

INTRODUCTION TO A LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Language Investigation

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WELCOME

Firstly, welcome to the cross over work between GCSE English and A Level English Language!

Hopefully, as you will soon discover, A Level English Language is really different from GCSE English Language. We will be exploring topics as diverse as ‘How do we learn to speak?’ to ‘Where does Stormzy’s dialect come from?’ stopping along the way to consider the impact that your occupation may have on your language, and what on earth is meant by a first person plural possessive pronoun?!

OVERVIEW OF TASK

You are going to undertake a language investigation as an introduction to your A Level English Language studies. You will undertake a similar piece of work towards the end of your first year of studies too, so this is an excellent opportunity to develop, and practice, some skills of linguistic analysis.

When you actually complete your language investigation, you are able to choose your own topic. For example, in recent years we have had topics like:

- How Hamilton changes through his lyrics in the musical
- Award acceptance speeches from Oliver Sykes and Kendrick Lamar
- Self-presentation in 'Love Island' VTs
- Ambiguity of sexuality in Sam Smith and Frank Ocean lyrics
- Presentation of villains in 'Wonka'
- Self presentation of Elliot Page pre and post social transition

OVERVIEW OF TASK

For this language analysis, you are going to explore the presentation of a celebrity of your choice by the British press, exploring how they are represented and considering why certain linguistic choices may have been made.

Your investigation may lead you to explore language and power, or the impact of gender on language, or the media perception of celebrity, or many other areas of focus.

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR INVESTIGATION

You will create a poster style investigation.

The following slides will talk you through what you must do in order to complete your language investigation.

We have created an example using Caroline Flack and hope this will show what we are expecting!

A NOTE ON AI USAGE

Your language investigation must be your own work. This means it should show your own ideas, analysis and writing.

If you do use AI it should be as a starting point only, not as a way to complete your work for you.

What you CANNOT use AI for:

- Writing your investigation
- Producing analysis of your corpus
- Improving or rewriting your drafts
- Paraphrasing AI responses and presenting them as your own work
- Making up or changing data

1. CHOOSE YOUR CELEBRITY!

The first step in this language investigation is to choose your celebrity focus. They need to be someone who has been in the press and has had a variety of positive and negative stories written about them – for our example investigation, we have chosen Caroline Flack.

You can either choose one of the suggestions from the list below or pick a completely different celebrity that we haven't thought of.

- Justin Bieber
- Ben Stokes
- Taylor Swift
- Gary Lineker
- Nigel Farage
- Britney Spears
- Max Verstappen
- Lindsay Lohan
- Meghan Markle
- Blake Lively
- Bukayo Saka

2. WHO AND WHY...

To contextualise your investigation focus, you need to provide a brief explanation of:

1. Who your celebrity is
2. Why you have chosen them as your focus

3. CREATE YOUR CORPUS

Now you've chosen your celebrity, you need to create a corpus of at least 30 different headlines about them. A corpus is simply the name given to a collection of text, or speech.

You must record the following information:

- **Date of publication** e.g. 28.08.14
- **Headline** e.g. Caroline Flack to star on BBC One's Strictly Come Dancing
- **Subheading** e.g. Former Xtra Factor host Caroline Flack is joining rival show Strictly Come Dancing
- **Source** e.g. BBC Newsbeat
- **URL** e.g. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/28963582/caroline-flack-to-star-on-bbc-ones-strictly-come-dancing>

Once you have your corpus, sort it into date order (as much as possible) as this will make it far easier to track patterns.

