

<b>Institution:</b> University of York		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26 - Modern Languages and Linguistics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Enhancing teachers' confidence and student outcomes through resources to support updated curriculum for English Language A level		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Paul Drew	Professor	Jun 2018 - present
William Haddican	Lecturer	Oct 2005 - Mar 2013
Tamar Keren-Portnoy	Senior Lecturer	Jan 2007 - present
Paul Kerswill	Professor	Jan 2012 - present
Carmen Llamas	Professor	Oct 2007 - present
Dom Watt	Senior Lecturer	Oct 2007 - present
Eytan Zweig	Lecturer	Oct 2007 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> Aug 2013-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Through <i>York English Language Toolkit</i> workshops, a website and a MOOC (Massive Online Open Course), teachers and students have gained access to up-to-date linguistic concepts and methods for A level work, enhancing student confidence, outcomes and aspirations. York research across all core areas of the English Language A level curriculum has supported teachers' continuing professional development and subject engagement, allowing them to provide stretching materials which enable students to reach higher mark bands. Accessible presentation of research has facilitated a key aim of the revised 2015 AQA UK specification, namely to engage students with the latest developments in linguistics. Related consultancy informed changes to the Cambridge International specification to include an updated set of linguistic terms and topics, suited to a global audience.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Each highlighted research output [3.1-3.6] represents a body of related research by an individual and/or research team which contributed to the impacts below. The six papers also form a representative sample of the 18 research case studies on the <i>York English Language Toolkit</i> website, encompassing the core areas of the English Language A level curriculum: Language Use [3.1], Language Acquisition [3.2], Language Diversity [3.3-3.5] and Language Change [3.6]. Each Toolkit case study provides a text or video summary of a highlighted research paper, drawing out key concepts and/or methods relevant to the A level curriculum, supported by downloadable classroom materials. It is a strength of the chosen studies that they represent the diversity of work in language use, acquisition and variation which are central to the A level curriculum.</p> <p>Drew &amp; Ferraz [3.1] summarise the key features of talk-in-interaction in the courtroom, highlighting Drew's own prior research on the similarities and differences between naturally occurring talk and courtroom spoken interaction. Excerpts from trial transcripts are used to demonstrate the general key concept that language is used to perform social actions, as well as the specificities of the courtroom context. Through close reading of transcripts using the techniques of Conversation Analysis, they show that those asking the questions (lawyers) use identifiable strategies to support or undermine those who answer (witnesses and defendants). [Core area: Use]</p> <p>Keren-Portnoy et al [3.2] created a take-home story book for care-givers to read to their infants, then tested babies in the lab for recognition of words presented in isolation or mid-sentence in the book; they found that babies pay more attention to isolated words in language input than to words in running speech. The research highlights the key concept of a difference between input and intake in the acquisition process, and introduces a method of exposure to experimental stimuli which increases ecological validity in infant studies of intake. [Core area: Acquisition]</p> <p>Llamas et al [3.3] propose a novel experimental method - the Social Category Association Task - which measures the strength of association within a speech community of a linguistic form with a particular social group or category, illustrated with data from the Scottish-English border. The</p>		

research argues for careful delimitation of the key concept of sociolinguistic salience, and provides a novel tool for its measurement adapting social psychology techniques. [Core area: Diversity]

Research involving Watt, who collaborated on design and execution of the study and helped to prepare the findings for publication [3.4], reports innovative experimental methods used to investigate accent bias in four studies: attitudes to accent labels, attitudes to real voices in mock job interview answers, attitudes to accents in a mock hiring exercise and interventions to combat bias. The resulting research successfully replicated prior studies yielding an example of the key concept of age grading in UK language attitudes, as opposed to language change in apparent time. [Core area: Diversity]

Kerswill [3.5] used a mixed methods approach to document use of the term 'Jafaican' by the media to refer to the multi-ethnic youth speech style which linguists call Multicultural London English (MLE). Through quantitative analysis of a large text corpus of newspapers, and discourse analysis of identified text samples, the research charts the rise and fall of both terms across time, and their enregisterment as indexes of particular social categories and traits. [Core area: Diversity]

Haddican et al [3.6] use controlled judgement task experiments with participants of different age groups to show that the set of contexts in which 'be like' quotatives are accepted has widened over apparent time. 'Be like' quotatives now carry an eventive meaning alongside their original stative meaning, evidenced also in reduced lexical frequency of relevant synonyms. [Core area: Change]

