Preface

I know an artist who has spent his whole life painting a still-life, in innumerable versions, in order to get it right. I know another who continually repaints a scene, in various lights and circumstances, in order to obtain fresh insights into it. There is no end to the process. It is always the next work which will achieve the longed-for resolution.

The study of language is no different. I have lost count of the number of times I have tried to introduce this subject to one readership or another. There are, I imagine, only so many ways of telling the language story, but one goes on looking for new angles, new insights. The present book has been an interesting exercise in taking familiar ideas and rethinking them with a focus on the 'how' rather than on the 'what', 'why', 'where', or 'when'. I have quite consciously incorporated material from my earlier expositions displaying those other emphases, but I hope I have managed to present it here in a fresh and interesting way.

It is not necessary to read the book 'from left to right'. Each chapter is designed as a self-contained unit, and there are many cross-references to associated chapters. This is the distinctive feature of any 'how' approach. The section in a car manual which tells you about its tyres can be read independently of the one which tells you about its lights.

This is a book about how language works, not about how the study of language works. That would be called 'How linguistics works' – or perhaps better, 'How linguists work'. I am a linguist, so you will see from

these pages how I work, how I think about language. But there is no attempt in these pages to represent the full range of opinions – at times often very divergent – about the way language can or should be studied. This is above all a personal account. Nor is there much on the methodology of linguistic enquiry: while I talk a lot about child language, for example, I do not say anything about the range of methods that linguists use when they are investigating child language. I have therefore included a short bibliography of further reading for those who reach §73 and wish to take such things further.

David Crystal
Holyhead, April 2005

How what works?

'Language', the title of this book says. But what is meant by 'language'?
Consider the following expressions:

body language
spoken language
written language
sign language
computer language
the French language
bad language
animal language
the language of birds
the language of cinema
the language of music
the language of love

Plainly the word is being used in many ways – some technical, some figurative – and the senses go in various directions. If a reviewer were to remark, after an impressive orchestral concert, 'The conductor and the musicians were all speaking the same language', we would interpret this to be a comment about their playing, not their chatting. And the same point applies to other linguistic terms, when used in special settings. I have seen books called *The Grammar of Cooking* and *The Syntax of Sex*. The first was a collection of recipes – as was the second.

How Language Works is not about music, or cookery, or sex. But it is about how we *talk* about music, cookery, and sex – or, indeed, about anything at all. And it is also about how we write about these things, and send electronic messages about them, and on occasion use manual signs to communicate them. The operative word is ‘how’. It is commonplace to see a remarkable special effect on a television screen and react by exclaiming ‘How did they do that?’ It is not quite so usual to exclaim when we observe someone speaking, listening, reading, writing, or signing. And yet if anything is worthy of exclamation, it is the human ability to speak, listen, read, write, and sign.

An alien visitor to Earth might well wonder what was going on. It would see humans approach each other, use their mouths to exchange a series of noises, and – apparently as a result of making these noises – cooperate in some activity. It would see human eyes look at a set of marks inscribed on a surface, and the eye-owners then behaving in the same way – going out of one door rather than another in a theatre, for instance. Rather less often, it would see some humans using their hands and faces to achieve the same results that others obtain through the use of their mouths. In each case it might think: ‘How did they do that?’ And in each case the answer would be the same: ‘through the use of language’.

But our alien would also observe other kinds of behaviour. It would see humans smiling and frowning at each other, or waving and gesturing, or stroking and kissing. It would notice that the effect of carrying out these actions was similar in some respects to that produced by the use of spoken noises, written marks, and manual signs. It might well reflect: can these actions therefore be called ‘language’ too?

Our alien would also see apparently similar behaviour among other species. It would see a bee find a source of nectar, return to a hive, and perform a series of dance-like body movements. Other bees would then move off in the direction of the nectar. Animals of all kinds would seem to be sending information to each other in analogous ways. Is this the same sort of behaviour as the humans are displaying, our alien observer might think? Do animals also have language?

These questions involve more than hypothetical extraterrestrials.

Terrestrial observers also need to be able to answer them, as a preliminary stage in the study of language. If we pick up a manual called *How Cars Work*, we do not expect to find in it chapters on bicycles and lawn-mowers. Nor, in *How Language Works*, will there be much space devoted to the use of facial expressions and body movements or to the way animals communicate. Why not?

