



**General Certificate of Education**

**English Language A 2701**

*Specification A*

**ENGA3      Language Explorations**

**Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination – June series*

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## General

This was the first summer series of this Unit and examiners reported seeing some excellent work as candidates responded to the demands of the new examination. There was clear evidence that candidates knew a great deal about language and were able to respond to unseen data in lively and thoughtful ways. The questions provided candidates of all levels with stretch and challenge as they developed their responses to the materials they were provided with and the issues that were raised. There was a great deal of evidence that candidates had developed a good body of knowledge about language and acute critical thinking skills as well.

All the stimulus materials used were readily accessible to almost all candidates and provided plenty of opportunities for discussion at a variety of levels. In Question 1 two texts were provided so candidates could examine how and why language might have changed by using some evidence. In Question 2 candidates were provided with the transcript of a conversation and a table of research findings so they could discuss how gender might or might not be significant in interaction. The source materials in Questions 1 and 2 gave candidates primary data and research findings that illustrated the variation and change topics being focussed on. In Section B Question 3 candidates were provided with a different kind of data: secondary, popular, non-academic writing about a language topic.

The wording of the questions proved clear and straightforward and the provision of two bullet points helped candidates to approach and structure their responses to the tasks. The bullets were designed to help candidates hit the assessment objectives. Inevitably there was some evidence in answers to each bullet that showed achievement of the other assessment objectives. This was rewarded as marks were given after assessing the whole response.

The first bullet in each question guided the candidates to analyse some textual data that was relevant to language change or variation in Section A and came from a discourse about language in Section B. The second bullet then asked candidates to look at wider issues raised by the data and to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts and issues. The bullets guided candidates which sources to use and for what purposes.

Those who dealt with the bullet points in order produced clearer and generally better balanced answers than those who attempted to deal with both bullet points simultaneously. Finding an appropriate balance between description, analysis, demonstrating knowledge and evaluation was crucial for candidates. The most successful paid due attention to all of these, and knowing the number of marks available for each AO would help candidates considerably when deciding how much time and attention to give to each aspect of the question. Some candidates wrote two clearly separate 'mini-essays' which seemed to help them clarify the different things they were doing in their answer. Some wrote a unified answer that moved from the first bullet to second, sometimes making useful connections. Both methods were acceptable and successful. The key was to make sure that all aspects of the task were covered substantially.

Candidates generally had plenty of time to process the materials and write substantial answers that let them display all the necessary knowledge and understanding to gain the very highest marks. There were, however, some issues regarding the amount of time candidates spent on each question. Some scripts showed much longer answers to the Section A question and shorter responses to Question B. Both sections carry the same total marks in the same proportions so it is sensible to devote 1 hour 15 minutes to each question.

There is a lot of data in this paper for candidates to analyse and use. For each question it is recommended that they spend at least 15 minutes reading the tasks and data to prepare to write their answer. It might even be sensible to devote more time to the preparation and planning time if the candidate has developed their speed writing skills. There is a parity of marks between the two sections and it is recommended that candidates spend 45 minutes answering each question.

Not all candidates were equally well prepared for the paper in terms of subject knowledge, and relied on straightforward textual analysis, with only brief, if any references to wider examples, theories or theorists. It is important that candidates have detailed knowledge of research findings and an understanding of the big issues, debates and different approaches that characterise the different topics.

There were a small number of incomplete scripts. It is important that candidates recognise that the topics selected on the paper now sample those in the specification and that they need to be prepared for this. It would also be unwise to engage in question spotting, bearing in mind that a topic can appear in Section A or Section B (for example gender and interaction in June 2010 and January 2010).

There were a small number of rubric infringements with candidates answering both Question 1 and 2 from section A but not Question 3 from section B. In these cases both answers were marked and the highest scoring question was counted.

