

English Language

Advanced GCE A2 H469

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H069

Report on the Units

June 2010

HX69/R/10

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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F651 The Dynamics of Speech

General Comments

Centres and candidates are coping increasingly well with the demands of this paper. There were encouraging signs of an improvement on previous sessions, in terms of greater familiarity with the requirements of the new specification. Levels of performance often suggested thorough preparation informed by relevant theoretical knowledge.

Candidates are now accustomed to the structure of the paper, in which each Section provides a choice of two questions. In Section A, significantly more candidates answered Question 1 than Question 2, though both were based on transcription of classroom interaction. Presumably candidates felt they could make more of their knowledge of speech to and by children if they dealt with interactions involving younger (4-5) rather than older (9-10) children.

Answers in Section B were a little more evenly split between the alternatives, with the majority of candidates opting for Question 4. This preference was marked in some Centres: the comments on individual questions may suggest some explanations for such a preference.

As is always the case, the stronger candidates adopted a specifically *linguistic* method. It is possible to trace *The Dynamics of Speech* in the passages in 'common-sense' (generally descriptive) terms, without using an approach which is explicitly linguistic. But candidates who do this gain, at best, Band 3 marks. *Linguistic* (AO1) approaches, terminology and methods are essential in order to succeed at higher levels in this paper.

Except where specifically prompted by phonemic representation in the transcribed material, the table of *phonemic symbols* (printed on the last page of the question paper) was little used; and phonology was a significant weakness in the work of many candidates, who struggled to differentiate between accent and dialect. Only regular practice will make students more comfortable with representations of speech sounds.

Examiners were encouraged by the levels of theoretical knowledge which many candidates displayed. Sometimes this was superficial, with Chomsky (or Labov, or Lakoff, or Grice, or Giles) merely named, as 'proof' of some assertion. However, as noted in previous sessions, more and more candidates now move confidently between theory and practical illustration.

Halliday's functions of language were often referred to. Where this reference was used to *inform* discussion, it was helpful; but lengthy exposition of Halliday's ideas (or, indeed, of any theory) tended to distract candidates from the transcription evidence.

Most candidates who attempted to use Basil Bernstein's theory of *restricted* or *elaborated code* had very little real understanding of the concepts. Often the examples they cited showed that they intended nothing more than a contrast between *inclusive* and *exclusive* uses of language.

These two theorists, Halliday and Bernstein, are difficult for even the strongest candidates; and whilst perceived 'difficulty' is not a reason to avoid anything, candidates would be well advised to *begin* with the transcription evidence and to cite theory only if the example genuinely corresponds.

Examiners noted that many candidates wrote competently-structured answers which balanced general comment with specific examples. Few wasted time on lengthy introductions or conclusions.

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An exception to this encouraging tendency was the number of candidates who used a long opening paragraph predicting what they 'could expect to see' in the transcript – often citing things that weren't in the passage, which led to an afterword on those things that one 'might have expected to see' being missing.

Stronger responses were characterised by a wide range of terminology, used accurately to communicate relevant knowledge with some precision (AO1). *Spelling* of terminology, though, was very variable. To expect accurate spelling is not outdated pedantry; for, once the term has been learned, it should be as easy to spell *deixis* (or *repetition*, or *elision*, or *liaison*, or *adjacency*) correctly as to spell it wrongly.

As far as possible, candidates should be encouraged towards greater specificity of terms – and, therefore, of analysis. So it is generally more productive to refer to *lexis* or *syntax* or *grammar* rather than to *language* or *vocabulary*.

It is worth remembering the Assessment Objective weightings for this Unit. AO2 is dominant in Section A, AO3 in Section B. However, there will always be significant overlap between the AOs, and a competent linguistic approach is likely to integrate aspects of AO1, AO2 and AO3 into virtually every relevant comment.

The following comments on responses in this session should provide helpful guidance to those entering in subsequent sessions. In addition, the published mark-scheme provides indications of appropriate response in terms of the Assessment Objectives.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Speech and Children

Centres need to keep in mind the Unit Content in the specification. Child Language Acquisition is amongst the topics, but it is by no means the only required subject for study. Some knowledge of the theories of child language is required, but knowledge of how to use theoretical ideas in practice is more important.

