**Rowena Morris** - Hello and welcome to this on-demand video exploring the electives options in Unit 2 of the new English Language Study Design. My name is Rowena Morris, and I am the teaching and learning leader and a teacher of English Language at Kyabram P-12 College.

In this webinar, I will be exploring and unpacking the electives options within Unit 2 of English Language. Throughout this webinar, I will delve into the reasons and benefits of the inclusion of an electives option within Unit 2, discuss the key considerations within both the incursions and inventions elective, and provide some guidance about selecting the most suitable elective and preview the content and resources suitable within each.

One of the most common challenges faced in the teaching of English Language is being able to identify the boundaries of exploration and study. This is particularly true in Unit 2 where the possible influences on the development and evolution of English are almost infinite. The inclusion of the electives option allows teachers and students to zero in on more targeted focus areas for their study of English across time. Students then have more opportunity to explore concepts in greater depth and apply metalinguistic concepts with greater focus and attention to specific events and concepts. As a result, the electives option provides students and their teachers with greater agency, depth, accessibility, engagement, and focus within the required key knowledge and skills of the study.

The key topics for selection have been divided into two electives options. The incursions option focuses on those key events which impacted the English-speaking world and had lasting effects on the language of that world. This includes the Viking and Norman invasions, the impact of religious influence, and the role of various plagues or pandemics in manifesting language change. The inventions option, in contrast, focuses on human creation throughout time, which have encouraged, forced, or allowed language change and development, specifically the changing nature of linguistic technologies over time.

There are several factors to consider in the selection of the right elective option for individual cohorts. As always, student agency is an important consideration in any curricular decision and should be layered into all considerations. While the choice of elective will ultimately come down to teacher preference, teachers should also consider the interests of their cohort, their own academic expertise, the resourcing available to the school, and the specific learning needs at cohort and individual student level.

The incursions elective views language change through a socio-political lens. The focus is on historical events which had a significant and lasting impact on the English Language and its evolution over time. It is important to remember that in Unit 2, the focus is on the linguistic impacts of socio-political events as it can be tempting to fall into an historical study rather than a linguistic one.

Things to consider in the study of the linguistic influence of incursions includes the nature of the incursion. Was this an invasion of foreign powers, the spread of religious ideology, or the battle against a pandemic, which brought with it a wave of linguistic innovation and change? With every incursion, influences are likely to impact different social groups in diverse ways. This will in turn impact the language in different ways as a response to the social influence and priorities of various groups. In turn, the semantic fields most influenced by various incursions will depend on the nature of the incursion and the hierarchical influence that it has. Every incursion will also impact each subsystem in different ways. Therefore, it is possible to explore the linguistic influence of incursions across the full gamut of subsystems over time.

There are four key incursions for consideration in this elective. Two of these are fixed in time, the Viking conquests of the British Isles between the 8th and 11th centuries and the Norman Conquest of Britain in 1066. Each of these incursions impacted language in different ways. While the Viking incursions had a significant impact on the language of everyday life due to the integration of Viking communities into Anglo-Saxon ones, the Norman Conquest influence occurred in the upper echelons of society. The lingering impacts of this key difference in modern English is a fascinating exploration for students. Identifying that language for agriculture, dirt, and nature in modern English can often be traced back to the Viking Raiders while language for culture, the arts, politics, and haute cuisine can similarly be traced to the French speaking Normans often stimulates fascinating and rigorous linguistic debates about how language and linguistic identity is influenced today.

This helps to set the foundations for discussions about formal and informal language and language and identity, which students engage in during Units 3 and 4. The other two topics within the incursions elective are more open and broad, while still engaging with the influences of an invading force of sorts. The study of religion allows students and teachers to examine the ways in which cultural and religious factors can stimulate lasting changes to linguistic systems. As with the Vikings and Normans, the movement of Christianity into the British Isles brought with it the Latin language. Like the Norman French, this incursion most significantly influenced the language of the middle and upper literate classes and students can trace this in the remaining Latin influences in modern English, particularly in the world of academia, sciences, and the law.

The democratisation of religion in Britain through the influence of Protestantism and the printing of the King James Bible marks the period of declining Latin influence and the gatekeeping of academic and, at this time, religious knowledge. This presents students and teachers with an excellent opportunity to explore the role of language in manipulating and manifesting social hierarchies and change.