### **Assessment Objective 1**

The AO1 descriptors are designed to assess how well candidates can describe aspects of language and communicate ideas as a linguistic specialist. Examiners looked to reward the range of linguistic descriptions first and then balanced this out against the quality of expression in terms of precision, organisation and accuracy.

This Assessment Objective is marked out of 10 on all the questions and therefore carries less weight than AO2 or AO3, though it can be evidenced across the work answering both bullet points. The weighting of ten marks is a reminder that just describing features of language is not sufficient to succeed fully on this unit. These features will need to be explored to address the issues raised by the questions and assessed by AOs 2 and 3. Examiners reported that candidates often forgot to describe linguistic features technically even when they were quoting them and analysing them.

Spelling, punctuation and expression were generally good. A substantial number of candidates needed to improve their punctuation of sentence boundaries, presentation of quotations and reference to people and researchers. The apostrophe was an interesting case study of use, misuse and absence. Many candidates would have benefitted from more systematic planning and organisation to construct paragraphs with clear topics and topic sentences. Many answers used very short paragraphs and offered loosely chronological accounts of the texts.

Candidates who looked closely at word classes and sentences functions or verb moods were placed in the 5-6 band. If they could look at verb forms, tense, aspect and voice or classify types of word class (eg comparative adjectives) they entered 7-8. In 9-10 were placed candidates who could synthesise approaches and explore sentences, clauses, phrase structures and patterns. It was noticeable that some candidates who were clearly well informed about language and looked closely at details of the text sometimes gave no description of these features at all and scored low marks on AO1 while doing well on the other AOs.

Particular issues for significant numbers of candidates were insecurity about word class identification and describing the person, number and function of pronouns.

### **Assessment Objective 3**

This AO is designed to assess candidates' ability to analyse how texts are affected by aspects of context and the ways in which they create meanings. It is weighted at 15/45 marks and should be seen as linked with AO1 as candidates need to be able to describe and analyse salient linguistic features to answer the first bullet point in the questions.

All the questions required some form of textual analysis in answering the first bullet point. Textual analysis was a task with which candidates were clearly familiar. Some misread the genre of Text A and some showed unfamiliarity with conventions of presenting spoken language in transcript form.

### **Assessment Objective 2**

This AO carries 20/45 marks and requires candidates to show wider knowledge of the concepts and issues concerning the topic set. It is particularly targeted by the second bullet point.

Candidates knew most about theories and research into gender interaction for Question 2. Their knowledge of language change was sometimes limited to the process of standardisation of spelling and grammar in the distant past and broad references to prescriptivism and descriptivism, though many had good knowledge of a range of ways of accounting for language change.

To improve their performance in future examinations candidates should:

- time their answers carefully to balance the amount of attention they give to their two answers which are worth equal marks
- ensure they answer only one question from Section A and Question 3 from Section B
- pay close attention to the requirements of the bullet points and give roughly equal attention to each part
- make use of technical linguistic descriptions to identify and analyse significant features of language in textual data (and thus hit AO1)
- know and understand key research and concepts relating to change and variation topics
- know and understand what the big debates are in each topic area
- evaluate research and ideas critically
- be able to evaluate views about language use by reference to specific examples
- be willing to argue their own views.

## **SECTION A – Language Variation and Change**

### **Question 1**

This question used two texts from different periods with a thematic connection as a way of testing candidates' ability to respond to texts from different times and use them to explore the nature of language change. This style of question for the change topic is a descendant and development of the questions on the legacy unit ENA5. It requires candidates to look at language change as a process that occurs through people's actual uses of language. These two texts encouraged a good range of responses from candidates and it was apparent that the study of mode in AS had informed some very interesting discussion about the nature of the different audiences being addressed by the authors and the stylistic choices made in addressing them.

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The texts for analysis proved to be accessible at a variety of levels while providing stretch and challenge for the most able. Candidates were asked to analyse a diary entry from 1940 and a blog entry from 2007 by describing (AO1) and commenting on (AO3) linguistic features to explore the way meanings were conveyed. They were then asked to evaluate the effect of period and context on the ways the texts used language (AO3).