CREATE YOUR CORPUS AS A TABLE

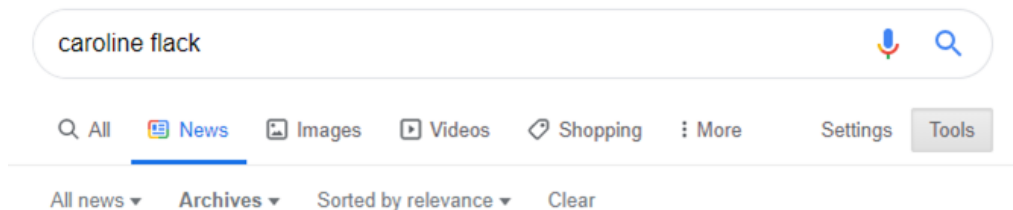
Caroline Flack Headline Corpus

	Date	Headline	Subheading	Source	URL
1.	30.11.07	Caroline Flack - She's not your typical childrens' television presenter	<i>Since drinks with Amy Winehouse, parties with Pete Doherty and dates the drummer from a hip indie band. So what is Caroline Flack doing on Saturday morning TV?</i>	Daily Mail	https://www.mailonsunday.co.uk/home/moslive/article-498734/Caroline-Flack--Shes-typical-childrens-television-presenter.html
2.	13.07.08	I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of These Clothes!	The I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here! Now host did a shoot with us when she was an up-and-coming presenter. Flacking-hell indeed!	Maxim	https://web.archive.org/web/20110716134938/http://www.maxim.co.uk/girls/celebrity/13908/caroline_flack.html
3.	13.12.11	Caroline Flack Teased About Harry Styles Kiss On Never Mind The Buzzcocks	The Xtra Factor co-host was mocked for her reported romantic tryst with the teen pop star.	Capital FM	https://www.capitalfm.com/artists/one-direction/news/harry-styles-never-mind-the-buzzcocks/
4.	27.01.12	One Direction's Harry Styles and Caroline Flack break up	One Direction singer Harry Styles has confirmed he has split from TV presenter Caroline Flack.	BBC Newsbeat	http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/16754845/one-directions-harry-styles-and-caroline-flack-break-up
5.	25.03.13	Caroline Flack will return to Xtra Factor after Simon Cowell tells her the job is still hers	And with Olly Murs busy on his tour, will last year's contestant Rylan Clark be her new co-host?	Mirror	https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/online-flack-return-xtra-factor-1779888

TIPS FOR CREATING YOUR CORPUS!

It might seem like quite a daunting task, creating a corpus, especially when Google only seems to want to give you the most recent news about them! Some tips to help are:

- Go to their Wikipedia page and look in the references section for news articles
- Use the Google news tab and to get older headlines, use the tools tab to change recent to archive

