LANGUAGE FRAMEWORKS Approaches to text analysis for AQA English Language A Level

2nd edition 2018



EMC Advanced English Language Series

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Language Frameworks – 2nd edition 2018: approaches to text analysis for AQA English Language A *Level* is designed to be used as a way into textual analysis as you begin A Level English Language, or if you are in need of a refresher course in language analysis as you approach your exams.

Section 1 'An Introduction to Frameworks' outlines and starts to explain key linguistic approaches that we'll be encouraging you to use throughout this pack. We call them **frameworks** here, but they're sometimes termed **linguistic methods** or **language levels** too.

As this is an introduction to the nuts and bolts of textual analysis, we're not expecting to cover every framework in huge amounts of detail, but to pick some of the core elements of each one for you to use. If you want to develop your understanding of the different frameworks here then we'd advise you to consult 'Further Reading' where we outline some articles and books that we believe will help you expand your knowledge.

Each chapter in Section 1 includes questions on the particular framework, with short texts to illustrate the points being made, as well as a couple of slightly longer extracts to give you a chance to test out your knowledge of that particular framework.

Section 2 'Applying Frameworks to Texts' provides 11 texts drawn from a range of different text types, similar to those that you'd find in the A level exam units of the main exam boards. These are designed to allow you to apply selected frameworks and see which ones work best for different text types. You'll find discussion and feedback of some of the points you might raise in the 'Commentaries on Activities'.

Section 3 focuses on important skills that you'll need for examinations and is intended for students studying the AQA English Language specification. It provides you with approaches to using what you've learned about text analysis to exam-style texts and pairs of texts.

The 'Glossary' provides definitions of the linguistic terms used in this pack. These terms are emboldened the first time they are used, but not subsequently.

'Further Reading' offers suggestions for taking further the ideas raised in this pack. The starred texts are those we think are particularly suitable for A level students.

What we're *not* suggesting is that language frameworks are the be all and end all of textual analysis. At A level, you are expected to explore meanings in texts and explain how text producers have used language to achieve their goals. Language analysis should never just be about the dry labelling of parts, but the language terminology you will develop at A level should be seen as a way of showing that you have subject expertise and understanding. Part of the approach in Language Frameworks is also to show you how language works across a whole range of different levels and to start you thinking about the most appropriate ones to use with different types of texts. If you are confident about what they mean and how they work, you can then go on to select the most relevant ones to apply and the most salient aspects of texts to explore.

A note to teachers

Three audio/video clips are available as .mov and .mp4 files in the folder of assets 'LangFrame2018.zip'.

An Introductory Activity on Word Classes

Before you embark on Section 1, let's have a look at some of the ways in which language analysis at AS is different from what you will have done before at GCSE. Take a look at the sentence below and think about what each individual word is doing and how it is operating to create meaning.

The small things in our lives can make a really big difference.

Let's look at some of these words in a bit more detail and think about how they work together.

Two types of word stand out here: **adjectives** and **nouns**. These are the building blocks of many phrases and sentences and they tend to cluster together.

In this sentence we can see that the nouns are: 'things', 'lives' and 'difference'. Why? Well, we can apply tests to see if they are nouns and we generally have some kind of sense that nouns name things (and you can't get much more 'thing-like' than the noun 'things'), people and places.

One test we can apply and which works quite well here, is can you add an -s to make nouns plural? Here, both 'things' and 'lives' are already plurals, so that rule works fine, and it's easy to see that 'difference' could be turned into a plural too by adding an '-s'.

'Difference' is probably not quite as simple a noun as 'things', because it is an **abstract noun**, one that is used to refer to a concept or idea, rather than a physical object or person.

Nouns also tend to have words like 'a', 'the' or 'an' somewhere in front of them, and we can see that 'the small things' and 'a really big difference' fit this quite well, with the **determiners** 'a' and 'the' lining up in front of them, not directly in front admittedly, but in front of other words which also help us identify 'things' and 'difference' as nouns.

The words 'little' and 'big' are probably familiar to you from GCSE and earlier as **adjectives**. Adjectives are often termed descriptive words, but that is a bit vague, because nearly all words describe something if you think about it. At A Level we talk about these as words which **modify**. Here the adjectives modify the nouns they go in front of, changing them or adding more detail in some way.

