N.B. *Whilst this seeks to be a helpful checklist of terms students can employ, it's not an entirely exhaustive list of possible terms that could be used when analysing language change texts.*

Lexis

Lexis
'Lexis' refers to the words or vocabulary of a text.

Lexical field
The subject or topic area of a group of words. Another term which is often used interchangeably with 'lexical field' is 'semantic field', which emphasises the connection between the words being based on meaning. A text may have several lexical / semantic fields.

Archaism / archaic language
This is language which belongs to an earlier period, now considered old-fashioned and out of general use, although sometimes used in poetry, religious or legal texts, or for other specialised purposes. 'Thee' can be considered to be archaic.

Obsolete / obsolescence
Obsolete language is language which is no longer used in any context, e.g. 'pacative' (which means calming).

High frequency
High frequency words are those which are in regular use and would be widely known among all speakers of a language, e.g. 'house', 'book', 'jump'. The term is used in relation to children's acquisition of reading skills, as learning to read the high frequency words enables children to gain access to a large amount of written text.

Low frequency
Low frequency words are less regularly used than high frequency words, although not rare, e.g. 'neuron'. Low frequency words might be used by some groups more than others.

Elevated lexis
This is language which is regarded as sophisticated, elegant and 'high register'. A common misconception is that elevated lexis is polysyllabic, but this need not be the case. Other ideas are that such language is often derived from the higher status origins of Latin, Greek or French, as opposed to the lower status Old English (the language of the Anglo-Saxons), e.g. 'enquire' compared with 'ask'.

Technical lexis
This is language which is specialised, and has a meaning for the specific field in which it is used, e.g. 'dendrite' (science), 'purl' (knitting), 'travel' (basketball), 'shrinkage' (retail). Another term for this type of language is 'jargon'.

Vocatives
A vocative is a word or phrase which addresses someone, e.g. 'Lord, hear my prayer!'

Generic term
This is a word which indicates the overall type of something, e.g. for 'men' and 'women' the generic term would be 'people'. A generic term is inclusive and general, without individual characteristics or any brand name attached to it.

Gender-neutral / inclusive pronouns
In older usage, the words 'he', 'him' and 'his' have been used generically to refer to the whole of humanity. However, more recently, there has been criticism of these terms, as well as words like 'mankind' and 'Man', and increased pressure to use gender-neutral or inclusive terms. This is largely possible in the English language, but some problems remain with pronouns, as there is no satisfactory gender-neutral pronoun for Third person singular. Some writers choose 'they' or 'them', e.g. 'If anyone wants their coat, they must collect it before ten.' Other possibilities include '(s)he' or 'he/she', or completely avoiding the need for a pronoun by recasting the sentence.

Grammar

Word classes:

Nouns

Common
Common nouns are all the nouns which are not proper nouns (proper nouns are names of specific people, places and things, e.g. 'George', 'Britain', 'Boeing 737').

Concrete
Concrete nouns are used to refer to entities that can be perceived with at least one of the senses, e.g. 'table', 'sky', 'atom'.

Abstract
Abstract nouns are used to refer to abstract entities such as ideas, emotions or concepts e.g. 'happiness', 'time', 'information'.

Apposition
Nouns in apposition are single nouns or noun phrases which are placed alongside each other e.g. The owner John has leased the property.

Pronouns

First person
First person singular personal pronouns are 'I' and 'me'
First person plural personal pronouns are 'we' and 'us'

Second person
Second person personal pronoun is 'you' – the same word is used for singular and plural forms.

Third person
Third person singular personal pronouns are 'he / him', 'she / her', 'it', and the plurals are 'they / them'

Masculine
Third person singular personal pronouns have a masculine form, which is 'he' and 'him'

Feminine
Third person singular personal pronouns have a feminine form, which is 'she or 'her'

Singular
This form is used if there is only one thing being referred to, e.g. 'it (is)'.

Plural
This form is used if there are two or more things being referred to, e.g. 'they (are)'.

