

English Language

Advanced GCE A2 H469

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H069

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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Overview

As the Specification has matured there has been sound development by centres and their candidates. This is reflected in the much wider range of resources upon which candidates have drawn in both the examined and centre-assessed papers. There are clear indications that most centres have read and applied much of the advice and many of the suggestions detailed in the previous individual reports upon each of the four papers.

A number of new avenues of critical exploration and analysis have enlivened the written examinations. These approaches appear to be replacing the more mechanical and limited appraisals which were once quite common. At the structural and analytical levels many candidates are showing a detailed familiarity with the structural conventions of Spoken Language at AS level. This work has been supported with a quite impressive range of secondary reading. The wider understanding of basic phonological features of the varieties of speech, and the ability to use some of the relevant symbols in analysis and explanation, has enhanced much work at A2 level. In option topics many candidates have been able to apply syntactical/grammatical analyses in a quite rigorous way. Response to lexicographical features has shown a more discerning approach, often supported by some judicious references to basic semantics. In being able to illustrate their work with a greater range of apposite linguistic terminology, candidates have increased the levels of stylistic appraisal of all relevant passages. Perhaps the most encouraging sign at A2 level has been the significant increase in references made to wider reading - some of which might have been anticipated at a higher academic level. This important contextual aspect of the paper is notably extended by this really welcome input from centres.

Similar developments have been noted in the internally assessed coursework. There is strong evidence of excellent linguistic research being undertaken in many centres. The distinctions between spoken, written and multimodal texts have been largely mastered. This has been complemented by some quite impressive adaptive and creative writing. Another significant feature is the increasing production of web-based texts. This combined range of skills, which candidates have displayed, could be of intrinsic transferable value should they be moving to a higher level of study. Many centres have developed a very secure approach to research and combined this with efficient administration. The fusing of all these features exemplifies the value and justification for coursework.

It has been satisfying to comment favourably upon the major practices and developments noted in this year's work. The strongest candidates have shown that the application of formal linguistic analyses to unseen texts and to their own writing and research can produce accomplished results. It is to be hoped that all centres will continue to encourage this rigorous and rewarding approach.

F651 The Dynamics of Speech (Written Examination)

General Comments

This was the fifth June session of F651. Centres and candidates continue to develop helpful strategies for dealing with the questions, and have taken advice offered in previous Reports as to what to avoid.

Examiners have, however, noticed a tendency over the last few sessions for some candidates to approach both of the Sections in very similar ways. Some concepts and theories are likely to be helpful in responding to questions on Speech and Children as well as on Speech Varieties and Social Groups, but it is not wise to approach both Sections with an identical 'check-list' in mind.

All questions this summer attracted a considerable number of responses; none evoked notably better or worse performance. There were very few instances of unfinished or obviously rushed answers.

Features of performance on each question are listed below. As usual, reference may be made to the published mark-scheme for further indications of appropriate response in terms of the Assessment Objectives.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Speech and Children

In Section A, rather more candidates answered Question 1, which was based on an interaction between a mother and her two young children on the 'school run', than Question 2, a transcription of a conversation between a behavioural therapist and a six-year-old boy.

In Question 1:

- weaker answers foregrounded the events taking place – a mother trying to get her children into the car and off to play-group – concentrating on how Lara is rushed and worried they'll be late, therefore impatient and annoyed with Charlotte for not co-operating
- better answers foregrounded the linguistic discussion and used the background scenario to inform the features emerging from it
- some candidates noted non-fluency features and features of child-directed speech – slower speech, simpler vocabulary and constructions, exaggerated intonation and recasting
- most answers also included Skinner, and understood the theory of imitation and reinforcement
- better answers noted Adam's correctly-applied repetition of past tense (*brought*) and the fact that his would-be constructions are sometimes interrupted by Charlotte
- Charlotte was correctly seen as at post-telegraphic stage, and using a range of lexis and grammar (e.g. plurals and possessives)
- many answers argued that Charlotte incorrectly pluralises *tail* – or that maybe the toy has two tails and it is correct – and that Lara does not correct her but repeats and reinforces the error
- only a few candidates could see that *tails* was a contraction with the auxiliary verb (*has*)
- generally, comments on syntax and grammar were the weakest aspect.

In Question 2:

- (done less frequently though generally better than Q 1)
- this transcript lent itself very well to provoking evaluation of CDS features
- the majority of candidates did a competent job of tying spoken features to some of the issues of adults talking to children, particularly in a semi-formal setting
- the weakest candidates collected and listed features, commenting that these were features of (for example) child-directed speech, without any sense that there were issues to be brought in
- there was often good insight into the therapist's position as lead speaker, drawing out from Robert desired outcomes
- Grice's Maxims were often referred to, but not very usefully
- imitation/reinforcement theory (Skinner) was used helpfully, and Halliday's functions understood and exemplified
- some well-developed answers made excellent use of the transcript evidence.