You will probably have noticed too that as well as an adjective modifying the noun 'difference', we also have the word 'really'. When you look at what this word does, it performs a similar function to an adjective, but this time it is modifying not a noun but an adjective. 'Really' is an **adverb**. Adverbs are members of a quite useful word class, because they can do several different things. Adverbs can modify adjectives (usually being called **adverbs of degree** when they do this, because they tell us something about how much or how little the adjective is doing) but they also modify verbs (often being easily identifiable because of their '-ly' endings in these cases: 'quickly', 'slowly', 'silently', etc.).

When you look at the section on phrases and modification, you'll see how these individual words can be grouped into larger units, but for now we will just deal with them as separate words.

The other words in this sentence also need some attention. Sentences need **verbs** and this sentence has two of them working together (in what you will see is a **verb phrase** when you reach **Section 1**). The main verb – the verb that carries the main meaning in the sentence – is 'make' and it is assisted by another verb, what is called a **modal verb**, 'can'. The modal verb works with the main verb to assist it in creating possibility, prediction or a degree of certainty, among other things. Think about the different modals you could put in front of a verb like 'to happen' and you can see what modals do: 'it can happen', 'it might happen', 'it should happen', 'it will happen'.

2. Text Patterns

In a text, a text producer's decision to choose one particular word over another is significant. For example in text 1 (page 12), the choice of the word *scintillating* is taken at the expense of a number of potential others.

Try replacing scintillating with a word that has a similar meaning and then with a word that has a very different meaning – how do you think this would alter the message that the text producer is attempting to convey?

Consequently, we can say that text producers make decisions about the likely impact of their choices that they hope will be picked up by text receivers, who in turn will attach some kind of significance to a choice a text producer has made. Often these choices form part of larger cohesive units across texts in the form of text patterns.

To understand the idea of text patterns, look at texts 2, 3 and 4 (page 12).

Each of these texts relies on a kind of **pattern-forming**, which makes a particular feature or technique stand out. In text 2 (page 12), the repeated 'h' sound not only lends itself to the fact that each boxer's surname begins with 'H' but also attempts perhaps to mimic the sound of repeated punches. In text 3 (page 12), the emphasis is not on sound but on patterns around a particular group of associated words (ingredients) and verbs that provide instructions. And, in text 4 (page 12), a memorable slogan/pattern is formed through the common rhetorical device of repetition.

As well as forming patterns, text producers often rely on **pattern-breaking** to draw attention and give prominence to a particular textual feature. Pattern-breaking relies on our attention being drawn towards a language or visual feature that is strikingly different in some way. At a simple level this might be due to its being exaggerated in terms of colour, brightness, movement or size.

■ As a quick way of understanding how our visual attention is drawn to breaks in patterns, have a look at texts 5, 6 and 7 (pages 12-13).

This kind of attention is often seen in written texts. For example, in text 8 (page 13), the text producer has used the words *reverse osmosis water-fed pole system* which is in stark contrast to the choices used to describe his company's rivals. In a similar way, text 9, (page 14) an extract from a ghost story ends in **minor sentences** (see Section 1 Chapter 6 'Clauses and Sentences' on pages 21-24) to create a particular effect and impact.

- To think about these ideas in more detail, look at texts 10 and 11 (page 14).
 - How do the text producers of these texts rely on establishing and breaking patterns?
 - At what level do these occur?
 - What impact do you think these might have on their readers?

Text Patterns – Text 1

This is taken from the website of a kitchenware manufacturer.

Our products are a scintillating range of top quality workmanship

Text Patterns – Text 2

This is a headline from a newspaper reporting on a boxing bout between Audley Harrison and David Haye.

Harrison hits hard ground as Haye's the heavyweight king

Text Patterns – Text 3

This is from a recipe book.

Cut the chicken into strips. Fry and then add the onions and peppers. Put the tomatoes into the pan and then follow with the herbs.

Text Patterns – Text 4

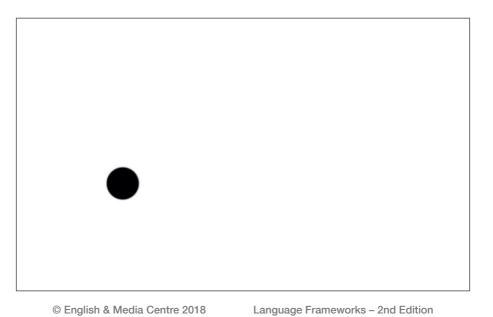
This is taken from a school prospectus sent out to prospective parents of Year 7 students.

