English Glossary

Adverb

A word class that may modify a verb (for example, ‘beautifully’ in ‘She sings beautifully’), an adjective (for example ‘really’ in ‘He is really interesting’) or another adverb (for example ‘very’ in ‘She walks very slowly’). In English many adverbs have an –ly ending.

Alliteration

The recurrence of the same consonant sounds at the beginning of words in close succession, for example ripe, red raspberry.

Clause

A clause creates a message through the combination of a subject (the element being identified for comment) and its predicate (the comment about the subject which contains a verb), for example ‘I (subject) shall eat my dinner (predicate).’

There are different kinds of clauses. The clause that is essential to any sentence is an independent (or main) clause.

Compound and complex sentences contain more than one clause.

A clause that provides additional information to the main clause but cannot stand alone is a dependent (or subordinate) clause. For example:

* 'When the sun goes down (dependent), I shall eat my dinner (main).'
* ‘My time is limited (main) because I am reading Shakespeare.’ (dependent)

An embedded clause occurs within the structure of another clause often as a qualifier to a noun group, for example:

* ‘The man who came to dinner (embedded) is my brother.’

Complex sentence

Contains an independent (or main) clause and one or more dependent (or subordinate) clauses. The dependent clause is joined to the independent clause through subordinating conjunctions like ‘when’, ‘while’, and ‘before’. A complex sentence will not make sense without an independent clause. In the following example, the dependent clause is underlined and the conjunction is in bold: ‘**When** the sun came out, we all went outside.’

Compound sentence

A sentence consisting of two or more independent (main) clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions like ‘and’, ‘or’ ‘but’ and ‘so’. Each clause is coordinated or linked so as to give each one equal status as a message. In the following example, the coordinating conjunction is underlined and verbs are highlighted: ‘The sun **emerged** and we all **went** outside’.

Comprehension strategies

Strategies and processes used by readers to make meaning from texts. Key comprehension strategies include:

* activating and using prior knowledge
* identifying literal information explicitly stated in the text
* making inferences based on information in the text and their own prior knowledge
* predicting likely future events in a text
* visualising by creating mental images of elements in a text
* summarising and organising information from a text
* integrating ideas and information in texts
* critically reflecting on content, structure, language and images used to construct meaning in a text.

Conjunction

A word that joins other words, phrases or clauses together in logical relationships such as addition, time, cause or comparison. There are two major types of conjunctions for linking messages: coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions.

* coordinating conjunctions are words that link words, phrases and clauses in such a way that the elements have equal status in meaning. They include conjunctions like ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘but’:
* ‘Mum and dad are here’ (joining words)
* ‘We visited some of our friends but not all of them’ (joining noun groups)
* ‘Did I fall asleep and miss my dinner?’ (joining clauses)
* subordinating conjunctions introduce certain kinds of dependent clauses;
* ‘that’ simply marks declaratives, for example ‘I know that he is ill’
* ‘whether’ (or ‘if’ in the sense in which it is equivalent to whether) marks interrogatives, ‘I wonder whether/if she's right’
* ‘while’, ‘after’, ‘when’, ‘because’, ‘if’ (in the conditional sense) serve to mark the kind of dependent clause it introduces: for example one of time, reason, condition, ‘We went home after/when the meeting ended’, ‘They stayed in because it was raining’, ‘I'll do it if you pay me’

Connective

Words which link paragraphs and sentences in logical relationships of time, cause and effect, comparison or addition. Connectives relate ideas to one another and help to show the logic of the information. Connectives are important resources for creating cohesion in texts. The logical relationships can be grouped as follows:

* temporal – to indicate time or sequence ideas (for example ‘first’, ‘second’, ‘next’)
* causal – to show cause and effect (for example ‘because’, ‘for’ , ‘s o’)
* additive – to add information (for example ‘also’, ‘besides’, ‘furthermore’)
* comparative – for example ‘rather’, ‘alternatively’
* conditional/concessive – to make conditions or concession (for example ‘yet’, ‘although’)
* clarifying – for example ‘in fact’, ‘for example’

Decode

The process of working out the meaning of words in a text. In decoding, readers draw on contextual, vocabulary, grammatical and phonic knowledge. Readers who decode effectively combine these forms of knowledge fluently and automatically, using meaning to recognise when they make an error, and self-correct.