Section B: Speech Varieties and Social Groups

There were rather more attempts at Q3, which was based on an interaction about a faulty Land Rover, than at Q4, which was based on an interaction about a faulty sun-bed.

In Question 3:

- there was often clear focus on the language used by both Lew and Matt, especially their field-specific lexis, sometimes seen as 'jargon' or occupational language
- some candidates made intelligent attempts to explore the semantics of *running too lean or rich*, *carb blockage* or *knackered leads*
- informality was noted, and most argued for a friendly and co-operative relationship between the two men, exploring the trajectory of overlaps and back-channel behaviour
- there was generally less inclination than in previous sessions mistakenly to argue for 'typically-male' competitiveness
- the signs of shared interest and humour were helpfully explored.

In Question 4:

- most answers identified a relaxed relationship between the two speakers
- the largely co-operative nature of exchange was generally noted, though some candidates wanted to see the overlaps as hostile
- Anoushka's exclamation "*that is just WRONG*" was not understood in the contemporary colloquial sense of wrong meaning dodgy/weird, but seen as a potentially face-threatening act of disagreement
- similarly, Nikki's repetitions of *im goin* in its 'quotative' sense were often misunderstood
- nevertheless, most candidates recovered to see the second half of the interaction as co-operative/collaborative construction of meaning
- there was useful and well-informed reference to Zimmerman & West, Lakoff, Goffman, Cameron and Tannen.

F652 Texts and Audiences

Task 1: Text Study

Candidates are required to produce an analytical essay in which they analyse the features of one written and one multimodal text of their choice. A great deal of hard work had evidently gone in to the completion of this task and there was real evidence of candidates being encouraged to explore challenging topics and to stretch themselves at all levels.

Candidates had clearly been guided to select a wide variety of interesting and appropriate texts. Written texts included poems, song lyrics, film scripts, recipes, newspaper articles, reviews and prose extracts. Multimodal texts included transcripts from film and TV, music videos, sports commentaries, children's books, magazine articles and advertisements. Teachers are asked to ensure that candidates do not select texts which are too long. One candidate attempted to analyse an entire film and another a whole children's book, as multimodal texts. One scene from the film or a few pages of the book would have sufficed. Indeed, an in depth analysis of a shorter text is often far more productive than a superficial analysis of a longer text.

A small number of centres had guided all candidates to study the same two text types, eg. a recipe and a charity appeal letter. Although permissible, this approach can be quite restrictive and is not really in the spirit of the course. Where candidates are encouraged to choose their own data there is more scope for them to pursue their own interests and enthusiasms and to develop their own strengths. The selection of appropriate material is an important aspect of the coursework process, and as such candidates should be encouraged to work independently to find their own texts for analysis.

Centres are reminded of the need to identify the texts clearly as 'written' or 'multimodal' and to ensure that written texts do not include any accompanying visual material. Please note that it is not necessary to include CDs/DVDs; transcriptions will suffice.

The analytical essay addresses Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3, so candidates need to focus on context, audience and purpose (AO3), whilst adopting appropriate frameworks to discuss the key linguistic and stylistic features of the texts (AO1). Much high level work was submitted, with close attention paid to features of register, lexis, grammar, syntax, phonology, semantics and cohesion. Not all candidates had given sufficient consideration to the impact of multimodality on meaning. It is always important, when analysing multimodal texts, that alongside the linguistic features students look closely at (for example) images, pictures, diagrams and the use of colours and fonts. Some obvious multimodal aspects of film clips, such as movement, music and gestures, were sometimes ignored.

Task 2: Adaptive Writing and Commentary

This task, where candidates adapt one of their texts from Task 1, tests Assessment Objectives 1 and 4. Candidates are required to demonstrate expertise and creativity in their writing and to apply appropriate linguistic methods and terminology in their commentary.

The best adaptive pieces were well chosen, challenging and fit for purpose, making good use of material from the original text. Text types produced included spoken language transcripts, newspaper and magazine articles, autobiographies, interviews, letters and dramatic monologues.

Successful commentaries offered a comprehensive exploration of the writing process. Candidates focused closely on the relationship between the original material and the newly adapted text, including detailed discussion of features retained and changes made in the light of

the new audience and/or purpose. There were concerns, where some candidates submitted commentaries which gave no consideration whatsoever to the process of text adaptation. Such commentaries tended to involve the candidates carrying out a linguistic analysis of their own work with no reference to the process of adaptation. No references were made to which parts of the source material had been retained, which parts had been omitted from the adaptive text, and how language had been modified to accommodate the new audience and purpose of the text that had been produced. In these cases only tenuous links could be made between the original text and the adapted text, which suggested that the adapted text was 'inspired by' the source material rather than 'adapted' from it.