Other topics include the social contexts of talk and children, children's language in use (child-child and child-adult) and children's language in the media and in the wider community.

Question 1

The transcription was of a series of interactions in a class of 4-5 year olds, in which the teacher and the children are reading a number of stories, starting with *The Three Little Pigs*.

The task-wording provided an open-ended question: *How do the speakers here use language to explore the stories?*

The majority of candidates chose this question. They engaged readily with the situation, recognising that the teacher's role was to encourage both understanding of the stories and language development. They identified the use of questions as crucial in involving the children, and noted the teacher's use of Child Directed Speech. This was located in simplified lexis, simple sentences and the use of pauses to allow information to be absorbed. Exemplification was generally good, but (here and elsewhere) very seldom followed by developed and specific linguistic analysis.

For example, Miss P's attempt to respond to Jordan's use of *piggies* (while clarifying the story for the rest of the children) was often quoted but hardly ever analysed in syntactical or grammatical

terms. It should not be difficult to analyse what happens at each of Miss P's pauses: *because her children (.) her pigs (.) are going away (1) shes sending them away and shes very sad (1) she doesnt want them to leave*. Firstly she provides an alternative (common / concrete) noun (*pigs*) in apposition to the first one (*children*). Next she turns the grammatical subject noun (*her pigs*), into the object pronoun *them* in order to remind the children that this is a sad but deliberate decision and action by the mother sow. Lastly she adds a complete declarative utterance to explain why the mother is *very sad*.

Although the foregoing is fairly low-level analysis, it makes clear in *linguistic* terms how CDS is working here. Candidates often managed precise analysis of individual utterances (such as Nate's double-negative *she dont got no money*) but seldom tried to analyse larger structures.

Useful reference was made to Skinner in relation to Miss P's frequent positive reinforcement. More developed answers considered the competing claims of Chomsky or Piaget to explain how children learn correct grammatical structures, and the strongest candidates explored the comparative merits of correction and acceptance as methods of developing children's language.

The mark-scheme indicates other avenues of discussion worth exploring.

Question 2

The transcription was of a group of 9-10 year old pupils – Lucy, Tim and Joe – discussing the ethical problem faced by a character in a story they had been reading.

The task-wording was again an open-ended prompt: *How do the three children use language here to explore the problem, and to come to an agreement?*

The question was attempted by the minority of candidates, and most of these struggled to comprehend the dynamics. The better answers were characterised by careful reading of the transcription evidence and analysis of utterance types. Weaker answers were limited by a tendency to make assumptions about speakers on the basis of age, developmental stage and gender rather than responding to what the speakers actually said.

Some responses struggled to move beyond identification of features of speech to evaluation of their effect on the dynamics of interaction. It would be perfectly acceptable to argue (as many did) that Joe was dominant. But some candidates found evidence of dominance – or attempts to dominate – in the speech of Tim or Lucy, and argued their case coherently.

Answers which made assumptions about class or speculated about accent were less successful, though there was plenty of evidence of non-standard usage and signs of phonemic deletion which could suggest accent, or dialect, or both.

The mark-scheme contains further indications of relevant material and issues for discussion.

Section B: Speech Varieties and Social Groups

Centres need to keep in mind the Unit Content in the specification. Amongst the topics for study are the subjects of group identities created through specific features of language, the use of language to exclude and include, slang and jargon, social class, regional variation, occupation / age / power, and how language can demonstrate attitudes and values.

In terms of response to phonological features, it is worth remembering that discussion of *accent* usually becomes unprofitable when it moves into assertions about *class*. Similarly, comment on *accent* is often conflated with notions of *dialect*. Most often, weaker candidates equate Received

Pronunciation with Standard English. However, sometimes candidates are able to write themselves out of such confusion as easily as they wrote themselves into it. Certainly they should not be discouraged from exploring phonological features, but they do need to be as exact as possible in looking at the transcript evidence.

