

Lingua Inglese II


The Language of Politics  
Unit 1

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Unit 1

Where do they stand?



Denotation v Connotation

**DENOTATION** ⇒ Referential meaning, the most direct or specific meaning of a word or expression, literal meaning of a word, the "dictionary definition".

**CONNOTATION** ⇒ Refers to the level of meaning based on associations we attach to words, associations or the emotional suggestions/evocations related to that word. An idea that is implied or suggested.

Politician

**"politician"**

DENOTATION	(NEGATIVE) CONNOTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) a person practically engaged in running a country</li> <li>2) practitioner of the art of politics</li> <li>3) a leader engaged in civil administration</li> <li>4) a person active in party politics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) an individual who is involved in influencing public decision making</li> <li>2) a schemer who tries to gain advantage in an organization in sly or underhand ways</li> <li>3) one who seeks personal or partisan gain, often by scheming and manoeuvring</li> <li>4) sinister, devious figure</li> </ul>

Statesman

**"statesman"**  
or stateswoman or statesperson

DENOTATION	(POSITIVE) CONNOTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) practitioner of the art of politics</li> <li>2) a person practically engaged in running a country</li> <li>3) a politician or other notable public figure who has had a long and respectable career in politics</li> <li>4) senior political figure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) wisdom, vision, dignity</li> <li>2) one who has the quality of leadership that brings people together, caring for others and for the whole</li> <li>3) Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela</li> </ul>

*"A statesman is a politician who places himself at the service of the nation.*

*A politician is a statesman who places the nation at his service"*

[Georges Pompidou, 1960s]

## Connotation and Denotation: Political labels

7



Margaret Thatcher  
The Iron Lady



### DISAPPROVING/OPPOSING

- narrow
- inflexible
- intransigent

### APPROVING/FAVOURABLE

- tough
- decisive
- resolute

Political labels for policies:  
**Reaganomics, Thatcherite, Blairite**

## Politics...

8

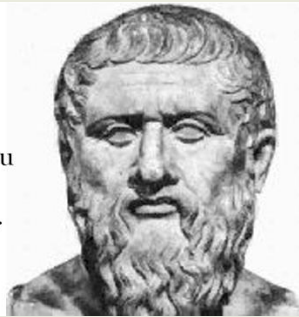
- **root: Classical Greek *polis* = city, citizen, civic**
- concerned with people and the lives they lead in organised communities
- Plato: politics is “*nothing but corruption*”
- George Orwell in *Politics and the English Language* (1946): “*All issues are political issues*” and “*politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia*”

## Plato

9

One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics, is that you end up being governed by your inferiors. *Plato*

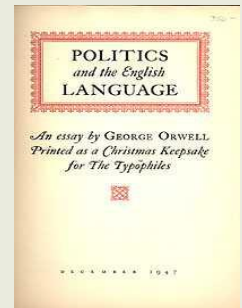
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## George Orwell

10

Political language is designed to make Lies sound Truthful and Murder respectable  
- George Orwell,



## Matching of definitions

politic	<sup>11</sup> course or method of action, guidelines; a plan of action adopted by an individual or social group
political	social relations involving authority or power; art or science of government
politics	the form of government of a social organization
politicise	relating to the state or its government; pertaining to politics, concerned with politics
policy	give a political character to something
polity	diplomatic, marked by artful prudence, expedience

## Code

12

Politics has its own **code**:  
a language variety of a specific group  
**VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR AND DISCOURSE**:  
specific features of various political activities

Idea of a **battleground of party politics**:  
**NEGATIVE CONNOTATION**,  
it also creates keywords for  
**POLITICAL ALIGNMENT OF PARTIES**

## right-wingers ↔ left-wingers

13

**Right and Left cannot be described neutrally**, without connotations.

during the French Revolution (1789–1799)

**LEFT** ⇒ those who opposed the King's policies

**RIGHT** ⇒ those who supported the King's policies

**CENTRE** ⇒ somewhere in between



## The left-right spectrum

14

There are many gradations of right, left and centre. Match the definitions.

a) EXTREME	1) one who is not extreme in his opinions or views, conservative, temperate person, without strong convictions or beliefs
b) MODERATE	2) of the greatest possible degree or extent or intensity, excessive
c) RADICAL	3) having extreme political views

left-of-centre, right-of-centre, radical centre, radical middle, radical centrism, radically moderate, far left (aka the extreme left), centre left, radical left (synonym for the "farthest left"), radical right, far right (or extreme right), centre right

## Wet and Dry

15

As **political groupings** emerge, **new words** are used to describe them.

