people with a very specific interest to meet like-minded people. The fans share a common language and this jargon gives linguistic cohesion to the group. On a Harry Potter website for example, all fans of the J. K. Rowling books and films would be able to discuss the relative merits of Gryffyndor and Hufflepuff as houses at Hogwarts School. These are lexical items relevant to the books and the films. Non-members of these fan groups are excluded by their ignorance of specific terms and they are often not allowed to post messages on the forums. Membership and language are important discriminators.

Fan groups are bound together by the continuing spin-offs from the books and films; merchandise is available for sale and fan art and fan fiction further reinforce solidarity and group interests. The boundaries between fiction and real life are frequently crossed, such as in fan fiction and fan art where the original narrative is developed by fans or by conventions where actors in role can meet their fans.

English-speaking websites have a global spread and other fan groups develop sites for other regions.

The following quotes are taken from the Harry Potter *SnitchSeeker* fan website.

Notices

Established in 2002, SnitchSeeker is a Harry Potter fansite, forum, and news site with a large member base and an active and welcoming community. Most of our discussions and activities focus on J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books and movies, and our members are passionate about them. Here on SS there are various places for discussing almost any Harry Potter topic that appeals to our members. Perhaps you want to talk about your all-time favorite Harry Potter character, or share what flavor of Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans you would most like to try. You can do that right here on SS.

Welcome to snitchseeker

Yesterday at 3:14pm

You can find me here mostly in the School RPG, the ministry RPG as well as the WWW forums. That however doesn't mean I don't visit other forums. In the School RPG I play a Slytherin girl named Cassia and she's going to be a sixth year soon! Oh and as for the house, I am a Slytherin in pottermore, too! So it's not only an IC thing. Slytherin is my favorite house, next to it comes Gryffindor. Of course I do like all the four houses.

Yesterday at 4:23pm

[*my favourite character?*] Voldemort. Hehe kiiiiidding. =3 You know that's a tough one. As much as I'd like to say George or Fred I couldn't because I'm not like them. xD I'd saaaay Remus Lupin.

Yesterday at 4:45pm

In answer to *What is your favourite Harry Potter film?* I think mine would have to be POA and OOTP, because that's where everything starts falling into place and we really learn some things about our favorite characters.

www.snitchseeker.com

ACTIVITY 5.14

These activities are designed to show you the language of fan sites so that you can assess the extent to which the fans become an exclusive group, defined by the language used amongst its members.

1 Look at the extract above from the *SnitchSeeker* fan site. To what extent do you think the material would be understandable to anyone? Identify any jargon words and phrases which would not make sense and would therefore exclude someone who was not a fan.

2 Research a fan website for a book, TV show or film of your choice. What jargon is used that would be understandable to website members but not outsiders?

3 Explain, with examples that you have researched, how fan sites give status to their members and reinforce the solidarity and mutual support of the fan group.

4 Read the extract from *HPearth*, an Indian-based Harry Potter website, and assess the role of such international sites for fans throughout the world.

It had quite a humble beginning in early months of its formation where it was known by a different name, 'Potter's India: Harry Potter comes to India'. Its foundation was laid by Harsh Sadhvani with a website hosted on geocities and a range of Harry Potter fanmade videos under the section 'Homemade HP'. Meanwhile Suman Barua was running a yahoo group called HPindia sucessfully with a lot of participants grouped into houses conducting HP Web Activities. Both Suman and Harsh were also staff at Harry Potter India (a well established website that time) under Chetan Bansal (now an IITian). It was there that these two guys came in contact, and being in the same city, connected. Both wanted to spread to an international dominion and hence came up with 'HPearth.com' and launched it on 31st October 2005. The duo began adding the bricks to the foundation and now it has grown to the cadres of being an International website, the only Harry Potter fan website with Indian roots which has survived the downfall of many big HPfansites.

www.hpearth.com

Interviews

The relationship between a star and his or her fans is another medium whereby a community of shared values develops and language is a part of this.

The following is an edited version of an interview with the actor Chris Rankin who plays the character Percy Weasley in the Harry Potter films. Interviews like this are supplemented by posts, online forums and tweets, all of which use specific references to the films and books and are of course mutually understood by the fans.

In addition to highlighting some of the mutually understood language of the fan group, this extract will give you more practice with unscripted conversational features. The commentary which follows highlights the ideas of the language of an inclusive group, but you should also be able to analyse this from the point of view of discourse.

Chris Rankin, who played Percy Weasley in the Harry Potter films.

Speakers: Chris Rankin (Chris), interviewer (Int).

CHRIS	I play Percy Weasley (.) in six of eight films (.) and I am a (.) um a regular [*laughs*]
INT	so (.) in the events (.) er do you wanna (.) to talk about these events (.) what makes you want to come back every year
CHRIS	it's a lot of fun (.) um I think the first one y (.) I accidentally went to [*laughs*] that sounds weird but it is (.) 7 is it 7 years ago (2) yes 7 years ago (2) nearly 7 years ago (.) I got asked by Salem town council (.) to be the guest of honour at their Halloween parade (.) which in Salem is quite a big deal/
INT	yeah/

CHRIS	That was awesome (.) I said yes I would love to go (.) so I didn't really know what to expect // … Then I turned up and there were all these people in costume (.) um and (.) er (.) I got arrested by a bunch of Death Eaters (.) and we stage crashed a Harry Potter gig (.) and (.) it was awesome and I bumped into a load of people I had spoken to on line (.) (.) I'd um done podcasts for Leaky Cauldron and I'd spoken to HPNA about stuff (.) and actually met them face to face (.) and really just ended up having a really cool time and //
INT	//so it was (.) like larger than life (.) was it (.) like what you were expecting
CHRIS	it wasn't what I was expecting (2) initially I was really scared of it (.) well because I was like (.) I'm an actor in these films and I'm staying in a hotel full of Harry Potter fanatics and um I'm not entirely sure if I'm safe// [*laughs*]
INT	// [*laughs*]
CHRIS	Then I started speaking to people (.) they were really great (.) they were really nice and friendly and enthusiastic (.) we shared a lot of common interest cos (.) obviously I'm a big Harry Potter fan as well (.) so (1) um kind of rocked up to a couple of events (.) sat in on a couple of screens and things and (.) just had an awesome time. um (.) and then 'cos of filming commitments and stuff (.) I couldn't do any for a while for a while (.) and then I came to Ascatraz which was in San Francisco about three years ago … and I'm here now and (.) it's cos I love them// and they're a lot of fun

www.youtube.com

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This interview took place at a Harry Potter convention where Chris was being interviewed for both the fans and a wider audience. The purpose was to 'get behind' the character and get to know the actor. Chris is a British actor who was at a fan convention in the United States.

Both Chris and the interviewer are young, and use colloquialisms (*rocked up, awesome*) which are familiar to the audience who, as a social group, are likely to be of a broadly similar age and so would feel some connection with the young actor who carries through his enthusiasm for the world of Harry Potter. In this context, Chris has the higher status but there is an equality between the two, with the interviewer overlapping, with feedback and some supportive comments:

… ended up having a really cool time and//

//So it was (.) like larger than life

The language is a structured conversation with question and answers in adjacency pairs. The expectation of the listener and viewers is that Chris will dominate the conversation and will be informative. The lexical