Question 3

The transcription was of part of a conversation in which three women friends in their forties and fifties talk about the words they used when they were growing up for particular rooms in their homes.

The task-wording reflected the content of the transcription, and was very close to the equivalent question from the January 2010 paper: *How do the women use language here to interact with each other and reflect particular attitudes?*

Although this question-focus is taken explicitly from the Unit Content, candidates seemed to find it hard to focus on *attitudes and values*. However, it was interesting to see how alternative interpretations of the dynamics emerged, any of which were fine as long as they were supported by *reference to specific examples from the transcription*.

There were some lively discussions on this question, with a number of candidates managing to delve into the way in which the women are mocking the terms they are using and what they imply, as used in their childhoods as compared to now, and about social standing and domestic life.

A minority felt that the women were competing spitefully and did not get along with, or approve of, each other. It was possible – but difficult – to make such a case, though some did fairly well at positing a non-co-operative dialogue of interruption and counter-interruption, of showing off, one-upmanship and disapproval. Some candidates saw Annabel as dominant, since she initiates the discussion and appears to ignore the first two contributions of her friends. Others argued that Caroline was of a lower class (or lesser level of education) than the other two, on the basis of her more colloquial language (*yeah cos there was never a TELLY ...*).

Approaches which made less well-supported assumptions about the social class and/or levels of education or income of the speakers were less productive, and are generally ill-advised. There was certainly scope here for *exploration* of the links here between language and social attitudes, and some candidates managed this thoughtfully; but to take a lexeme like *POSH* at face value is without analysing its use is likely to lead to misinterpretation.

The majority of candidates saw co-operation and confirmatory behaviour, allowing references to back-channelling, positive feedback and sympathetic circulatory. Relevant theorists were cited – Jenny Cheshire, Deborah Tannen and Robin Lakoff.

There was some interesting comment on the lexis (*grand*, especially with the hedging *quite sort of grand*, *telly*, and *subSTANTial*) as well as on the grammar. Annabel's uses of a sequence of modal verbs – *it would depend ... it would have to be ... you couldn't say (.) you know (.) LILS COTtage (.) would have a drawing room* – was explored by the more astute readers. Only the most confident candidates tried to account for *LILS COTtage*.

Reference may be made to the mark-scheme for further examples of relevant issues for discussion.

Question 4

This was the more popular question in Section B. The transcription was of part of an interview given by members of the rock band Franz Ferdinand to the BBC television programme *Top of the Pops (TOTP)*.

The task-wording was closely matched to the content of the transcription, and identical to the equivalent question from January 2010: *How do the members of the band use language here to reinforce their group identity?*

Candidates engaged readily with the speakers and had little difficulty in tracing the dynamics of interaction, exploring the ways in which the interviewer (who might have been expected to dominate in agenda-setting) has to bow to the pressure of group identity. And whereas in Question 3 the question-focus had been rather ignored in favour of sequential reading of the transcription, here in Question 4 candidates concentrated impressively on features which reinforced group identity.

Alex was regularly identified as the dominant speaker, but most answers went further than this, picking up subtleties of interaction such as the failed adjacency pairs with Andy at the start. Interaction was seen and described as good-humoured: candidates could see that the interruptions and overlaps were mostly signs of closeness rather than competition, with Paul taking up the conversational slack when Alex hesitates or Andy readily falling in with Paul's *four settings* banter. Better answers managed to analyse these and other features in explicitly *linguistic* terms. Weaker answers tended to be *descriptive* of interaction and relationship, rather than analytical of language.

There was much comment on gendered language, some of it informed by relevant research findings. Very few answers depended on 'extraneous' knowledge of the interview's subjects, so that the transcription evidence was closely examined.

The mark-scheme offers some further ideas for exploration.

Conclusions

It is always more important to be able to develop relevant analysis/evaluation from the initial identification of a significant feature of language than simply to identify that feature. So terminology of itself is not what earns credit.