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 **Drew, P.** & Ferraz, F. (2020). Order in Court: Talk-in-interaction in the judicial process. In M. Coulthard, A. Johnson & R. Sousa-Silva (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Forensic Linguistics* (2nd edition). London: Routledge, pp. 177-191. [DOI](#)
- 3.2 **Keren-Portnoy, T.**, Vihman, M., & Lindop Fisher, R. (2019). Do infants learn from isolated words? An ecological study. *Language Learning and Development*, 15(1): 47–63. [DOI](#) (British Academy Role of isolated words in word learning, PI Vihman, CI Keren-Portnoy, Apr 14-Mar 16 GBP10,000). \*+^
- 3.3 **Llamas, C.**, **Watt, D.**, & MacFarlane, A. E. (2016). Estimating the relative sociolinguistic salience of segmental variables in a dialect boundary zone. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7: 1163. [DOI](#) (ESRC Linguistic variation and national identities on the Scottish-English border, PI Watt, CI Llamas, Jan 08-Aug 11 GBP489,747). \*+^
- 3.4 Sharma, D., Levon, E., **Watt, D.**, Ye, Y., & Cardoso, A. (2019). Methods for the study of accent bias and access to elite professions. *Journal of Language and Discrimination*, 3(2): 150-172. [DOI](#) (ESRC Accent Bias and Fair Access in Britain, PI Erez Levon (QMUL), CI Watt, Sep 17-Aug 20 GBP471,042). \*^
- 3.5 **Kerswill, P.** (2014). The objectification of 'Jafaican': the discursal embedding of Multicultural London English in the British media. In J. Androutsopoulos (Ed.) *Mediatization and Sociolinguistic Change*. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 428-455. [DOI](#) (ESRC Multicultural London English: the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety, PI Kerswill, Oct 07-Dec 10 GBP600,547). ^
- 3.6 **Haddican, W.**, **Zweig, E.**, & Johnson, D. E. (2015). Change in the syntax and semantics of be like quotatives. In T. Biberauer & G. Walkden (Eds.) *Syntax Over Time: Lexical, Morphological and Information-Structural Interactions*. Oxford: OUP. pp. 54-71. [DOI](#)

\*=peer-reviewed journal; +=returned to REF2021; ^=produced with peer-reviewed funding

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

These impacts arise from (1) specific research outputs reframed in accessible format for teachers and students of English Language A level through workshops, classroom materials and an online course, and (2) from the body of research of individuals and teams informing design of the online course and expert consultancy. The engagement activities were led by case study author Sam Hellmuth, working with a wide range of colleagues across the Department.

#### Enhancing teaching practice and students' learning experience; increasing teacher and student confidence

English Language was introduced as an A level subject in 2000 and expanded rapidly; in 2020, 15,053 students sat English Language A level in the UK [[Joint Council for Qualifications Provisional GCE A Level Results](#) June 2020]. A 2006 HEA English Subject Centre report [5.1]

highlighted a specific need for i) accessible professional development opportunities for teachers who deliver English Language A level, who typically have limited training in linguistics, and ii) resources to support transition into Higher Education of students of English Language A level.

To respond to this need, in a series of *York English Language Toolkit* Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops, we have pioneered an approach which fosters knowledge exchange between researchers and teachers, in two ways. Firstly, each York research case study is presented by its author(s), with an opportunity for discussion, so teachers interact with experts in each linguistic sub-field. Secondly, we propose classroom materials on A Level curriculum topics linked to the research, which teachers can freely adapt. Providing our own idea of how to translate the research for the classroom creates common ground for mutual exchange.

Eighteen research case studies [including each of 3.1-3.6] with accompanying open access classroom materials, developed for a series of CPD workshops held between 2014 and 2020, are available through a multimedia website (launched 2019) [[englishlanguagetoolkit.york.ac.uk](http://englishlanguagetoolkit.york.ac.uk)]. The first on-campus one day workshops were regional (e.g. 13 teachers in 2014) but later recruited nationally (29 in 2015 and 35 in 2019) with delegates from as far afield as South Wales. The 2020 workshop ran online and attracted 582 pre-registrations including 546 UK teachers of whom 410 report teaching the AQA specification. Classroom materials and pre-workshop talks were posted in advance and the live webinar was attended by 318 delegates reporting affiliation to a UK school/college [5.2]. 2020 workshop resources have been accessed 3,400 times (ranging from 60-150 per worksheet) and YouTube views of 2020 workshop talks total 937 (to 31/12/20) [5.2]. Evaluation comprises immediate post-workshop surveys and email feedback [5.3], two teacher interviews [5.4] and two surveys run 6 months or more after a workshop [5.5].

Teachers new to the subject who have attended the workshops report increased confidence: “The range of resources on the York website are excellent and have given me the confidence to start teaching English language in September” [5.3]; “I’ve felt more confident about utilising these ideas in the classroom” [5.5]. More experienced teachers also value a chance to update their knowledge: “They get *me* excited, for a start, and it means rather than delivering the same old PowerPoint I say, ‘Oh great, let’s add something in.’ So [students are] getting a broader remit from me as a teacher” [5.4].

