



Do Now: Write down the first word that comes to mind for each identity.

• **Stretch it: *What gender did you imagine? Why?***

1. A leader
2. A nurse
3. A mechanic
4. A Teacher



• Today we will focus on the idea that **language carries assumptions** about gender roles.

Course Overview

Welcome to A-Level English Language

Today we are going to focus on two aspects of the course:

- ❖ How gender and sexuality affect spoken language choices. (P2 diversity)
- ❖ The representation of gender and sexuality. (P1 Q1/2)

A Level

- (1) **Language, the Individual and Society** (40%) 2.5 hours
 - A. Text variations and representations (3 questions, 1 on each text (25 marks each) and 1 comparison (20 marks))
 - B. Child language development (1 question from a choice of 2; from written, spoken or multi-modal language (30 marks))
- (2) **Language Diversity and Change** (40%) 2.5 hours
 - A. Language diversity (gender, occupation, accent, dialect etc.) *OR* Language change (1 question from a choice of 2 (30 marks))
 - B. Language discourses (1 analytical essay about language attitudes in two texts (40 marks); 1 opinion article about both texts (30 marks))
- (3) **Language in Action** (non-exam assessment)
 - A. Language investigation (10%)
 - B. Original writing and commentary (10%)

- **Gendered language:** e.g., “bossy” vs. “assertive”, “hysterical” vs. “passionate”.
- **Marked terms:** e.g., “female doctor”, “male nurse”.
- **Semantic derogation:** how words for women often become negative over time (e.g., “mistress” vs. “master”).
- **Pronouns and identity:** the role of inclusive language (e.g., they/them pronouns).

Why Study Language and Gender?

How does gender affect spoken language choices?

Home > Videos > Professor Deborah Cameron on Language and Gender



Professor Deborah Cameron on Language and Gender

Why are people so interested in linguistic differences between men and women?

Professor Deborah Cameron discusses Language and Gender.

Video Clips: 12

Language





Women's Language Theory:

Robyn Lakoff argued that women have a different way of speaking from men — a way of speaking that both reflects and produces a subordinate position in society. Women's language, according to Lakoff, is rife with such devices as mitigators (sort of, I think) and inessential qualifiers (really happy, so beautiful).



Deborah Tannen's difference theory argues that men often use language to assert dominance, while women tend to use language to establish rapport and build relationships.

Does our data support this research?



Features of Women's Language
Which features does Dina Asher Smith include in her utterance?

- Hedging (such as 'sort of', 'I guess', etc. ...)
- Politeness. ...
- Tag questions. ...
- Emotional emphasis. ...
- Empty adjectives. ...
- Correct grammar and pronunciation. ...
- Lack of humor. ...
- Direct quotations

Features of Men's Language
Which features does Adam Gemili include in his utterance?

- Report talk – focus less on feelings and more on information, facts, knowledge and competence.
- Instrumental – report to get things done, solve problems, define status: “Finish that proposal by Monday”.
- Assertive, certain, direct and authoritative – they use statements of fact rather than opinion: “That report is due on Monday” rather than “I think that report is due on Monday”.
- Dominance or control of the conversation for gaining power.

Post- Modern Approach: What is Gender?

Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity:

- Gender is not a fixed identity but a repeated performance shaped by language and social norms.
- Postmodernism sees identity as fluid, fragmented, and constructed.

Job Advert for Remixing

- “We’re looking for a confident, assertive man to lead our sales team and drive results.”

Remix this advert so it is suitable for:

- a. Women only
- b. Mixed gender applicants

Gendered assumption about leadership.

Lexical choices like “assertive” often coded as masculine.

Emma Watson: 2014 speech at the United Nations launching the HeForShe campaign.



Annotate:

- Personal pronouns
- Anecdote
- Repetition
- Lexical (word) choices
- Contrast
- Tone
- Audience Awareness
- Discourse Structure

“I started questioning gender-based assumptions a long time ago. When I was 8, I was confused at being called ‘bossy,’ because I wanted to direct the plays we would put on for our parents—but the boys were not. When at 14, I started to be sexualized by certain elements of the media. When at 15, my girlfriends started dropping out of their sports teams because they didn’t want to appear ‘muscly.’ When at 18, my male friends were unable to express their feelings.”