Nonetheless, careful habits breed more careful habits, and the better responses were undoubtedly those which used language accurately. Throughout the paper and across the Mark Bands, terminology was employed in a haphazard way, to the detriment of candidates' arguments. So: all interrogatives were called *tag questions*; interrogatives were confused with imperatives; utterances were called 'sentences'; *phrase* and *clause* were used interchangeably; anything short was called *simple*, anything long *complex*.

These complaints aside, examiners found much to be encouraged about in candidates' responses, and teachers are to be congratulated for the way in which they had prepared their students.

F652 Texts and Audiences

Task 1: Text Study

Selection of texts

The written and multimodal texts chosen for analysis were rich and varied, covering a range of genres and topics. Newspaper and magazine articles were popular choices, as written texts, as were extracts from informative texts, novels and autobiography. Adverts, recipes and poems were also used.

Multimodal texts included travel writing, holiday brochures, adverts, magazine and newspaper articles, illustrated recipes and illustrated poems. Online material included extracts from films and interviews and recordings of political speeches.

Please note that where candidates are analysing music DVDs or film extracts as multimodal texts, they need to include a transcript of the spoken language and a description of the other accompanying features (eg. visual). The description can appear within the transcript or, if more appropriate, in the actual analysis.

Some centres had difficulty differentiating between written and multimodal texts. Written texts are defined as texts which contain written material *only* and multimodal texts are those which contain more than one mode eg. written text accompanied by visual images. Centres must ensure that written texts do not contain any accompanying visual material. It is not acceptable to select a multimodal text and ignore the visual features in order to present this as a 'written' text.

Analysis

The text study assesses Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3. Many analyses adopted appropriate linguistic approaches (AO2) in order to highlight the linguistic and stylistic conventions of the chosen texts. In the best cases audience, purpose and contextual factors were also analysed (AO3).

Some analyses were weak in their discussion of multimodality, either completely ignoring the multimodal nature of the text or simply adding a short one sentence description of visual features. Stronger analyses explained in detail how more than one mode had been used to achieve meaning. When using film extracts, for example, it is not sufficient to transcribe an extract of the film and to analyse it purely in terms of its spoken language features. The spoken language features are important but, as this is a multimodal text, there needs to be further description and discussion of the delivery of the speech, of accompanying prosodic and paralinguistic features. Other areas of analysis would be the use of camera techniques, sound features and special effects. The aim is to show how these other features link in with the linguistic features to aid meaning.

Where literary material is used candidates need to be guided to focus their analysis on language features of the texts. Some analyses read more like English Literature essays, lacking the in-depth linguistic detail needed for a high mark in this unit.

Task 2: Adaptive Writing and Commentary

This task assesses AOs 1 and 4 and, in line with this, many candidates were able to demonstrate a high level of creativity in the adaptive writing and a good understanding of linguistic methods and terminology in the commentary.

Newspaper and magazine articles were adapted into autobiography, radio interviews and debates, and adverts into transcripts from TV shopping channels. Extracts from films were adapted into descriptive prose, poetry was adapted into diary entries and short stories, and recipes into transcripts of cookery programmes aimed at a variety of audiences.

Adaptation into web-based texts was not always successful. There were a number of web pages produced, including Facebook type pages, which did not really challenge candidates sufficiently and limited them when it came to writing the commentary.

Some centres experienced difficulty in their interpretation of 'adaptive' writing. Candidates are required to adapt the language of the original text into a new text. The aim is not to imitate the style of the original or to write a piece 'inspired by' or 'suggested by' the original but to provide an actual adaptation which relates closely to the original, where some of the original language is retained and some replaced to create a new text. The links between the two texts should be clear and a significant amount of the language of the original should be present in the adapted piece. It is not sufficient to simply adopt the theme of the original and write a new piece based on the same theme.

It is important, on the cover sheet and in the commentary, to indicate which text is being adapted as this is not always clear to moderators.

Many commentaries made strong links between the language of the original and the adapted text. Poorer commentaries tended to provide a description of the language of the adaptive piece with little or no reference to the language of the original, and no comment on changes made. Other weak commentaries made very generalised comments such as 'the original contained mainly complex sentences and the adaptive piece mainly simple.'

