IB Language and Literature

Part 1: Language in Cultural Context

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One way that identity is constructed is through language. In giving consideration to this idea, it is important to think about the various ways which language has the potential to shape identity such as national, racial, socioeconomic, gender, sexual orientation and so on.

Think about the relationship between language choice, language use and its potential to shape identity.

When you read the following material, consider the following:

- How audience, text type and purpose affect the structure and content of the texts.
- How language and meaning are shaped by culture and context.
- The impact of language choice made by writers and how it has the potential to shape identity.
Language and Identity in Australia

"Socio-economic background in Australia is not as visible as race and ethnicity in the United States, nor is it as obvious as class in the UK." (Moodie 2003, p. 35)

The manner of speaking is an expression of identity; it signals identification with one group and rejection of another. For example, when soccer player David Beckham says, "I want to fank everyone for coming", his substitution of an 'f' sound for the 'th' sound shows pride in his working class roots.

In England, accents vary according to class and region. In America, they vary according to race and region. Unlike America or England, Australia has no variance in speaking according to class, race or region. Instead, the accent varies according to ideology or gender. Two Australians can grow up side by side, go to the same schools, do the same job, but end up speaking English using different words, different syntax and with different accents. In fact, due to the gender variance, a brother and sister can grow up in the same house and end up speaking differently.

Australia has three recognised accents. About ten per cent of Australians speak like ex-prime minister Bob Hawke with what is known as a broad Australian accent. The broad Australian accent is usually spoken by men. 80 per cent speak like Nicole Kidman with a general Australian accent. 10 per cent speak like ex Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser with British received pronunciation or cultivated English. Although some men use the pronunciation, the majority of Australians that speak with the accent are women. It is a myth that working class Australians use cockney like David Beckam. It is a myth that Queenslanders speak differently to South Australians. It is also a myth that children of migrants have distinct accents.

The gender difference in pronunciation can perhaps be attributed to differing expectations about gender identities that are relatively favourable to the Australian stereotype when it comes to men but unfavourable when it comes to women. Specifically, expectations that men should be unpretentious, laid back and friendly are relatively consistent with stereotypes of Australian men. Contrasted to men, expectations that women should be refined, proper and neat are relatively inconsistent with stereotypes of Australian women.
Although the connotations of stereotypes are subjective, arguably most Australians would agree that the traditional male Australian stereotype is more positive than the traditional Australian female stereotype. The difference in values provides the best explanation for the gender difference in pronunciation with Australian women not wanting to sound, bogan, ocker or stereotypically Australian.

*Bill Hunter - Broad Australian English*

**Broad Australian Accent**

The broad Australian accent is typically associated with Australian masculinity. Notable speakers include ex-Prime Minister Bob Hawke, comedian *Paul Hogan* and actor *Bill Hunter*. Although the accent is only spoken by a minority of the population, it has a great deal of cultural credibility. This is shown by the fact that it is disproportionately used in advertisements and by newsreaders.

Very few women use broad Australian accents, probably because the accent is associated with Australian masculinity. If an Australian woman used it, she may sound like a woman partial to a spot of pig shooting or making fart jokes.

*Nicole Kidman - general Australian English*

**General Australian Accent**

Around 80 per cent of Australians speak like actor *Nicole Kidman* with what is known as a general Australian English accent. These accents are somewhat of a mix between the broad Australian and cultivated accents. Because they are comparatively neutral in ideology, most of the speakers believe that they don't have an accent. The speakers realise that they speak differently to the broad
Australian speakers that they associate with Australia as well as the cultivated speakers that they associate with upper class or elitism.

*Cate Blanchett - Cultivated accent*

**Cultivated Australian Accent**

The final ten per cent of Australians speak with what is known as a cultivated accent, which sounds a bit like *Prince Charles*. It is usually spoken by women wanting to portray a feminine and sophisticated image. Although most speakers are women, some men, such as ex-prime minister *Malcolm Fraser*, use the accent.

In the past, the cultivated accent had the kind of cultural credibility that the broad accent has today. For example, until the 1970s newsreaders on the government funded ABC had to speak with the cultivated accent. Since there was a shortage of Australian men able to speak in the accent, male newsreaders were imported from England. (At the time, women were not allowed to be newsreaders on government television.)

**Myths about the Australian accent**

**Myth 1 – There is regional variance in pronunciation**

There is a myth that Australians speak differently in different parts of Australia. For example, some people believe that all Queenslanders use the broad Australian accent. The stereotype is not based in fact. Queenslanders have the same variance in accent according to gender and ideology that is seen around Australia.

Some people believe that South Australians talk like New Zealanders. The myth probably comes from a presumption that since South Australia and New Zealand didn't receive Convicts, both should speak the same way. Again, the presumption is incorrect. South Australians have the same variance in accent according to gender and ideology that is seen around Australia.

Although the myths of regional variance are common, it is unlikely that the geographical origin of a player on the Australian cricket team or in an AFL team could be discerned from their accent alone. Likewise, it is unlikely that the geographic origin of a federal politician could be discerned from their accent alone.

**Myth 2 – There is ethnic variance in pronunciation**

Most migrants who speak English as their second language have an ethnic accent. The children of migrants, who speak English as their first language, usually use a broad, general or cultivated accent depending upon their ideology or gender.

Sometimes the children of migrants will put on the accent of their parents as a joke. For example, actor *Mary Coustas* created the character of *Effie*, which used a wog accent. It was not her real accent.
Effie (Mary Coustas) - Wog stereotype accent

Myth 3 – Poor Australians speak with a broad Australian, cockney or low class accent

Much like the character of Effie, the characters of *Kim & Kim* involved the creation of fictional stereotypes of low-class Australians that could be subsequently mocked. Contrary to the fictional portrayals, there is no relationship between socio-economic status and the manner of speaking. It is; however, more likely that women from wealthy families will speak with a cultivated accent because it is more likely that their parents will send them to a finishing school to cultivate a manner of speaking associated with elegance. The elegant image will be beneficial for the women because, as the characters of Kath & Kim and Effie show, there is ridicule associated with Australian women who lack elegance when speaking.

