Part 1: Language in cultural context

In this part of the course students are given the opportunity to explore how language develops in specific cultural contexts, how it impacts on the world, and how language shapes both individual and group identity. Topics for stimulating approaches to the unit are listed below, each of which implies a range of vocabulary and writing styles with which students should become familiar.

Students studying this part of the course should pay particular attention to the role of language in relation to the many areas involved in the construction of meaning and understanding of particular issues in the world.

The study of language in cultural context aims to enable students to meet the following learning outcomes.

- **Analyse how audience and purpose affect the structure and content of texts.** Areas to be considered could include:
  - the use of persuasive language in political speeches
  - the features of SMS messages
  - postcolonial rereadings of texts.
  - **Analyse the impact of language changes.** Points to be considered could include:
    - the impact of electronic communication on meaning
    - the influence of government policy
    - the emergence of new vocabulary from the language of groups (for example, young people)
    - the disappearance of vocabulary and of languages themselves.
  - **Demonstrate an awareness of how language and meaning are shaped by culture and context.** Points to be considered could include:
    - the ways in which jargon and professional language are used
    - the ways in which language affirms identity
    - the status given to standard and non-standard forms of the language
    - the status of minority languages in multilingual societies.

The above learning outcomes are achieved through the study of texts in relation to some of the suggested topics listed below.

- **Gender** (inequality, constructions of masculinity and femininity)
- **Sexuality** (its construction through language)
- **Language and communities** (nation/region, subcultures)
- **Language and the individual** (multilingualism/bilingualism, language profile/identity)
- **Language and power** (linguistic imperialism, propaganda)
- **History and evolution of the language** (disappearing and revival languages, Creoles)
- **Translation** (what is added and what is lost)
- **Language and knowledge** (science and technology, argot and jargon)
- **Language and social relations** (social and professional status, race)
- **Language and belief** (religious discourse, mythology)
- **Language and taboo** (swearing, political correctness)