The commentary should not describe the two pieces as though there is no connection between them but should demonstrate *how* the first text has been adapted into the new one. A small number of candidates were not able to make any connections to the original text because the new text bore no relation to it.

There needs to be a close relationship between the two texts so that candidates can provide specific examples of changes made, for example how the lexis of a particular sentence has been simplified by replacing obscure nouns with more commonplace ones or how a paragraph from the beginning of the original text has been moved to the end in the adapted one.

Application of Mark Scheme and General Administration

It was pleasing to see that the teething problems of last year were not repeated this year and most of the administration ran smoothly and efficiently. A small number of centres submitted inadequately labelled material which made the process of moderation more difficult. Please note that all data must be included, clearly labelled as 'written' or 'multimodal' and that Tasks 1 and 2 should also be clearly labelled as such. It is helpful if the 'written' and 'multimodal' labels actually appear on the texts themselves.

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In most centres the application of the mark scheme was accurate. Many teachers helpfully annotated the candidates' work, showing where particular Assessment Objectives had been met. Teachers are encouraged to mark punctuation and spelling errors as this is important for assessing AO1.

Centres are reminded of the need to adhere to the word limit of 3000 words.

F653 Culture, Language and Identity

General Comments

This June saw the first full entry for the paper. It was most encouraging to read work which was showing very secure linguistic knowledge and which did not find it hard to address the new range of assessment objectives. It should be added that this is the year when the A* grade makes its first appearance. It is appropriate therefore to indicate that there was some outstanding work, showing that really careful teaching had been taking place, encouraging a maturity of response from the candidates.

It was pleasing to note that most candidates appeared to navigate the reading booklet efficiently. This is a feature for all following papers. There was also evidence that a number of candidates made effective use of the fifteen minutes reading time allowed. This allowed them to sift the selected stimulus passages and highlight specific aspects of the texts for inclusion in the written answers. It was also pleasing to see that a number of centres had provided a good range of secondary reading texts in preparing their candidates. This support from wider reading helped a number of candidates produce very well integrated responses to one of the key assessment objective – A03.

The very best answers were noted for their ability to weave together the A02 and A03 objectives into a coherent and detailed synthesis. These candidates are to be congratulated upon meeting the challenge presented by the A2 papers and this should give added support to centres in preparing for future examinations. It might also be useful for centres to know that on the OCR website there will shortly appear further detailed guidance about approaches to this paper.

Section A

Language and Speech (compulsory question)

Most candidates appeared to have had a clear basic preparation for this topic and were able to spot that the stimulus material was best summarised as 'Does accent matter'? A reasonable proportion of candidates were able to support their answers by reference to a sound range of technical constituents. The vowel quadrilateral, IPA symbols and basic prosodic points were used in illustrating aspects of RP and other competing accentual sounds. Other candidates made a reasonable gesture at this kind of task by adapting standard orthographics to demonstrate both vowel and consonantal differences. It should be noted that the question actively encourages candidates to demonstrate that they have recourse to basic technical features to support answers. Candidates who were able to develop a discussion in depth about accents invariably were able to offer some kind of phonological constitution as part of their answer, so effectively ensuring an adequate control over the A02 objective which is dominant in this question. There was good evidence of wider reading in some centres. Luminaries such as Trudgill, Milroy and Milroy, Crystal and Labov were frequently quoted. Bernstein was also used a great deal; his views did seem apposite to the idea that speech could divide and segregate specific social groups by the very nature of accentual sounds. Examples of speakers who represented specific speech patterns were also used effectively. Estuary English was associated with Tony Blair, Jonathan Ross and Russell Brand. Whilst flagging up the north east, Cheryl Cole was cited as an effective agent for regional sounds – some candidates even pointing out that she had to take elocution lessons in order to make her intelligible to the American popular culture markets, so pointing out accent does matter. It was also interesting to see *Pygmalion* and Professor Higgins being quoted, with the idea that acquiring RP could be a valuable asset and making therefore another clear case for the fact that accent does matter. The Queen was also frequently cited as evidence of a real shift in RP sounds from the conservative to the modified

form. Another pleasing aspect appearing in a number of responses was the ability to respond to the idea that different sounds can be marked as correct or 'cool' and that, despite attempts to establish an orthodoxy or a series of phonemic rules, speech is a vibrant and living thing, playing a part in creating cultural variety.