Unlike Australian women, Australian men will rarely be sent to finishing schools in order to improve their speech. This is probably because elegance is not an admired masculine quality in Australia. An Australian man that speaks like Prince Charles or Malcolm Fraser is likely to find himself the target of school yard bullies.

The broad Australian accent has cultural prestige for men because it creates an image that the man has the ability to relate to people from all walks of life, and will treat everyone with a sense of equality. For example, even though the late billionaire Kerry Packer was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he used a broad accent his entire life. The broad accent helped create a perception that Packer had an egalitarian ethic, which contributed greatly to his popular appeal amongst average Australians. Of course, not all Australians (i.e, Malcolm Fraser) believe that the broad accent has a positive image. As a result, they prefer to speak like an Englishman.

Kath and Kim - Stereotype bogan accent

*Malcolm Fraser and Julian Burnside using cultivated accents to talk about Australian values.*

Features of the Australian English

Use of idioms

In stereotype, "g'day" is a word that helps define the Australian version of English but in truth, it is not common used. The use of idioms like ‘have a crack’ and ‘play a straight bat’ are more defining. In addition, Australians are prone to use similes like 'mad as a gum tree full of galahs' and 'he has kangaroos lose in the top paddock' to add more expression to sentences. Former Prime Minister Paul Keating was anoted inventor of similes and metaphor as an instrument of ridicule and humour. Some of his expressions included:

Keating on Former Leader of the Opposition, John Hewson:

(His performance) is like being flogged with a warm lettuce leaf.

I have a psychological hold over Hewson...He's like a stone statue in the cemetery.
I'm not going to be fairy flossed away as my opposite number, John Hewson, is prepared to be fairy flossed away by some spaced out, vacuous ad agency.

On Former Leader of the Opposition, Andrew Peacock

"I suppose that the Honourable Gentleman's hair, like his intellect, will recede into the darkness."

"We're not interested in the views of painted, perfumed gigolos."

"I was nearly chloroformed by the performance of the Honourable Member for Mackellar. It nearly put me right out for the afternoon."

On John Howard

"What we have got is a dead carcass, swinging in the breeze, but nobody will cut it down to replace him."

"But I will never get to the stage of wanting to lead the nation standing in front of the mirror each morning clipping the eyebrows here and clipping the eyebrows there with Janette and the kids: It's like 'Spot the eyebrows'."

"I am not like the Leader of the Opposition. I did not slither out of the Cabinet room like a mangy maggot..."

On Independent, Steele Hall:

"The Honourable Member has been in so many parties he is a complete political harlot."

On the press

"You (Richard Carleton) had an important place in Australian society on the ABC and you gave it up to be a pop star...with a big cheque...and now you're on to this sort of stuff. That shows what a 24 carat pissant you are, Richard, that's for sure"

Reporter: How long is it since you've been to Fyshwick Markets?
Keating: "Not long, not long. In fact if you get down to woollies at Manuka on Saturday I'd probably run over you with a trolley as I did a journo recently."

On the coalition party

"Honourable Members opposite are a joke. "They are irrelevant, useless and immoral." "...they insist on being mugs, Mr Speaker, absolute mugs."

"The Opposition crowd could not raffle a chook in a pub"

"Honourable Members opposite squeal like stuck pigs"
On former Prime Minister Bob Hawke

"Now listen mate," [to John Browne, Minister of Sport, who was proposing a 110 per cent tax deduction for contributions to a Sports Foundation] "you're not getting 110 per cent. You can forget it. This is a fucking Boulevard Hotel special, this is. The trouble is we are dealing with a sports junkie here [gesturing towards Bob Hawke]. I go out for a piss and they pull this one on me. Well that’s the last time I leave you two alone. From now on, I'm sticking to you two like shit to a blanket.

On Former Labour politician, Jim McClelland:

"That you Jim? Paul Keating here. Just because you swallowed a fucking dictionary when you were about 15 doesn't give you the right to pour a bucket of shit over the rest of us."

On Fund Managers:

"...these donkeys..." "It must get right up their nose, quaffing down the red wine at these fashionable eateries in Bent Street and Collins Street, with the Prime Minister calling them donkeys - but donkeys they are."

The Convict Influence?

Nearly two generations after the First Fleet, 87 per cent of the population were either convicts, ex-convicts or of convict descent. With such strong convict foundations, it was inevitable that Australia’s linguistic traditions would be different from the mother country. As argued by Sidney Baker in The Australian Language:

"No other class of society would use slang more readily or adapt it more expertly to their new environment; no other class would have a better flair for concocting new terms to fit in with their new conditions in life."

In 1869, Marcus Clarke described how locals devised language to 'convey a more full and humorous notion of all his thoughts' or to conceal 'the idea he wishes to convey from all save his own particular friends'. The most notable method of concealment was cockney rhyming slang. Rhyming slang created an idiom type sentence out of two or more words, the last of which rhymes with the intended word. For example, "plates of meat" were "feet" and "hit the frog and toad" was "hit the road." Although few Australians use rhyming slang today, its legacy may be the prevalence of idioms in Strine.

The abbreviation of words might be another legacy of rhyming slang. As rhyming slang involved the addition of new words, sentences became long-winded. In order to compensate, long words might have been shortened. Thus "have a Captains Cook" which is rhyming slang for "have a look", was abbreviated down to "ava Captains." Pomegranate, which is rhyming slang for "immigrant", was abbreviated to "Pom."
The skills that were acquired when abbreviating rhyming slang clauses may then have been applied to also economise ordinary clauses. So words such as "good day" were economised to "g'day", "afternoon" to "arvo", "politician" to "pollie", "journalist" to "journo" and "barbecue" to "barbie."