The plagues topic is a fascinating insight into the role of sudden significant events in transforming language. For students in a post-COVID world, this topic is particularly pertinent to their experience. The invention of new scientific language to describe these events, coupled with the tendency for societies to innovate language use during times of crisis, makes for a deep and rigorous investigation into the nature of language innovation and change. The ways in which teachers could approach the electives option in teaching and learning sequences are virtually endless. Teachers will naturally select learning activities which are at the point of need of their cohorts.

The incursions elective does lend itself naturally to tactile and visual activities. Timelines, annotated diagrams, graphic organisers, and jigsaw style activities support students to see the interconnections between historical events and linguistic evolution. Some possible topics for exploration could include the influence of Norse and French on the rise of fixed word order and a reduction in inflexions, a comparison of the semantic fields influenced by Norse and French incursions, the impact of the diverse incursions on the English spelling system, the increasing linguistic equality and democratisation influenced by the English translations of the Bible, and a linguistic innovation and experimentation that came from plagues throughout time.

Resources and detailed teaching ideas can be found in the VCAA Support Materials page of English Language. The University of Glasgow also houses a fantastic collection of readings from early to modern English, which can be used as discourse samples for exploration and analysis. The inventions elective takes a more technological approach to language change. The focus here is on those human innovations which have contributed to or influenced language change and innovation. As with incursions, it is important to consider the linguistic impacts of these innovations rather than simply exploring the sociocultural impact of inventions.

Things to consider in the study of the linguistic influence of inventions includes the nature of the invention. In what historical, social, and cultural context was it created? What need did it fill? And at which group in society was it aimed? Inventions are likely to target specific social groups in society and therefore will impact language in different ways as a result. Inventions over time have contributed to both increasing and decreasing language standardisation. It is important for students to grapple with the concepts of codification and standardisation in their examination of how inventions have contributed to language change. The development of key inventions over time will affect each subsystem in different ways. Students should be able to use metalinguistic terms to describe how inventions influence change and confidently discuss the subsystems in which these changes occurred.

There are four key inventions for consideration in this elective. Two are focused on codification and standardisation of language. The invention of the printing press not only opened the gates to a wider consumer base for printed materials, but motivated increasing standardisation in spelling and grammar. This topic allows students and teachers to explore the nature of increasing standardisation, the impact of opening prints to the masses, and the democratisation of language and access to learning that came as a result.

Similarly, the publication of a range of grammars and dictionaries over the past several centuries have contributed to increasing codification and standardisation of language. The influence of prescriptive attitudes towards language change and various linguistic identities reflected in diverse dictionary publications could be examined in classes. Students and teachers can examine the motivations for dictionary publication and the decisions made in these. The other two topics look at later inventions and generally reflect increasing linguistic innovation and flare offered by more modern technologies.

The broadening of access to word processing afforded by the invention of portable typewriters, word processing technologies, and computers has opened the doors to a much broader literary and linguistic community. Such access inevitably leads to increasing innovation and flare in language. Students could explore the sociocultural impacts of this access. How did the availability of typewriters contribute to the rise in female authors? How has access to word processing technology afforded access to low-literacy communities? What innovation and linguistic flare has come from these technologies across spelling, syntax, and semantics particularly? The information age wrought by the internet ushered in increasing descriptivist attitudes, increasing linguistic innovation globally. Students could explore the applications, social media, and other sites through which new language is disseminated and discuss the sociolinguistic implications of this.

As with incursions, there are myriad approaches to teaching and learning the inventions elective. Each teacher will understand the learning needs of their cohorts and the nature of teaching and learning that will best cater to their needs. The inventions elective lends itself well to the use of the very inventions studied through engagement with dictionaries, grammars, word processing, and web-based resources.

Some topics for investigation could include: an investigation into the way the English spelling system changed as a result of the invention of the printing press; discussing the impact of Johnson's dictionary and subsequent English dictionaries globally on morphology specifically; an analysis of the role of word processing technology like typewriters and keyboards on linguistic innovation and sociocultural change; a timeline or flow chart of the influence of the internet on linguistic innovation and change over time.

Again, the VCAA study design pages include a range of resources and web links in the Support Materials section. If you have any queries about the new English Language Study Design, please make contact with VCAA's English curriculum manager using the details on this slide.

I hope this webinar has provided some clarity and support in your English Language teaching journey. Thank you for your time.

[Copyright Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Footer/Pages/Copyright.aspx) 2023