### • "Wet" and "Dry": Metaphor of liquid

In the 1980s the Conservative party ruled Britain. Those in the party who did not support Thatcher's policies: "**wets**" (term of abuse, in public schools, those who lack courage).

Mrs Thatcher's supporters: started to call themselves "**dries**".

Then the term "wets" became established and lost its negativity.

## Tory

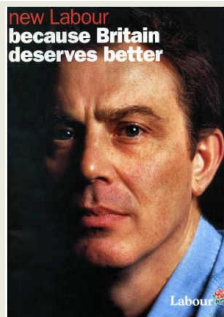
16

The word "**Tory**" was originally used by English settlers in Ireland to refer to the Irish who were attacking them; then it was used as a term of abuse when applied to a group of British politicians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; eventually it became the official name of the Conservative party.



## "Hard Left" and "Soft left"

17



### Metaphor of solidity

- In the Labour party, radical members belonged to the "hard left"; the less radical were called "soft left".
- In 1997 the new leaders of the Labour party coined the term "New Labour" to describe the new policies.
- New Labour v Old Labour

## Where do you stand?

18

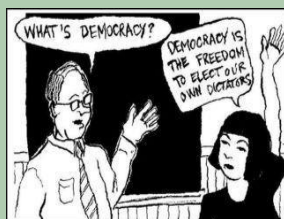
*Where you stand-  
the label which you attach to yourself,  
or the **label** that is attached to you-  
is very significant in politics*

# Know Where You Stand.

## Nouns to describe forms of government

19

Try to find definitions for these words



government
regime
junta
democracy
dictatorship
faction
one-man rule

### Match the definitions

- 1) government
- 2) regime
- 3) junta  
/ˈdʒʌntə/ /ˈdʒʌntə/
- 4) democracy
- 5) dictatorship
- 6) faction
- 7) one-man rule

- a) a military or political group that rules a country after taking power by force
- b) a small dissenting group, fighting for its own ideas and opposing those of a larger group
- c) a form of government in which the people have a voice in the exercise of power, typically through elected representatives
- d) the system by which a state or community is governed; the action or manner of governing a state, organization, or people
- e) type of government controlled by one person, rather than by several people
- f) government by a dictator; very strict and harsh government
- g) despotism, unlimited rule; totalitarianism

20

## Nouns to describe opponents to those in power

21

revolutionary
fundamentalist
dissident
zealot
critic
partisan
militant
separatist
paramilitary
protester
liberator

Try to find definitions for these words



## Matching of definitions

22

1) revolutionary	a) a person who opposes official policy or a government, especially when it is undemocratic, a person who dissents from some established policy
2) fundamentalist	b) a fanatical follower of a religion or policy; one with very extreme views and actions
3) dissident	c) promoting, or relating to political revolution, one who attempts to overthrow a government or authority, one who takes part in a revolution
4) zealot ('zelat)	d) one who strictly follows a system of beliefs (especially religious)

## Matching of definitions

23

5) partisan	e) a person who expresses an unfavourable opinion of something
6) militant	f) one who supports separation, one who supports secession or segregation of a group of people from a larger body on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or gender
7) separatist	g) a strong supporter of a party, cause, or person; a member of an armed group fighting secretly against an occupying force
8) critic	h) political activist; esp in the support of a cause, aggressive or vigorous

## Matching of definitions

24

9) paramilitary	i) someone who sets people free from a system, situation, or set of ideas that restricts them in some way
10) protester	j) organized on similar lines to a military force
11) liberator	k) people who protest publicly about an issue; a person who dissents from some established policy

## Nouns to describe attitudes towards a political issue

25

Try to find definitions for these words



hawk

dove

extremist

radical

moderate

HAWK



DOVE



Match the definitions

1) hawk

2) dove

3) extremist

4) radical

5) moderate

a) advocating complete political or social reform; politically extreme

b) not radical or excessively right- or left-wing

c) an advocate of an aggressive policy on foreign relations

d) someone who prefers negotiations to armed conflict in the conduct of foreign relations

f) a person who holds extreme political or religious views

27

## Satire and parody

28

Politicians are often seen in a negative light. Politics and politicians are often presented through the means of satire.