Aside from rhyming slang, another method the convicts used to conceal their true meaning was to turn the meaning of a word upside down. For example, "bastard" or "ratbag" were used as terms of endearment as well as insults. The only way to know up from down was to infer from the tone of the sentence.

**Has Chinese influenced the Australian accent?**

The Australian strain of English is very musical. Tones are very important, and with the abbreviation of words to emphasize the stressed syllable, Australian English follows the general pattern of how English sounds when it is sung. In 1911, an English woman, Valerie Desmond, released a book titled *The Awful Australian*. In the book, she speculated that the tonal aspect of Australian English may have been the result of Australians mixing with Chinese:

"But it is not so much as the vagaries of pronunciation that hurt the ear of the visitor. It is the extraordinary intonation that the Australian imparts to his phrases. There is no such thing as cultured, reposeful conversation in this land; everybody sings his remarks as if he was reciting blank verse in the manner of an imperfect elocutionist. It would be quite possible to take an ordinary Australian conversation and immortalise its cadences and diapasons by means of musical notation. Herein the Australian differs from the American. The accent of the American, educated and uneducated alike, is abhorrent to the cultured Englishman or Englishwoman, but it is, at any rate, harmonious. That of the Australian is full of discords and surprises. His voice rises and falls with unexpected syncopations, and, even among the few cultured persons this country possesses, seems to bear in every syllable the sign of the parvenu...The Australian practice of singing his remarks I can only ascribe to the influence of the Chinese. During my stay in Melbourne, I spent one evening at supper in a Chinese cookshop in Little Bourke Street, and I was instantly struck by the resemblance between the intonation of the phrases between the Chinese attendants and that of the cultivated Australians who accompanied me."

http://www.convictcreations.com/research/languageidentity.html
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Visual language used to represent national and cultural identity through Australian tourism advertising campaigns

- What visual language is used in order to convey a sense of national and cultural identity?

- Is it used in conjunction with spoken or written language? What is the intended effect of the diction used?

- What ideas about Australia and Australian identity are conveyed overall? How? What detail conveys what idea or ideas about Australia and Australian identity?

The Wonders Down Under 1984
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn_CPrCS8gs

I Still Call Australia Home 1998
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbGuqmaDgL

Where the bloody hell are you? 2006
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TebeNC-_VjA

Incredible Australia 2008
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQGMuxJ0vCc

There’s nothing like Australia 2011
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awBbQhTXWQ

Tourism Australia – Chris Hemsworth 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7dukhch8u0
Togs or swimmers? Why Australians use different words to describe the same things.

Is Australia about to descend into civil war over whether a deep-fried potato snack is rightfully called a “potato cake” or a “potato scallop”? From some recent headlines, you might be forgiven for thinking so.

A series of maps showing differences in words used across Australia sparked fierce debates online over the virtues of calling a barbecued sausage served in a single slice of bread a “sausage in bread” or a “sausage sandwich”.

The great potato cake/scallop/fritter divide. Rosey Billington, Lauren Gawne, Kathleen Jepson, and Jill Vaughan 'Mapping words around Australia' (bit.ly/AusWordsMaps)
Given that these maps were put together as part of an educational activity for students participating in the Linguistics Roadshow, the huge interest in the way Australian English is used across the country took us by surprise. But, perhaps it shouldn’t have.

It’s often said that Australian English doesn’t vary much geographically – and it’s true that we don’t find the same striking linguistic differences across the country as in some other corners of the English-speaking world.

However, past and ongoing research has shown that there are some regional differences. Among the most obvious are the words people use for the same thing, such as swimwear – preferences for “togs”, “swimmers”, “cossie” or “bathers” vary markedly across the states and territories.

Words for swimwear around Australia. Rosey Billington, Lauren Gawne, Kathleen Jepson, and Jill Vaughan 'Mapping words around Australia'
Where do these linguistic differences stem from?

Australian English developed from the speech of colonists from various parts of the British Isles, so sometimes the word used in a particular Australian region is the result of one option winning out among people from different British backgrounds.

Others might be derived from the names of people or brands, or borrowed from local Indigenous languages.

Each word has its own history, but many words across the country have a shared history - that’s what makes these exceptions stand out.

What’s fascinating is just how neatly some of this variation lines up with state lines, which suggests that there is something more than just the historical choices made by colonists or the distance between different locations contributing to these differences.

Striking examples of this phenomenon can be seen for border towns such as Albury-Wodonga, where a short walk across the bridge means you’ll hear a majority of people using a different word for swimwear.

More ‘bathers’ on the Victorian side of the border, more ‘swimmers’ on the New South Wales side.

Rosey Billington, Lauren Gawne, Kathleen Jepson, and Jill Vaughan 'Mapping words around Australia'

This is because certain words become strongly associated with a regional identity.
When there is more than one option to choose from, individuals might use a particular word because it’s the most common term in their community, but also because that word indexes a broader group identity, such as Victorian versus New South Wales.

Words are particularly good at doing this kind of work: they very easily become identity markers that people orient to.

Pronunciation differences can also function in this way: does “dance” rhyme with “aunts” or “pants” for you?

Other kinds of variation can fly under the radar because they’re more subtle, or part of a change in progress.

Many Australians are not aware, for example, that in parts of Victoria “celery” is pronounced more like “salary” – listen out for it next time you’re in “Malbourne”!

When we communicate we tend to use the words, pronunciations and linguistic patterns that we hear most often in the communities we live in.

Identity is a dynamic and ongoing process that we all actively participate in, and we use the variation inherent in language to express who we are at any given moment.

**What is Australian English?**

Australian English is really a broad cover term for different types of English used across the country, including the varieties used by different Indigenous and ethnocultural groups.

