



Sturminster Newton High School Sixth Form

A Level English Language Transition Project

Board: AQA (7702)

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Idiolect Scrapbook Investigation Pack

Your language didn't arise out of thin air.

Although humans appear to be born with some readiness to learn language, the type of language we learn is influenced by our environment. All the people we interact with as we grow up influence the language that we use, even if we remain in one place all the time and the language that we hear has only very small variations. Your family can have an interesting language history if you have lived in Sturminster Newton all your lives.

Your own language is unique, like fingerprints. It has many characteristics, ranging from accent and voice quality to typical gestures and much-used phrases. Idiolect is your own personal dialect.

You are going to complete some investigation work that looks at how your idiolect has been shaped by your background and influences. Please use the information provided to produce a 'scrapbook' of snapshots which have built your own language history.

Idiolect

The stem of the word derives from the Greek word *idios*, which means one's own. Idiolect is your personal language habit that gives every individual his/her personal style of language use. What contributes to such individual style are the following:

- tone of voice: high/low pitch - hard / soft - loud / quiet
- favoured choice of words / phrases
- lexis: long, unfamiliar words or simple, everyday words
- silence fillers: erm, well, mmh....
- eye contact / gestures - how frequent?
- conversational moves:
 - ask questions,
 - give orders,
 - exclaim,
 - initiate,
 - interrupt
- Style: range from formal to informal, from humorous to serious
- sentence: long, short

An investigation into Idiolect

Please use all the information you've obtained with the help of this study pack to produce a scrapbook on your own language history.

Task 1: Think about the following and make some notes or add ideas to your scrapbook:

- Your early language history – can you remember learning to speak, ask your parents what your first words were.
- Comment on your family history and what influence this might have been on your own language learning.
- What other influences have there been in your life e.g. have you moved countries?
- How do you think your friends influence the way that you speak?
- Look at your written repertoire – what sorts of writing / reading do you prefer? Can you hypothesise about why this might be?
- Are there any particular words that you use that you know you have picked up from your friends or your normal social groups?
- When was the first time that you realised that you had an accent or a dialect? What do you think of your idiolect? Are you happy with the way that you sound? Or would you like to change your accent?

Use all the research that you have completed in your self-study pack to produce a beautiful piece of work. It should have an analytical quality to it. If you mention a point you should always explain why it is.