## Satire

29

**Humour:** just evokes laughter

**SATIRE** ⇒ RIDICULE OF ⇒  
 1) individual politicians  
 2) political parties/institutions/nations  
 3) the whole human race

- uses laughter as a weapon
- points out folly
- suggests and implies that a certain political behaviour should change
- makes reference to specific people and events
- human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are ridiculed by means of derision and irony
- its purpose is not primarily humour in itself, but an attack on something of which the author/speaker strongly disapproves

## Gulliver's Travels

30



- Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" ⇒ published in 1726; at the time, travel writing was a popular genre, through which travellers described their adventures in exotic and undiscovered locations. Swift used **parody** to write this book: he uses Gulliver as the narrator.
- Swift attacks political factions and religious strife, and this remains relevant today, so the satire remains as powerful as the vices it attacks.

## Gulliver's Travels

31

- The fictional world can tell us the truth about the 'real' world of contemporary English society and politics
- Tradition of describing fantastic countries that satirise contemporary clerics, politicians, and academics.
- *Gulliver's Travels* is a fictional tale masquerading as a true story: fiction reveals what it would not be possible to articulate through a genuine account of the nation.

## Parody

32

- **PARODY** ⇒ humorous, satiric or ironic imitation of the language used by a particular writer or within a certain genre
- readers must recognize certain linguistic and structural features of the genre being parodied
- they must also “translate” the ideas from the parody to a different and more significant meaning.



## Utopia

33

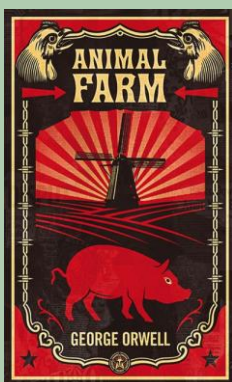


Thomas More's *Utopia* is a satirical work (1516). It introduced the word “utopian” into the English language. It was originally written in Latin and describes the political system of an imaginary land. It also comments on the politics of England at the time.

## Dystopia

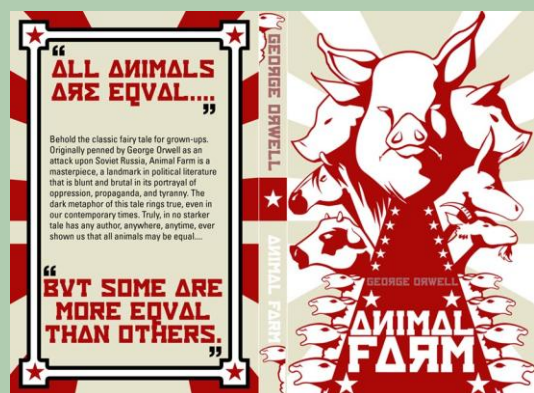
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- Many satirical novels are **DYSTOPIAN** ⇒ they depict, in an imaginative form, the worst of all worlds, and highlight the writer's fears about the politics of the time. Examples include George Orwell's novel '1984' and Aldous Huxley's book 'Brave New World'.
- A **dystopia (anti-utopia)** is the vision of a society in which conditions of life are miserable and characterized by poverty, oppression, war, violence, disease, pollution, and the limitation of human rights, resulting in unhappiness, suffering, and other kinds of pain.



*Animal Farm* is an allegorical and dystopian novel by George Orwell, published in England on 17 August 1945. According to Orwell, the book reflects events leading up to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and then on into the Stalin era in the Soviet Union.

35



36

“Man serves the interests of no creature except himself.”

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

“Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.”

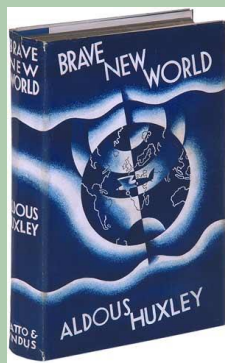
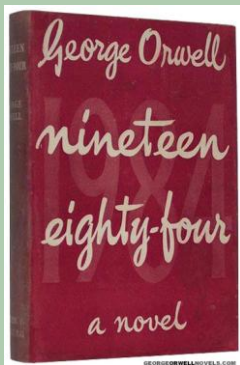
George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

37

“Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself.”

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

38



39

## Questions

## Unit 1

(6 cfu)

40

### Where do they stand?

- 1) Explain the difference between the two words *politician* and *statesman*. Why are they not usually synonyms?
- 2) When and where did the terms *left*, *right* and *centre* first originate?
- 3) Which two metaphors were used in the Thatcher years to describe the two factions, the supporters and opponents within the same party? Was the term used for opponents considered to be abusive?
- 4) Give examples of terms used to describe *forms of government*, *opponents* and *attitudes towards a political issue*. Give definitions.
- 5) What are *humour*, *satire* and *parody*?
- 6) What are *utopia* and *dystopia*? Look at the list of novels on p. 16. Can you briefly describe ONE and say what the novel is about?