This is cross-cut by the linguistic preferences of people representing different age groups, gender identities, and social and cultural backgrounds, with different vocations, interests and networks.

We are part of many communities simultaneously and can express our belonging in varied ways.

Someone can be an Australian, a Thai descendent, a soccer player, a woman, a student of medicine, and a Tumblr user, and be very adept at gauging the different spaces they participate in and choosing how they want to identify within them.

This is an important part of what languages do – they allow us to communicate not just information, but something about who we are.
‘Sausage sandwiches’ are preferred in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Rosey Billington, Lauren Gawne, Kathleen Jepson, and Jill Vaughan ‘Mapping words around Australia’

So, next time you find yourself arguing about sausage sandwiches versus sausages in bread, remember that whichever term you use, you’re contributing to the dynamic linguistic diversity of Australia.

http://theconversation.com/togs-or-swimmers-why-australians-use-different-words-to-describe-the-same-things-52007
My G'day moment

Benjamin Law

For me though, every week is an adventure in self-mortification at how little I know.

In primary school, we had to dress up as all sorts of things – kangaroos, koalas, Aboriginal people (yes, this was regional Queensland in the 1980s) – and sing for our parents true-blue Australian songs like Jake the Peg, a jaunty little number written by national treasure and convicted sex offender Rolf Harris.

One of the songs I loved from this period was something written by Slim Dusty, simply called G'day, G'day. We'd take to the stage dressed in flannies and fake Akubras (complete with dangling corks) and sing in our strongest ocker accents: G'day, G'day/ 'ow's it garrn?/ Whaddayaknow?/ Well stroik a loight. Okay, I'm writing the lyrics phonetically, but what I love about the song is that even when you see the actual lyrics, it ceases to make any sense to any English speaker except us.

For a long time, though, I never used "g'day" in conversation. It seemed too cartoonish, too ridiculous, like something only The Simpsons' version of Australians would say to each other. Then, when I started dating my boyfriend, I noticed he said g'day ... quite a lot, actually. He's not necessarily ocker, but it's his standard greeting. He even begins professional emails with g'day.

It was mildly disturbing at first but, as with most things in my 20s, I experimented for a while, taking my boyfriend's lead and, somewhere along the line, the greeting stuck.
Now I've embraced its culturally specific charm. Sure, it's old-fashioned (there are records of g'day being used in the 1880s), but it's also the word that greeted the world at the 2000 Olympics and marked our modern arrival on the world stage. There's something affectionate about saying g'day to someone, even when using David Williamson's immortal line of "G'day, c... features!" to a mate.

I'd love to see a g'day renaissance and I'm not going to lie: one of the joys of saying g'day is the happy bafflement on people's faces when they hear the word come out of this scrawny Asian dude's mouth.
What kind of a name is that? Publishing prejudices leave 'Jimbo' in limbo.

Dmetri Kakmi

April 15, 2016

Juliet Capulet said, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Wise words indeed. Or are they?

When you think about it, the naming of things is arbitrary. Under different circumstances, a rose might have been called a sardine and no one alive today would question it. The rose would still smell like a rose, even though it's called Rosa Clupeidae. It would not emit the aroma of a malodorous seaborne creature.

But does that work with the naming of a human being?

For instance, my name is Dmetri Kakmi. I have been known as such since birth. It is who I am. The two words form identity. I like my name. I'm as attached to it as I'm sure you are to Verity Millicent Spandex. Even though for a time, when my family first came to Australia, I was known as Jim.

The new name, I hasten to add, was not of my choosing. It was given to me by the principal of the primary school I attended. "In Australia," he said, "people can't pronounce Dmetri. From now on your name is Jim."

His word was law. The unfortunate transmogrification was an obvious necessity. Australians in the 1970s couldn't say their own names in full, let alone pronounce a mouthful like mine. Dmetri didn't stand a chance in a world of Bazzas, Shazzas, Gibbos and Chookas. So I became Jim. Sometimes known as Jimbo.

I had no idea who Jim was. I didn't recognise myself in what I came to regard as a nom de guerre. Jim lived in my body for 12 years; and for all that time we were at war. I was in suspended animation, waiting to purge him out of my system. It was a kind of possession. I reclaimed my real name at 22, and almost immediately found my feet again.

You can imagine how confused I was when I began to write in earnest and people started to ever so kindly suggest I change my name to something less "ethnic sounding".

In the late 1980s, for instance, a newspaper editor told me to submit work under "an Anglo name" and he'd publish. I told him to get intimately acquainted with his news print and never heard from him again.
A similar thing happened recently. In the enlightened age of 2016.

A short time ago, I received the sort of email writers would happily kill to receive. A publisher wrote to tell me that he enjoyed my manuscript and wanted to publish. Can we talk? I rang the very next day. After heaping praise on the novel the publisher got down to business.

He would like me to publish under a pseudonym. Why? Because he believes genre readers will not fork out hard-earned pennies dreadful for a supernatural adventure written by "an ethnic writer". They will see the name and think it's about "ethnicity" and possibly stay away. Whereas they will – he was certain – buy if the novel were written by Bradley Bulge, let's say.

As it happens the entire novel is tainted by dreaded ethnicity. The main character is Aboriginal. Several characters are Muslim – good ones, not bombers! The story contains elements of Christianity, Islam and indigenous lore, all set in an Australia that is clamorously multicultural. The Anglo character is not someone you want to bring home to meet your parents.

That was not a problem, but my name on the cover was.

Interestingly, I had a similar response from a literary agent last year for the same manuscript. Love it, but your name could be a hard sell in the genre. The same happened when I edited the children's anthology When We Were Young, and the publisher's sales and marketing department wanted to expunge my name from the cover.

As an editor who has been in publishing for 30 years, I know where these views come from. Expediency. I understand. It's about survival in a tough business. Books must sell to recoup their investment. I get it.