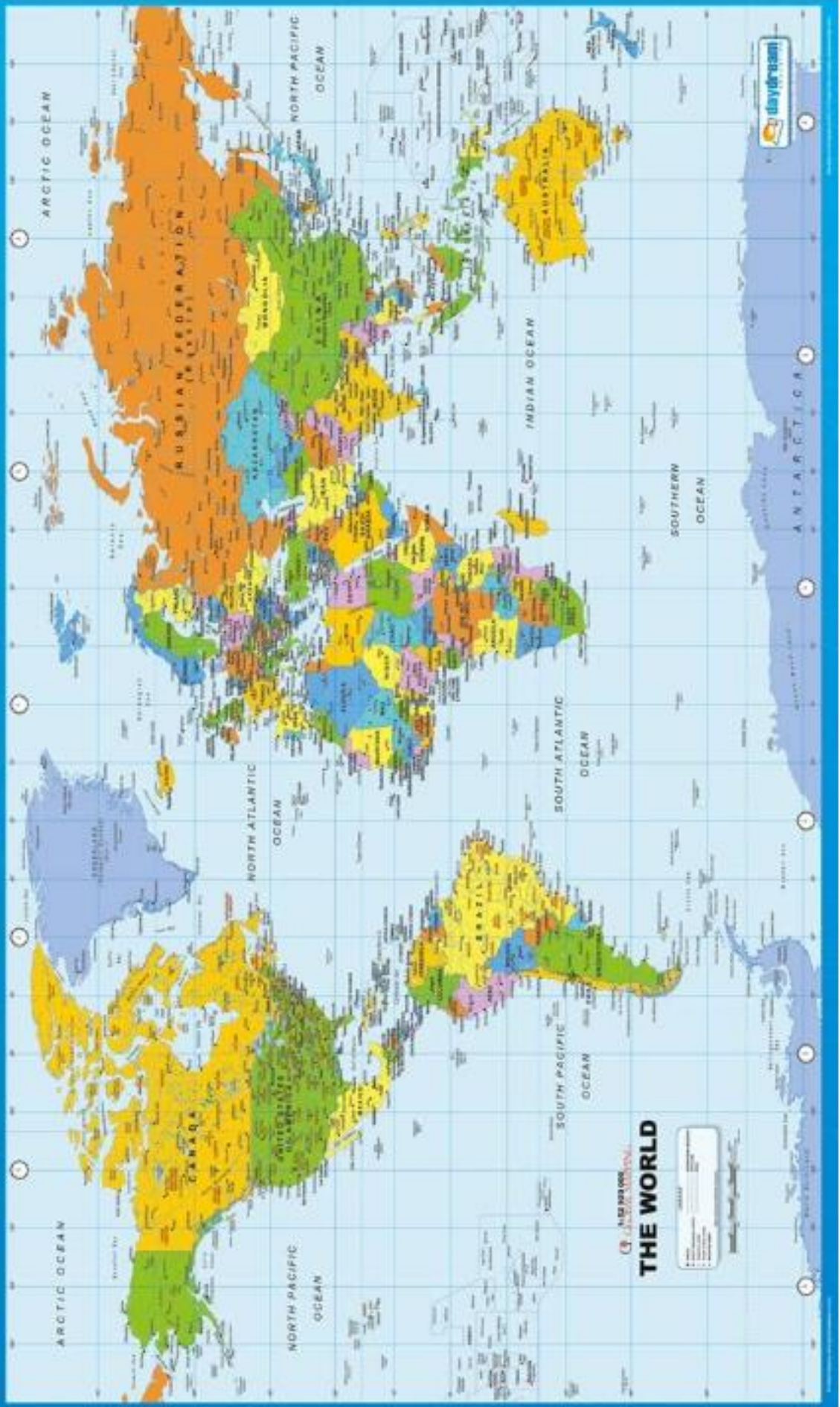
Task 2: British and World Maps

- 1) Look at the maps below. Mark on them where you have lived in the world and annotate with notes on how you think this might have affected the way you speak. Can you think of any examples of idiomatic phrases / words that you still use that might have been influenced by where you live?
- 2) Now choose a different colour and mark on the map any family members who may have lived in these places. Annotate in the same way.
- 3) You may only be marking the Sturminster Newton/Dorset area.... Suggest other ways your language might have been influenced. Think about your friends and wider family and what you know about them.

British Map:



The World



Task 3: Your early language history

We develop our own language repertoire from a very early age, some say as early as development in our mother's wombs. Try to find out what your first words were.

Roger Brown says we usually all go through certain grammatical stages of development:

- Pre-verbal (crying, cooing and babbling)
- One word stage – or the holophrastic stage
- Two words
- Telegraphic (where the sentences miss out non-vital function words so it sounds a bit like a telegraph)

Speak to your parents and your family members. What were your first words? Do these words say anything about your immediate experiences as a small child? Did you make any errors trying to say these words? What were they? Give some examples. Don't worry if it is a different language, though you may want to translate into English.

As your education started and progressed you will have developed language characteristics from your experiences and preferences. Our spoken language learning comes first, the written repertoire normally develops as we start formal education. Make a note of any educational experiences. What there a subject you particularly liked? Can you find any examples of your early work? What can you observe about this work and how it might have developed your written repertoire?

Task 4: Examining how your sociolect and speech communities add to your speech repertoire.

- Sociolect is the language used by a particular social group.
- A speech community is a group of people who associate with each other and develop similar patterns of speech.

Look at the groups below – now consider idiolect

Occupational group
e.g. Estate agent

Regional group

Ethnic group



Social class group

Age group

Gender group

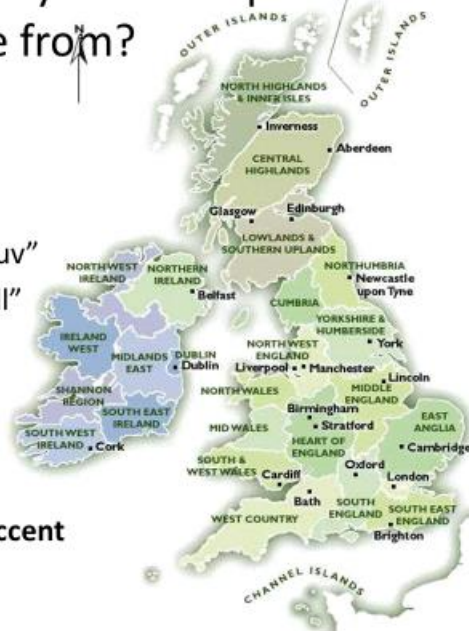
How do you fit into these groups? How do you think they might affect your language use? As your experiences change so does your language.