Generally responses were stronger in response to the first bullet point. Candidates often needed a more systematic approach to identifying and explain features of language that could be linked to social, historical, genre and mode contexts. Some candidates used techniques like examining proper nouns to see how they reflected the world of the writers. Some looked at phenomena that didn't exist at the time of the first text. Some considered modes of communication. Some looked at the significance of social values, for example gender roles, and explored how these might affect the language used. Less successful approaches involved looking at how the invention of the printing press, Johnson's dictionary and other similar examples had a direct bearing on these particular texts.

There were a few scripts where candidates had not read very closely and described text A as a letter to the son, and others who seemed to misunderstand the nature of text B's focus, assuming that it was all about soldiers in different parts of the world, but these were a small minority.

Stilted, veiled and one were labelled as archaic by many candidates, along with 'that cheered us' being described as elliptical, but others were a little more circumspect and instead described them as less frequent or more formal usages.

Most candidates wrote intelligently about how the context of each text had influenced its production, but a significant minority wrote as much as they could about the history of the English language from the Anglo-Saxon period through the Great Vowel Shift and into the time of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary (or in one case Samuel L Jackson's Dictionary, which would have been an amazing thing to see!). Others mechanically explained Jean Aitchison's models of prescriptive attitudes to change with varying degrees of application to the text. The best answers seemed to link attitudes about change to specific language features (such as noun to verb conversion, clipping of -g endings and the like), while there were some really good answers that looked at the changing nature of audiences in a multi-modal age.

Key issues affecting candidates' performance positively were:

- using linguistic descriptions consistently across different levels when analysing the language of the text, thus gaining high marks on AO1
- balancing their answer between the demands of the two bullet points
- engaging fully with the mother's thoughts about communicating her experiences and her feelings
- engaging fully with the way the blog represented the Frontline Club persuasively
- evaluating how the period and modes of communication had affected the language of the texts
- evaluating the language use and changes in the light of different views about why language changes.

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The most successful candidates:

- analysed linguistic features closely in relation to the genres, audiences and purposes of the two texts, rather than merely describing them
- recognised the essentially private nature of Text A and the public nature of Text B
- analysed degrees of formality in the texts, relating these to period and changing conventions, audience and purpose
- showed clear understanding of the modes of communication available in 1940 and in 2007, and the expectations of audiences, particularly in relation to the instant nature of communication via computer technology
- examined how the verb 'cheered' showed Milburn's feelings
- commented on the adjectives 'stilted' and 'single' to explore her feelings about the restrictions on her ability to communicate
- looked at her use of the modal auxiliary 'can' to express the irony of the potential about frequency of communication but the limits of what could actually be said
- identified the pronoun 'one' as a feature of period, social class, and status
- discussed the impersonal tone of 'one' seeing it as a strategy used by the writer to distance herself from her deeper emotions, in keeping with the, 'keep a brave face' and 'stiff upper lip', expectations of behaviour in wartime
- examined how passive verbs contributed to the restrained tone of Text A
- explored the syntax of the first paragraph of Text B to show how it represented an image of variety, activity and excitement when depicting the Frontline Club
- analysed the use of present progressive verbs creating an impression of vital activity
- explore Text B's use of first person pronouns to create an exciting sense of a large and vibrant team or community of interest
- conceptualised and evaluated the representation of the blog and website as turning the reporting of war-related news into trivialised entertainment for a gossip-hungry generation
- used both metaphor and sentence analysis to demonstrate how the writer of Text B creates excitement and enthusiasm for persuasive purposes
- noted how proper nouns describing place reflected the nature of the worlds of both texts, commenting on the European war with Germany and the globalised world of Text B
- identified in Text A the possession of two cars as an indication of class and relative wealth
- commented on the loss of some car manufacturers' names over time
- explored the significance of the names given to the cars and the lifestyles their use implied
- analysed the word classes in 'She is as good a girl as ever and behaves nicely' and the way they might be influenced by gender role expectations
- understood the need for coded language in Text A, as opposed to the apparent complete freedom of information available on the internet
- related the ideas and language of the two texts only to relevant aspects of language change, for example, new vocabulary and word formation
- explored the word formation processes used in words like 'RSS feed', 'YouTube', 'blog', 'bloggers' and 'twitter' (as noun and verb): initialism, compounding, blending, affixation and conversion
- commented on the semantic shifts in words like 'feed'
- evaluated how the technological development of communications technology and social networking had affected the vocabulary of Text B, the methods of working for the Frontline Club and the attitudes to communication
- evaluated how the need for security affected the use of coded language in the letter writing described in Text A
- made reference to Aitchison's categories of worries about language change to explore how some might disapprove of aspects of the language of Text B
- explored other ways of explaining change, for example functional theory, to explain language to describe new phenomena