As a writer, I am incensed.

People with funny names are allowed to publish memoirs and cook books. But novels are the preserve of an elite that can only describe a shared familiarity, the known. "Pumpkin soup," as author Cecile Yazbek wrote, "is acceptable but if you add coriander, ginger and chilli, it becomes un-English, un-Australian, too challenging."

The Australian literary scene has room for one Greek novelist, one Vietnamese, one African, and so on.

Small numbers can be contained. They are not a threat. Allowing them into the inner sanctum makes the people who run the game feel good about themselves. We're so inclusive! Too many Greeks or too many Chinese, on the other hand, don't just melt the pot; they tip it over. They are a deluge. We are overwhelmed. The true voice of Australia is diluted. Let's hold back the tide by creating ludicrous, outdated rules.

So went the telephone conversation with the publisher who wanted to publish my novel. Like the literary agent, he and I finally parted ways. Each man convinced he was in the right.

Of course, I fail to see why publishing under my name is a problem. Mother Land was a critical and (moderate) commercial success. Haunting Matilda was shortlisted for best horror novella in the Aurealis Awards. My essays are anthologised and praised. And they are all published under my all-too-woggy name.
It seems that Mistress Capulet's theory about names holds true for horticulture, but it cannot hold true for homo sapiens. Jim will never smell as sweet as Dmetri. Though admittedly Kakmi can be a bit on the nose. Jim does not think like Dmetri. He does not have the same sensibility as Dmetri. He sees the world through different eyes. And I am too used to seeing out of Dmetri’s somewhat sullied 55-year-old brown eyes. For better or worse, it’s the vision I want to write about.

Or maybe I can make a cocktail out of both names and come up with Jimetri? But what do I do with Kakmi?

How To Write About Africa by Binyavanga Wainaina


Never have a picture of a well-adjusted African on the cover of your book, or in it, unless that African has won the Nobel Prize. An AK-47, prominent ribs, naked breasts: use these. If you must include an African, make sure you get one in Masai or Zulu or Dogon dress.

In your text, treat Africa as if it were one country. It is hot and dusty with rolling grasslands and huge herds of animals and tall, thin people who are starving. Or it is hot and steamy with very short people who eat primates. Don’t get bogged down with precise descriptions. Africa is big: fifty-four countries, 900 million people who are too busy starving and dying and warring and emigrating to read your book. The continent is full of deserts, jungles, highlands, savannahs and many other things, but your reader doesn’t care about all that, so keep your descriptions romantic and evocative and unparticular.

Make sure you show how Africans have music and rhythm deep in their souls, and eat things no other humans eat. Do not mention rice and beef and wheat; monkey-brain is an African’s cuisine of choice, along with goat, snake, worms and grubs and all manner of game meat. Make sure you show that you are able to eat such food without flinching, and describe how you learn to enjoy it—because you care.
Taboo subjects: ordinary domestic scenes, love between Africans (unless a death is involved), references to African writers or intellectuals, mention of school-going children who are not suffering from yaws or Ebola fever.

Throughout the book, adopt a *sotto* voice, in conspiracy with the reader, and a sad *I-expected-so-much* tone. Establish early on that your liberalism is impeccable, and mention near the beginning how much you love Africa, how you fell in love with the place and can’t live without her. Africa is the only continent you can love—take advantage of this. If you are a man, thrust yourself into her warm virgin forests. If you are a woman, treat Africa as a man who wears a bush jacket and disappears off into the sunset. Africa is to be pitied, worshipped or dominated. Whichever angle you take, be sure to leave the strong impression that without your intervention and your important book, Africa is doomed.

Your African characters may include naked warriors, loyal servants, diviners and seers, ancient wise men living in hermitic splendour. Or corrupt politicians, inept polygamous travel-guides, and prostitutes you have slept with. The Loyal Servant always behaves like a seven-year-old and needs a firm hand; he is scared of snakes, good with children, and always involving you in his complex domestic dramas. The Ancient Wise Man always comes from a noble tribe (not the money-grubbing tribes like the Gikuyu, the Igbo or the Shona). He has rheumy eyes and is close to the Earth. The Modern African is a fat man who steals and works in the visa office, refusing to give work permits to qualified Westerners who really care about Africa. He is an enemy of development, always using his government job to make it difficult for pragmatic and good-hearted expats to set up NGOs or Legal Conservation Areas. Or he is an Oxford-educated intellectual turned serial-killing politician in a Savile Row suit. He is a cannibal who likes Cristal champagne, and his mother is a rich witch-doctor who really runs the country.

Among your characters you must always include The Starving African, who wanders the refugee camp nearly naked, and waits for the benevolence of the West. Her children have flies on their eyelids and pot bellies, and her breasts are flat and empty. She must look utterly helpless. She can have no past, no history; such diversions ruin the dramatic moment. Moans are good. She must never say anything about herself in the dialogue except to speak of her (unspeakable) suffering. Also be sure to include a warm and motherly woman who has a rolling laugh and who is concerned for your well-being. Just call her Mama. Her children are all delinquent. These characters should buzz around your main hero, making him look good. Your hero can teach them, bathe them, feed them;
he carries lots of babies and has seen Death. Your hero is you (if reportage), or a beautiful, tragic international celebrity/aristocrat who now cares for animals (if fiction).

Bad Western characters may include children of Tory cabinet ministers, Afrikaners, employees of the World Bank. When talking about exploitation by foreigners mention the Chinese and Indian traders. Blame the West for Africa’s situation. But do not be too specific.

Broad brushstrokes throughout are good. Avoid having the African characters laugh, or struggle to educate their kids, or just make do in mundane circumstances. Have them illuminate something about Europe or America in Africa. African characters should be colourful, exotic, larger than life—but empty inside, with no dialogue, no conflicts or resolutions in their stories, no depth or quirks to confuse the cause.