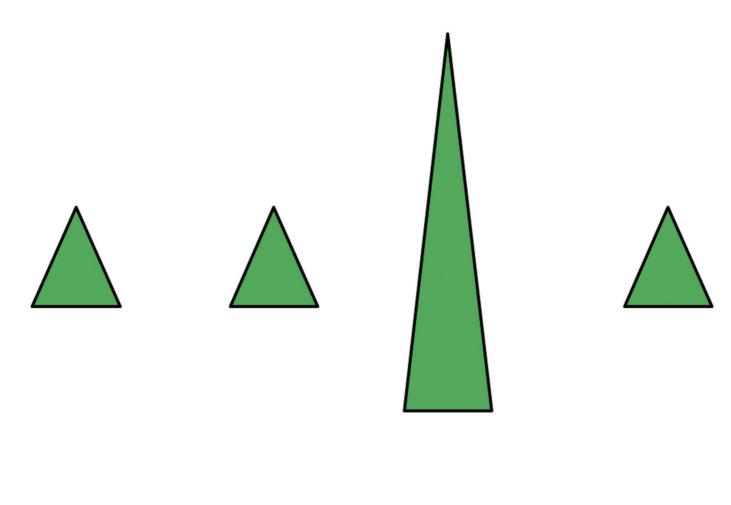
We believe in top quality education. We believe in your child's education. We believe in your child.

(III) Text Patterns – Text 5

This text is a video clip of a black dot moving across a white screen.

This text is available as an audio clip (Black Dot_1.mp4 or Black Dot_1.mov in 'LangFrame2018.zip').





Text Patterns – Text 7



Text Patterns – Text 8

This is from advertising material produced by a window-cleaning company.

Whilst our rivals are still using tatty sponges and dirty buckets of water, Round-developers use the cutting-edge technology of a reverse osmosis waterfed pole system.

4. Spoken Planned Speech

The following text is the opening to Barack Obama's inaugural speech as President of the USA in 2009.

This text is available as a video clip (Obama.mp4 or Obama.mov in 'LangFrame2018.zip').



My fellow citizens:

I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbearers, and true to our founding documents.

So it has been. So it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land – a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights.

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America – they will be met.

Applying Linguistic Frameworks

Which frameworks would be best used to analyse this text (Spoken Planned Speech, page 53)?

We would suggest:

- Address
- Lexis and semantics
- Structure and rhetoric
- Phrases and modification
- Ideologies and discourses

Initial questions

- 1. Can you identify important adjectives in this text and suggest why they have been chosen?
- 2. Can you identify important nouns in this text and suggest why they have been chosen?
- 3. Can you identify important verbs in this text and suggest why they have been chosen?
- 4. What type of sentence is this? Why do you think that it is used in this extract?
 - 'Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet'
 - 'So it has been'
 - 'Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred'
 - 'They are serious and they are many'

Detailed questions

1. How does Obama address his audience? What particular strategies does he use and what are the effects?

2. What can you say about the structure of this extract? What explicit rhetorical techniques does Obama use?

3. What key semantic fields do you feel this speech contains? How do they provide a sense of coherence and support Obama's purpose?

4. Spoken Planned Speech

1. How does Obama address his audience? What particular strategies does he use and what are the effects?

Obama begins by directly addressing his audience as 'My fellow citizens'. He aims to portray the relationship between them as equal (despite the clear distance in power between them) as is fitting for a democratically elected president of a republic. This understanding is emphasised by his later choice of adjectives 'humbled', 'grateful' and 'mindful'. He uses deictic terms of person 'I', place 'here' and time 'today' as a technique of address to emphasise the importance of this specific occasion and his central role, to which he then returns in his final paragraph 'Today I say to you'.