Possessive pronouns
This form is used to indicate belonging, e.g. 'my' / 'your' / 'his' / 'her' / 'its' / 'our' / 'their'

Adjectives

Predicative position
Adjectives can be placed either before (attributive position) or after (predicative position) the noun or noun phrase they modify. The use of the predicative position without a linking verb e.g. 'times past' is now considered archaic.

Comparative and superlative adjectives
❖ Comparative adjectives modify a noun by comparing it with others, e.g. 'better' / 'worse'. They are often created by the suffix 'er'.
❖ Superlative adjectives take this comparison to its furthest limits, e.g. 'best' / 'worst'. They are often created by the suffix 'est'.
❖ So we get modifications such as: 'young' / 'younger' / 'youngest'.

Adverbs

Temporal adverbs / Adverbs of time
There are many of these words and phrases in the English language, e.g. 'yesterday', 'afterwards', 'then', 'earlier', 'hourly'. They are used to indicate the time that something happens or how often it happens.

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Verbs

Inflections
Inflections (also spelled 'inflexions') are the endings of words which indicate the tense, person, or number. Modern English has very few inflections, e.g. '-s' for plurals, '-ing' for the present participle, '-ed' or '-t' endings for the past tense, and '-s' for the Third person singular form of verbs.

Infinitive
This is the form of a verb which follows 'to', e.g. 'to <u>run</u>' or '<u>to write</u>'. It can be used with 'to' ('I want to find the ball') or without ('Help me find the ball').

Verb phrase
For the purposes of analysing language in older texts the definition of verb phrase is restricted to the main verb, auxiliaries and any other forms of verbs being used, e.g. 'I <u>should have chosen</u> that colour.'

Auxiliary
Auxiliary verbs are also known as 'Helping verbs' as these help to form a verb phrase such as 'he <u>was</u> writing' where the verb phrase created is 'was writing'. There are several types of auxiliary, including modal auxiliary and dummy auxiliary verbs.

Modal auxiliary
This type of verb helps to convey subtle meanings of obligation ('should', 'must', 'ought'), certainty or prediction ('shall', 'will'), possibility or ability ('might', may', 'can', 'could', 'would'), and permission ('may'). Depending on the context, these words can convey other ideas as well, e.g.

'I would like a cup of tea' which is more wishful than 'She would be able to win if she trained more'.

Dummy auxiliary
This type of verb is sometimes known as 'dummy *do*' because the word 'do' is used to create verb phrases. This occurs in question structures 'Do you want eggs?', in negative structures 'He doesn't like eggs' or in commands 'Do not drop the eggs!'. In older texts, the dummy auxiliary is used more often, in phrases such 'He did speak to his followers' (in modern texts this would be interpreted as being emphatic, but here it has the meaning 'he spoke').

Prepositions
These words and phrases indicate the relationship between elements in a sentence, often in terms of their location or movement, e.g. 'The bus was <u>next to</u> the car', although there are many other ways in which prepositions are used. Common prepositions include 'by', 'with', 'from', 'to, 'for', 'in', 'under', 'after' and 'before'.

Conjunctions / connectives
Conjunctions or connectives are used to show the connection between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. There are two types: coordinating (and, but, or) and subordinating (because, since, although, despite etc.

Sentence construction:

Types of sentence

Declaratives
Sentences which are statements and end with a full stop, e.g. 'I like ice cream.'

Interrogatives
Sentences that ask a question and end with a question mark, e.g. 'How are you?'.

Imperatives
This simply means 'commands' – sentences might be described as imperative if their function is to give a command, e.g. 'Put your pens down and look at the board.' This must be carefully considered, however, as some sentences also imply a command but do not directly issue a command, e.g. 'It's freezing in here! Someone needs to shut the door!'

Exclamatories
Sentences (which may be any of the above) that express emphatic intention / emotion and end with an

exclamation mark, e.g. 'Have a great party!' / 'Please go away!'

