Language features

The ‘comprehension’ assessment design criterion Cp2 and the ‘Application’ assessment design criterion Ap1 in Stage 1 EAL, and the ‘Analysis’ assessment design criterion An2, and the ‘Application’ assessment design criterion Ap1 in Stage 2 EAL refer to ‘language features’. Language features can be identified in oral, written or multimodal texts including films.

**The Australian Curriculum English glossary defines language features as**

‘The features of language that support meaning (for example, sentence structure, noun group/phrase, vocabulary, punctuation, figurative language). Choices in language features and text structures together define a type of text and shape its meaning. These choices vary according to the purpose of a text, its subject matter, audience and mode or medium of production’.

Different language features are used in different text types to achieve their purposes. For example, an email to a friend might be written using informal language from the first person perspective, a poem may be composed using figurative language and symbolism and a persuasive piece is likely to include emotive language and rhetorical questions to achieve its purpose.

This is a list of *some* of the types of language features EAL students could identify. It is not a comprehensive list.

* The use of adjectives and adverbs to create imagery or graphic pictures.
* The use of emotive language to make the reader feel a certain way (e.g. angry or afraid).
* The use of figurative language where words and phrases are used in a way that is different from the expected or everyday usage such as personification, metaphor or simile.
* The choice of the tense of the text (present tense, past tense and future tense).
* The point of view of the narrator such as a personal voice in the 1st person using ‘I’, in the 2nd person using ‘you’ or in the 3rd person using ‘he or she or they’.
* The use of rhetorical questions that are designed to provoke thought rather than require an answer.
* The formality of the voice of the writer (e.g. formal, informal, colloquial) – influenced by the amount of nominalisation and the sophistication of the language.
* The use of humour.
* The use of symbolism when an image represents something else, such as a dark shadow which could symbolise danger.
* The use of irony - saying one thing but meaning another.
* Use of idioms - an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of the individual words such as ‘I am over the moon’ or ‘on thin ice’.
* The impact of different types of sentences (e.g. short sentences might add to drama and tension).

Consider these language techniques for film texts

* The types of shots in a film such as the angle of the shot ( e.g. bird’s eye view, crane shot ) and shot sizes (e.g. close-up, long distance)
* Speed and type of editing of scenes in a film.

Useful resource for film study

*The Language of Film* <http://d2buyft38glmwk.cloudfront.net/media/cms_page_media/11/FITC_Language_of_Film_1.pdf>