Extended Essay
English
Group 1
Category 3: Studies in Language
Advice for Supervisors and Students

Introduction

If you are reading this, it is most likely because you are a teacher supervising an Extended Essay (EE) in group 1, category 3: studies in language, or you are a student who has embarked on a group 1, category 3 EE, or you are thinking about doing so.

This document is intended to provide guidance on writing a group 1, category 3 EE in English. This document should be read in conjunction with a range of important additional documents (and not instead of these documents), including the IB Extended Essay Guide (2013), the IB Ethical guidelines for extended essays research and fieldwork (2013), and the UWCSEA Extended Essay Student Handbook.

At the end of this document, you will find some examples of possible category 3 EEs.

Students who would like to do their EE in English have a choice of three categories, as follows:

- Category 1—Studies of a literary work(s) originally written in the language in which the essay is presented

- Category 2—Studies of a literary work(s) originally written in the language of the essay compared with literary work(s) originally written in another language

- Category 3—Studies in language.

This document does not consider categories 1 and 2, focusing only on category 3. In theory, students who are studying English A: language and literature or English A: literature can do an EE in category 1, 2, or 3. However, it may be
suggested that a student studying English A: literature, may not be well placed to study a category 3 EE. And, students studying English A: language and literature at Standard Level may find the demands of a category 3 EE challenging. Therefore, students who are not studying English A: language and literature, but who wish to pursue an EE in category 3 should, after consultation with their supervisor, be absolutely confident that they feel able to study an EE of this kind.

Extended Essay, Category 3: studies in language

A group 1 EE in Category 3: studies in language, provides students with an opportunity to:

• develop skills of textual analysis by considering how language, culture, and context influence the ways in which meaning is constructed in texts

• think critically about the different interactions which exist between texts, audiences, and purposes

• develop the ability to convey views persuasively and in a well-structured manner, using an appropriate academic register.

Where appropriate, students may compare and contrast different languages and cultures. However, the main focus of category 3 EEs should be on the language and culture(s) of the language in which the EE is written. Thus, in English, the main focus should be on the English language, and cultures where English is widely spoken and/or written.

Category 3 EEs emphasize the production and reception of texts in cultural contexts, and essays of a general cultural nature are not appropriate. Essays must involve close textual analysis. It is emphasized that texts are constructed and understood in specific cultural and historical contexts; meaning may be contested. See below, please, for a definition of ‘text’.

Broadly speaking, students may focus on two areas in a category 3 EE, or a combination of both:

(i) Language in a cultural context: Here, students have the opportunity to explore how language develops in specific cultural contexts, how it impacts on the world, and the ways in which language shapes both individual and group
(ii) Language and mass communication: Here, students are able to consider the way language is used in the media, and may address how the production and reception of texts is influenced by the medium in which they are written.

**Treatment of the topic**

Whatever area of language study the student chooses for their EE, *they will need to give focused and critical attention to the text or texts being considered. This close analysis must be integrated into a wider discussion of the contexts in which the text or texts are produced and understood.*

Students are encouraged to adopt an analytical, critical position, and to show awareness of potentially conflicting viewpoints on texts and their meaning in a wider social context. *Straightforward descriptive essays are inappropriate.* Students should aim to be balanced, argue coherently, and present relevant supporting examples.

Students should develop a focused and manageable research question, approaching it critically and independently.

**Defining ‘text’**

The term ‘text’ for the purpose of a category 3 EE is defined to include the widest range of oral, written and visual materials present in society. This range will include:

- single and multiple images with or without written text
- literary written texts and text extracts
- media texts, for example films, radio and television programmes and their scripts
- electronic texts that share aspects of a number of media texts, for example, video sharing websites, web pages, sms messages, blogs, wikis and tweets.
- oral texts will include readings, speeches, broadcasts and transcriptions of
When writing the essay, students must bear in mind that any narrative and/or descriptive material included should be directly relevant to the critical analysis. A précis of the student’s reading is not sufficient.

Examples

Topic: language varieties, code-switching and code-mixing

Research question: What social and cultural factors influence the choice to speak English or not to speak English in Singapore?

Topic: English as a global language; historical language studies

Research question: What historical and social factors influence the ways in which Singaporean English is systematically different from Standard British English?

Topic: media, language, culture, and taboo

Research question: How are death notices similar and different in Australian and Singaporean newspapers?

Topic: language and belief

Research question: How do believers and non-believers signal their position through language use?

Topic: language, media, gender, and power

Research question: How are male and female speech portrayed in the television drama Mad Men?
Topic: language, media, gender, and power

Research question: How are women represented in *Diva* (magazine) and in *Men’s Health* (magazine)?

Topic: language, media, ethnicity, and power

Research question: How are ethnic minority groups represented in *The Daily Mail*?

Topic: language, identity, and computer-mediated communication

Research question: How do people use language to construct identities on *Facebook* (or in *Second Life*)?

Topic: language and computer-mediated communication

Research question: How do readers recognize inauthenticity in email phishing spam?

Topic: language, age, and computer-mediated communication

Research question: How and why do different generations use language differently in email correspondence?

Topic: language, gaming, and computer-mediated communication

Research question: In *Minecraft*, which features of language are determined by the activity, and which by the fact that the game is played on-line?
Topic: media, language, ideology, and power

Research question: How are environmental issues represented in *The Straits Times* and *New Internationalist* (magazine)?

Topic: language, media, and persuasion

Research question: What rhetorical and stylistic strategies do estate agents use to persuade their readers in Singapore and the USA?

Topic: language, newspapers, culture and society

Research question: How similar and different was the reporting of school shootings in Dunblane, Scotland, in 1996, and Columbine High School in the USA in 1999?