Clause
A clause is part of a sentence, usually containing a verb. A clause can be a main clause or a subordinate clause, depending on whether it can stand alone in the sentence. In the example, 'Peter ate his lunch before it went cold' the main clause is 'Peter ate his lunch' and the subordinate clause is 'before it went cold'.

Subordination
This term refers to the use of a subordinate (or dependent) clause within a sentence, creating a complex sentence.

A subordinate clause will not make sense on its own without an independent clause. For example, in the sentence: 'The dog, which was bought when no-one knew it had serious problems, immediately fell ill and died.'
- ❖ 'The dog … immediately fell ill and died' would be the independent clause, as it makes sense on its own
- ❖ 'which was bought when no-one knew it had serious problems' does not make sense on its own but only in relation to the main clause, and is therefore subordinate.

As the above demonstrates, subordination may involve several levels of complexity within a sentence.

Passive voice
Verbs can be formed using as either the active voice or the passive voice. Using the active voice creates a sentence such as 'Farah returned the library book' whereas
using the passive voice creates the sentence 'The library book was returned by Farah'. The difference is mainly one of focus, as the use of passive voice draws attention towards the object of the verb and away from the subject (sometimes the subject is even omitted completely, e.g. 'The library book was returned.'). It is often a sign of formality.

Rhetorical structures

Parallelism
A similar construction in a series of sentences or clauses.

Antithetical parallelism
Balanced sentences or clauses with contrasting ideas.

Repetition
Using a word or phrase more than once for emphasis.

Syntax

This term refers to the order and combination of words in a sentence.

Subject
This is the part of the sentence which does the action of the verb, e.g. 'the boy' is the subject in the sentence, 'The boy won a medal' and typically starts a main clause.

Compound subject
This term refers to a subject which is made up of several elements, e.g. 'The three boys and their mothers attended the meeting with the Head.'

Predicate
This is the part of the sentence which follows the subject – usually a verb and some other elements such as the object and any adverbials.

Inversion
This term is used when the usual order of words in a sentence or clause is altered or turned around, which can sometimes affect the meaning.

Question structure
The order and combination of words used to create a question, e.g. 'What did you see?' (Wh-word, auxiliary verb, subject, main verb)

Negative structure
The order and combination of words used to create a negative expression, e.g. 'He did not like his food.' (Subject, auxiliary verb, main verb, object i.e. 'his food')

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Ellipsis
The omission of a whole word or more from a sentence, e.g. 'The meal was ready, the table set' (omitting 'was' in the second part). This should not be confused with elision or contraction, where part of a word is omitted e.g. 'don't' and 'we're'.

Contraction
This occurs where part of a word is omitted e.g. 'don't' or 'we're'. This is a type of elision, where sounds are lost, and should not be confused with ellipsis (omitting a whole word or more from a sentence).

Prescriptive grammar
This term refers to the rules of grammar which have been created and published in order to establish the 'correct' way to use the language. These rules are always subjective, and often reflect the usage of the writer or a social group with high status. Notable examples of prescriptive grammar include Bishop Lowth's 'A Short Introduction to English Grammar, with critical notes', published in 1762, and Lindley Murray's 'English Grammar' of 1795.

Semantics

Semantics
The study of how language is used to express meaning and how those meanings change. The change can be to do with context or situation, but can also be to do with changes that take place over time.

Connotation
The connotation of a word contrasts with its denotation or literal meaning. Connotation is the cultural associations that a word may have. Connotations can also be personal and can be positive or negative. It can be the difference between 'strong-willed' and 'pig-headed' or 'terrorist' and 'freedom fighter'.

Pejoration
A word develops a sense of disapproval. For example, 'Notorious' once meant 'widely known', but now means 'widely and unfavourably known'.

Amelioration
When the negative connotations of a word decrease. For example, using the term 'naughty' once indicated serious moral disapproval, but now tends to be less severe and is applied mainly to children.