Remember, any work you submit in which people look filthy and miserable will be referred to as the ‘real Africa’, and you want that on your dust jacket. Do not feel queasy about this: you are trying to help them to get aid from the West. The biggest taboo in writing about Africa is to describe or show dead or suffering white people.

Animals, on the other hand, must be treated as well rounded, complex characters. They speak (or grunt while tossing their manes proudly) and have names, ambitions and desires. They also have family values: see how lions teach their children? Elephants are caring, and are good feminists or dignified patriarchs. So are gorillas. Never, ever say anything negative about an elephant or a gorilla. Elephants may attack people’s property, destroy their crops, and even kill them. Always take the side of the elephant. Big cats have public-school accents. Hyenas are fair game and have vaguely Middle Eastern accents. Any short Africans who live in the jungle or desert may be portrayed with good humour (unless they are in conflict with an elephant or chimpanzee or gorilla, in which case they are pure evil).

After celebrity activists and aid workers, conservationists are Africa’s most important people. Do not offend them. You need them to invite you to their 30,000-acre game ranch or ‘conservation area’, and this is the only way you will get to interview the celebrity activist. Often a book cover with a heroic-looking conservationist on it works magic for sales. Anybody white, tanned and wearing khaki who once had a pet antelope or a farm is a conservationist, one who is preserving Africa’s rich heritage. When interviewing him or her, do not ask how much funding they have; do not ask how much money they make off their game. Never ask how much they pay their employees.
Readers will be put off if you don’t mention the light in Africa. And sunsets, the African sunset is a must. It is always big and red. There is always a big sky. Wide empty spaces and game are critical—Africa is the Land of Wide Empty Spaces. When writing about the plight of flora and fauna, make sure you mention that Africa is overpopulated. When your main character is in a desert or jungle living with indigenous peoples (anybody short) it is okay to mention that Africa has been severely depopulated by Aids and War (use caps).

You’ll also need a nightclub called Tropicana, where mercenaries, evil nouveau riche Africans and prostitutes and guerrillas and expats hang out.

Always end your book with Nelson Mandela saying something about rainbows or renaissances. Because you care.

https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/
How to Write About Africa II: The Revenge

Binyavanga Wainaina

Novelists, NGO workers, rock musicians, conservationists, students, and travel writers track down my email, asking: Would you please comment on my homework assignment / pamphlet / short story / funding proposal / haiku / adopted child / photograph of genuine African mother-in-law? All of the people who do this are white. Nobody from China asks, nobody from Cuba, nobody black, blackish, brown, beige, coffee, cappuccino, mulatte. I wrote “How to Write about Africa” as a piss-job, a venting of steam; it was never supposed to see the light of day. Now people write to ask me for permission to write about Africa. They want me to tell them what I think, how they did. Be frank, they say, be candid. Tell it like it is.

I have considered investing in a rubber stamp. I have imagined myself standing at the virtual borders of Africa, a black minuteman with a rubber stamp, processing applications — where YES means “Pass go, pay one hundred dollars,” and NO means “Tie ‘em up and deport ‘em.” It’s almost a sexual thing. They come crawling out of the unlikeliest places, looking to be whipped. I am bad, Master Binya, beat me. Oh! Beat me harder. Oo! They seem quite disappointed when I don’t. Once in a while I do, and it feels both good and bad, like too much wasabi. Bono sent a book of poems. Someone wrote an essay, “How to Write about Afghanistan.” I shook hands with, not one, but two European presidents, who read my text and shook their heads: How bad, how very bad. I shared a cigarette in Frankfurt with the bodyguards of Yar Adua, the Nigerian president, who said they don’t like gyms back in Abuja because the wives of the big men come onto them and cause all kinds of trouble. They preferred hotel gyms in Europe. But German cigarettes were not as good as Nigerian cigarettes. German vegetables were not as good as Nigerian vegetables. German beer was, when you really looked, deep into the foam, not nearly as light and golden as Nigerian beer. When all is said and done, they said, stamping out their cigarettes and smelling of fine French cologne, Nigeria is the best place. Have you been to Abuja, they asked? No, I said. Abuja is ultramodern, they said, and we all looked out at the wet, gray, old, stained buildings in front of us.

One day a man I know called me in some agitation. He had just read “How to Write about Africa” and wanted to know why I would write about him as I’d done. I had said, “After celebrity activists and aid workers, conservationists are Africa’s most important people. Do not offend them.” I had offended him. I had not mentioned anyone by name, but he was personally affronted. Yes, he’s a conservationist, and, yes, he has hosted a celebrity or two — but he didn’t trade in game animals, and he paid his workers well. Sure, I said. It’s beyond the pale, he said. I have never really understood what that means, where that is, the pale, and why such a mild-seeming phrase promises interpersonal Armageddon.
“How to Write about Africa” grew out of an email. In a fit of anger, maybe even low blood sugar — it runs in the family — I spent a few hours one night at my graduate student flat in Norwich, England, writing to the editor of *Granta*. I was responding to its “Africa” issue, which was populated by every literary bogeyman that any African has ever known, a sort of “Greatest Hits of Hearts of Fuckedness.” It wasn’t the grimness that got to me, it was the stupidity. There was nothing new, no insight, but lots of “reportage” — Oh, gosh, wow, look, golly ooo — as if Africa and Africans were not part of the conversation, were not indeed living in England across the road from the *Granta* office. No, we were “over there,” where brave people in khaki could come and bear witness. Fuck that. So I wrote a long — truly long — rambling email to the editor.