The less assured responses tended to follow a quite distinctive pattern. They spent too long trying to summarise the contents of the passages, including attempts to analyse the syntactic elements, rather than answering the question - which asks for an analysis of the *issues* raised in the passages about speech and accent. Centres might help their candidates by reminding them that A2 English Language is not a paper for sociological generalising.

To move candidates beyond this position it would be useful to summarise for them some of the debates which have surrounded and will continue to surround the idea of 'correct speech'. It is helpful to ALL candidates if they have heard live speech from a variety of sources and can be given guidance in picking up *phonemic* features which distinguish different accents, rather than the less rewarding outlets of simplified commentaries about social class differences.

Section B

The Language of Popular Written Texts (option)

One examiner remarked upon some 'very sparkling answers' to this question. It would seem that a number of candidates who had chosen this Topic had been well-prepared. Wider studies of popular writing were cited, including Carter, Nash, Leech and booklets from the Routledge *Intertext* publications. The presence of JK Rowling was also of assistance, with many candidates showing some familiarity with the series. Familiarity with the generic conventions of writing about schools and the role they have played in popular culture and the candidates' own imaginations was slightly uneven. Only the better candidates could discuss the differing ways in which schools were re-presented, pointing out that JK Rowling was drawing upon a rather out-dated model of the boarding school. However, as far as the text itself was concerned, candidates had much to say about the rather strange lexicon and the impressions of school life being mediated from Harry's point of view. A few incisive responses remarked upon the strangely surrealist lexis where the mundane West Ham was in the same cohesive group as Quidditch, Muggles, Broomsticks and hang-gliders

In both passages (g) and (h) a number of candidates did not pick up the contextual information that these texts were produced for adults. It was interesting to note that passage (g) attracted some sociological ranting about public schools; the candidates unwittingly extending the context into their own popularly mediated ideas about such institutions. The more searching responses picked up the quasi philosophical collocation in the second sentence and the lexis shifting from blue sky to decay/infection. A number of candidates did pick up the religio/military lexicon of obey/respect/marching/regulated, seeing these as indicators of specific forms of control and acculturation, this verbal cohesion confirming the authorial establishment of stereotypes introduced by the singing of a hymn. One or two candidates also spotted the stylistic intrusion of architectural and signficatory nouns reflecting architectural ambience and the authoritative idea of boys 'filing to houses to fetch books'. In passage (h) the voice of the disgruntled narrator, particularly hostile in a 'litany' of complaint in paragraph three, was largely not picked up by candidates. This is an important stylistic feature, establishing the voice in a narrative, which functions at the level of reportage and also raises the crucial point - for whom is the story being told and by what means? More attuned response could spot the interesting cultural contrast in the lexis between the various titles attributed to the characters and the more mundane level of the actual business of running the school, these being presented in interesting syntactic structures, establishing a secondary narrative patterning.

It appeared that some candidates had problems with time management in this question. It is important that they ensure that in responding to the options that the reading time is used to sift and select aspects of the texts in order to focus upon contextual issues, mode of production and time and place as well as the structural features. The questions do NOT ask for summaries of material OR comparative address.

Language and Cultural Production (option)