Digraph

Two letters that represent a single sound. Vowel digraphs are two vowels (‘oo’, ‘ea’). Consonant digraphs have two consonants (‘s h’, ‘th’). Vowel/consonant digraphs have one vowel and one consonant (‘er’, ‘ow’).

Ellipsis

* The omission of words that repeat what has gone before; these terms are simply understood (for example ‘The project will be innovative. To be involved will be exciting.’ ‒ ‘in the project’ is ellipsed in the second sentence).
* Through a related resource called substitution, a word like ‘one’ is substituted for a noun or noun group as in ‘There are lots of apples in the bowl. Can I have one?’ (‘of them’).
* A cohesive resource that binds text together and is commonly used in dialogue for speed of response and economy of effort, for example (do you) ‘Want a drink?’ / ‘Thanks, I would.’ (like a drink).
* The use of three dots. This form of punctuation (also known as points of ellipsis) can be used to indicate such things as surprise or suspense in a narrative text or that there is more to come in an on-screen menu.

Etymological knowledge

Knowledge of the origins and development of the form and meanings of words and how the meanings and forms have changed over time.

Evaluative language

Positive or negative language that judges the worth of something. It includes language to express feelings and opinions, to make judgments about aspects of people such as their behaviour, and to assess the quality of objects such as literary works. Evaluations can be made explicit (for example through the use of adjectives as in: ‘She’s a lovely girl’, ‘He’s an awful man’, or ‘How wonderful!’), however, they can be left implicit (for example ‘He dropped the ball when he was tackled’, or ‘Mary put her arm round the child while she wept.’)

Figurative language

Words or phrases used in a way that differs from the expected or everyday usage. They are used in a nonliteral way for particular effect (e.g. simile, metaphor, personification).

Genre

The categories into which texts are grouped. The term has a complex history within literary theory and is often used to distinguish texts on the basis of their subject matter (detective fiction, romance, science fiction, fantasy fiction), form and structure (poetry, novels, short stories).

Graphophonic knowledge

The knowledge of how letters in printed English relate to the sounds of the language.

High frequency sight words

The most common words used in written English text. They are sometimes called ‘irregular words’ or ‘sight words’. Many common or ‘high-frequency’ words in English are not able to be decoded using sound–letter correspondence because they do not use regular or common letter patterns. These words need to be learnt by sight, for example 'come', 'was', 'were', 'one', 'they', 'watch', 'many'.

Homophone

A word identical in pronunciation with another but different in meaning, for example 'bare' and 'bear', 'air' and 'heir'.

Juxtaposition

The placement of two or more ideas, characters, actions, settings, phrases, or words side-by-side for a particular purpose for example to highlight contrast or for rhetorical effect.

Language features

The features of language that support meaning, e.g. sentence structure, vocabulary, illustrations, diagrams, graphics, punctuation, figurative language. Choices in language features and text structures together define a type of text and shape its meaning. These choices vary according to the purpose of a text, its subject matter, audience and mode or medium of production.

Morpheme

The smallest meaningful or grammatical unit in language. Morphemes are not necessarily the same as words. The word ‘cat’ has one morpheme, while the word ‘cats’ has two morphemes: ‘cat’ for the animal and ‘s’ to indicate that there is more than one. Similarly ‘like’ has one morpheme, while ‘dislike’ has two: ‘like’ to describe appreciation and ‘dis’ to indicate the opposite. Morphemes are very useful in helping students work out how to read and spell words.

Morphemic knowledge

Knowledge of morphemes, morphemic processes and the different forms and combinations of morphemes (for example the word ‘unfriendly’ is formed from the stem ‘friend’, the adjective forming suffix ‘ly’ and the negative prefix ‘un’).

Multimodal text

Combination of two or more communication modes, for example print, image and spoken text as in film or computer presentations.

Narrative

A story of events or experiences, real or imagined. In literary theory, narrative includes the story (what is narrated) and the discourse (how it is narrated).

Nominalisation is a way of making a text more compact and is often a feature of texts that contain abstract ideas and concepts.