Obama also makes extensive use of the second person pronoun 'you' as a way of extending this relationship-building element of his speech and personalising the contents for his audience. In addition, he uses the first-person plural pronouns 'we' and 'our' to suggest a sense of shared ownership and an inclusive approach to the problems that the country will face. This emphasis on inclusivity can also be seen in his reference to both a shared history ('our ancestors') and a shared future ('this generation of Americans') in which he positions himself clearly with his audience as part of a collective responsibility towards ensuring progress. Finally, he addresses the audience by using the name of the country ('America') to refer to the people who live within it (a technique known as **metonymy**). This is a particularly powerful way of addressing an entire nation, especially since Obama will have a much wider national and international audience beyond simply those who are in attendance. In an important political speech as a new world leader, Obama needs to ensure that he comes across as focused and able to lead change.

2. What can you say about the structure of this extract? What explicit rhetorical techniques does Obama use?

Obama's speech follows a conventional problem-solution discourse pattern. He begins by thanking his audience, then by presenting the problem (the political crisis) before offering the solution (his leadership).

Obama makes use of the triad, a common persuasive/rhetorical strategy.

'humbled by the task', 'grateful for the trust you have bestowed', 'mindful of the sacrifices' (three adjective phrases)

'our nation ... our economy ... our collective failure' (three noun phrases)

'homes have been lost'; 'jobs shed'; 'businesses shuttered' (three noun + verb phrases)

'our health care ... our schools ... each day' (three noun phrases)

He also explains the country's state of affairs using the overarching metaphor of 'the political situation is an event of nature'. So, 'rising tides' and 'still waters' suggest safer, positive and calmer political times, whilst a more dangerous political and economic landscape is understood through the description of 'gathering clouds' and 'raging storms'. Here he relies on his audience's understanding of how clouds and storms are indicators of disturbance in the natural world and consequently are suggestive of more dangerous political times.

Obama also uses modal verbs in his speech. He uses 'must' to stress the obligation of 'this generation of Americans' to maintain the American spirit and later uses 'will' in 'they will be met', which has elements of both obligation and certainty to emphasise how successful his presidency will be. Modal verbs convey a sense of force and power and are used to stress the intensity and likely impact of Obama's words and actions.

Working with Exam-style Texts

The AQA English Language specification consists of two examinations (as does the AS qualification, for which much of the following will be useful too). The material provided here could be used to develop key frameworks for you to use on Paper 1 Section A and also help with Paper 2 Section B.

Paper 1 - A Level 7702/1, AS level 7701/1

On Paper 1, you are provided with two texts on the same topic which you need to analyse individually at first and then deal with together in a third question where you explore the similarities and differences between the two texts.

While the texts will have a common theme – for example both texts might focus on school proms, cycling or a particular event – they will vary in different ways. For example, one text might be written and another spoken, or one might be from a type of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) such as a conversation on a message board or series of Tweets, and another spoken.

- For the AS level, both texts will be contemporary (relatively recent) and from the UK.
- For the A level, one of the texts will always be older (potentially as far back as 1600) while the other will be contemporary. Either might be from outside the UK as well.

The key variables that might alter between the two texts will be **audience**, **purpose**, **genre**, **mode** and the **context of production** (time and **place**).

Your task is to analyse the two texts and consider the ways in which language is used to create meanings and representations. Basically, what are the texts about and how are the text producers using language to say what they want to say?

There are three questions on the paper. The first two questions are marked using two assessment objectives (**AO1** out of 10 and **AO3** out of 15) and Question 3 is marked out of one assessment objective (**AO4** out of 20).

AO1 primarily assesses your ability to identify and label **language features** in the texts, so you are rewarded for being able to talk about different language frameworks. You can range across graphology, semantics, syntax, phonology and discourse (among others) depending on what is most appropriate for that given text, and identify semantic fields, lexical formality, textual design, word classes, sentence functions, sentence types and structures & patterns within texts. The more detailed your analysis and the wider your range of discussion about salient points within the text, the higher your mark. For example, if you manage to talk about nouns you will generally be within the middle territory of the mark range, but if you talk about abstract nouns you might have the chance to go into higher levels. Equally, if you notice that a language feature is occurring again and again, this might be part of a pattern. If you can distinguish patterns of language, you will be able to see a bigger picture emerging and perhaps be able to link this to how the text producer is shaping language.