This option produced some rather uneven work. One problem was that candidates did not select judiciously from the passages, an issue noted in Section B answers, and the fact that their familiarity with the figure of Bond was probably more from filmic iconography than from writing about him. This fact actually enhanced some responses, since it did give additional edge to developing points about the contexts of production. Most responses picked up the fact that the writing was more about marketing than any literary inclusiveness. This was specifically evident in the actual sales talk - branding agency, marketing chiefs, publicity event - which permeated passage (i), the noun phrases dominating the idea of 'retailing'. This is the kind of language dealt with in the Routledge *Intertext* series and is a particular linguistic aspect of how culture is part of constant cross-media marketing. Equally, passage (k) falls into the category of selling through interviews: another pervasive aspect of writing about popular culture. The second paragraph provided adequate emphasis to the idea that Bond is a manufactured product; this supported by lexical emphasis upon the 'product', a crucial noun in understanding the construction of popular identity. Candidates seemed to get more from passage (j) where there were clearly gender related points in the writing. These were syntactically embedded within issues of 'style', drink and a 'hot starlet'. This is language of both the market place and the production of identity. The discreet 'last updated' was a neat Vb. phrase signifying both production and cultural instanteity. The fact that the noun Bond was linked to 'his girls' offered a really good opportunity to discuss feminine and masculine image and power creation. Candidates spotted some interesting collocations in this passage as well. Cited were: 'shaken not stirred', 'Daniel's Bond', 'Connery's Bond', 'Bond aficionados', 'hot starlet', etc., showing that the passage was saturated with these male/female associations. This approach showed a clear stylistic understanding of linguistic features being linked to the overall syntactic patterns established in the whole passage. One centre produced some interesting material in discussing point-of-view. This allowed responses which demonstrated that the narratives in each of the passages are stories, but authorially manipulated to meet particular demands. Whilst it is not necessary to compare the passages, this particular 'point-of-view' approach allowed a summative response which not only gave context a sharper perspective, but allowed discussion of the differing forms of cultural language in each of the three.

Language, Power and Identity (option)

There were some interesting contrasts in candidates' answers to this section. Some centres appear to have over-promoted points about speech and gender as a (if not the) feature of power and identity; this left some candidates in difficulty when they were asked to look at a different aspects of power, in writing about money. Other candidates, who had been encouraged to think about broader social issues linked to power/identity, were able to produce answers with some real depth, whether in terms of writing about the tardy payment of debts, or the soft selling of an image of a caring bank. Evidence of wider reading was seen in references to Lakoff, Tannen, Crystal and Fowler. In the case of Lakoff there was some confusion when candidates introduced features of spoken discourse into analysing texts which were clearly written in format.

Passage (l) was written off as entirely archaic in terms of lexis and syntax. In fact the business letter in general was dismissed as a verbal dinosaur. More detailed approaches focused upon how the syntactics did show a way of reprimanding without totally admonishing, and gave some

interesting support to this by judicious clause analysis. 'As a man of business' was duly criticised as being inappropriate as a pre modifying adverbial in terms of gender exclusivity. Passage (m) allowed candidates some opportunities to link the parallelism of the opening sentence with the idea that women cannot control money, thus invoking a stereotype. 'Let's say' was picked up as a discourse feature of the spoken voice. However, this was difficult to substantiate given the more complex lexis later in the passage. The use of colloquial language like 'breezy', 'gross' and 'thrilling kick' were noted as was the use of 'female' empty adjectives like 'lovely' In passage (n) it was clear that Fanny (Mae) and Freddie (Mac) needed a gloss, helping candidates avoid imagining they were euphemisms. It was a little surprising to find many candidates were unfamiliar with the meanings of some of the key terms such as Eurozone and Eurosceptic and some tended to equate Iceland with a well-known company of the same name. A few candidates felt the language was more tabloidese than broadsheet, citing the rhetorical 'can we' and 'do you want'? Also the colloquial 'booze', 'it's bust' were seen as lexically of a more populist order. Passage (o) was seen as ticking the right social boxes in the first sentence.

Not many candidates spotted the discreet branding exercise here, supported by a very rich range of positive nouns and adjectives. The typographical strap/slogan with its collocation of the past and the future was remarked upon by the more resourceful candidates, as an appeal to a broad age range of potential customers. It was clear in this passage also that a number of basic financial lexemes were not well understood by a number of the candidates. In terms of all passages there were few weak responses. Those that were tended to show rather limited understanding of basic monetary issues and were little more than observational summaries of the passages. Centres will help candidates by encouraging them to identify ideological positions within writing – very plain in text (o) – since this is of inestimable value in developing a greater academic depth to the A03 objective. This is a crucial feature of power and identity, whatever subject the passage might embrace.