Noun

A word class used to represent places, people, ideas and things. Nouns can be made plural (for example dog/dogs) and can be marked for possession (for example dog/dog’s). There are different types of nouns including:

* abstract noun refers to an idea, state or quality (for example ‘democracy’, ‘freedom’, ‘courage’, ‘doubt’, ‘success’ and ‘love’)
* concrete noun refers to something that has a physical reality. It may be seen, touched, tasted
* pronoun refers to words like ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘them’, ‘hers’ that are used in place of a noun.

Noun groups

A group of words building on a noun. Noun groups usually consist of an article (‘the’, ‘a’, ‘an’) plus one or more adjectives. They can also include demonstratives (for example ‘this’, ‘those’), possessives (for example ‘my’, ‘Ann's’), quantifiers (for example ‘two’, ‘several’), or classifiers (for example ‘wooden’) before the head noun. These are called pre-modifiers after the noun, phrases and clauses act as post-modifiers following the head noun (for example ‘the girl with the red shirt who was playing soccer’).

Onset and rime

The separate sounds in a syllable or in a one syllable word. In ‘cat’ the onset is /c/and the rime is /at/, in shop the onset is /sh/ and the rime is /op/. Word families can be constructed using common onsets such as /t/ in top, town, tar, tap, or common rimes such as /at/ in cat, pat, sat, rat. These are very useful for teaching spelling.

Personification

The description of an inanimate object as though it were a person or living thing.

Phoneme

The smallest unit of sound in a word. The word ‘i s’ has two phonemes /i/ and /s/. The word ‘ship’ has three phonemes /sh/, /i/, /p/.

Phonic

The term used to refer to the ability to identify the relationships between letters and sounds when reading and spelling.

Phonological awareness

A broad concept that relates to the sounds of spoken language. It includes understandings about words, rhyme, syllables and onset and rime. NOTE: the term ‘sound’ relates to the sound we make when we say a letter or word, not to the letter in print. A letter may have more than one sound, such as the letter ‘a’ in ‘was’, ‘can’ or ‘father’, and a sound can be represented by more than one letter such as the sound /k/ in ‘cat’ and ‘walk’. The word ‘ship’ had three sounds /sh/, /i/, /p/, but has four letters ‘s’, ‘h’, ‘i’, ‘p’. Teachers should use the terms ‘sound’ and ‘letter’ accurately to help students clearly distinguish between the two items.

Phonological knowledge

Information about the sounds of language and letter-sound relationships (when comprehending a text), for example single sounds, blends.

Predictable text

Texts that are easily navigated and read by beginning readers because they contain highly regular features such as familiar subject matter, a high degree of repetition, consistent placement of text and illustrations, simple sentences, familiar vocabulary and a small number of sight words.

Prediction

An informed presumption about something that might happen. Predicting at the text level can include working out what a text might contain by looking at the cover, or working out what might happen next in a narrative. Predicting at the sentence level is identifying what word is likely to come next in a sentence.

Prefix

A prefix is a meaningful element added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning.

Prepositional phrases

Prepositions are positional words, for example:’ below ‘, ‘for’, ‘down’, ‘above’, ‘to’, ‘near’, ‘under, ’since’, ‘between’, ‘with’, ‘before’, ‘after’, ‘into’, ‘from’, ‘beside’, ‘without’, ‘out’, ‘during’, ‘past’, ‘over’, ‘until’, ‘through’, ‘off’, ‘on’, ‘across’, ‘by’, ‘in’, ‘around.’ Prepositional phrases are units of meaning within a clause that contain a preposition, for example ’She ran into the garden’, ‘He is available from nine o’clock’.

Sentence

A unit of written language consisting of one or more clauses that are grammatically linked. A written sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark. There are different types of sentences:

* simple sentence – has the form of a single independent clause (for example ‘Mary is beautiful.’ ‘The ground shook.’ ‘Take a seat.’)
* compound sentence – contains two or more clauses that are coordinated or linked in such a way as to give each clause equal status. In the following example ‘and’ is the coordinating conjunction: ‘We went to the movies and bought an ice cream.’
* complex sentence – contains an independent (or main) clause and one or more dependent (or subordinate) clauses. The dependent clause is joined to the independent clause through subordinating conjunctions like ‘when’, ‘while’ and ‘before’ as in the following examples: ‘We all went outside when the sun came out,’ and ‘Because I am reading Shakespeare, my time is limited.’