Annotatable Features in the Speech Excerpt

1. Personal Pronouns

“I”, “my”, “we”, “our”: Creates a personal, inclusive tone and builds rapport with the audience.

Encourages identification and solidarity.

2. Anecdote

Personal stories from different ages (8, 14, 15, 18) show the **developmental impact** of gendered expectations.

Makes abstract issues relatable and emotionally resonant.

3. Parallelism / Repetition

Repetition of “**When I was...**” structures the speech rhythmically and emphasizes the **progression of gendered experiences**.

Aids memorability and rhetorical impact.

4. Lexical Choices

Words like “**bossy,**” “**sexualized,**” “**muscly,**” “**unable to express**” carry strong connotations and reflect **gendered language norms**.

Opportunity to discuss **semantic fields** and **loaded language**.

5. Contrast

Implied contrast between how boys and girls are treated (e.g., boys not being called “bossy”).

Highlights gender bias and double standards.

6. Tone

Reflective, sincere, and persuasive.

Students can explore how tone is shaped by lexis, syntax, and delivery.

7. Audience Awareness

Delivered at the UN, aimed at a global audience.

Uses inclusive language to appeal to both men and women (especially relevant to the HeForShe campaign).

8. Discourse Structure

Chronological structure builds a narrative arc.

Moves from personal experience to broader social critique.



look at that, the blooming man in your life has left the toilet seat up again. and he's blooming well dropped his dirty towels on the floor. wouldn't you know it, he's also squeezed the blooming toothpaste from the top again. oh, and aren't those his blooming pants behind the door? why can't he just put them in the blooming laundry basket? never mind, I'll just take a shower with this floral body cleanser. we only want you for your body.

Theory Link: Mary Talbot (2003) explored how stereotypes persist in the representation of male and female speech in a range of texts (including advertising material).

This text was found on the side of the shower gel bottle.

1. How does this text represent males and females?
2. Complete an inference loop for the key word "blooming"
3. How is this text structured?
4. What is the effect of the final statement 'we only want you for your body'?