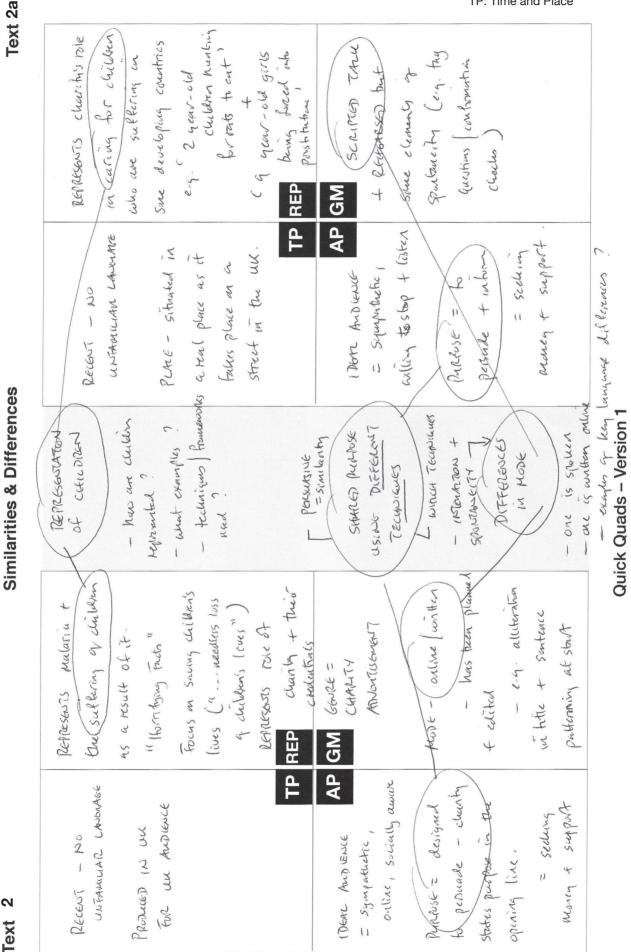
This analysis has to be linked to the **salience** of the features that you identify though and this means finding the most relevant and significant language features to describe, rather than hoping you can get marks for labelling anything that you recognise. It's also very important to consider what is relevant specifically to each text, rather than assume that the same things will always get you marks. AO1 – to a lesser degree – also assesses your ability to write accurately and structure an answer.

AO3 assesses your interpretation of meaning in each text. If you are able to think clearly about what the text producers' purposes and target audiences are, and how these link to the meanings in the text, you will be credited. Towards the higher end of the mark scheme you will be rewarded for exploring the views they express towards their subject matter and how they position themselves in a

An example of 'Quick Quads' notes

Key

GM: Genre and Mode AP: Audience and Purpose **Rep: Representation** TP: Time and Place



Text

side, by the manipulations demanded by the multiplicity of articles to be fitted, tacked, and carefully adjusted on their bodies. What mother ever found her girl of six or seven stand quiet while she was curling her hair? How many times nightly has she not to reprove her for not standing still during the process! It is the same with the unconscious infant, who cannot bear to be moved about, and who has no sooner grown reconciled to one position than it is forced reluctantly into another. It is true, in one instance the child has intelligence to guide it, and in the other not; but the motitory nerves, in both instances, resent coercion, and a child cannot be too little handled.

2496. On this account alone, and, for the moment, setting health and comfort out of the question, we beg mothers to simplify their baby's dress as much as possible; and not only to put on as little as is absolutely necessary, but to make that as simple in its contrivance and adjustment as it will admit of; to avoid belly-bands, rollers, girths, and everything that can impede or confine the natural expansion of the digestive organs, on the due performance of whose functions the child lives, thrives, and develops its physical being.

Task 3 for Paper 1 A Level (7702/1)

A third and final pair of texts offers you another genre to consider. Both of these texts are examples of travel writing. Again, one is an older text and the other more contemporary but they share the same theme, if not the same expedition location.

