

A-level English Language Paper 2 SAMs commentary

This resource explains how the questions in the specimen assessment materials for A-level Paper 2 address the assessment objectives, with some suggestions as to how each task might be approached. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every point that could be made, but it provides teachers and students with some guidance that will support their work on this paper.

A-level Paper 2 Question 1

Evaluate the idea that spoken interactions between men and women are characterised by miscommunication.

The AOs assessed in this question are A01 and A02 (A01 10 marks, A02 20 marks), and this is made clear to students through the question wording. A01 is pointed to through “Evaluate the idea” (with the definition of “evaluate” being “judge from available evidence”). A02 is pointed to through “spoken interactions between men and women are characterised by miscommunication”.

A01: Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression

In order to evaluate the idea that spoken interactions between men and women are characterised by miscommunication, students will need to apply appropriate methods of language analysis to the context of spoken interactions between men and women. This could include, for example, consideration of grammar or pragmatics, and students would be expected to apply a range of appropriate linguistic terms with accuracy.

In their response to this question, students will need to use correct and relevant terminology for the context in order to successfully evaluate the idea that spoken interactions between men and women are characterised by miscommunication. For example, they may refer to features such as tag questions, directives and turn-taking structures, as well as the possible functions of such features in considering research on gender and difference.

Students will need to use coherent written expression in their answer.

A02: Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use

In evaluating the idea that spoken interactions between men and women are characterised by miscommunication, students will be able to demonstrate critical

understanding of concepts relevant to spoken language use by men and women. For example, they might look to evaluate the deficit, dominance or difference views and research.

Students will also be expected to demonstrate critical understanding of issues relevant to spoken language use by men and women. For example, they might look to challenge ideas of difference by critiquing notions of gender polarisation and dichotomies, or they might explore the range of different functions and meanings offered by some language features and how this makes categorisation of homogenous male and female speech styles too simplistic.

A-level Paper 2 Question 2

Evaluate the idea that the English language is changing and breaking up into many different Englishes.

The AOs assessed in this question are A01 and A02 (A01 10 marks, A02 20 marks), and this is made clear to students through the question wording. A01 is pointed to through “Evaluate the idea” (with the definition of “evaluate” being “judge from available evidence”). A02 is pointed to through “the English language is changing and breaking up into many different Englishes”.

A01: Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression

In order to evaluate the idea that the English language is changing and breaking up into many different Englishes, students will need to apply appropriate methods of language analysis to the context of change and diversity. This could include, for example, consideration of lexical or semantic change, and students would be expected to apply a range of appropriate linguistic terms with accuracy.

In their response to this question, students will need to use correct and relevant terminology for the context in order to successfully evaluate the idea that the English language is changing and breaking up into many different Englishes. For example, they may refer to ‘amelioration’, ‘broadening’ and ‘borrowing’.

Students will need to use coherent written expression in their answer.

A02: Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use

In evaluating the idea that the English language is changing and breaking up into many different Englishes, students will be expected to demonstrate critical understanding of concepts relevant to change and diversity. Students might consider how and why the language has changed in the past and what this suggests for the future, or the ways in which English has spread around the world and developed new forms and uses.

In evaluating the idea, students will also be expected to demonstrate critical understanding of issues relevant to change and diversity. For example, they might look to evaluate the idea that the English language has ever been a

monolithic whole, or that 'breaking up' is a suitable term to apply to a range of different varieties.

A-level Paper 2 Question 3

Text A, printed on the insert, is a blog post about language change from The Guardian online. Text B, printed on page 3, is the start of an article about language change from The Daily Telegraph online.

Analyse how language is used in Text A and Text B to present views about the nature of language change. In your answer you should:

- examine any similarities and differences you find between the two texts
- explore how effectively the texts present their views.

The AOs assessed in this question are A01, A03 and A04 (A01 10 marks, A03 15 marks, A04 15 marks), and this is made clear to students through the question wording. A01 is pointed to through "Analyse how language is used". A03 is pointed to through "to present views about the nature of language change" and "explore how effectively the texts present their views". A04 is pointed to through "examine any similarities and differences you find between the two texts".

A01: Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression

In order to analyse how language is used in Text A and Text B to present views about the nature of language change, students will need to apply appropriate methods of language analysis to the texts. This could include, for example, consideration of issues pertinent to grammar and morphology (i.e. the structural patterns and shapes of English at sentence, clause, phrase and word level) or to lexis and semantics (i.e. the vocabulary of English) which are relevant to how language is used in the texts to present views about the nature of language change.

Students will need to use correct and relevant terminology for the context in order to successfully analyse how language is used in the texts to present views about the nature of language change. For example, in semantics, they could discuss metaphor, and the connotations of words.

Students will need to use coherent written expression in their answer.

A03: Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning

Through this question students will be focusing on the construction of meaning, including evaluation and analysis of those language features associated with it. They need to show they understand how the language features build into patterns of meaning to present views about the nature of language change. Students could look at how ideas about language are constructed and how the

writers position themselves in relation to the subject matter and their ideal readers.

A04: Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods

Through analysing how language is used in Text A and Text B to present views about the nature of language change, students will be exploring connections between them (as directed by the first bullet point in the question wording, “examine any similarities and differences you find between the two texts”) and looking at similarities and differences in the ways in which language is used to present views about the nature of language change. They may, for example, evaluate presentations of language change as decay, or evaluate presentations of correctness and communication/clarity. Exploring these connections will require them to refer closely to the relevant textual dimensions.

In exploring the similarities and differences between the texts, students will be employing a fundamental method of linguistic enquiry, which is to research how texts construct discourses about a subject.

A-level Paper 2 Question 4

Write an opinion article about language change in which you assess the ideas and issues raised in Text A and Text B and argue your own views.

The AOs assessed in this question are A02 and A05 (A02 20 marks, A05 10 marks), and this is made clear to candidates through the question wording. A02 is pointed to through “assess the ideas raised in Text A and Text B and argue your own views”, and A05 is pointed to through “Write an opinion article about language change”.

A02: Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use

In writing an opinion article about language change in which they assess the ideas and issues raised in Text A and Text B and argue their own views, students will be able to demonstrate critical understanding of concepts relevant to changing language use, such as ideas of progress or decay.

In assessing the ideas and issues, students will also be able to demonstrate critical understanding of issues relevant to language use by challenging particular stances.

A05: Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways

In writing their opinion article, students will need to demonstrate both expertise and creativity by making innovative use of form and using an appropriate register, transforming and exploring ideas relevantly and interestingly for the audience, and using an engaging and entertaining style.