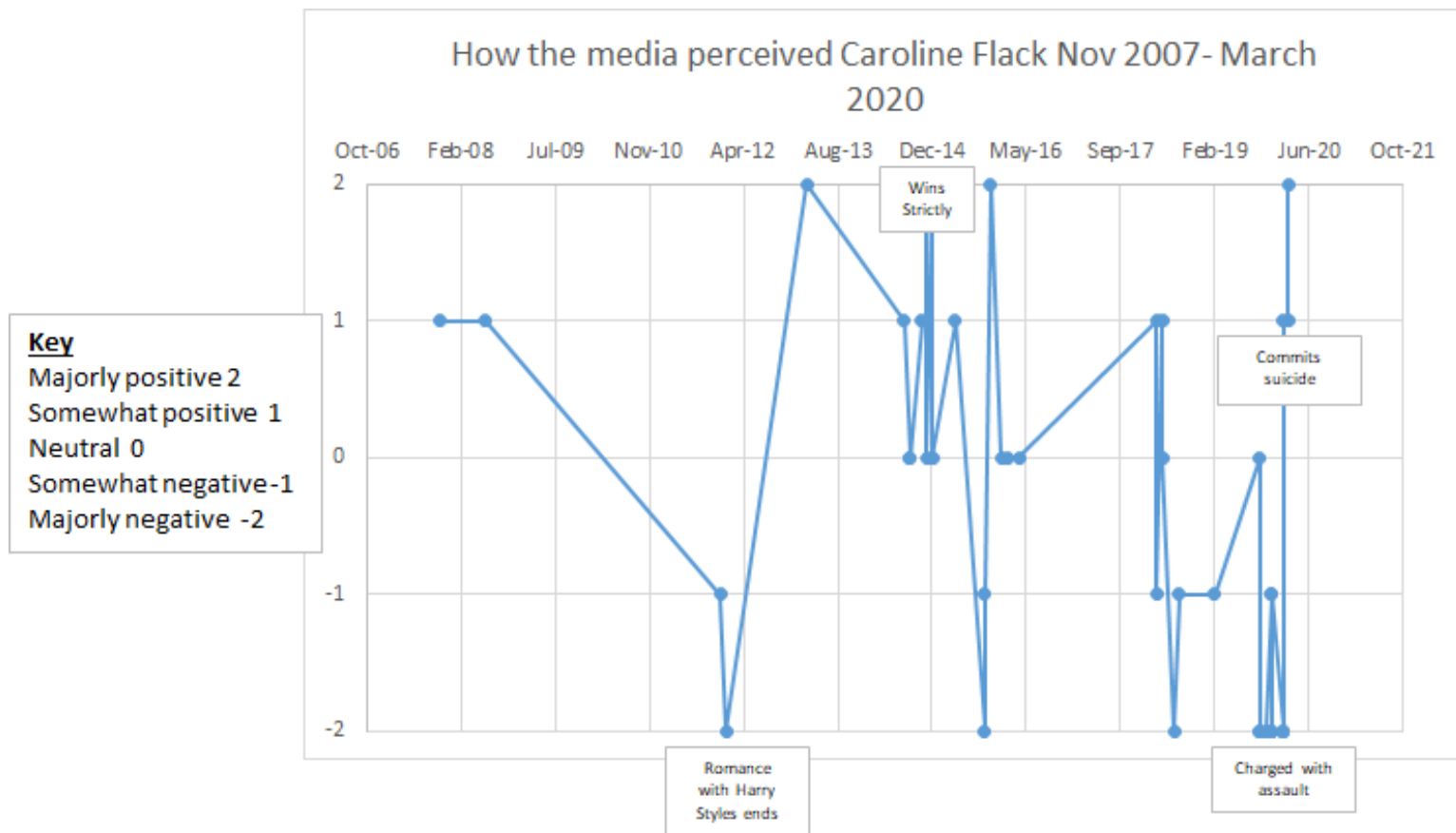


4. PRESENT THE CORPUS DATA

In order to be ready to analyse the language used you need to be able to consider your celebrity's career, highs and lows, and how they were perceived by the media at the time. You may like to present this as a graph, as a word cloud, or in anyway you desire. We created a graph on Excel - we would not recommend this approach unless you are an Excel fan, it might be much easier by hand!

We gave each story a rating for how the media perceived Flack, from very positive, to very negative, then plotted it onto the graph using the x axis for the date, and the y for the media's perception.

THE MEDIA'S PERCEPTION OF CAROLINE FLACK



5. IDENTIFY POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE LANGUAGE USED TO DESCRIBE YOUR CELEBRITY IN THE HEADLINES

Positive	Negative
‘Not your typical’ (Daily Mail 30.11.07) ‘Star’ (BBC Newsbeat 28.08.14) ‘Glitzy signature shorts’ (DM 03.09.14) ‘Delight’ (Metro 29.11.14) ‘Pin up girl’ (DM 17.0.15) ‘Lucky’ (Express 28.11.15) ‘Brady Bunch’ (The Sun 24.04.18) ‘Engaged’ (Evening Standard 29.04.18) ‘Loved up selfies’ (The Sun 27.05.18) ‘Tragic [death]’ (The Guardian 16.02.020) ‘Unbreakable ‘flirty’ bond’ (The Mirror 03.03.20) ‘Devastated [by death]’ (The Guardian 05.03.20)	‘Teased’ (Capital FM 13.12.11) ‘Single’ (The Telegraph 23.05.15) ‘Paedophile in the street’ (Independent 11.10.15) ‘Cried...trolled’ (BBC Newsbeat 02.01.16) ‘Quits’ (Digital Spy 22.02.16) ‘Intense... toxic’ (The Sun 12.07.18) ‘Ex-fiance’ (Metro 29.02.19) ‘Strife’ (The Sun 17.10.19) ‘Flack Attack’ (The Sun 29.11.19) ‘Arrested’ (The Independent 13.12.19) ‘Assault... beating’ (BBC News 13.12.19) ‘Assault’ (The Guardian; The Sun 17.12.19)

