TSSM
Creating VCE Success

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Teach Yourself Series
Topic 1: Metalanguage

Contents

Metalanguage

As it appears in Units 1 - 4

Metalanguage underpins key knowledge and skills and provides students with the means to discuss elements of linguistic study. In linguistics, a **metalanguage** is the terminology used to make statements about language. Expressions in a **metalanguage** are often distinguished from those in an object language by the use of italics, quotation marks, or writing on a separate line. It is important for students to study glossaries and compile lists of **metalinguistic** terms that can be applied to their study of linguistics.

Unit 1 – Language and communication

Unit 1 requires students to understand linguistic concepts and use **metalanguage** appropriately to describe and analyse language in an objective and a systematic way.

Review Questions

1. What is the 'critical period' in language acquisition?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Explain the importance of 'stress' in connected speech.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. List the three types of affixation. Are they considered 'bound' or 'free' morphemes?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Define 'linguistic relativism'.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Discuss the importance of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Unit 2 - Language change

Unit 2 focuses on dynamic changes in language over time. Students explore texts from the past, and contemporary texts, considering how all subsystems of the language system are affected. Attitudes to language change vary considerably and the **metalanguage** used when discussing these cycles of change must be understood and utilized in your responses.

Review Questions

6. Explain the importance of a lingua franca.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Discuss three types of language change and provide an example of each.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Solutions to Review Questions

Unit 1 – Language and communication

Q1. The 'critical period' of language acquisition is a controversial theory that there is a definite time frame within which a first language must be acquired.

Q2. Words with more than one syllable have a syllable that receives the primary stress. Variations in stress produce the speech rhythm of a language. Example: 'I like the de<u>sign</u> of the new iPhone' (stress on second syllable)

Q3. Affixation: prefix, suffix, infix. They are all types of 'bound' morphemes because they must be attached to another morpheme in order to make a word.

Q4. Linguistic relativism explores the specific relationship between a language and the manner in which its users hold views about the world.

Q5. The IPA was devised by linguists as a system of phonetic notation, to precisely represent each of the wide variety of sounds (phonemes) used in spoken human language. It is intended to be used as a coded standard for the phonemic and phonetic representation of all spoken languages.

Unit 2 - Language change

Q6. A lingua franca allows for communication to become possible between persons who do not share a common language. It refers to any language that is widely used as a means of communication among speakers of other languages. A lingua franca may also be a pidgin, like Tok Pisin, which emerged as a 'trade language' in Papua New Guinea.

Q7. Three types of language change:

1. Semantic change – Slang terms that come and go, as well as changes in lexical meaning
   Example: in text talk and teenspeak – using last year's slang can spell social disaster
2. Syntactic change - Shifts from Old English into Modern English
   Example: the shift from 'not lead thou' to 'don't lead us'. Nowadays, 'not' must follow an auxiliary verb 'do' (often contracted to don't). There is no pronoun subject in the phrase, and if there were one it would be 'you' as 'thou' has entirely disappeared from the modern language
3. Phonetic change – Even when speaking Standard English, accents can vary considerably. Dialect variation can cause communication breakdown. We also see the widespread use of dipthongs.
   Example: 'Yes' (Standard English) changes to 'Yees' (New Zealand Broad)