Modes of communication

Because not all of these forms of communication are *language*, in the sense of this book. *Communication* is a much broader concept, involving the transmission and reception of any kind of information between any kind of life. It is a huge domain of enquiry, dealing with patterned human and animal communication in all its modes. Those who study behaviour usually call this domain *semiotics*. *Linguistics*, the science of language, is just one branch of semiotics.

There are five modes of human communication, because there are only five human senses which can act as channels of information: sound, sight, touch, smell, and taste. Of course, if you believe in telepathy, you would need to recognize a 'sixth sense' available for communication; and perhaps there are life forms which interact using still other modes, such as the non-visible areas of the electromagnetic spectrum. But the five traditional human sensory modes are all we need to put the subject of this book into a more general perspective.

The information we send and receive using these modes is usually called the *meaning* of our communication. But the five modes are not equally relevant for the transmission and reception of meaning. In fact, two of them play hardly any role at all in human beings – the *olfactory* (smell) and *gustatory* (taste) modes. We do not routinely emit smells in order to communicate with others (the controlled flatulent behaviour of some small boys notwithstanding), and there is a very limited amount of information about the outside world which we can receive through the mediums of smell and taste. By contrast, the use of sound – the *auditory-vocal* mode – is fundamental to the notion of language, and the properties

of this mode will form the major part of this book (§4). Speech is the primary manifestation of language, in all cultures.

The *tactile* and *visual* modes fall somewhere between these two extremes. They are often technically described as being channels of *non-verbal communication* because the way in which we use facial expressions, gestures, and touch behaviour seems to contrast with the words and sentences we describe as *verbal* language. But ordinary people do not talk about nonverbal communication. Instead, they simply refer to *body language*.

Is this use of 'language' the same as the one we use when we talk about speech, writing, and signing, or about English, French, and Chinese? Should large sections of this book be devoted to how facial expressions and manual gestures work? The answer is no, and to understand why we need to briefly consider the differences between what is involved in nonverbal tactile and visual communication, on the one hand, and in language, on the other. We shall see that these differences also enable us to disregard animal communication, as well as the other figurative applications of the term. We shall be left with a trinity of mediums – speech, writing, and sign – which manifest our concept of 'language'.

How to treat body language

When people talk about body language (§1), they are referring to those features of bodily behaviour which are under some degree of conscious control, and which they can therefore use to express different sorts of meaning. The meanings involved are all fairly 'primitive' expressions of attitude or social relationship, such as affection, aggression, sexual attraction, greeting, congratulation, gratitude, surprise, and the signalling of attention. Both tactile and visual modes of communication are employed.

The tactile mode

The tactile mode of nonverbal communication operates when parts of the body make planned physical contact with other people. A very wide range of meaningful activities is expressed by such contact, as this small selection of terms suggests:

dig, embrace, hold, jog, kick, kiss, nudge, nuzzle,
pat, pinch, punch, shake, slap, spank, tickle

They operate within a complex system of social constraints. Some of the acts tend to be found only in private – notably, sexual touching. Some are specialized in function: examples include the tactile activities which we permit from doctors, dentists, hairdressers, or tailors. And some are restricted to certain ceremonies or occasions – a handshake which signals

a formal agreement, for example, or a laying on of hands in the context of religion or healing.

The communicative value of tactile activities is usually fairly clear within a culture, but there are many differences across cultures. Some societies are much more tolerant of touching than others, so much so that a distinction has been proposed between *contact* and *non-contact* societies – those that favour touching (such as Arabs and Latin Americans), and those that avoid it (such as North Europeans and Indians). In some cultures, conversationalists touch each other two or three times a minute; in others, no touching takes place at all.

Related to our use of body contact is the way we use body distance and orientation to communicate meaning. There are norms of proximity within a culture (*distance zones*) which can inform us about the social relationship between the participants. Latin Americans, for example, prefer to stand much closer to each other during a conversation than do North Europeans. In a traditional caste system, such as in India, the acceptable distance zones between the members of different castes can vary greatly – from less than 2 metres to over 20.

The visual mode

We use the visual mode to communicate nonverbally in several ways. We can gesture, vary our facial expressions, make eye contact, and alter our body posture. Each of these behaviours performs a variety of functions. Movements of the face and body give clues to our personality and emotional state. The face, in particular, signals a wide range of emotions, such as fear, happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, interest, and disgust. Many of the expressions vary in meaning across cultures, and we have to learn how to interpret the sometimes very subtle movements in the faces of people whose racial characteristics differ from our own.