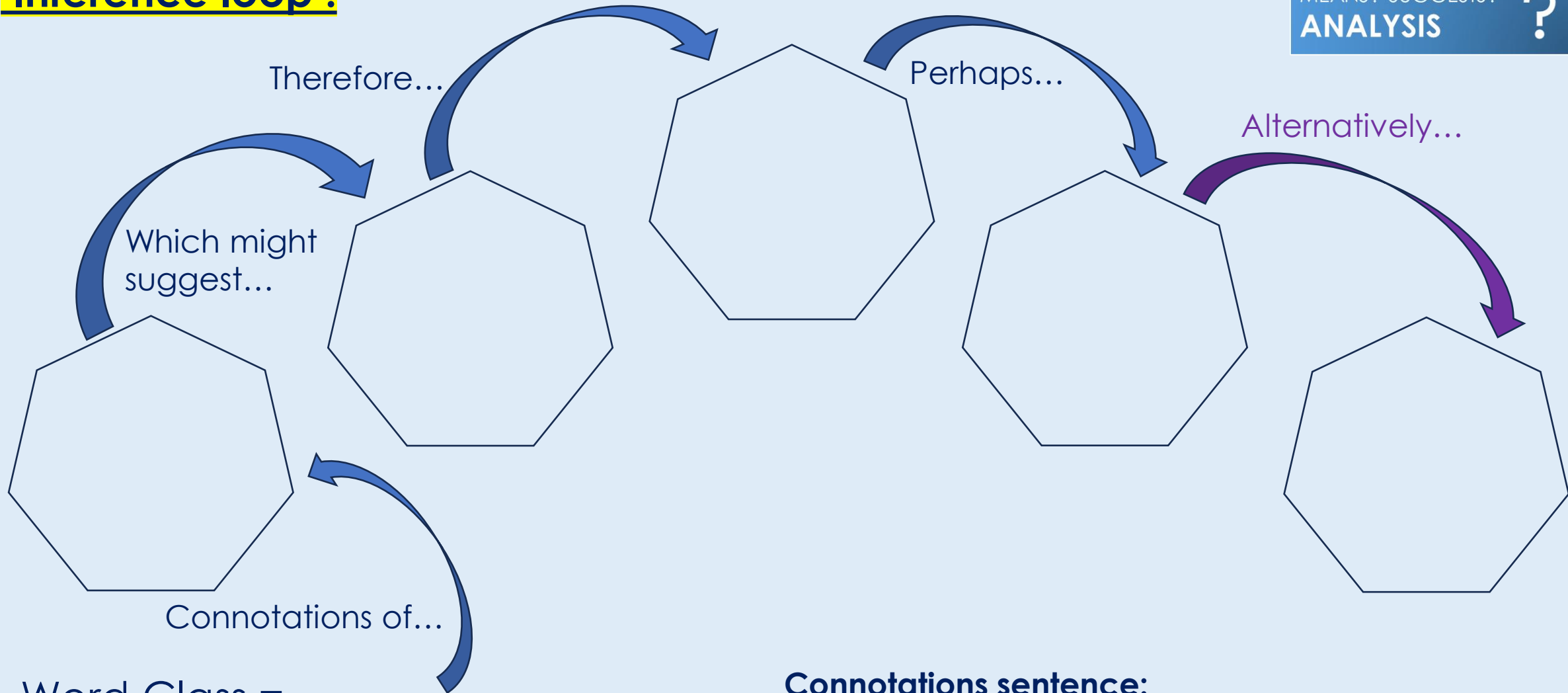


'Inference loop':

MEANS? SUGGESTS? **ANALYSIS**



BUILDING OUR ZOOM



Word Class = _____
 Word = _____

Connotations sentence:

1. How does this text represent males and females?

Generally speaking, males in this text are portrayed as being untidy and behaving in stereotypical ways around the house (leaving the toilet seat up, leaving clothes on the floor) as well as being selfish (using the shower gel with no thought for their wife/girlfriend). Women on the other hand are portrayed as concerned about cleanliness and tidiness (another stereotype). The anonymous

narrator of the text speaks to the implied female audience as a friend, representing females as keen to talk about domestic and relationship topics (yet another stereotype).

2. Why do you think the text makes such extensive use of the intensifier 'blooming'?

'Blooming' is considered a very mild expletive – some might argue it's no longer an expletive at all.

A similar point could be made about the word 'heavens' (in the final sentence of the text in white), which would once have been considered a profanity. 'Blooming' could be used for several reasons.

It could point in a humorous way to another commonly held stereotype that women only use mild expletives (as suggested by Lakoff in *Language and Woman's Place*). And/or it could – through repetition – emphasise the talkative nature of the female narrator and females in general, which is of course yet another stereotype.

3. How is this text structured?

The text is structured like a conversation with discourse markers that mimic face to face

conversation e.g. 'look at that' and others that are phatic in orientation e.g. 'wouldn't you know it' and 'never mind'. These evaluative points frame a series of 'domestic crimes' that the reader's husband/boyfriend has committed. The climax to the text offers a powerful irony: the male, who up to this point is not interested in cleanliness and tidiness, uses all of the shower gel. Depending on how you read this, it could be down to pure selfishness (less ironic reading) or being overcome by the quality of the 'floral body cleanser (more ironic reading).

4. What is the effect of the final statement 'we only want you for your body'?

This really depends on who you see speaking these lines. Some possible ideas are:

- The male – emphasising the male stereotype as lacking interest in cleaning but here using the shower gel either because it's easy to do so or he is curiously drawn to it (the 'body' here could be that of the female or the richness (the 'body') of the shower gel).
- The female: who only wants her husband/boyfriend for his body, especially once he uses the 'floral body cleaner', i.e. not his unclean and unattractive ways and habits. There are several possible ironies here.
- The company: who only want customers for their bodies i.e. as users of their product and are really not interested in the domestic situation and gossip they portray.

What Gender Assumptions are made by this text?