- Text 12 (page 121) is taken from the autobiographical travel book *Syria: The Desert and The Sown* by Getrude Lowthian Bell and first printed in 1907.
- Text 12a (pages 122-123) is taken from an entry on a travel blog, *Road to Sagarmatha*, written in November 2017 about an expedition to the Himalayas. https://roadtosagarmatha. wordpress.com/2017/11/09/day-7-and-day-8-pheriche-rest-day/

Exam-style questions

- 1. Analyse how Text 12 uses language to create meanings and representations. (25 marks)
- 2. Analyse how Text 12a uses language to create meanings and representations. (25 marks)
- 3. Explore the similarities and differences in the ways that Text 6 and Text 6a use language. (20 marks)

Text 12: Extract from The Desert and The Sown by Gertrude Lowthian Bell (1907)

Beyond the fountain the road was empty, and though I knew it well I was struck again by the incredible desolation of it. No life, no flowers, the bare stalks of last year's thistles,

the bare hills and the stony road. And yet the Wilderness of Judaea has been nurse to the fiery spirit of man. Out of it strode grim prophets, menacing with doom a world of which they had neither part nor understanding; the valleys are full of the caves that held them, nay, some are peopled to this day by a race of starved and gaunt ascetics, clinging to a tradition of piety that common sense has found it hard to discredit. Before noon we reached the khan half way to Jericho, the place where legend has it that the Good Samaritan met the man fallen by the roadside, and I went in to lunch beyond reach of the boisterous wind. Three Germans of the commercial traveller class were writing on picturepostcards in the room of the inn, and bargaining with the khanji for imitation Bedouin knives. I sat and listened to their vulgar futile talk – it was the last I was to hear of European tongues for several weeks, but I found no cause to regret the civilisation I was leaving. The road dips east of the khan, and crosses a dry water-course which has been the scene of many tragedies.

Under the banks the Bedouin used to lie in wait to rob and murder the pilgrims as they passed. Fifteen years ago the Jericho road was as lawless a track as is the country now that lies beyond Jordan: security has travelled a few miles eastward during the past decade. At length we came to the top of the last hill and saw the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea, backed by the misty steeps of Moab, the frontier of the desert. Jericho lay at our feet, an unromantic village of ramshackle hotels and huts wherein live the only Arabs the tourist ever comes to know, a base-born stock, half bred with negro slaves.

I left my horse with the muleteers whom we had caught up on the slope 'Please God you prosper! "Praise be to God! If your Excellency is well we are content' and ran down the hill into the village. But Jericho was not enough for that first splendid day of the road. I desired eagerly to leave the tourists behind, and the hotels and the picture-postcards. 'Two hours more and we should reach Jordan bank, and at the head of the wooden bridge that leads from Occident to Orient we might camp in a sheltered place under mud hillocks and among thickets of reed and tamarisk. A halt to buy corn for the horses and the mules and we were off again across the narrow belt of cultivated land that lies round Jericho, and out on to the Ghor, the Jordan valley.

Glossary

Α			
Abstract:	a signal that a narrative is about to begin		
Adjacency pair:	a pair of turns, with an initial turn followed or answered by a second		
Adjective:	a word class used to modify nouns		
Adverb:	a word class used for a number of functions, including modifying adjectives and verbs. Adverbs often tell us about time, manner an place. These are called adverbs of manner . They can also modified adjectives and verbs by telling us to what degree (how much or how little) a verb is operating or an adjective is modifying. These a called adverbs of degree .	ify	
Anaphora:	the repetition of the same word/phrases in a succession of phrase sentences	es/	
Actual reader:	the term used to refer to the individual or individual(s) who actually read or listen to a text	1	
Actual writer:	the term used to refer to the individual or individuals who actually produce a text		
Anchoring:	the process by which the meaning of an image is fixed by adding words and phrases to support it		
Antithesis:	a contrast between ideas (the thesis and antithesis) by placing the together for effect	эm	
Aspect:	a grammatical term that refers to whether an action or process is ongoing (progressive aspect) or completed (perfective aspect).		
Audience:	a general term referring to the readers of or listeners to a text		
В			
Binary opposition:	a technique that places ideas or language structures in direct contrast to each other		
С			
Clause:	a group of words used to express a single idea. These usually (although not always) consist of a subject and a verb		
Clipping:	cutting off the beginning or end of a word		
Coda:	a signal that a narrative has come to an end		
Complex sentence:	a sentence consisting of at least two clauses, one of which is subordinate to (or dependent on) a main clause		
Compound sentence:	a sentence consisting of two or more main clauses linked with on of the conjunctions <i>or, but</i> or <i>and</i> .	е	
Complicating action(s):	the main event(s) of a narrative	139	