Teachers report using the materials to enhance their teaching practice, with effective uptake by students: “[D]uring Covid-lockdown, I was able to share the website and resources easily with my students via Google Classroom. Part of their wider reading homework was to study the materials [on 3.2] and some used the information really effectively in their essays” [5.3]. A Sixth Form College teacher reports: “I’ve already forwarded some of the online resources to students who are looking to extend their wider reading over the summer. [Name] is hoping to study Law and I know that she’s been excited to look at some of the courtroom data in relation to Paul [Drew]’s talk [3.1] and [Name] is looking at accent bias so the discussions from Dom [Watt] [3.4] will ... add an extra dimension to what she knows already” [5.3]. Another teacher noted: “The up to date research on courtroom questioning [3.1] has become an integral part of my teaching of occupational lang, and has helped more than one student with their NEA [Non-exam assessment] investigations” [5.5]. Another teacher reports that a student was inspired by the ‘be like’ case study [3.6] to collect data on inter-generational family use of ‘be like’ for their NEA coursework: “this was just spot on for a language investigation in terms of scope, data size and findings” [5.3].

Comments from teachers who attended several workshops show sustained impact on practice, with evidence of forward knowledge transfer to other teachers: “This year I’ve presented all the workshop materials and ideas ... for training three other English Language A level teachers; with a y12 class I’ve used the material presented by Paul Kerswill on ‘Jafaican’ [3.5] as part of their study of dialect changes and public perception of/attitudes to these” [5.5].

In a survey six months after the 2020 webinar (43 respondents, 13.5% of attendees): 77% report using materials in teaching and 67% report the materials or webinar changed how they teach; 70% report positive outcomes for students as a result [5.5]. Free text comments give concrete examples of: enhanced knowledge, understanding and confidence of teachers and/or of students; use of the materials in non-exam coursework; adjustments to teachers’ approach to the A Level course; contributions to enhanced remote learning during Covid lockdown; and inspiration for

students to apply to study linguistics at university [5.5]. One teacher writes: “We have updated our A Level English Language resources on child language development and discourse analysis with handouts and tasks from the talks. This has benefited the students enormously, as they have been able to engage with university level content and research” [5.5].

Building on our experience working with teachers, in 2019 we added a student-facing resource. The FutureLearn Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) *Introduction to Sociolinguistics: Accents, Attitudes and Identity* presents methods and findings of research in language variation and change [3.3-3.5] in a step-by-step format which assumes no prior knowledge of linguistics. It is an accessible self-study tool for A level English Language students, useful also for teachers and the general public. The September 2019 run had 1,137 active learners (defined as a learner who has completed at least one course step), of which 304 (19.6%) were ‘fully participating learners’ (FPL) who completed >90% of the course. The 2020-21 run has 3,766 active learners and 1,113 FPL (21.9%) to date [to 31/12/20], and in the end of course survey (665 responses to 31/12/20) 96% of respondents said they had acquired new knowledge/skills [5.6]. Comments at course completion show that learners who are A level students apply what they have learned to their studies and display renewed confidence to pursue further study: “It was so interesting to learn more in depth about something I am so passionate about and am definitely going to study at university. ... There are several aspects from the course I can take and put into my own English Language A-Level and expand my answers further”; “I am hoping to study Linguistics with Spanish at [Institution], and this is has actually given me a real insight into some of the things I will be looking at. ... I have also been able to make links with a couple of the subject areas I am currently studying (mainly my English language) so that has been a great help” [5.6].

After recommending the Sept 2019 MOOC to a student, a Sixth Form College teacher reports: “One of the reasons she wanted to do [the MOOC] was to get confidence for university debating and discussion, as she’s off to do speech and language therapy. Across the year, her confidence was exponentially higher. She went from a grade C to the strongest piece of NEA [coursework] in the year, which would have been at A\* level. Her mock exam was an A. It was really, really lovely. I think it gave her the confidence - she started doing the wider reading - it was a really good leaping off point for her. And she did start to get that bit of evaluation; that really clicked for her quite early on, which was a real benefit” [5.4]. This college incorporated the MOOC directly into their curriculum: “With the blended learning that we’re doing, it’s going to be written into the scheme of work that they should be working through that” [5.4].

### **Supporting the revised leading UK English Language A level curriculum**

AQA 7702 English Language is the market-leading specification for AS and A level English Language in the UK [5.1]. The current specification was revised in 2015 to meet government requirements and renew subject coverage. Since 2015 we have tailored our CPD materials to the adjusted structure and content of the new AQA specification. Fit to the specification is demonstrated in the Toolkit website ‘index’ page [[englishlanguagetoolkit.york.ac.uk/index](http://englishlanguagetoolkit.york.ac.uk/index)], which was prepared by a teacher consultant and is organised by components of the AQA assessment.

