

Lecture 4.1

1 Carry out a parent survey to find out what their children's first words were, and when they appeared. Compare the results with any online reports you can find, such as:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/children_shealth/6929280/First-words-of-children-include-cat-beer-and-Hoover.html>.

2 Observe a conversation and note the turn-taking strategies that are in use. In a group, how does the speaker select who is to speak next? (Look out for directional eye contact and body movement, as well as linguistic cues such as naming someone.) How do individuals let the speaker know they want to speak next? (Look out for body movement, such as leaning forward, as well as short anticipatory vocalizations.) Do people interrupt each other or speak at the same time? How does the conversation continue under such circumstances?

3 Observe people talking to very young children. What special features do they use? Look out for features of pronunciation (eg 'lickle', special tone of voice), grammar (eg short sentences, or the use of 'we' for 'you', as in 'Are we hungry?'), and especially vocabulary (eg pussy-cat, din-din, oopsy-daisy, yum-yum, wee-wee). Discuss some of the other circumstances when a simplified style is used, such as talking to foreigners, pets, lovers, people being bullied, or people in care. Why do people talk like this, and what is the effect on their listeners?

4 Identify some of the new linguistic skills you have had to acquire since early childhood. Note that you should consider all four skills – listening, speaking, reading, writing. Some possible areas for exploration: learning lyrics or raps, filling in forms (eg for a passport or a driving licence), reading road signs, listening to public announcements, studying football tables, joining a social group (eg dramatic, political, religious), texting, interacting on the Internet.

Lecture 4.2

1 Take part of a Shakespeare play, note the uses of 'thou' and 'you' (with their variant forms – 'thee', 'thine', etc), and discuss why the speakers change from one to the other. You will find other examples from the dialogue between Hamlet and Ophelia at different points in the play. Some other examples: Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* Act 4 Scene 1; Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* Act 1 Scene 7; Lear talking to his daughters in *King Lear* Act 1 Scene 1.

2 Find other examples of false friends in the history of English. You will see a short list of Shakespearean examples at:

<<http://www.thinkonmywords.com>>

– scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on 'False Friends'. Use the concordance feature of the 'Shakespeare's Words' site to find other examples:

<www.shakespeareswords.com>.

3 Examine texts from earlier periods to see which words have spellings different from present-day Standard English. A text such as the Shakespeare First Folio will illustrate many differences:

<<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/facsimile>>,

but even an 18th-century text will show the distance still to be travelled to reach modern norms. See, for example, the Preface to Dr Johnson's Dictionary at:

<<http://ethnicity.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/preface.html>>.

Find the words in the Preface that have archaic spellings, and group them into types.

4 Listen to some of the examples of 'original pronunciation' on the British Library's *Timelines* at:

<<http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/index.html>>

or

Activities

<www.pronouncingshakespeare.com>.

Make a list of some of the most noticeable differences between then and now, if possible using a phonetic transcription. What are the benefits of putting on plays and reading poems in original pronunciation? Can you see any disadvantages?

5 Explore the way the present continuous form of the verb has been used in recent and present-day English. You can find examples by interrogating one of the big corpora at:

<<http://corpus.byu.edu>>.

For example, in the COCA corpus, type in a form of the verb (eg 'loving') and you will see the number of examples shown year by year.