- were prepared to evaluate and challenge the success of Text B.

Less successful candidates:

- thought that Text A was a letter
- did not describe any linguistic features
- confused first, second and third person pronouns, (most commonly mis-labelling 'we' and 'us' as 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person )
- described 'one' as an adjective or count noun
- were unfamiliar with the words 'stilted', 'sifted' and 'veiled', often seeing them as archaic
- understood the audience of A to be the readers of the book in which the extract was later published
- described the writer of A as writing in 'restricted code'
- misjudged the writer of A as uneducated because, 'women were oppressed' at that time and she began a sentence with a conjunction
- took this use of the conjunction as a cue for a long and detailed account of the history of standardisation in English from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century onwards
- used the same use of the conjunction to write about the advance of Estuary English, or the beginning of universal primary education in England, (just before 1940, apparently)
- wrote very little on Text A, in favour of describing the features of Text B, because 'language has advanced a great deal since then'
- saw the main focus of B as war rather than communication.

## Question 2

This question was answered by slightly more candidates than Question 1. Candidates were asked to analyse a transcript of a mixed-sex conversation by describing (AO1) and commenting on (AO3) linguistic features to explore the way meanings were conveyed. They were then asked to evaluate the effect of gender on interactional language, examining the transcript and using their knowledge of research about male and female interaction (AO3).

Candidates found the data for this question accessible and were able to explore the issues effectively. They examined the views and experiences the participants discussed and examined the development of the interaction, with the best linking what happened with claims about gender and language, recognising that the data did not always fit.

Candidates were generally familiar with a range of research on this topic. It was pleasing to see so many candidates aware of recent research into gender and conversation, rather than reporting the ideas and research of Robin Lakoff and Zimmerman and West as if they represented current thinking. References to Jennifer Coates' work on male talk, Geoffrey Beattie, Janet Hyde, Nicola Woods, Deborah Cameron and many others suggested that this topic was being seen as a developing discourse. Particularly impressive were the answers which used the transcript to challenge simple dominance and difference approaches and suggest that status, relationships and individual behaviour were all of significance too. Some of the best answers synthesised an analysis of the transcript and table into a conceptualised overview of gender as one variable in a sea of other factors worth considering. These candidates tended to avoid formulation like 'Men do this while women do that'.

There was evidence that some candidates' knowledge was imprecise as they made rather vague claims about researchers' ideas and attributed names and terms incorrectly. Cameron and Tannen were often confused and Lakoff's name was spelt in a variety of ways. Some candidates referred to the dominance and difference theory as though this were one approach. A substantial number of candidates, however, were reliant on older, and perhaps discredited theories, and were happy to accept generalisations about differences, without considering the influence on gender interaction of other factors such as age, class, power, status and situation.



Weaker answers often wrote about men and women as homogenous groups when some particularisation would have been more fruitful. Some showed no more knowledge than the ideas of Robin Lakoff, while others gave a critique of her ideas as part of overview of how language and gender studies have developed over time.

More successful candidates were able to classify and evaluate different approaches to the topic and cited the more recent ideas of Deborah Cameron, and the research findings of Hyde. They had a clear overview of the history of the study of gender and interaction. The best candidates looked at the range of variables that might affect the way people use language in specific contexts. They criticised the data in Table 1 and asked questions about other factors they would want to take into account.

Key issues affecting candidates' performance positively were:

- using linguistic descriptions consistently across different levels when analysing the language of the transcript, thus gaining high marks on AO1
- balancing their answer between the demands of the two bullet points
- engaging fully with the participants' views and how they developed the interaction
- identifying different views of gender and interaction and evaluating them by the analysis of specific examples
- avoiding generalising and polarising description 'men do this, women do that'.

The most successful candidates:

- described language features with understanding of the characteristics of spontaneous speech
- explained the views of the participants precisely, using inferential skills effectively
- distinguished the views expressed about marriage from the male and female speakers' perspective
- analysed the significance of particular word choices and classes used
- analysed the meanings created by the use of stress
- explored pronoun use and the significance of *you* and *in* terms of how views were presented
- identified agreement and monitoring features
- classified overlaps and interruptions precisely and looked at their significance in context
- explored the collaborative development of the topics and topic shifts
- looked closely at the way in which George's final contribution can be seen as a topic shift
- pondered his use of an impersonal, sport related example
- analysed in detail Anna's interactional behaviour: her question, interruption and length of turn
- evaluated how the use of stress might offer some support or challenge to earlier ideas about women's language
- looked at Anna's use of *jolly nice* as an example of Lakoff's ideas about intensifiers and empty adjectives
- interpreted the findings of Table 1, linked them with dominance views and examined them in the light of the topic initiations in Text C
- identified and analysed early dominance approaches to the topic
- identified examples of report/rapport speech in Text C
- identified and explained the difference approach and how it would interpret language features differently from the dominance approach
- used Text C to challenge the ideas of Lakoff, Zimmerman and West, Fishman and Tannen about men's and women's interaction, noting language features used by men and women and examples that countered stereotypes
- used research on the varied functions of tag questions to challenge simple views of the tentative nature of women's talk

- explained how the findings of O’Barr and Atkins suggested factors other than gender
- cited Cameron and Hyde’s more recent research on gender similarities
- commented on the significance of topic, setting, period and possible personality and relationship issues that might affect the language used.

Less successful candidates:

- analysed Text C as though it were a written text, referring to ‘sentences’ and lack of punctuation, identifying Hodder as the author
- attempted to identify an audience other than the participants and focus group organisers
- showed no awareness of the time Anna’s anecdote referred to, or that things might have changed over time, including ideas about gender and interaction
- saw the discussion in C as confrontational
- misread the views expressed by the participants about marriage, women and employment opportunities
- identified word classes without linking them to meaning or effect
- identified informal features, eg ‘gonna’ as evidence of poor education, lower class and ‘showing covert prestige’ – with a long digression by way of Norwich, Milton Keynes, and Martha’s Vineyard
- went off at a tangent from the word ‘gay’ spending much time talking about PC, pejoration, and attitudes towards gay people
- repeated the information in Table 1 rather than interpreting and evaluating it
- restricted their discussion uncritically to the ideas of Lakoff, all of whose features they identified in Text C
- were very uncertain about exactly what was a tag question
- had very limited and inaccurate knowledge of research findings and ideas
- wrote about language and gender, rather than gender and interaction
- wrote an ill-focused essay covering everything they knew about language and gender
- drifted into a range of marginally relevant or simply irrelevant material.

## **SECTION B – Language Discourses**

### **Question 3**

The distinctive nature of Question 3 is that it requires candidates to analyse non-academic writing about language and variation. It requires candidates to engage with popular but often questionable views about language. In this examination the question focussed on attitudes to language change. The first bullet required candidates to analyse how two texts, both extracts from popular linguistics books, represented different views about the use and abuse of the apostrophe. The second bullet required candidates to explore more widely ideas about how and why language changes.

Candidates were expected to analyse both texts systematically by describing (AO1) and commenting on (AO3) linguistic features to explore the way John Humphrys presented his views about apostrophe usage and his response to the views of Jean Aitchison and David Crystal. They were then expected to evaluate the ideas presented within the context of the various discourses about language change (AO3).

Candidates found the data for this question accessible and were mostly able to identify Humphrys’ prescriptivist attitudes. The texts were provided to allow candidates to explore how ideas about language change are produced and widely disseminated. The second bullet enabled them to examine a range of views about language change and to develop their own argument.

In terms of the balance between linguistic description, analysis, knowledge and evaluation, this was often the most successfully answered question. Candidates had little trouble analysing the texts, and generally identified their purpose and audience. Better responses adopted a systematic approach to the analysis of the texts as discourse. They focused initially on how Humphrys presented his views about language and Aitchison and Crystal before looking at the way Humphrys presented himself and then sought to position the reader so they accepted his views. It seemed that work from ENGA2 had positively influenced many of the best responses, with some good work on ideal readers, subject positioning and audience address appearing in lots of answers.

Candidates were frequently able to classify the different discourses about language change referred to and exhibited by Humphrys. The best responses went on to evaluate these views, often with detailed, though not necessarily many, specific examples. The discussion of texting and apostrophes was a very effective focus. The best answers often avoided a simple characterisation of prescriptivism as bad and descriptivism as good. The question gave plenty of scope for most candidates to discuss Humphrys' views on change, and there were some really engaged and committed responses which argued passionately about the need for a standard or the need to accept and embrace change.

A few candidates struggled to differentiate between the different views that Humphrys was putting forward and conflated his and Aitchison's or his and Crystal's, but most were clear on where he stood in relation to them and how he was trying to use language to position himself in opposition to them. There were – as in Question 1 – some weaker answers that just tried to tell us everything the candidate knew about the history of the language, or even as much as they could about regional variation.

Key issues affecting candidates' performance positively were:

- using linguistic descriptions consistently across different levels when analysing the language of the texts, thus gaining high marks on AO1
- balancing their answer between the demands of the two bullet points
- engaging fully with Humphrys' views and how he expressed them persuasively
- identifying different views of language change and evaluating them by the analysis of specific examples.

The most successful candidates:

- read both passages before starting to write, so that they recognised their similarities and had an overview of Humphrys' views and strategies from the start, drawing the texts together, aiding conceptualisation and avoiding undue repetition
- established clearly what John Humphrys was actually arguing in the texts
- skilfully integrated their knowledge of the processes of, and debates about, language change with close reading and analysis of the texts
- showed detailed and precise understanding of exactly what it was that Humphrys disapproved of about the attitudes of Aitchison and Crystal
- used a range of linguistic features, including pronoun use, word classes, verb forms and use, metaphors and sentence and clause structures to analyse how Humphrys conveyed his views
- examined how the noun phrase used to introduce Jean Aitchison represented her and was used ironically in the light of Humphrys' depiction of the views of someone he felt should know better
- explored how Humphrys built up the praise of David Crystal to make his attitudes to apostrophe use all the more damning

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- explored the implications of the adjective *relaxed* and the verb *bother* in Text D and the verb *relapse* and abstract noun *indifference* in Text F, linking them with discourse about language change being the product of laziness or lack of care
  - saw how the use of inverted commas on the technical term '*grammaticalisation*', the verb *call* and the minor sentence *All very interesting* served to undermine the expert view
  - commented how the abstract noun *mood* suggested the inconsistency and flightiness of supposed experts
  - understood the reference to a linguistic mafia as a criticism for the way they dominate the way the ordinary person is supposed to think
  - examined the use of verbs that represented linguists as telling the ordinary person what to do
  - examined the implications of Humphrys' horsewhip metaphor to describe responses to apostrophe misuse
  - understood the implicit criticism in the adjective *scholarly* and explored how Humphrys represented himself as the ordinary person who was being sold short by the academic linguists
  - saw how Humphrys used 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and 1<sup>st</sup> person plural pronouns to position the reader with him and against Aitchison and Crystal
  - examined Humphrys self-deprecation and self-representation as a rather pugnacious champion for the ordinary person
  - looked at the implications of the noun phrase *our common language* for his views of who language belongs to
  - noted the tone of disbelief and the shaping of the reader's response by the use of rhetorical questions
  - classified and explained prescriptivist and descriptivist views clearly
  - explained the metaphors of the crumbling castle, damp spoon and infectious disease views of language 'decay', attributing the views to prescriptivists, and the classifying metaphors to Aitchison
  - related each metaphor closely to specific views expressed by Humphrys in the texts
  - examined the argument that descriptivist attitudes might damage the mastery of English by young learners
  - understood the exact nature of Crystal's criticism of non-specialist purists such as Humphrys, linking his metaphors to Aitchison's infectious disease metaphor
  - explored a number of alternative views of the nature of language change: eg the functional, random fluctuation and substratum theories
  - evaluated specific examples of change to evaluate whether it could be seen as progress or decay
  - debated how important apostrophe use might be and whether it could be removed from use
  - explored texting and why apostrophe use might be different there, arguing about different modes, genres and conventions
  - refused simplistic arguments that all change is good and all rules will necessarily inhibit creativity
  - were alive to the power dimension of access to language knowledge and skills
  - developed their own considered views about language change.
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**Less successful candidates:**

- did not pay full attention to both bullet points
- had difficulty disentangling Humphrys' views from those of the people he quoted
- did not describe features using linguistic terminology
- analysed the texts at a very superficial level: Humphrys does not like Aitchison and Crystal
- wrote an essay on only one aspect of language change – usually dialect levelling and attitudes to accent, which largely ignored the main focus of Texts D and E
- wrote a small amount about Humphrys' views before launching into a potted history of English from 400AD to the present day
- wrote about prescriptivist views of change in general, rather than looking closely at the precise focus of Humphrys' complaints
- confused prescriptivism and descriptivism and could not spell these terms
- attributed the views of language change as decay to Aitchison, rather than recognising them as her categorising metaphors for such views
- concluded their discussion with 'throw away' comments about how everyone must make up their own mind on the topic of language change
- misused the apostrophe throughout their answer.

**Advice to candidates****Do:**

- answer 1 question from Section A and Question 3
- spend 1 ¼ hours on each question
- read the two bullet points very carefully to see how to use the data and what you are expected to do
- give roughly equal attention to each bullet point
- read the texts very carefully before beginning to write, to ensure that you have interpreted correctly what is being said
- apply linguistic descriptions when analysing, and make sure they are the appropriate ones for the type of text, eg spoken or written
- make sure you know research, theories and ideas about all the topics which may be covered in the unit – not just those which were the focus of the previous paper
- make sure your subject knowledge is up to date
- know what the key issues and points of debate are for each topic area
- be selective about the theory/knowledge you discuss in each answer, so that it illuminates the text you are analysing as well as demonstrating your wider knowledge
- argue your own informed views on language topics, supporting them with textual or other evidence;
- judge (evaluate) how far linguistic ideas are valid, how convincingly they are conveyed, and to
- think about the issues before you come into the exam - if you have clarified your ideas beforehand, you will be able to express them more clearly, which is important.

**Do not:**

- write answers to both Question 1 and 2 in Section A
- paraphrase the content of texts
- forget to describe important features of language technically
- make sweeping and unsupported assertions
- generalise about men and women in gender and interaction answers
- summarise a range of research superficially with no reference to the question.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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