Narrowing
A word becomes more specialized in meaning. Example: in Old English 'mete' referred to food in general (a sense which is retained in 'sweetmeat'); today it refers to only one kind of food.

Weakening
A word loses some of its force. Example: 'Mischievous' has lost its strong sense of 'disastrous', and now means the milder 'playfully annoying'.

Discourse

Register
The way language varies according to the situation in which it is being used. This will be affected by the context, the subject matter of the language and the audience. Formality and politeness features are an important part of register.

Formality
Formality in language is a measure of its precision and lack of ambiguity. It is closely associated with a prestigious written style.

Formal
A style associated with serious writing and characterised by long sentences and the use of abstract nouns. There is usually an absence of everyday conversational language.

Ultra formal
A style of language associated with great occasions e.g. state and religious

ceremonies or important works of literature e.g. the Bible.

Informalisation
Language which has moved closer to the everyday conversational English and away from the conventions expected of a formal written style.

Genres
A French word meaning type or class. A major division of type or style in an art form. A sub-genre is a lesser division. This can refer to all types of texts, both literary, like novels and plays, and non-literary, like newspapers or letters.

Cohesion
How sentences, parts of sentences and paragraphs link together. This can be through:
- ❖ The use of connectives or conjunctions
- ❖ The use of pronouns
- ❖ The use of lexical fields.

It is important in writing to show how ideas link together.

Graphology

It is the study of layout, the use of logos, images and any other feature of graphical communication.

Layout
The arrangement of words, diagrams and other features including space on a page in order to make it visually effective. For example, this material is divided by headings and sub-headings.

Capitalisation
Certain words other than proper nouns and those at the beginning of sentences and speech may be capitalised for effect, particularly in older texts.

Font effects
Different sections of a text may be printed in differing fonts for effect, or some words may be **emboldened** or *italicised*

Indentation
The placement of text a few spaces to the right in order to separate it from the rest of the text.

Orthography

The study of spelling to show the relationship between sounds and writing.

Inconsistent, archaic or foreign spelling
Within one text may be spelling variants, such as enquiry / inquiry, which indicate a less proscribed attitude to what constituted 'correct' spelling.

Some words have changed their spelling, e.g. The modern word 'show' sometimes appears in older texts as 'shew'.

There are some differences in the spelling of the English language used in the United States of America and that used in the United Kingdom. In the UK spelling was standardised by Dr Johnson in his dictionary of 1775. US spelling was standardised by Webster's dictionary in 1826. Webster was in favour of spelling reform and so some differences grew up. Specifically, there is the use of '–or' at the end of words like 'color' rather than the British 'colour', and '–er' at the end of 'theater' rather than the British 'theatre' which stays with the original French version.

Phonology

The study of sounds and how they function in language in order to produce meaning. Key areas to consider include:

Alliteration
A device whereby words begin with the same consonant to form a significant pattern.

Sibilance
The repeated use of 'ss' sounding consonants to create a soft, sometimes hissing effect (often with negative connotations).

Consonance
The repletion of a sequence of consonants but with a change in the intervening vowel, e.g. 'groan' / 'groin', 'lean' / 'lone'.

Assonance
The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in a sequence of words

Rhyme
The selection of words which sound the same, from the last stressed vowel and the consonants around it, e.g. 'late' / 'gate', 'tending' / 'mending'.

Rhythm
A distinctive beat to the words, created by any of the above or from a pattern of stressed syllables.

Rhetorical patterning
Sound effects created by patterns such as a similar construction in a series of sentences or clauses (parallelism) or using a word or phrase more than once for emphasis (repetition).

Pragmatics

A way of looking at the meanings created by language when used in a particular social context. It seeks to explain meanings which cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structures, often referred to as the sub-text.

It is to do with what is inferred or said indirectly and goes beyond the semantic values of the words. For example, when asked to go out for the evening, if your reply is 'I'm washing my hair', the sub-text is clearly that one is not interested in going out with said person!