



**General Certificate of Education**

**English Language 2706**

*Specification B*

**ENGB4 Investigating Language**

**Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination – June series*

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## General

Approximately 15,000 candidates were entered for this second series of ENGB4. Moderators reported that generally this was a very positive series, as centres coped with the demands of this unit.

The advice and information given in the body of this report is intended to help centres feel confident to teach and assess further series of this unit. However, as always, AQA continues to provide further individual advice and support via the Coursework Adviser system and the teacher standardising meetings in the Autumn term.

## Language Investigation

This element of the coursework folder allows candidates to independently pursue 'interesting questions about language in use', and moderators were impressed by the variety of topics and approaches undertaken by candidates. Several moderators felt that the revised word count and assessment criteria had liberated many candidates allowing for a tighter focus and more rigorous analysis.

The ENGB4 January 2010 Report on the Examination focused upon the key characteristics of the most and least successful language investigations and media texts in terms of approaches and outcome, and it would be worth revisiting that report in light of the following comments. Centres are reminded again that while candidates should be working in topic areas which are seen to afford 'interesting questions about language in use' the role of the supervising teacher(s) is to guide the candidate in terms of the 'time and word constraints' as well as in matters of ethics and ethical approaches to investigating language. Centres are advised to always consult their coursework advisers if they are unsure about any topic (specification, p.12).

## Introduction

Moderators were pleased with the quality and focus of candidates' introductions. Many candidates chose topics which were not directly taught as part of the specification which was a pleasing development demonstrating genuine independent learning. Centres should be congratulated for allowing their students to pursue areas of personal language interest. As highlighted in the January 2010 Report, it was clear that the most successful starting point for an investigation was a strong personal engagement with the topic area.

Interesting and popular topic areas this series included:

- language acquisition
- political speeches
- language and gender (representation and talk)
- the language of literature
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Language acquisition
- taboo language
- reality TV
- interviews
- advertising.

## Methodologies

This section should provide an account of the methodology chosen for data selection. Moderators remarked that there was a significant improvement in the quality, focus and range of methodologies used by candidates to collect and organise their data this series.

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Most candidates set themselves sensible and appropriate methods of data collection, often balancing quantitative and qualitative approaches. However, some candidates tended to explain and describe data collection in unnecessary detail, focusing on the 'physical' aspects of where and how the data was collected, which did not fully illuminate the collection process or the approaches to be taken to explore the data. However, mostly the methodologies adopted were sound and the data collected allowed for appropriate linguistic analysis and reflection on concepts.

Several moderators remarked that they saw questionnaires used both as a method for data collection and a way of gaining more detail about the contextual factors surrounding the data. This often proved to be a very successful approach. Several moderators commented that candidates who chose to 'test' or 'repeat' an existing language theory, e.g. men and women's ability to describe colour, often produced very focused and successful investigations. In addition case studies often provided candidates with a very successful starting point when considering Child Language Acquisition and 2<sup>nd</sup> Language Acquisition.

For further advice on selecting an appropriate methodology to set up a language investigation, please refer to the GCE English Language B Teacher Resource Bank <http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/english.php> or contact your Coursework Adviser.

### Analysis

This section of the investigation should be used to demonstrate the analysis of the data using 'appropriate linguistic concepts', offer consideration of 'concepts and issues relating to language' and analysis of 'contextual issues' (specification, p12). In the most successful investigations this was demonstrated by the use of clear, salient subheadings relating to the topic and data.

All moderators commented that candidates who focused on the most interesting aspects of their data, rather than simply using a list of language methods, were more likely to produce successful and meaningful investigations. Moderators also remarked that one of the main indicators of weaker analysis sections was the use of subheadings where candidates clearly had little idea of what to include in that section. This was particularly true of the subheading 'Grammar' where weaker investigations often included comments on the lack of grammar in the data, or unhelpfully included comments on lexis, or some other method, in this section. Centres are reminded that there is no need to cover all the language methods listed in the specification in a language investigation.

Moderators also commented that occasionally there was a whole centre approach to the analysis section, where every candidate used the same four methods to analyse their data. This approach should be avoided, as it is very unlikely to allow candidates to access the top two mark bands for the AO1 assessment criteria.