In addition, the face and body send signals about the way a social interaction is proceeding. We use *eye contact* to show who is the focus of our communication, in a group, or to prompt a person to speak next. We use *facial expressions* to give feedback to others about how we are receiv-

ing their message, expressing such meanings as puzzlement or disbelief. We use our *body posture* to convey our attitude towards an interaction – for instance, whether we are interested or bored. Several kinds of social context are associated with specific facial or body behaviours, such as waving upon meeting or taking leave. Ritual or official occasions are often associated with gesture and posture – as with kneeling, standing, bowing, and blessing.

Some visual effects are widely used in the cultures of the world. An example is the *eyebrow flash*, used unconsciously when people approach each other and wish to show that they are ready to make social contact. Each person performs a single upward movement of the eyebrows, keeping them raised for about a sixth of a second. The effect is so automatic that we are hardly ever conscious of it. But we become uneasy if we do not receive an eyebrow flash when we expect one (from someone we know); and to receive an eyebrow flash from someone we do not know can be uncomfortable, embarrassing, or even threatening.

Most gestures and facial expressions, however, differ across cultures. Sometimes the differences are very noticeable, especially when we visit a society which uses far more gestures and facial expressions than we are used to (e.g. Italian, compared with British) or far fewer (e.g. Japanese, compared with British). We even coin phrases to express our sense of these differences, as when an English person describes Italians as ‘talking with their arms’ or Westerners refer to people from oriental countries as ‘inscrutable’.

Even when a visual effect seems to be shared between societies, we have to be careful, for it can convey very different meanings. A thumbs-up sign has a positive ‘all is well’ or ‘I am winning’ meaning in Western Europe, the USA, and other cultures influenced by its use as a symbol of combat survival in Roman times. But in the Arab world, as well as in parts of West Africa and Asia, it is a symbol of insult, equivalent to giving someone ‘the finger’ (‘up yours!’) in the West. As a consequence, it was never entirely clear, during the aftermath of the Iraq War of 2003, when Iraqis were seen on television giving a thumbs-up to American troops, whether this was the traditional gesture being used as an insult or whether

it was the Western version being adopted as a sign of cooperation and a symbol of freedom.

Conversely, a particular meaning can be conveyed by a variety of different visual signals. To express humility or deference, for example, Europeans tend to extend or lower their arms, and they sometimes bow their heads. But in other cultures we find more profound bowing, using the whole of the upper half of the body, as well as crouching, crawling, and prostration. We also see other kinds of hand or arm movement, such as the placing of the palms together in an upward orientation (as in the Indian subcontinent).

Properties of language

Body language is evidently an important means of human communication, and when it comes to basic emotions and social relationships, it is a familiar experience that a gesture, facial expression, or piece of bodily contact can 'speak louder' than words. However, the potential of body language to express meaning is very limited, compared to that which is made available through speaking, writing, or signing. Language, as we shall discuss it in this book, displays certain properties which enable us to express far more than any piece of nonverbal communication could ever do. We can express our surprise or anger using our bodies; but if we want to explain why we are surprised or angry, we need to use language.

Probably the most remarkable property of language is the way it enables us to talk about virtually anything we want. And if it lets us down, by not immediately providing the required words and sentences, we change it so that it will do so. This is what is meant when we say that human language is *productive*. Productivity is the capacity to express and understand a potentially infinite number of utterances, made by combining sentence elements in new ways and introducing fresh combinations of words. Most of the sentences we read in a book are original, in the sense that no one has used those particular combinations of words and constructions before. Nor is there any limit to the length of a sentence: any sentence can be made longer by using *and* (or some similar word) to

attach another piece of utterance. Similarly, there is no limit to the number of words in a language; new words are being invented every day.

By contrast, there is no productivity in tactile or visual body language. The number of tactile or visual body signals in everyday behaviour is very small – a matter of a few hundred only (compared to the million or more words in a language such as English) – and they do not increase very easily. We can readily invent a new word – I can do so now, and talk about ‘bodylinguistic’ behaviour – but it strains the imagination to think what we could do if we were asked to invent a new facial expression or bodily gesture. Nor do these nonverbal features combine to produce a wide range of varying sequences, as we routinely encounter with sentences. Only in the world of artistic expression, such as in the various forms of Indian dance, do we find a significant expansion of the body-language repertoire, in the codified hand signs known as *mudras*.