5. IDENTIFY POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE LANGUAGE USED TO DESCRIBE YOUR CELEBRITY IN THE HEADLINES

This information can be included at the end of your corpus as a table or could be highlighted (with colour coding) in the corpus.

6. IDENTIFY PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE USE IN YOUR CORPUS

Now that you've thought about the positive and negative language used, see if you can find any patterns:

- Do tabloids and broadsheets vary in their use of positive/negative language?
- Are the trends of positive/negative language linked to specific events?
- Do the intended audience of the articles influence the language choice?
- Do the subheadings support the language use in the headings?
- Is the positive/negative language used to describe the celebrity or just linked to them?

PATTERN IDENTIFICATION

- Both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers use negative and positive language to describe Flack.
- The majority of negative headlines are associated with times when Flack was experiencing either personal or career lows, for example her break ups with partners.
- The majority of the positive headlines are associated with Flack's career success and the reflections following her death.
- Her appearance is often seen positively (and only commented upon by tabloid newspapers), whereas her actions are seen negatively.
- The majority of the language used in the headlines is mirrored in the subheadings, further supporting the negative or positive view being shared by the article.
- Negative language isn't just linked to Flack's actions, they are also used to describe projects she is linked to.

7. SUMMARISE YOUR FINDINGS OF PATTERNS

Once you have explored patterns within your corpus, put them into more developed writing with examples, using subtitles/boxes to order your ideas. For example:

Influence of events on negative headlines:

The majority of the negative headlines about Flack herself are associated with times when Flack was experiencing either personal or career lows, for example her break ups with partners. This is most evident following her break up from Harry Styles where she recalls 'It was a laugh, until I started being called paedophile in the street' (The Independent, 2015); interestingly, this negative headline was published over three years after the breakup. Through quoting Flack herself using 'paedophile', which in itself is a highly controversial term, The Independent is arguably sensationalising a news story which would otherwise be uninteresting to all those but her most ardent followers. The retrospective negative portrayal of her relationships is furthered by Brady, her ex-finance, labelling their relationship as 'toxic' (The Sun, 2019).

8. LINKING YOUR INVESTIGATION TO READING

Now that you have explored your chosen headlines, you need to link it to wider readings and theory. The first angle to consider is the ethics of journalism. Read the article from [Poynter](#). Does this influence your perception of the headlines? You may want to think about:

- Whether the headlines are affected by the demographic/bias of the newspaper
- Whether the headlines suggest that they are based on actual news, or are sparked by photographs

9. LINKING YOUR INVESTIGATION TO FURTHER READING

There are a variety of theoretical approaches which can be applied to your findings.

Read the articles/ information provided in the additional information folder and decide which approach you could apply to your own corpus. You may want to think about:

- What is the language trying to persuade us to think or feel?
- How does the language used engage a specific audience?
- What are the benefits of using language in this manner?
- Is there a difference between reporting celebrities and non celebrities?

10. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

You will need to present your findings in one A3 poster. In addition to this you will need to include your corpus as a separate printed document.

Use the example provided to support with your poster creation. You will be presenting your poster in a seminar style (not to the whole class) when we start in September and these will also be used for display.

PEER ASSESSMENT GRID

In September, you will be peer assessed on your poster and how you are able to explain it. The marking criteria is:

	Far beyond expectations	Exceeding expectations	Meeting expectations	Below expectations	Improvement required
Contextualising information					
Creation of corpus					
Presentation of data on poster					
Presentation of poster					
Engagement with theory					
Overall analysis					
Overall presentation					