



Language in Use

Some examples of language and how it can be used. Context not provided. Some common language techniques (literary devices/ figures of speech/ verbal techniques/ poetic devices):

1. Comparative techniques: Effect: emphasise a particular image/theme. Look for links and comment on specifics – what two things are being compared and how/why are they similar or different? Look for extended ideas.
 - Simile (using like or as)
 - Metaphor (comparison without using like or as)
 - Personification (giving non-human objects human characteristics).
2. Sound Devices: Effect: highlights words – comment on the importance of those words – do they link to imagery? Do they reflect an important theme? What are the connotations of those words? Do they add to mood?
 - Alliteration (repetition of initial consonant sound)
 - Assonance (repetition of vowel sound)
 - Sibilance (repetition of 's' sound)
 - Onomatopoeia (word is pronounced like the sound).
3. Euphemism: (pleasant way of saying something unpleasant). Effect: softens an idea. Adds child-like tones (gone to heaven), humour as a coping strategy (kicked the bucket), literary idealism, adds sophistication (shuffled off this mortal coil).
4. Hyperbole: (exaggeration of the facts). Effect: stresses an idea, theme, imagery. Sometimes is an indication of character revelation.
5. Litotes: (understatement of facts). Effect: downplays the importance of a situation/ person.
6. Allusion: (reference to another aspect already in existence – literary, media, biblical, religious, political etc.). Effect: links to wider world, enriches and universalises association, can create a definite idea, image etc. What is being alluded to and why?
7. Cliché (over-used expression)/Colloquialism (casual way of communicating). Effect: adds to tone, creates sense of familiarity, easy to understand and remember, relevant, distinct to a particular region, culture.



8. Pun: (double meaning of word/phrase). Effect: adds humour, sometimes used as foreshadowing, always explain both meanings and why author chose to make it ambiguous.
9. Antithesis/Juxtaposition/Oxymoron: (the placing of opposite phrases and/or words in close proximity). Effect: emphasises the contrast, adds depth to an idea by considering both sides etc.
10. Highlighting the negative aspect of something, sometimes used for humorous effect.
 - Satire – making negative comment about something
 - Irony – saying the opposite of what you mean
 - Sarcasm – saying something derogatory.
11. Imagery: (using figurative language to create an ‘image’.) Effect: uses senses to involve the reader, creates a picture in the mind’s eye, adds visual stimulus.
12. Connotation: (the emotive meaning of a word). Effect: adds to mood, links to other ideas, themes, issues etc.

Syntax

Remember – this is the way words and/or sentences have been constructed – word order, patterns etc. You must be able to identify a reason for this construction.

1. Parallel structure (when parts of a passage are deliberately repeated). Effect: establishes links within a passage, emphasises main ideas, clearly shows similarities and/or differences between objects/people/the setting.
2. Questions and answers: conversational, adds variety and interest through posing and solving problems, used for suspense and expectation.
3. Rhetorical questions: (questions that do not require an answer). Effect: leaves reader with a particular thought, used for humour, adds intensity, reinforces ideas.
4. Passive voice: (when the object appears before the verb). Effect: emphasises specific words for meaning, could make tone more formal.
5. Simple sentences: (a sentence with just one verb). Effect: makes it immediate, informal, easy to understand, narrative, child-like, unsophisticated.



6. Minor sentences: (containing no finite verbs). Effect: adds informality, ease of absorption.
7. Compound and/or Complex sentences: (sentences that contain more than one finite verb, or a variety of phrases and clauses). Effect: provides further explanations to topic, allows writer to build on, or explore, ideas.
8. Balanced sentences: reinforce/compare/contrast important ideas.
9. Listing of:
 - Verbs: emphasise action, gives the passage motion, explores variety of activities, shows sequence of events, train of thought
 - Adjectives: highlight description, shows variety, emphasises a specific image, provide significant detail about a specific object/person, provide multiple alternatives (check whether the adjectives complement or contrast each other)
 - Nouns: emphasise a particular image, show a trend, highlight objects of importance.
10. Parenthesis: (brackets, dashes, commas) adds important detail, used for humour, clarification, provides personal viewpoint, emphasis, creates pause.
11. Dialogue: used to add personal touch, reveals something about character, conveys thoughts, highlights important ideas.
12. Pre/Post-Modification: usually adverbs or adjectives added for deliberate effect, modifies information, adds tone, always remember to look for connotations.
13. Adverbial/adjectival phrases: adds depth, provides additional detail, highlights important characteristics, links to ideas.
14. Conjunctions: links sentences and ideas, aids in changing tone, compounds a particular tone.
15. Punctuation: look for deliberate use of punctuation:
 - many commas (pauses) help to build anticipation or suspense
 - longer sentences can help the feeling of story-telling
 - ellipsis – words omitted for a reason, can add suspense or speed of interaction – aids with progression of ideas.



Style

This includes all aspects of syntax as well as all the techniques. It also includes:

1. Repetition: to reinforce ideas, link to imagery, make a particular statement or point memorable.
2. Vocabulary: look for emotive words – they help express a particular emotion, help add to mood.
Connotations: positive or negative – link to overall tone. Links to imagery and mood.
3. Change in tense: shows passing of time, flashback or flash forward.
4. Tone: identify tone (sincere, sarcastic, envious, insulting, flippant, nostalgic, conversational, hostile, mournful, uplifting, forceful etc...) Tone helps to create the feelings of the author, helps reinforce the theme, adds emotion and feeling.
5. Code-switching: change from one language to another – find the connotations of the non-English word e.g. French = sophistication, Maori = cultural affiliation, etc.
6. Register: this could be connected to tone. The level of formality of the text:
 - formal (adds sophistication, plausibility, credibility etc.)
 - informal (adds to relaxed tone, easy to understand, non-pretentious)
 - colloquial (relatable, friendly, conversational)
 - slang (young, adds to particular setting)
 - jargon (exclusivity, hits at education, knowledge)
7. Point of View:
 - first person (makes passage and ideas more personal, involving, insight into character motivation and action, emotive)
 - second person (conversational, involving, persuasive)
 - third person (eye-of-God, objective, informative). Omniscient, omnipotent, etc.
8. Positioning of reader: how do techniques/syntax/style position the reader i.e. manipulate the reader's emotional response to a character/event/object?