Another important difference between language and body language lies in the far greater structural architecture of speech, writing, or sign. Language makes use of two fundamental levels of structural organization. At one level, we find the use of sounds or letters – *t, s, e*, and so on – which have no intrinsic meaning. We cannot sensibly ask ‘What does “s” mean?’ At another level, we find these sounds or letters combining in different ways to form elements that do convey meaning – the words, phrases, and sentences. We can sensibly ask ‘What does “sit” mean?’

This property is called *duality of structure*, or *double articulation*, and it is not present in body language. The movements which form the signals of body language always convey some kind of meaning. If I raise my left eyebrow significantly, or smile, or give a thumbs-up sign, the action automatically sends a meaning, and within a culture this meaning remains the same whenever the same action is used. We cannot build up a wide range of body-language ‘sentences’ which mean something different from the meaning of the elements they contain. Body language cannot be analysed into two levels of structure.

For the same reasons, we cannot call ‘animal communication’ language. The facial expressions, gestures, and tactile behaviours of the animal kingdom lack productivity and duality of structure in the same

way that human body language does. Even the most sophisticated kinds of behaviour, such as bee-dancing or birdsong, are highly limited in what they can do, compared with language. Bees can 'talk' about nectar but not about much else.

There are several other important differences between animal communication and language. In particular, language enables us to talk about events remote in space or time from the situation of the speaker: I can talk about what happened in the near or remote past and speculate about the near or remote future. This property of language – often called *displacement* – is something which goes well beyond the capabilities of animal signals, which reflect stimuli (such as the presence of danger or the direction of a food source) encountered in the animal's immediate environment.

Despite some superficial similarities, so-called 'body language' and 'animal language' are very different from what happens in language, in the sense of this book. I find it clearer to avoid the use of the term *language* altogether, in fact, and to describe these phenomena in more general terms – as *body communication* and *animal communication*. There is nothing wrong with the 'language' metaphor, of course, as long as we realize that that is what it is – no more than a vague approximation to the structurally complex and multifunctional behaviour we find whenever we speak, write, or sign.

3

How we use the 'edges' of language

The contrast between what counts as language and what does not is usually clear enough, once we look for evidence of productivity and duality of structure in communicative behaviour (§2). But the boundary is fuzzy at times. In particular, some non-linguistic forms of behaviour, both vocal and visual, can be adapted so that they take on some of the functions of language. There are also some features of language which are decidedly less complex than others, and where it is unclear whether they should count as part of language or not.

Making vocal noises

The vocal organs (§4) can be used to make a wide range of noises that are definitely not linguistic. They express only a biological state, and communicate no cultural meaning. Examples are coughing, sneezing, and snoring, as well as the various voice qualities which signal a physical condition, such as hoarseness. It makes no sense to talk about 'snoring in English', nor do we expect a foreign language course to teach us how to cough. But a phenomenon such as whistling does something more than just express a basic biological or psychological state.

When we blow air through tensed and rounded lips, we form a primitive musical instrument, and a note is the result. We can alter the pitch level by moving the tongue and cheeks to change the shape of the

inside of the mouth. We can alter its loudness by blowing harder. And we can alter its quality (making it soft or shrill) by altering the tension of the mouth muscles or putting our fingers against the lips to make the sound sharper. It does not come naturally. Children have to learn to whistle. And the behaviour is subject to social factors: usually it is boys and men who whistle.

People most often use whistling to carry musical melodies, and some professional whistlers have developed this musical skill into an art form. Some people are able to mimic birdsong or other animal noises. But these imitative abilities have no more linguistic significance than the phenomena they imitate. We move in the direction of language only when individual whistles are used conventionally in a culture to express a specific and shared meaning. Examples include the 'wolf-whistle', the whistle which calls sharply for attention, the whistle of amazement, and the whistle of empathy ('gosh!'), which is often more a breathy exhalation than an actual whistle.

We see the communicative potential of whistling at its most developed in the case of the so-called *whistle languages*, found in some Central and South American tribes, as well as in the occasional European community, such as in the Pyrenees, Turkey, and the Canary Islands. Conversations have been observed between people standing at a considerable distance from each other, especially in mountainous areas, carried on entirely in whistles. The whistled conversations deal with quite sophisticated and precise matters, such as arranging a meeting or selling some goods.