1960s

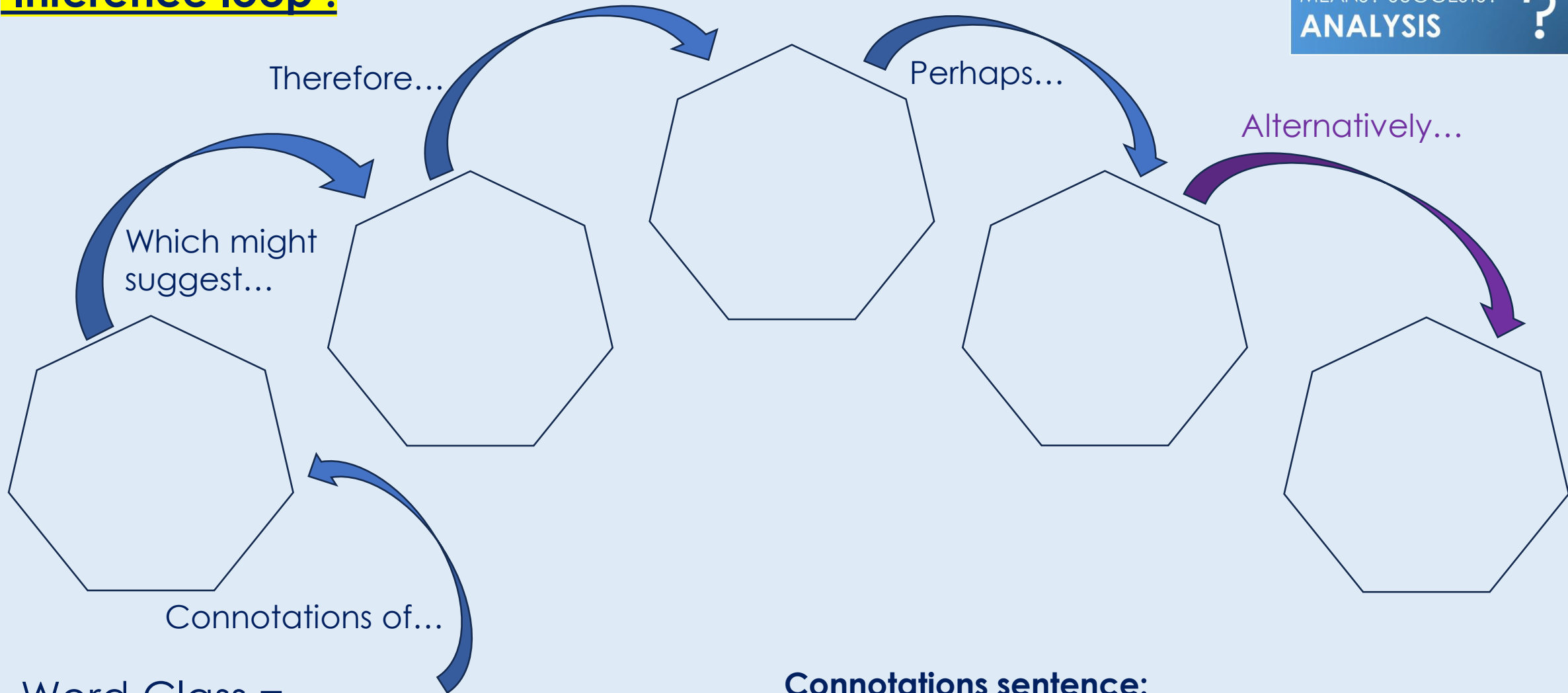
1. Which decade do you think this text was produced?
2. What is the purpose of the text?
3. How does this text represent males and females?
4. Complete an inference loop for the key word "every"
5. Explode the common noun "bride" on your MWB
6. What is the purpose in us analysing this text?

'Inference loop':

MEANS? SUGGESTS? **ANALYSIS**



BUILDING OUR ZOOM



Word Class = _____
 Word = _____

Connotations sentence:



- What surprised you about today's session?
- How does this compare to GCSE English?
- What would you like to explore more at A Level?