To my surprise, *Granta* wrote back right away. The editor, Ian Jack, disavowed the “Africa” issue — that was before his time, he said. A year or so later, another *Granta* editor called. They were doing a new “Africa” issue, and they wanted my perspective. Sure, sure, I said. And then forgot. And then remembered, felt guilty, felt the weight of a continent on my back. I was blocked and more blocked. I drank a Tusker. Finally I wrote something about Bob Geldof. It was shit, said the editor — not his words, but he meant to say that, and he was right. So I went back to work. The deadline came. The deadline went. I was busy working on a short story, busy working on my novel. A cold Tusker. The new *Kwani*. The beach, in Lamu. The editor called with an idea — why don’t we publish your long crazy email? An extract, that is. Sure, I said, absentmindedly. He sent me a draft. Phew, I thought, absentmindedly. Cut, paste, cut, paste. A few flourishes here or there. Send. It took an hour.

The issue came out, my article went online. It became the most-forwarded story in *Granta* history. I started hearing from friends, from strangers; started getting my own words forwarded to me with a cheerful heading, as something I might be interested in, as though I hadn’t written it. I went viral; I became spam. I started getting invitations — to conferences, meetings, think tanks. I started getting mail. Now I am “that guy,” the conscience of Africa: I will admonish you and give you absolution. If I was smart, I would have waited a few years and made an iPhone app: a little satirical story about how to write about Africa every day, interactive and adaptable, for ninety-nine cents. Fuck *Granta*... thanks, *Granta*.

I was busy working on my novel. Then I was drinking chili-flavored vodka with the editor of this magazine, and before I knew it I had agreed to write a sequel to “How to Write about Africa.” Okay, I said, absentmindedly. So, here we are.

http://bidoun.org/articles/how-to-write-about-africa-ii
IB Language and Literature

Part 1: Language in Cultural Context

Topic: Language and Identity
Welcome to Senior School

Encouraging excellence as young men explore their unique talents, skills and leadership potential.
IB Language and Literature

Part 1: Language in Cultural Context

Topic: Language and Identity

Taboo Language

That’s so gay  

What’s the harm in casually using the phrase ‘that’s so gay’? Nothing particularly sinister is meant by it and no offence is usually intended. 1,500,000 tweets give a different impression. Greg Dickson writes that homophobic language negatively affects gay people regardless of speaker’s intentions:

I’ve been hoping it’s just a passing phase but apparently not. A mate of mine Facebooked recently that while leaving his gym he overheard a young woman on her phone casually use the phrase ‘that’s so gay’. Good on my mate for then chiding her for this unnecessary use of homophobic language but it’s unfortunate to know that hearing this stuff leaves enough emotional residue (yes, he’s gay) for him to have to vent his frustrations on Facebook and question, “Why is the term ‘that’s so gay’ socially acceptable?”

Is it socially acceptable? I don’t think it is at all. But there is a decent-sized minority of people who don’t realise that language like this is inappropriate or might realise it but are too lazy to change their speech behaviour. (This linguistic research shows some young Australians think it’s fine while others realise it’s not good but “find it hard not to use it”). I think the use of ‘that’s so gay’ can be put down to ignorance. It’s clearly more prevalent among young people. I can only assume (and hope) that as people who use this phrase age and mature and gain some life experience (e.g. get to know some gay people) it will gradually be dropped from their vocabulary.

I’ve seen this happen a few times myself, where people who know I’m gay suddenly reconsider their language use. I was once having dinner with old family friends and a 20-something I’ve known for years (but not that well) dropped the ‘gay = bad’ adjective. It took him a microsecond to realise that it was poor form to say that in my company and then said quietly with some embarrassment, “I probably shouldn’t say that”. A similar thing happened with another friend. One of the first times we hung out together, a ‘so gay’ comment slipped out and, not knowing her too well but thinking she was nice, I let it slide. A few weeks later it happened again. By then I could make a joke out of it and we both had a laugh and I never heard her say it again. I can only assume that when people like this start having experiences where they are required to consider the impact of using such language then
it will filter out into their general language use – that even when there are no gay people around, they now have an emotional trigger associated with the phrase that may limit its acceptability and use.

But what’s the harm? Most people who use this term use it innocently. They’re not bad people. It’s just something they say and obviously they’re not using it in direct reference to homosexuality. The harm is that it makes gay people feel like crap. Gay people hear homophobic language regularly and we’re well aware that it gets used all the time. We know most of it is used flippantly but nonetheless, it’s a constant reminder that we’re different, that many perceive us negatively, that we are made fun of, that we’re something that most people don’t want to be. And given that most people who say ‘that’s so gay’ are young people talking to other young people, it can be further claimed that it makes young gay people in particular feel like crap. Not a good thing for this more vulnerable group to have to put up with.

To get a sense of how homophobic language can affect you, check out NoHomophobesDotCom. The website was created by the University of Alberta to raise awareness of the issue. It features a live stream of tweets that use the terms ‘faggot’, ‘so gay’ ‘no homo’ and ‘dyke’. The tweets fly by, painting a picture of how it feels to be constantly aware that this sort of language is around you. ‘Faggot’ has been tweeted publicly over 4 million times since July and ‘so gay’ has just clocked 1.5 million tweets. Most heterosexual visitors to the site will find it thoroughly depressing and will hopefully make even more of an effort to avoid and discourage such language use. Then they’ll go to another website or back to their work. When gay visitors click off the site all we do is go back to the real world version of it.
Please do your bit to reduce the use of homophobic language. On behalf of all gay people, I think I can safely say: we hate it.

*Crikey is an independent news website featuring commentary on politics, media, business, culture and technology.*
Language is Important: Recognize the Person First, Then the Disability or Difference

When someone seems different from you, it’s pretty easy to focus on what sets them apart. Maybe it’s how they look or how they speak.

But think about it:

- Do differences define the person?
- Suppose you were the only one who failed a math test.
- Would you want to be called “the math failure”?
- Wouldn’t it be more accurate to say you were “the person who failed the math test yesterday”?
- Your grade isn’t who you are; it’s one small thing about you.