Task 5: Your regional influences – your dialect

- A dialect is a form of speech usually governed by geographical area
- Standard English is a form of dialect which is the dialect of education and occupational professions and is usually learned
- Accent is often interchanged with dialect, although some theorists argue that accent is more determined by the sound and pronunciation of words and dialect by the actual words and phrases used and their grammar or syntax.

Where in the country do these phrases come from?

- “Ha’way, pet”
- “Top of da mornin’ to ya”
- “Calm down, calm down”
- “Just on the dog and bone, luv”
- “Ey up, there’s trouble at mill”
- “Och aye lassie”



We know this because of the **accent** that it is spoken in.

What words do you use for these?

A filled bread roll

- Cob
- Sub
- Roll
- Batch
- Barm cake
- Bread cake
- Scuffler

All these terms are used across the country for the same referent! Ask your parents, do they use the same word?

This is probably due to their regional history. Can you think of any other words that have such variation?

Can you list any words or idioms (repeated phrases) that are commonly used in your area? Do you also use them? If you do this shows that you have been influenced by the speech communities you move in within your locality.

Task 6: adapting talk to different audiences and situations

Sometimes our idiolect will change according to the context. David Crystal calls this 'bi-dialectalism' and this implies that we are very adept at adapting our language style to the people we are talking to.

Complete the following hypothetical situation questionnaire and make notes after about what the answers say about the way you adapt your idiolect. Give examples of your language use to back up your ideas.

- 1) You are speaking on a one to one basis with your class teacher about a problem with homework

What tone will you use?

What will your language be like and why?

- 2) You are speaking to adults during a job interview

What tone will you use?

What will your language be like and why?

- 3) You are speaking to your parents about your day at school.

What tone will you use?

What will your language be like and why?

- 4) You are speaking to your friends about what you did on the weekend

What tone will you use?

What will your language be like and why?

Task 7: Case Study – Peter Crouch

Take a look at the screen grab of part of Peter Crouch's bio on Wikipedia. What assumptions can you make about the way that he speaks?

Early life

[edit]

Crouch was born in [Macclesfield, Cheshire](#), but his family moved to [Singapore](#) when he was one year old, where they stayed for three years before returning to Great Britain and settling in London. A keen footballer from an early age, he became a [ball boy](#) at the age of ten.^[3] As a child, he attended some [Chelsea](#) games.^[4] Later, he told the Liverpool official website that despite this, he and his friends at the time were fans of [Queens Park Rangers](#).^[5]

After attending North Ealing Primary School, and [Drayton Manor High School in Hanwell](#), Crouch signed a professional contract with [Tottenham Hotspur](#) on 2 July 1998, after having played for their youth side.^[6] However, he did not make any appearances for their first team and was loaned out to other clubs, having brief spells at [Dulwich Hamlet](#) in the [Isthmian League](#) and, in the summer of 2000, [IFK Hässleholm](#) in [Sweden](#).^[7]

2002–2004	Aston Villa	37	(6)
2003	→ Norwich City (loan)	15	(4)
2004–2005	Southampton	27	(12)
2005–2008	Liverpool	85	(22)
2008–2009	Portsmouth	38	(11)
2009–	Tottenham Hotspur	64	(10)
National team [‡]			
2002–2003	England U21	6	(1)
2006	England B	1	(0)
2005–	England	42	(22)
<small>* Senior club appearances and goals counted for the domestic league only and correct as of 19:10, 26 February 2011 (UTC).</small>			
<small>† Appearances (Goals).</small>			
<small>‡ National team caps and goals correct as of 16:00, 26 February 2011 (UTC)</small>			

Do some more research on Peter Crouch – what other factors might influence his dialect / idiolect?

Listen to Peter Crouch on BBC sounds and make a note of some of the phrases he uses. Feel free to transcribe sections if you want. Are your suppositions about his language repertoire correct? Is there anything you are surprised about?

Task 8:

Write up a short account that explains how you think your language has developed and how you have been left with your own personal idiolect – your personal language fingerprint.