Whistled speech closely corresponds to the tonal and rhythmical patterns of spoken language, and is especially complex when the whistlers speak a language in which pitch levels (tones) are important, such as some languages of Central America. With very few exceptions, each 'syllable' of whistle corresponds to a syllable of speech. Ambiguity is uncommon, because the topic of the conversation is usually something evident in the situation of the speakers. However, it is important for both speakers to use the same musical key, otherwise confusion may arise.

Whistled dialogues tend to contain a small number of exchanges,

and the utterances are short. They are most commonly heard when people are at a distance from each other (e.g. when working the land), but they can also be found in a variety of informal settings. Although women are able to understand whistled speech, it is normally used only by and between men.

The whistling is a substitute for speech. The whistlers stop whistling when they are within normal speaking range of each other, and talk in the normal way. For this reason, whistled speech has been called a speech replacement, or *surrogate*. Because it is used only in certain circumstances, and can convey only a limited range of meanings, and is not used equally by all members of the community, it does not really correspond to the complexity and functional breadth of a spoken language. But it is certainly a step in that direction.

Being paralinguistic

There are a number of vocal noises which can be ‘superimposed’ on the stream of speech. It is possible, for example, to speak while sobbing, crying, laughing, or giggling, or we can introduce a tremulous ‘catch’ in our voice. The auditory effects are usually immediate and dramatic – though the meaning conveyed is sometimes unclear, and always subject to cultural variation. A giggle can convey humour, innuendo, sexual interest, and several other nuances. In Britain it is most commonly used in joking; in Japan it is more often a sign of embarrassment.

We can also change our tone of voice by altering the quality of the sound we produce in the vocal tract (§5). Normally, the sound produced by our vocal folds yields a vibrant voicing which we hear in every vowel and in most of the consonants. But it is possible to speak without producing any voicing at all. The phenomenon is called *whispering* – and whisper conveys meaning, usually a ‘conspiratorial’ effect of some kind. A related effect is *breathy* voice, where extra breath is heard on top of what we are saying. We produce breathy voice after exercise, when we are ‘out of breath’; but it is also possible to introduce a breathy voice when we are at rest, and it then conveys a meaning. I once heard two neighbours talking

about a woman who had returned from a holiday, saying that she was 'brown all over'. The words 'all over' were uttered in a breathy tone. It seems she really was.

Several other tones of voice can be consciously made by altering the way in which we make sounds resonate in our mouths and nose. We can *round* our lips so that everything we say comes out in a tone which we associate with baby-talk or talking to animals ('Who's a lovely little baba/budgie, then?'), though we also use the effect when addressing those with whom we are most intimate. We can add a *nasal* tone of voice if we want to add a mildly 'camp' effect to what we are saying – something which the British comedian Kenneth Williams used routinely. And we can make our vocal folds move very slowly, to produce an effect often called *creaky voice* or *vocal fry*. This was something horror-movie star Vincent Price used to do when he wanted to sound especially menacing, but it is also associated with such attitudes as disparagement and doubt.

These effects all add an emotional colouring to the voice, and their sound quality and use are conditioned by the language and culture of the speaker. When we speak French we have to learn to round our lips to express attitudes in different ways from the way we round them when we speak English. When we learn Portuguese we find that nasal tones of voice are used differently. And when foreigners learn English, they have to do different things too: Finns learning English have to stop 'creaking' their voice so much, for otherwise they give the impression of being perpetually disparaging. These effects all seem to be linguistic in character.

On the other hand, they are plainly not like vowels and consonants, or words and phrases, in the way they are formed and used. They do not show the productivity and duality of structure (§2) which we associate with the rest of language. In many ways they are more like the facial expressions and body gestures of visual communication. This suggests they are *not* really linguistic in character.

We need a way of talking about vocal effects which are on the boundary between the linguistic and the non-linguistic, showing some but not all of the properties of language, and the term *paralanguage* has been devised to fill the bill. The *para-* prefix is from Greek, expressing the

notion of 'alongside' or 'above and beyond'. Effects like giggle and whisper are said to be paralinguistic in character, and some scholars include facial expressions and gestures under this heading as well.