F654 Media Language

Centres are to be congratulated on the way in which they have dealt with this new A2 coursework unit. There was an excellent range of submissions covering a wide range of text types and topics. Much of the analysis was detailed and thorough and the original writing highly successful and suited to purpose.

Task 1: Independent Investigation: Comparison and Analysis

The task assesses Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3 taking the form of a sustained comparative analysis of three media texts, in the spoken, written and multimodal modes. The three texts need to be linked thematically and the themes chosen varied enormously. Many candidates chose themes related to popular interests such as sport, music, fashion, advertising and comedy. Others focussed on more serious issues such as politics, inequality, racism and domestic violence. Some chose to examine the media representation of groups such as teenagers, mothers and the elderly and others chose texts which were linked according to audience or purpose. Excellent work was produced on more challenging themes such as satire, propaganda and taboo. All of the themes mentioned here were appropriate, with many yielding excellent material for analysis.

It is important that candidates clearly state their linking theme in the introduction to the analysis; not all candidates did this and it was sometimes very difficult for moderators to identify exactly what the theme was.

Where web-based texts are used, candidates must provide hard copies. It is not sufficient to provide web addresses alone.

Some centres experienced problems in their understanding of 'written' and 'multimodal' texts. Written texts must be in the written mode only, containing written material with no accompanying visual material. Multimodal texts include more than one mode, eg. written with accompanying images. It is not acceptable to select a multimodal text, to ignore the visual material and then submit this as a written text.

It is essential that candidates submit copies of all three texts (preferably 'clean' copies which have not been annotated.) Without the texts to refer to it is virtually impossible to moderate the coursework.

Please encourage candidates to label all three texts as either 'spoken' 'written' or 'multimodal' as it is not always clear which is which. It is most helpful if the labels appear on the texts themselves.

Centres are to be discouraged from the practice of setting whole group tasks, where all candidates select the same theme or the same text types. Although this does not infringe the rubric of the specification it is not really in the spirit of the unit, which aims to encourage variety and individuality. The same applies to Task 2, where some centres had directed the whole class to produce the same text type for original writing. This approach is clearly restrictive and therefore is unlikely to enable the candidates to reach their full potential.

The unit requires candidates to compare the three texts, identifying similarities and differences between them and discussing the impact of the different modes and contexts on the language used. Candidates need to present their findings as one essay which compares and contrasts the three texts. It is not sufficient to analyse each text in isolation and submit three separate, unrelated analyses.

Many candidates did provide excellent analyses full of relevant comment and detailed linguistic analysis but some submissions would have benefitted from a more detailed discussion of multimodality. The weakest candidates ignored multimodality entirely and others gave it only the briefest of mentions. Candidates need to discuss how the producers of the text have chosen to use more than one mode and how those modes work together to aid meaning.

Task 2: Original Writing and Commentary

With Task 2, as with Task 1, there was a vast array of work produced with the original writing covering many different modes and genres. Spoken texts included persuasive speeches, transcripts of interviews for radio and TV and political speeches for party conferences. Written texts covered poetry, newspaper articles, agony aunt columns, diary entries and reviews; and multimodal texts included web pages, blogs, film reviews, travel reviews, cartoons, posters, magazine articles and advertisements.

Most original writing pieces were highly creative, showing engagement on the part of the students. Weaker pieces were often insubstantial or insufficiently challenging. Some posters, articles and websites were just too short to allow candidates to gain a high mark.

Moderators commented on the high standard of many of the accompanying commentaries, which were detailed and illuminating. Weaker ones tended to be too short, lacking linguistic detail and exemplification.

Application of Mark Scheme and General Administration

In most centres the application of the mark scheme was accurate. Many teachers helpfully annotated the candidates' work, showing where particular Assessment Objectives had been met. Teachers are encouraged to mark punctuation and spelling errors, as this is important for assessing AO1.

A small number of centres submitted work without the accompanying cover sheets. It is essential that this is attached in all cases.

Some centres failed to submit copies of the MS1 sheet which is also essential to the moderating process.

Centres are reminded to adhere to the word limit which is 3000 words.

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