Every person is made up of many characteristics and abilities—but few people want to be identified only by those things. That’s true whether it’s their grade on a math test, their ability to play tennis, or their love for fried onions.

Everyone is a person first.

It’s like that with disabilities, too.
Here are some cool ways to “put the person first” when talking about people with disabilities.

1. **Speak of the person first, then the disability.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Instead of this</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>person with a disability</td>
<td>disabled or handicapped person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people with disabilities</td>
<td>the disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person with cognitive delays</td>
<td>mentally retarded person or retard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person who is deaf or hard of hearing</td>
<td>deaf person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person with Down syndrome (not “Down’s”)</td>
<td>“Retard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person with a physical disability</td>
<td>crippled person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Emphasize abilities, not limitations.**
Focus on what someone can do, not what they cannot do.

3. **Don’t give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability.**
Over-focusing on someone can be patronizing.

4. **Remember that choice and independence are important.**
Let the person do or speak for him or herself as much as possible.

5. **Know the difference between a disability and a handicap.**
A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person’s ability to walk, hear, talk, learn, etc. A handicap is a situation or barrier imposed by society, the environment, or oneself.

The next time you see a person in a wheelchair unable to go up the stairs in a building, what will you see first? The wheelchair? The physical problem? The person?
Will you say, “There is a handicapped person unable to find a ramp?” Or will you say “There is a person with a disability who is handicapped by an inaccessible building?”

So, if you do all that and “put the person first,” do you know what people will say? “Now there goes a person who is way cool.”

“That’s Retarded”

Have you ever heard something silly, unfamiliar, awkward, or misunderstood described as “retarded?”

A lot of people use this word, but many don’t really understand what it means. Did you know that “retarded” is simply derived from an old-fashioned medical term for people with intellectual disabilities? Yeah, it was mental retardation. It was just a word used to describe a medical condition like “asthma or pneumonia.”

But now, the word has morphed into something negative and offensive. It’s used to insult someone or something considered to be lesser in some way. And while the people who use it might not even know about its history, it’s still linked to people with disabilities. That means that when someone uses the word “retarded” as an insult, it is degrading to people with disabilities.

The way we speak helps us and the people around us shape their opinions. If you use “retarded” to refer to things you dislike or make fun of, you’re creating an environment that perpetuates negative stigmas about people with disabilities. You’d probably never directly call a person with a disability those things, but every time you use “retarded” as a synonym for something negative, you’re putting them down.

Now that you know more about the history of the word “retarded,” how will you react next time someone uses it around you?

It’s not easy to be the person who says something isn’t right. It takes courage to say something to your friends that may not be what they want to hear. But it’s important that people understand the power of words and their impact. You and your friends can lead this change. Stop using the “r-word” today.

“That’s So Gay”

Have you ever heard someone use the word “gay” to insult someone else? Sometimes it’s meant to comment on someone’s sexuality, but other times “gay” is used as another word for “stupid,” “uncool,” or “bad.” Some people think that it’s no big deal to use “gay” as an insult – that it’s just a word. But using the word this way can be extremely harmful.

Imagine that you were someone who identified as LGBTQ. How would you feel if you heard someone use “gay” as an insult? Your identity is being used to put down someone else. It’s like if you were from America, and you heard someone say, “What a stupid thing to do; that’s so American.” It would hurt a lot. It might make you hesitate to tell people that you’re American, because obviously if they use it as an insult, they don’t think it’s a positive trait. Using “gay” as an insult implies that being gay is a bad
thing, something no one would want to be. Using someone’s identity to insult another can be really hurtful, and it certainly doesn’t create an accepting community.

What does this have to do with person-first language? It shows that person-first language doesn’t just apply to disabilities. It’s a way to think about other people, by always remembering that they aren’t defined by any one of their characteristics. A person isn’t defined by their race, sexuality, gender, ability, etc.; every person is a unique combination of characteristics. It’s important to remember that even if someone has opinions that differ from yours, they’re still a person – and they still deserve respect.

_______________________________________________

Take the pledge together against bullying. United for kindness, acceptance and inclusion.

Your support can mean one less student being bullied, one more person speaking out, or one more kid knowing that somebody cares.

Thank you for making a difference.
Task:

As practice for the Written Task and the Further Oral Activity that you will complete for Part 1 of the IB Language and Literature course, you will be required to show an understanding of the relationship between language and the concept of identity.

You will be required to write a detailed proposal that outlines key elements of the task such as the primary source or sources that you will draw on as inspiration for your creative response or oral presentation, the ideas that you will explore in your WT and FOA that focus on the topic of Language and Identity, the text type and the language that you will use.

Please use that attached pro forma to develop and organise your ideas

As a class you will have:

2 periods: 1 period plan your response and seek assistance, if necessary, and 1 period to write your Written Task and Rationale.

You may also work on this task during prep if you need to.

Written Task proposal: 200 - 300 words

Further Oral Activity proposal: 200 - 300 words
**IB Language and Literature**  
**Further Oral Activity planning sheet**

**Name:**
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**TASK:**

The FOA is expected to address the relationship between language, meaning and context.

There must be a clear link between the activity and the texts that have been studied in class.

**HIGHLIGHT PART and TOPIC**

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<td>Propaganda</td>
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**Primary resource:**
________________________________________________________________________

**Purpose:**
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**Form of delivery:**
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**Idea/s being explored in relation to the topic and text:**
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**Language and register being used:**
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
**IB Language and Literature**

**Written Task 1 planning sheet**

**Name:**

**TASK:**

The WT is expected to demonstrate an imaginative way of exploring an aspect of material studied in the course. It must show a critical engagement with an aspect of a text or topic.

**HIGHLIGHT PART and TOPIC**

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**Idea/s being explored in relation to the topic and text:**


**Language and register being used:**