Using manual signals

Many gestural systems have emerged to facilitate communication in particular situations. They are often referred to as *sign languages*, but few have developed any degree of structural complexity or communicative range, and it is therefore important to distinguish them from sign language proper – the natural signing behaviour which has evolved for use among deaf people (§25). Nonetheless, they are a definite advance on the 'basic' kinds of body language that are seen in everyday interaction (§2).

Several professions use sets of conventional signals. Sports players and officials can use hand and arm gestures to show the state of play, or an intention to act in a certain way. Groups of performers (such as acrobats or musicians) use them to coordinate their activities. In casinos, officials use them to report on the way a game is going, or to indicate problems that might affect the participants. In theatres and cinemas, ushers use them to show the number and location of seats. In sales rooms, auctioneers use them to convey the type and amount of selling and buying.

People controlling cranes, hoists, and other equipment can signal the direction and extent of movement. In aviation marshalling, ground staff can send visual information about the position of an aircraft, the state of its engines, and its desired position. Firemen can send directions about the supply of water, water pressures, and the use of equipment. Divers can communicate depth, direction, and time, and the nature of any difficulties they have encountered. Truck drivers can exchange courtesy signals, give information about the state of the road, or show they are in trouble. Environmental noise may make verbal communication impossible (e.g. in cotton mills), so that workers start signing to each other.

Race-course bookies send hand and arm signals about the number of a race or horse, and its price. In radio and television production, producers and directors can signal to performers the amount of time available,

instructions about level of loudness or speed of speaking, and information about faults and corrections. Religious or quasi-religious groups and secret societies often develop ritual signing systems so that members can recognize and communicate with each other. Some monastic orders have developed signing systems of considerable sophistication, especially if their members are vowed to silence, as in the case of the Trappist monks.

But in none of these cases are we dealing with systems containing thousands of expressive possibilities, as we are with 'language proper', or with signed sentences of any complexity. They all lack productivity and duality of structure (§2), and they are meaningless outside of the situations for which they were devised. A Trappist monk would make little headway signing at a football referee, and vice versa. These signalling systems are highly restricted methods of communication, invented to solve a particular problem. They are a step or so above basic body gestures, but not much more than that.

There are only a few cases where the visual and tactile modes have been adapted to perform a truly linguistic function, providing alternative modes of communication to that which we encounter most commonly in the auditory-vocal behaviour we call 'speech'. Most obviously, the visual mode is used in writing, and there have been several writing-based visual codes, such as semaphore and Morse. Writing can involve a tactile dimension, too, as when visually impaired people receive written information through their finger-tip contact with the sets of raised dots known as braille. Tactile codes also exist, in which sounds or (more usually) letters are communicated through touch; and touch is critical when deaf-blind people use their hands to sense the movements of another person's vocal organs while speaking. Finally, facial expression and gesture is crucially involved in deaf signing – which, as we shall see (§25), is very different from the signing systems described above or the everyday gestural behaviour used by hearing people.

Speech, writing, sign: these are the three mediums which define the conceptual domain of any book on language. And the natural place to begin is with speech. Of all the modes of communication (§1), the auditory-vocal medium is the one which has been most widely adapted for purposes

of human communication. All children with their sensory and mental faculties intact learn to speak before they learn to write. Only in the case of a child born deaf is there a natural opportunity to learn a non-auditory system. Moreover, all languages exist in spoken form before they are written down. Indeed, some 40% of human languages (over 2,000 in all) have never been written down. For their speakers, the topic 'how language works' could mean only one thing: 'how speech works'.

Reading list:

Here is a list of texts that will help you build a strong knowledge of A Level English Language. Seeking some of these books out and reading them will help you build a rich understanding of language that will bring high grades with it.

Marcello Giovanelli, Gary Ives, John Keen, Raj Rana and Rachel Rudman *English Language A/AS level for AQA Student Book* (Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Dan Clayton, Angela Goddard, Beth Kemp and Felicity Titjen *AQA English Language: AS and A level* (Oxford University Press, 2015)

Dan Clayton, Angie Kolaric *Revise AQA English Language: A level and AS Workbook* (Oxford University Press, 2018)

Ron Carter, Angela Goddard, Danuta Reah, Keith Sanger and Nikki Swift *Working with Texts* (Routledge, 2008)

Ron Carter and Angela Goddard *How to Analyse Texts: A toolkit for students of English* (Routledge, 2016)