

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

H470

For first teaching in 2015

H470/01 Summer 2023 series

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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.

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Paper 1 series overview

H470/01 is one of two exam papers for A Level English Language. This largely synoptic component requires candidates to apply their knowledge of linguistic terms, context and theory to unseen texts, as well as use their knowledge to create a piece of writing in a given form. To do well on this paper, candidates need to be comfortable applying their knowledge and understanding to unseen texts as well as producing their own writing on a topical language issue.

This year saw the return of students sitting the paper without any advanced information, as was the case last year in mitigation for the effects of the pandemic. In this series, the source material was highly accessible, which meant that candidates usually performed well, as there were a number of obvious elements to discuss. The level of accessibility did pose a challenge for candidates targeting higher levels, however, as the opportunities to discuss the texts conceptually may have been harder to find. In Question 2, many candidates struggled to focus their responses on the specific topic of accent and so drifted into discussions around dialect and standardisation. Surprisingly, given the similarity of the specified form (a radio show) to last year's (a podcast), a significant proportion of candidates wrote essay-type responses with barely any relevant features for the specified form. The marks given ranged from the bottom of Level 2 right up to the top of Level 6.

As in the last series, there remains an issue with the lack of specificity around the labelling of AO1 features. Too many candidates are relying on catch-all terms like 'lexical fields' (which are vaguely defined) from which to hang their analysis, rather than labelling the abstract nouns within a precisely defined lexical field, for example. The exemplification had improved, with candidates less likely to cite a particular feature, such as an adjective, and then use a noun phrase in their exemplification and expect the examiner to 'find' it. Nevertheless, centres should make sure that their candidates are able to precisely exemplify ahead of the exam series, as the issue is still present. The use of glossing in Question 2 was much improved and was often seen across the range of responses.

Although examiners saw more responses where candidates appeared to run out of time this year compared to previously, most candidates appeared to have sufficient time to answer all of the questions. There were also fewer overly long, unplanned responses. Better responses were usually succinct, suggesting that candidates should be spending more time analysing the texts and planning their response before starting their writing.

In order to achieve at the top levels, candidates should aim to achieve conceptual overviews of texts. This means not necessarily looking at language points in isolation but considering how combinations of language features create patterns; for example, how contractions and colloquialisms lead to an informal register. This leads to more thorough analysis and more perceptive discussion of context. Candidates should be wary of simply using the term 'pattern' without exemplification or analysis.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planned carefully • used terminology precisely • considered the source material perceptively • answered the questions posed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wrote irrelevant introductions • used vague terminology • were imprecise in their exemplification • were narrow in their consideration of language levels.

Section A

Question 1 (a)

1 Giving careful consideration to the context of the text:

(a) Identify and analyse patterns of lexical and semantic use.

[10]

While most candidates in this series answered the two questions separately, there remain a significant minority that answered parts (a) and (b) together. Centres must discourage candidates from doing so, as it leads to responses that are far less focused on the specific elements of the question. Similarly, the use of theorists was not required in this question and wasted time, as it is not rewarded. Candidates found this to be a highly accessible text, even though many did find it more challenging to think about the text conceptually and consider less obvious contextual points, such as encouraging a more environmentally friendly approach.

Most candidates were able to comment on the use of semantic fields, high frequency lexis and dynamic verbs, although some responses did confuse high and low frequency lexis. There is a year-on-year decrease in candidates' use of specific linguistic terms; this is a terminal A Level paper and as such there is an expectation that candidates are able to precisely label features they are analysing.

Once again, examiners reported candidates using the word 'pattern' without necessarily exemplifying patterns or analysing the impact of a pattern. Often candidates demonstrated their appreciation of patterns through a density of analysis and considered the impact of the text a whole.

Candidates were able to consider the audience and purpose of this text, although some candidates were still writing introductions which did not tie the audience and purpose to specific lexical features. More perceptive responses considered the ways the writer appealed to a London-centric audience (use of the verb 'tackle' in 'tackle the tourists') and the development of a playful tone.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Identify and analyse the way sentences are constructed in this text.

[10]

There was an improvement on the labelling and exemplification in this part of Question 1, with most candidates able to consider sentence types and forms. There was also an improvement in the analytical comments, with candidates tending to analyse the impact of the sentences, rather than the lexis within them. Some responses did have a tendency not to exemplify in this question.

Better responses considered how the patterns of complex sentences worked with the patterns of simple sentences to create an overall impact. Other responses considered the use of parenthesis to create the idea that 'the indulgence of cake is a secret between producer and receiver' which was a perceptive comment. Less effective responses overly focused on the use of declaratives without making anything more than basic comments as to their purpose. Interestingly, candidates were less inclined to make generic comments about context in this part of the question.

Misconception



This question must be answered in two separate parts, not as one amalgamated response
The use of theorists and concepts is not rewarded and should not be included.

Section B

Question 2

- 2 'Since regional accents can be a disadvantage in life, schools owe it to their pupils to encourage them to speak with Received Pronunciation.'

Write a script for the presenter, or presenters, of a local radio show who will critically debate this statement. You should aim to engage a reasonably well-educated, non-specialist audience. Your script should be no more than 500 words. **[24]**

Accent was an area that most candidates were able to explore, although most found it challenging to focus their entire response on this phonological aspect and drifted into discussions around dialect and standardisation. There were some candidates who did not appear to know the difference between accent and dialect and used the terms interchangeably. Others talked about accent but gave dialectal examples. The best responses critically engaged with the question and sustained a response focused on accent from start to finish. Some candidates also considered power, and how else people could gain power linguistically as an alternative to changing their accents.