Several moderators remarked that the use of a quantitative approach to data analysis as the only method of exploring the data, tended to limit a candidate's access to contextual marks (AO3). It is essential that this type of analysis is balanced by discussion of the 'language features in use' so that the candidate can access contextual elements of the assessment criteria. Centres are reminded that tables containing numbers of syllables, lexis and lengths of sentences are unlikely to be illuminating on their own. Moderators felt that some candidates were distracted by this type of 'counting' approach and consequently failed to make any 'evaluative' comment – therefore keeping the quality of their analysis in the bottom half of the AO1 assessment criteria.

## Conclusion

This section provides candidates with the opportunity for sensible reflection on the investigation process. Successful comments focused on and evaluated the key findings of the analysis section, drawing perceptive and tentative conclusions. Less successful approaches tended to simply repeat comment from the analysis section and consider speculatively what might have been, given more time and/or words.

## Bibliography

Centres are reminded that this is a mandatory element of a language investigation (specification, p12). The majority of centres had taught candidates how to approach the recording of resources, and many moderators were impressed by the organisation and clarity demonstrated in this section. However, despite consistent and clear advice through the teacher standardising meetings, some investigations did not contain this section.

## Appendices

Many moderators remarked that they were impressed by the organisation of this section of the investigation folder. Data was usually offered in a format which was easy to access and read, which was very helpful. Centres are reminded that it is not necessary to include tapes, CDs or DVDs in the data section. All spoken data should be transcribed and included as a paper copy.

## Assessment

Moderators were impressed by the quality of annotation and teacher comments provided by centres for the language investigations. It was clear that the majority of centres were fully conversant with the assessment criteria and were able to use the teacher standardising material to benchmark candidates' work. Moderators welcomed the referencing of teacher standardising material in the teacher comments. Moderators also found the use of an individual centre assessment sheets to be particularly helpful during the moderation process.

In terms of assessment, often centres started with the AO2 mark (as modelled in the teacher standardising material) allowing the assessment of the methodology to guide the initial thoughts about the quality of the investigation, moving into a consideration of the linguistic (AO1) and contextual (AO3) analysis.

Centres are reminded that candidates must demonstrate clear awareness between context and language features to access the top two bands of the AO3 assessment criteria.

## **Media Text**

This element of the ENGB4 folder was handled in very different ways by centres. Some centres followed the requirements closely and as such candidates produced some excellent work. Effective links between the investigation and the media text included an analysis of *Zelda: Twilight Princess*, with an article on Technology, or *Accent and Dialect in Jamie T lyrics* with an article on Mockney. Also particularly interesting was a consideration of power strategies employed by Simon Cowell and Cheryl Cole in X-Factor, accompanied by a 'how-to' guide – *How to regain power in your relationship*. There were also some highly ambitious links including an investigation into Chaucer's Language and Translations, with a *Radio Times* article to accompany a BBC series about the medieval world. One particularly imaginative candidate produced a Power Point presentation with accompanying notes for new police officers on language power techniques for interrogating suspects.

The genres attempted for this task were also fairly imaginative, with many candidates producing articles for magazines or broadsheet newspapers. Website articles were also a particularly popular and successful genre. Radio scripts were rather mixed in terms of success; however, one moderator commented that ‘Thought for the day’ style pieces were a highly effective way of approaching the task.

Unfortunately, some centres failed to meet the requirements of this task in terms of using the ‘broad subject focus of their language investigation’ to highlight ‘the language ideas and issues surrounding their chosen topic’ (specification, p13). As highlighted at all teacher standardising meetings, these pieces of work cannot be credited above a mark of 15 for AO4.

### Assessment

This task is assessed in three different ways, as highlighted in the assessment criteria bands:

- audience, purpose and genre
- register
- transformation of ideas and concepts from language study (original materials).

Moderators remarked that when centres referred to these three strands in their comments the assessment of the text was likely to be very accurate. Problems occurred when centres failed to consider one or more of these elements, or when there was no indication of the intended audience or genre of the text, making the assessment of the first bullet very difficult. Centres are reminded to use the AQA cover sheet to indicate these details to allow for an efficient moderation process.

### **Administration Issues**

Centres are reminded that:

- candidates’ marks need to be carefully checked as they are transferred between centre comment sheets, Centre Mark Form and Candidate Record Forms
- data for the language investigation should be in paper format and securely attached
- all folders should contain teacher comments indicating how and why the marks were awarded – comments simply transferred from the assessment criteria or highlighted in a photocopy of the assessment criteria are not as helpful as individual comments.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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