Simple sentence

Contains one clause and expresses a complete thought. It has a subject and a verb and may also have an object or complement.

Most personal pronouns have a different form when the subject of a finite clause (I, he, she, etc.) than when the object (me, him, her), for example ‘She won the race’, not ‘Her won the race’. In the present tense, and the past tense with the verb ‘be’, the verb agrees with the subject in person and number, for example ‘Her son lives with her’ and ‘Her sons live with her’

Suffix

A meaningful element added to the end of a word to change its meaning.

Syllabification

The process of dividing words into syllables.

Syllable

A single unit of pronunciation.

Tense

A verb form that locates the event described by the verb in time (for example ‘Sarah laughs’ is present tense, ‘Sarah laughed’ is past tense).

Text

The means for communication. Their forms and conventions have developed to help us communicate effectively with a variety of audiences for a range of purposes. Texts can be written, spoken or multimodal and in print or digital/online forms. Multimodal texts combine language with other systems for communication, such as print text, visual images, soundtrack and spoken word as in film or computer presentation media.

Text structure

The ways information is organised in different types of texts for example, chapter headings, sub headings, table of contents, indexes and glossaries, overviews, introductory and concluding paragraphs, sequencing, topic sentences, taxonomies, cause and effect. Choices in text structures and language features together define a text type and shape its meaning. See language features.

Theme

* refers to the main idea or message of a text, or
* grammatical theme indicates importance both within a clause and across a text . In a clause the theme comes in first position and indicates what the sentence is about. Theme is important at different levels of text organisation. The topic sentence serves as the theme for the points raised in a paragraph. A pattern of themes contributes to the method of development for the text as a whole.

Types of texts

Classifications according to the particular purposes they are designed to achieve. These purposes influence the characteristic features the texts employ. In general, in the Australian Curriculum: English, texts can be classified as belonging to one of three types: imaginative, informative or persuasive, although it is acknowledged that these distinctions are neither static nor watertight and particular texts can belong to more than one category.

*Imaginative texts* – texts whose primary purpose is to entertain through their imaginative use of literary elements. They are recognised for their form, style and artistic or aesthetic value. These texts include novels, traditional tales, poetry, stories, plays, fiction for young adults and children including picture books and multimodal texts such as film.

*Informative texts* – texts whose primary purpose is to provide information. They include texts which are culturally important in society and are valued for their informative content, as a store of knowledge and for their value as part of everyday life. These texts include explanations and descriptions of natural phenomena, recounts of events, instructions and directions, rules and laws and news bulletins.

*Persuasive texts* – whose primary purpose is to put forward a point of view and persuade a reader, viewer or listener. They form a significant part of modern communication in both print and digital environments. They include advertising, debates, arguments, discussions, polemics and influential essays and articles.

Verb

Tell us what kind of situation is described in a clause – in particular, whether it is a happening or a state – but they often need other elements to locate the situation in time, to indicate polarity (positive or negative), aspect (whether the situation is completed or not) or modality (the assessment of the speaker about the situation)

* doing for example ‘She climbed the ladder’
* being for example ‘The koala is an Australian mammal’
* having for example ‘the house has several rooms’
* thinking for example ‘She believes in her work’
* saying for example ‘The prime minister spoke to the media’

Verbs are essential to clause structure and change their form according to tense (present tense or past tense), to person (first, second or third) and number (singular and plural).

Verb groups

Groups of words that are centred on a verb and consist of one or more verbs. The main verb in a verb group often needs auxiliary (or helping) verbs to indicate features like time (past or present), polarity (positive or negative), aspect (whether the action is completed or not) and modality (the assessment of the speaker about the action). All the following verbs contribute to the meaning of the verb group as a whole: ‘the girl played soccer’, ‘the girl was playing/had been playing soccer’, ‘the girl was not playing soccer’, ‘the girl could have been playing soccer’.

Visual features

Visual components of a text such as placement, salience, framing, representation of action or reaction, shot size, social distance and camera angle.