A senior examiner and lead moderator for AQA English Language A/AS level writes: “One of the aims of the 2015 AQA specification was to refresh the content of this course and bring it up to date. AQA wanted to offer links to more recent research and encourage students and teachers to keep abreast of developments in contemporary linguistics and language study, and the York English Language Toolkit has been a key resource in helping teachers of the AQA specification achieve this goal” [5.7]. Comments from teachers confirm that the materials provide ‘stretch’ in ways that closely fit the specification: “I really appreciate the graphs as these are often used by AQA to support questions and also help students to visualise the information. It also shows them ways that they can present their own work in an investigation” [5.3]; “to get into band five, which is the top of our bands, [the students] need to be constantly evaluative, they need to be testing out ideas, and they need to be brave enough to challenge published writers in Paper Two. The ability to do that with real data [from the case studies] is useful for both them and us” [5.4].

Successful translation of research content into students’ assessed work is corroborated by the AQA Senior Examiner: “It is clear that teachers and pupils have used the toolkit very effectively. Material from Toolkit sessions has appeared in various forms of assessed student work, including

exams and NEA investigations. Debates about ‘Jafaican’ (MLE) have been prominent [3.5] in this work, while many students have chosen to look at representations of online identity and research accent and social attitudes [3.3]. The use of such case studies, derived from the toolkit, allowed students to fully explore and engage with the specification. Many of the themes and approaches adopted by students drawing on the case studies are those that allow them to access the higher bands of the mark scheme” [5.7]. They conclude: “The York English Language Toolkit has been an important resource in helping teachers develop their students’ understanding in the course, with up to date research and resources for tackling the revised AS and A Level English Language specification. It has clearly proven popular with teachers and students alike, and has been used by students in assessed work of the highest standards” [5.7].

### **Influencing scope and relevance of international English Language A level curriculum**

Cambridge International 9093 is an international AS/A Level English Language qualification. It was taken in 2018-19 by 27,920 students in 1,164 schools in 104 countries, and in 2019-20 by 27,111 students in 1,036 schools in 103 countries [5.8]. In 2016, Cambridge International commissioned York linguistics researchers to review the content and scope of the AS/A level specifications for English Language (9093). The report [5.9] (authors: Hellmuth, Keren-Portnoy, Kerswill, Sells) was informed by our experience of working with UK teachers, but drew primarily on the body of research by Keren-Portnoy on early child language development [e.g. 3.2] and by Kerswill on the influence of class and ethnicity on language variation and change [e.g. 3.5].

Inspection of the new specification published in 2018 shows that our recommended changes to scope and relevance were taken up [5.10]. The Development Manager in the Qualifications Development team at *Cambridge Assessment International Education* confirms: “[The York] report played a significant role in shaping our understanding of linguistics and the skill of data and language analysis. As a result of the report, we have made a number of changes to the syllabus to better reflect the progression for students entering university in order to undertake a course in English or Linguistics. These changes include: inclusion of linguistic elements within the subject content for Paper 1 and Paper 2 ...; addition of many linguistic terms such as phonology and morphology for Paper 1 and Paper 2; addition of a new Section A in Paper 3 on Language change ....; amendment to the Child Language Acquisition section from it being very broad and covering years 0-18 to now concentrating on a shorter time period of years 0-8 ...; change in title to Section A within Paper 4 - it is now called English in the World rather than English as a Global Language” [5.8]. The Development Manager concludes: “We believe that the revised syllabus will provide greater progression for students wishing to study English or Linguistics at undergraduate level at University, as well as introducing students to new and relevant skills such as data analysis, and exciting and engaging topics such as Language change” [5.8].

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Bleiman, B. & Webster, L. (2006). *English at A Level: A Guide for Lecturers in Higher Education*, Egham: English Subject Centre. [URL](#)
- 5.2 York English Language Toolkit 2020 registration, click-through and video view reports.
- 5.3 York English Language Toolkit 2015/2019/2020 Workshop Feedback (free text comments in post-workshop and website feedback surveys, and emails received from teachers).
- 5.4 Transcripts of interviews with teachers [Sixth Form College Teacher/Voluntary Aided School Teacher] (19 August 2020).
- 5.5 York English Language Toolkit Follow-Up Surveys (June 2016 and January 2021).
- 5.6 Introduction to Sociolinguistics Accents, Attitudes and Identity Stats dashboard FutureLearn Course Creator [data to 01.12.19 & 31.12.20] and Step 4.15 End of course round up: free text public comments [retrieved 16.09.19-1.12.19].
- 5.7 Testimonial, AQA English Language A level Senior Examiner/Lead Moderator.
- 5.8 Testimonial, Development Manager, Qualifications Development team, Cambridge Assessment International Education.
- 5.9 Department of Language and Linguistic Science, University of York (2016) Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language (9093): Assessment and Review.
- 5.10 Cambridge Assessment International Education (2018) Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language 9093: For examination in June and November 2021, 2022 and 2023. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate.