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A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

H470
For first teaching in 2015

H470/02 Summer 2022 series

Contents

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

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Paper 2 series overview

Overall, the standard seen has covered the full range of the mark scheme and there have been very few instances of candidates struggling to complete the paper. There remains a tendency for some candidates to write at greater length than is necessary. This is especially true on Question 1. There was no correlation between overly long (four or five page) responses to this section and the mark awarded. Centres would be advised to remind candidates that precision and succinctness are hallmarks of good essays and linguistic analyses. As noted in previous reports, overly long responses can often become self-penalising as they obscure good points and lose a sense of precision and discernment.

Candidates have attempted the paper in every conceivable question order and while this doesn't seem to have had a major bearing on quality overall, Question 3 responses written first often seem to be more controlled and well-structured. The order in which candidates approach the paper is entirely their choice and has no impact on the examiners' application of the mark scheme.

Perhaps as a result of less well-honed exam craft, there were a number of trends in candidate responses that weren't indicative of good practice:

- Candidates predicting what would be found in texts and spending time outlining this in detail. This shows some knowledge of contexts but robs candidates of time to analyse the language itself. Candidates should analyse the actual text. There is no need for predictions/genericism unless the text then subverts these expectations.
- Across all sections of the paper, some candidates parenthesised their quotations and this often led to less than focused analysis of language. While not standard academic practice, it does not alter the application of the mark scheme; however, candidate responses in which this was seen did not analyse as clearly, or with the same focus, as other responses.
- There were more examples of "undigested chunks of knowledge", especially conceptual, being presented at length and with limited relevance to the text. This is, not advisable and does not meet the needs of any of the questions.
- There was a tendency to credit David Crystal incorrectly, with the creation of almost all theories and concepts across every question. This has no impact on the application of the mark scheme and candidates should be encouraged to learn and offer the theory names rather than the theorists who presented them.
- Exploration and use of contexts is done less well than the other areas of analysis. Candidates seemed to struggle to go beyond GAP and even those who did, often made broad and not overly helpful assertions that provided little to no opportunity to explore language.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
- focused on analysing language and patterns of language use - presented ideas precisely, in depth and detail and covered a range of points - selected carefully those language features and patterns most worthy of, or amenable to, analysis - used theory to explore texts and used texts to explore theory – the interaction of the two is the key - constructed responses carefully and with clarity of structure - considered the contexts of a text 'through the lens' of its language.	- focused on content over language - offered assertive, narrative accounts of data without engaging with language use - presented "undigested chunks of knowledge" with little relevance to the data - attempted to prove/disprove theory rather than explore texts through it - made sweeping generalisations and misunderstood the limitations of small, exam-based data sets - used vague terms like "word" in place of subject terminology - offered either very little reference to contexts or made vague or ambiguous assertions about GAP.

Section A overview

As with all sections of this exam, depth, range and precision were the key indicators of very strong responses and candidates would do well to approach this question in a spirit of enquiry, asking themselves why the language use may be as it is, rather than attempting to shove it into the neat theoretical boxes they arrive with in mind.

The transcript itself features Charlie at home with three adults, only one of whom speaks in the transcript. More so than in previous years, candidates seem to have taken a deficit approach to Charlie's language production from the starting point of seeing theories as a paragon of, or set of rules for, 'good' first language acquisition. This is not a strong approach.

Question 1

1   Using the appropriate terminology to explain your findings, examine the language development stage of the child-participant as evidenced in the transcript. You should identify and analyse the phonology, grammar and meaning of his utterances.

Use your knowledge of theories and concepts of child language acquisition to support your answer.   **[20]**

The transcript included a range of interesting features across the three areas stated in the question. The most meaningful engagement, as with previous series, focused on grammar and meaning and most candidates were able to engage with phonology on some level.

In terms of grammar, candidates showed a solid grasp of auxiliaries, question formation and inflections, which demonstrated sound understanding of the data. Examiners commented that there was "lots more morphological analysis than previous series which was quite nice to see!"

Meaning often focused on the use of concrete nouns alongside the pragmatics of intonation and stress used by Charlie and his mother. Some candidates attempted to discuss hyponymy with limited success.

The area where candidates continue to be less strong is phonology. Candidates do not need to label individual phonemes precisely to engage with phonology. Rather, they can focus on the simplification processes shown (of which there were many) and engage with phonology that way. Candidates were less secure in this area than in previous series. Candidates also continue to struggle with identification of consonant clusters with many claiming the simplification of 'balloons' in the transcript was because it featured a 'double L cluster'.

The range of theories applied continues to grow with Tomasello, Bloom and others adding to Grunwell, Shriberg and Cruttenden. As noted in all previous series, candidates and centres do not need to explore the far theoretical corners of acquisition to achieve highly on this question. In some cases, the very best responses focused precisely and concisely on the so-called big 4 (Innateness, Behaviourism, Cognitivism, Interactionism) and used their understanding to illuminate the language use in front on them. The breadth of theory remains impressive but this has caused an increase in responses that suggest an insecure grasp of theory. As ever with language study, saying lot about a little is often better practice than the opposite.

Candidates continue to attempt to 'prove' and 'disprove' theories (not possible with a tiny data set) or they 'prove' theories with irrelevant details. More so than in the last full series, candidates attempted to prove a grammatical stage by referring to phonology, semantics, lexis, pragmatics and everything else they could think of. This suggests a limited understanding of stage theory itself and is evidence of candidates starting from theory and not language use.

Misconception

? Grammatical Stages such as the telegraphic stage are characterised by grammatical features. Candidates should avoid linking them to phonology (or other language levels) which may occur at similar ages but are not grammatical.

Exemplar 1

In terms of phonology, Charlie exhibits only a few instances of immature pronunciation and aside from these, often meets his adult target. He immediately struggles with the noun 'balloons' which he pronounces, /buŋs/. It seems as though he is omitting the unstressed /əe/ syllable in order to pronounce a monosyllabic rather than disyllabic reduce the noun to be, which is likely more difficult for him to pronounce. Charlie also follows realisation rules when he substitutes a /th/ sound for the labio-dental fricative /f/, which he may have more ease creating than the more complex, /th/. Although, after hearing his mother correcting

This response deals with phonology in a reasonably detailed way which showed accuracy and understanding of simplification processes. It avoids a deficit approach with the phrase "immature pronunciation" and demonstrates understanding that phonological development is a process. It also shows tangential knowledge of word class There is a missed opportunity to discuss fronting as an explanation for the second simplification process but this does not detract from the overall quality of the section shown.

Section B overview

The data was taken from an online financial advice website which is part of The Daily Mail. It features a range of online features and generic conventions which allowed candidates an accessible way into analysing the text. Some sought to label it as politically left wing ("because it seems to care about vulnerable people") or politically right wing (because it is "money focused") and while neither assertion affected the overall quality of the response, neither were felt to be entirely relevant in this instance.

This section saw the greatest consistency of responses and was the strongest section of the exam for many candidates. The focus on media in this question allows students to draw on knowledge of power and is a sociolinguistic area to which they are subject on a daily basis, meaning even weaker responses had a 'way in'.

Candidates must maintain a focus on language and patterns of language in order to address the needs of the question; however, there were still instances of candidates opting for a concept-led discursive style of response and, in doing so, missing the focus on language that is required.

This series saw a significant rise in the number of candidates attempting to apply conversational and spoken theories to the written data. These were not relevant to the text and did not suggest a strong conceptual understanding of the data. There remain examples of candidates trying to make Grice or Goffman fit with the written text when they would be better advised to consider register, tenor and distance between producer and receiver. Often, the points were founded on a reasonable understanding of the data but were then linked to theories of limited relevance in this mode.

Question 2

2   Using your understanding of relevant ideas and concepts, investigate how language features and contextual factors construct meanings in this text.   **[24]**

The strongest responses focused on patterns of language use across the data with many identifying shifts in tone, the inter-relation of image and language and the range of organisations and individuals represented across multiple language levels. These responses engaged with contexts in a nuanced way and showed understanding of a number of potential audiences for the text and the differing ways those audiences were positioned and represented by the producer.

Almost all responses across the ability range chose to engage with power concepts over any other conceptual areas and this is a valid response. On occasion, candidates attempted to apply gender theories but these were almost always spoken theories being misapplied to the data or broad assertions that bordered on misogynistic at times. In terms of power and media concepts, almost every response referred to synthetic personalisation and some were able to engage with the multiple levels across which this is achieved; however, for a significant number of responses, it was a bolt-on extra term for any and all pronoun use. As with Question 1, the range of theories drawn on continues to expand and this has led to some interesting applications of Hasan's generic structures and Chomsky's five filters. A high proportion of students engaged with semiotics and Barthes' anchor-relay to explore the image and integrate this with other language levels.

Less successful responses were still able to engage with the surface level features of the text and the most straight-forward aspects of contexts. These responses remained assertive and content-driven for the most part and had no sense of patterns of language in any meaningful way at all. These responses tended to be over-reliant on synthetic personalisation as their main theoretical tool.

Exemplar 2

2		The author empowers herself by use of expert power as of French and Raven, in noun phrase 'financial website of the year' in the title. This creates power for the author as it attempts to gain the trust of the reader by presenting itself as a reputable source. Expert power is further propagated by use of topic - specific lexis on 'the Office of the Public Guardian' and abstract noun phrase 'power of attorney'. These subject-specific terms create power for the author as it suggests that she has knowledge on the subject, and

The exemplar shows the benefit of focused analysis from the start of the response rather than providing unnecessary introductions or predictions about what 'might' be seen. There is a conceptual starting point that links to language, out into contexts and forwards to another language point under the same conceptual viewpoint. In doing so, this response weaves disparate language features into a pattern and is a good example for candidates that a 'pattern' does not have to be a repeated feature across the text but a repeated use of multiple features. This style of pattern and approach to analysis is often indicative of stronger responses.

Section C overview

As with every other section of the exam, the focus of this question is on exploring and analysing language and patterns of language. This analysis should then be used to explore language change in contexts. Most candidates clearly understood the needs of the question and were able to demonstrate that understanding appropriately; however, the focus on change itself, which is assessed under AO3 and AO4, was less clear than in previous series.

Almost all responses seen in this series compared texts concurrently and consistently, which has not always been the case; however, this series has seen the rise of a trend towards using "meanwhile" as a comparative discourse marker. This is not incorrect, nor does it affect marking but it seems note-worthy when the candidature as a whole begin to use a new feature consistently. This question sits, rather aptly then, at the vanguard of language change. Regardless of comparative choices, candidates would do well to remember that, in addition to comparison, there should be links to language change/development.

The two texts themselves were concerned with the intelligence of dogs and most candidates were able to compare and contrast them with some success. The absence of obvious orthographic differences (such as long S) seems to have saved students from a common pitfall and allowed for more time exploring language meaningfully.

Question 3

3   By detailed analysis of the writing in both passages, discuss and illustrate the variations in language between the 19th and 21st centuries. In your answer you should explore the ways language is used in each text, as well as how contextual factors influence the way meaning is constructed.   **[36]**

The strongest responses were comparative throughout and focused on patterns within and between texts. They allowed the language in the two texts to guide their responses and approached the texts with an open mind, exploring the similarities and differences before attempting to account for them via contexts and concepts. In this sense, strong responses were written in triangulated paragraphs that move across the demands of the question and mark scheme to skilfully build an exploration of how the texts relate to language change.

Less successful responses focused on content and what they imagined the producers thought about dogs. Any sense of comparison was broad and drew on attitudes and content rather than language and there were often bolted-on contextual points and links to change and theories of change which showed an insecure understanding.

Across the ability range, candidates seemed to have decided that "cleverest", the superlative adjective from Text C, is variously archaic, obsolete or incorrect. Some candidates attempted to use the use of cleverest to exemplify the fact that the producer would be of limited intelligence. While candidates are arguably closer to the frontiers of language change than the examiner, it was not felt that cleverest was anything other than a moderately common adjective.

Candidates continue to struggle with theories of change, mutating standardisation or Haugen to fit the data in front of them. They may be better advised to consider internal and external aspects of change and refocus on representations and the ways in which they are indicative of the society in which the texts were produced. Not only would this meet the needs of concepts but would naturally start to integrate with contexts. Candidates should also be wary of calling every famous name a theorist; John Humphreys is not linguist. Similarly, Jean Aitcheson continues to be maligned as the proponent of prescriptivist views rather than a descriptivist with an eye for a useful metaphor.

Misconception

?   Across all attainment levels, there were some common misconceptions and flawed approaches which are best avoided.

Candidates are often too definitive about standardisation and misunderstand it as meaning there will be no non-standard features or no change in texts. There is rarely an understanding of standardisation as a process which aims at a moving target (in terms of societal, generic, other contextual factors).

Many candidates have a tendency to focus on large historic events, often attached to dates, and to become determined to calibrate language change based only, or mainly, on them. The relevance of the Education Act seven years prior to publication of Text C, written by two adult males who would have had no benefit from the act, was frequently over-stated. Caxton, Lowth and Johnson also featured again with very limited utility or relevance.

Key point: Genre

This is not the first time "Letters to the Editor" have featured in a change question but it is a genre in which candidates seem to be less well-versed. Many considered Text C to be personal letters written to a single recipient. Centres are recommended to explore this genre in greater depth.

Exemplar 3

> **3**
>
> Texts C and D differ in regards to their lexis. Text C uses archaic ~~and old fat~~ lexis such as "dog-pensioner" alongside the ~~of~~ saying "peace to his shade", ~~as~~ as well as the use of ~~imperial old no~~ discontinued money such as "half penny", and it's accompanying slang "copper". ~~be~~ In contrast, in Text D, there is ~~texts highlights a range of technology and~~ ~~setin~~ technological and scientific jargon such as ~~from~~ the latinate "canine", initialism "MRI" and neologisms ~~such as~~ "fast-mapping". This emphasises the ~~me~~ technological developments that have occurred between the two texts, as well as emphasising the need for a greater burden of proof required in 2016 ~~in 2016~~ ~~scientific~~ ~~proof~~, ~~should~~ aided by scientific ~~refer~~ evidence, instead of the ~~more~~ "anecdotes" used in Text C. This is

This response shows the opening of this candidate's response and demonstrates an unfussy, well-planned and succinct approach to meeting the needs of the question. It builds from a point of comparison, links to change, exemplifies in both texts and offers a reasoned explanation for why based on contextual factors. It is not perfect, there is more that could be said, but it represents a strong, structured approach to answering this question.

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