The use of exemplification was better in this series, with candidates generally able to give examples for the points they made. Examiners enjoyed reading various phonological representations of words pronounced by speakers with accents from across the British Isles. Candidates found it more challenging to apply their knowledge of concepts and theorists, and more responses than ever before did not include any reference to either. This is most likely owing to the specific topic, but centres should make sure that candidates are prepared to use a range of concepts and theorists in this question. Many candidates did effectively consider prescriptivism and descriptivism with more successful candidates deploying Johns, Trudgill, Giles and the like into their responses. Discussion around accommodation and code switching worked well when it was explicitly linked to accent.

The similarity of the form to last year's question meant that many candidates were well-prepared to write the script for a radio show. Successful approaches included both one- and two-presenter scripts; when the two-presenter scripts were written well and focused on the language issue rather than other topics, these often showed more skill in writing. Many candidates used theorists as special guests which often allowed for a critical approach. One candidate had a presenter as mediator and then used two linguists to debate the issue (Rob Drummond and Lindsay Johns). This was very effective as concepts were glossed and attitudes were debated through the created voices of the linguists themselves. Those who tried to write transcripts did not fare so well; this was not a requirement of the task. Many candidates wrote responses that more closely resembled essays or speeches rather than a radio show, and did not show any features of the form. Examiners were looking to see at least an opening and closing, with some direct address to the reader. The use of glossing was far more consistent this year, with many candidates using the two presenters to explain specialist terms.

Section C

Question 3

3 Using appropriate linguistic concepts and methods, analyse the ways in which language is used in these two texts. In your answer you should:

- explore connections and variations between the texts
- consider how contextual factors contribute to the construction of meaning.

[36]

The sources for this question were generally accessible, with most candidates able to consider the texts on *Dr Who* and make at least basic, if not more developed, comparisons. In this series, there was an improvement in the analysis of Text C, with candidates able to consider discourse features, sentences and lexical choices with ease. Comparisons were increasingly based on linguistic features, although, some candidates did fall back into comparisons around audience, purpose and mode, including 'Text C doesn't have this feature because it's written' type comments. Examiners also noted that candidates often exemplified more readily from Text B, which had a knock-on impact on both their analysis and comparison, as the comparison is not based on linguistic features.

Candidates' preparation for writing was better this year; there were far fewer overly long and unfocused responses. Although there were a variety of successful approaches to comparison, it was clear that candidates had carefully considered how to structure their comparison and how to integrate relevant concepts. Concepts were also an area of improvement compared to last year. The most successful candidates utilised concepts in a way that illuminated their analysis overall. There were pertinent comments relating to gender, when looking at the way Whittaker was represented as the first female Doctor, and power often enhanced the overall analysis. Candidates were less confident in applying concepts to the written text. Some less successful responses made no attempt to include concepts.

As in previous years, candidates seemed most comfortable considering features around lexis and spoken language. Candidates often use high and low frequency lexis for this question as an anchor point for comparison. Often discussion of high frequency lexis does not allow students to develop a depth of analysis. The low frequency lexis, such as the noun 'mythos', did allow candidates to delve further into language. It was pleasing to see more candidates grapple with sentences this year, although there is more scope for accurate exemplification from some. There remain more opportunities for candidates to consider patterns meaningfully, by evaluating the impact of a repeated language feature.

Candidates are increasingly able to link their discussion of context with the linguistic levels they are analysing; there were far fewer stand-alone contextual paragraphs this year. Candidates understood the differing audiences of the two texts (although some candidates confused the *Radio Times* for *The Times*, or *Times Radio* which impacted the accuracy of their analytical comments). More successful responses also considered the subtle difference between an interview aired before the series was broadcast (Text B) and how the interviewer built up excitement, and a mid-season review (Text C) which could judge the show's qualities after the fact. Some candidates wrote about how JW had her face needs met by the interviewer and was complimented with ameliorative adjectives by the writer of Text C – this provided a nuanced understanding of context.

Exemplar 1

A similarity between the two texts is their positive representation of JW as the doctor. In Text B, JW herself is interviewed and describes the role as "mercurial" and having "this extraordinary hindsight", where she felt she focused on "playing the truth". The use of low frequency lexis such as "mercurial" and the noun phrase "extraordinary hindsight" in addition to the jargon of specific film and television lexical fields used throughout such as "scene", "character" and "actors" contribute to the sense of an authentic and authoritative voice from JW as a talented actor, painting her depiction of the Doctor as theatrically intricate and objectively good. Furthermore, JW uses the syndetic listing of "full of hope (1) fizzing with energy (.) and (1) a (2) curiosity from out of this world" in order to describe the role, the dynamic verb "fizzing" further contributing to the sense of thrill and passion along with the comparison of "out of this world" having a dual meaning of an incredible joy playing the role in addition to a specific Doctor Who reference that fans and anyone vaguely familiar with the show will understand. These overall work to portray JW's role as accurate and fitting to the franchise in addition to exciting and fun, portraying her representation of the doctor in a positive light and encouraging fans to view her as an iconic version of the doctor that will be legendarily remembered amidst future castings by fans, typical of the Doctor Who fandom whereby it is of vital importance who plays each incarnation of the doctor and the elements they bring to the role. Similarly, in Text C, this sense

This extract is from a Level 6 response that is able to deploy a density of well labelled quotations in order to comment on how the producer creates a particular effect. There is more opportunity for precision in the labelling, but this is an example of a candidate analysing patterns without laboriously using the term 'pattern'. The candidate is able to draw on a range of features and consider how they work together in order to create a specific effect, considering the audience and purpose.

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