



General Certificate of Education

English Language 2706

Specification B

ENGB3 Developing Language

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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General

The first sitting of this A2 unit has offered examiners an impressive selection of responses, demonstrating both the quality of teaching in centres and the students' ability to rise to the challenging of a changing focus in Assessment Objectives from AS. Approximately 3000 candidates took this exam and although, for some, this may have been a rehearsal for the summer exam, it was clear that the majority had prepared well for the demands of the separate exam topics. It was a pleasure to see candidates engaging with the data and responding with insight to both child language acquisition and language change. Indeed, it was significant that many candidates were performing equally as well with language change, and sometimes this topic produced even stronger answers, showing that the focus on Late Modern English has been enabling rather than restricting their opportunities to impart their understanding of change processes.

The increased time allowance has also clearly benefited candidates in the structuring of their answers, producing more systematic responses than chronological or feature-spotting approaches. Longer answers seem to have been another by-product of the increased time allowed, but candidates seemed to be able to sustain the quality of their answers rather than becoming descriptive and unfocused.

Another interesting development evident from this unit has been the shifting popularity of acquisition and change questions with responses to children's literacy development increasing from the legacy specification. Likewise, candidates have also become more confident at handling questions on single texts in the language change section. This now enables students as they have genuine choice on the paper and can select questions on their strengths and their ability to engage with the texts offered for analysis.

Section A – Language Acquisition

Question 1

This was a popular choice with most candidates responding well to the transcripts of a teacher and pre-school children.

Successful responses:

- identified significant linguistic features and evaluated them through links to language concepts (AO2) and contextual factors (AO3)
- looked for patterns and grouped linguistic aspects systematically. For example, more sophisticated responses looked at the teacher's role and language in both transcripts and compared and contrasted the teacher's use of CDS to suit the age of the children and the activity they were undertaking
- applied linguistic knowledge accurately and precisely, exemplifying and closely analysing the children's utterances
- used synoptic theories, such as power, interestingly to support analysis
- selected AO2 theories and applied to particular examples from the data, eg Halliday, Bruner and Skinner.

Less successful responses:

- tended to be AO2-led, leading to describing learned knowledge about theories rather than applying them relevantly to the data
- described the data
- took a chronological, line-by-line approach
- offered a deficit approach, judging the children harshly for their language competence.

Question 2

This question, although less popular, produced some interesting responses with candidates enjoying the child's understanding of the diary genre.

Successful responses:

- explored Georgia's use and adaptation of genre conventions, seeing it as creative and personal and allowing for more creative freedom than a school activity
- engaged with technical aspects of spelling
- selected examples well from the diaries to highlight significant linguistic methods, drawing sensible conclusions about literacy issues and practices
- related linguistic observations to various contexts, eg Christmas, the informal and personal nature of a diary, Georgia's enthusiasm and boredom, influences of technology etc
- focused on the multimodality in the data
- integrated AO2 with specific examples from the diary.

Less successful responses:

- viewed Georgia's eight day diary entries as a longitudinal study of her literacy development, leading to sweeping statements about her increasing/decreasing ability with written language
- took a deficit approach to the data, criticising her and finding faults with her language use.

Section B – Language Change

Question 3

This seemed to yield more focused and systematic analysis than the comparative question. Often, stronger candidates seemed to choose this question, using it to demonstrate their knowledge of the particular genre of speeches and the broader area of language change.

Successful responses:

- showed an awareness of its genre as a speech and used this to explore particularly features of the texts such as the prosodic effects of punctuation and rhetorical devices effectively
- linked linguistic features to context throughout, eg the address to 'gentlemen', the warnings and motivations to the male students in the rhetoric, the biblical lexis linking to the society of the time and the references to the 'vulgar' cementing the social hierarchy and expectations of students at the time
- used AS power theories helpfully to explore the linguistic features and the intentions of the speaker
- selected specific examples from the text to demonstrate understanding of language change processes.

Less successful responses:

- imparted learned knowledge about Caxton, Samuel Johnson's dictionary and a broad history of standardisation with either little attempt to connect these with the text or to making sweeping generalisations
- described graphological and orthographical features without development
- ignored the context, often overlooking that it was a speech or became distracted by the context of a male-only university and women's rights.

Question 4

Students obviously enjoyed these texts and were grateful that times had changed. However, Text J seemed to produce more confident comments on the article's conversational style with good exemplification of range of features, often at the expense of close scrutiny and analysis of Text I.

Successful responses:

- conceptualised the discussion of the speed and nature of language change, using the texts as evidence for these
- showed close reading of the data comparing the address terms and the words used in both texts to exemplify language change processes
- used context helpfully to support linguistic observations, even identifying that some attitudes and social behaviours had not changed from Text I to Text J although many clearly had.

Less successful responses:

- covered standardisation unhelpfully given the dates of the data
- made lengthy comments on graphology, becoming very descriptive and rather deficit observations made about Text I's layout that added little fruitfully to a discussion of the texts
- offered general discussion of Text I's complex sentences but with little support and development
- focused on Text J and ignored a linguistic analysis of Text I.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.