Corpus Linguistics: Data Investigation Task

'Corpus' linguistics is just a fancy way of saying 'small parts of different texts'. This task prepares you well for component 1, section A, which is all about analysing texts and explaining what effects the writer(s) have achieved and how they have achieved them. Additionally, when you do a language investigation for your coursework with Mrs Smith in your first year, you will be procuring your own data and independently leading your own study!

See below for an example of a corpus of political speeches:

1. **Our top priority was, is and always will be education, education, education.**

Tony Blair, former Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party Launch of Labour's Education Manifesto (23rd May 2001)

2. **We shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets. We shall never surrender.**

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister during the Second World War House of Commons (4th June 1940)

3. **To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase, the "U" turn, I have only one thing to say: you turn if you want to; the lady's not for turning.**

Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party Conservative Party Conference (10th October 1980)

4. **And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you— ask what you can do for your country.**

John F Kennedy, former President of the United States of America Inaugural address1 (20th January 1961)

5. **Gingivitis has been eroding the gum line of this great nation long enough, it must be stopped. For too long this country has been suffering a great moral and oral decay – in spirit and incisors. A country's future depends on its ability to bite back.**

Vermin Supreme, American political activist Televised political debate (19th December 2011)

6. **It's a European Union of economic failure, of mass unemployment and of low growth; but worst of all it's an EU with the economic prison of the Euro.**

Nigel Farage, Leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party Speech to the European Parliament (10th May 2012)

7. **Out of many, we are one and while we breathe, we hope. And where we are met with cynicism and doubts and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can.**

Barack Obama, former President of the United States of America Speech following his successful election campaign (4th November 2008)

8. **We have the character of an island nation: independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty. We can no more change this British sensibility than we can drain the English Channel.**

David Cameron, former Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party Conservative Party Conference (23rd January 2013)

9. **How does the 'party of the family' cut child benefit, cut housing benefit, reduce nursery schooling, turn hundreds of women into immigration widows? Is that the mark of 'the family party'?**

Neil Kinnock, former Leader of the Labour Party Leader's speech (11th October 1985)

10. **I want the motto of our country to be 'CAN DO SCOTLAND'. Labour and the Tories – Scotland's can't do parties – will hate it. But we are the party of the future.**

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister and Leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) SNP Party Conference (17th October 2015)

Your task is to make your own corpus of data.

- Choose a topic or thing you are interested in (e.g. politics, cars, football)
- Collect 10 small pieces of text about this topic that are from the same genre (e.g. tweets, headlines, slogans, titles, speeches)
- Annotate each one to identify the PAC – the purpose (what is the writer trying to achieve?), audience (which group(s) are they writing for?) and the context (why do they write?). You will have done similar tasks at GCSE.
- Then examine the whole corpus. What language features are common for this genre?
- How do the texts persuade/ engage/ motivate their audiences?
- What similarities are there? What differences?
- What do you notice about any lexical choices? Any metaphors?
- Evaluate how well each text achieves its purpose.

Example topics

Advertisement slogans (e.g. for cosmetic advertisements, you could look at L'Oreal's 'because you're worth it' / Urban Decay's 'Stay you. Stay naked' and others)

Tweets (about a certain subject, e.g. Tweets about Donald Trump or Tweets about Coronavirus)

Political speeches (see above)

Newspaper Headlines (e.g. about the Kardashians or about the economy)

Text messages / Memes

Titles of detective fiction novels