

AQA A-Level English Language

Language Change - Attitudes

Attitudes towards language change

- PRESCRIPTIVISM – The belief that there is a ‘correct’ form of the English language and change is negative.
(We should be critical of prescriptivists in our essays!)
- DESCRIPTIVISM – The belief that the English language is evolving and change is positive. Descriptivists do not believe that there is a ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ form of the English language.
(Examiners want to see us adopt a more descriptivist viewpoint)

Prescriptivist example 6

Deborah Cameron, 1995

- It is important to note that Cameron does not like the term 'prescriptivist' and does not identify as such
- She argues that everybody is in some way a 'verbal hygienist'
- Everyone has 'pet peeves' and opinions about the correct usage of language