Application of Mark Scheme and General Administration

The administration was mostly carried out accurately and efficiently and the application of the mark scheme was generally accurate. Most of the work was helpfully annotated with detailed summative comments and reference to relevant Assessment Objectives which made the moderation process straightforward.

F653 Culture, Language and Identity

General Comments

The paper produced a significant range of responses to all the questions. In Section A there was a slight increase in candidates' ability to use a range of technical illustrative features in the course of their answers. In Section B there was limited evidence of increased wider reading being integrated into A03. In both sections of the paper markers noted that some candidates still spend rather too much time on summarising the contents of the passages rather than applying critically analytical methods to the forms and structures of the writing. This is an important discriminating feature of A2 level work. Moreover, some candidates still appear to have had little practice in organising and writing an academic essay. This weakness frequently impacts detrimentally on the mark for A01.

Section A

Language and Speech

Since the passages were focused upon aspects of Estuarine speech, there was a much-needed decline in general histories of RP. There were also far fewer historically inaccurate commentaries about the role of the BBC in fostering certain speech conventions. Most candidates appeared to be comfortable with the broader issues surrounding the complexities which have developed around the sounds of Estuary English. It is important for centres to note that a number of candidates appear to have had little experience of actually listening to live speech. This is a particularly inhibiting factor given the technical demands of this question. Some candidates spent rather too long on summarising the passages and simply repeating the sounds illustrated therein. This is an unnecessary practice and will not fulfil the A02 obligations. For those candidates who addressed the question as intended, the sequencing of the passages was helpful: moving from a basic definition of Estuary to the extended and ongoing debate about its significance and effects. The ideas and illustrations in this material allowed candidates to make increasing use of vowel quadrilaterals. It needs to be noted that some were reproduced by rote and were not immediately relevant to Estuary features. The example most cited to illustrate this aspect, was of changes in the RP of the Queen compared with the Northern strut 'U'. More accomplished analytical approaches compared a small range of Estuary sounds - glottals; upspeak; yods; diphthongalisation- with some of the models generated by traditional RP. This approach was a very effective way of synthesising A02 and A03. By engaging with basic phonological features candidates were able to make quite sound conceptual engagement with the debate about Estuary speech. Many answers showed quite knowledgeable acquaintance with Rosewarne's original work. There were also a number of responses which made successful references to the more recent work on the topic by Wells. Candidates appear to have found the work of Coggie and Trudgill also of considerable value.

Section B

The Language of Popular Written Texts

For all work in Section B it is expected that candidates will be primarily concerned with the following aspects of written discourse: lexicality - how do individual words contribute to the overall text? – and grammatical cohesion - how is the text bound together across the boundaries of sentences? Finally, in what ways does the text convey its 'message'? This could include things like the use of speech, additional signs and symbols being used, as in websites; and any metaphorical and cultural references which support and develop the author's work. These basics combined make up the broader conventions of simple discourse analysis.

The more analytical responses to Question 2 focused upon the ‘sarcastic’ tone of (d) compared to the gentler, historically analogous tone of (e). It was interesting that candidates were not entirely perceptive in using ‘sarcastic’, when the writer’s approach is probingly ironic. However, they did pick up on the environmental/ conservationist appeal of the passages. This was achieved by some careful illustration and comment upon specific lexical items and some basic discussion of how the grammar of (d) appeared to evolve. In this passage the opening simple pastoral declaratives were seen as being a prelude to the more complex grammatical cohesion which developed. Lexical issues in (d) revolved largely around such collocations as London/Birmingham and countryside/housing estates. The verbal nouns of emailing, facebooking, etc., were also the subject of some comment in terms of textual coherence. A few candidates suggested that the style of writing could be similar to that of a broadcast or TV documentary. This seemed interesting; and there is a clear appeal to a specific audience in the use of under-stated pronoun ‘we’. There was less time spent upon (e). Those who did look at the structure pointed out the importance of the lexical set associated with the noun ‘wood’, including the variety of ways it was used in the web-links. This noun was embedded in the syntactic organisation through much of the passage, flagging up the historical contextualisation of the writer’s ideas. It was clear to markers, also, that a number of lexical items were outside of the readers’ immediate vocabularies. This is an aspect which should not be ignored; rather it should invite comment in terms of the broader contextualisation of the work, which (given its medium of transmission) was meant to have a popular appeal, as indicated especially in the strap declarative ‘How humans are linked to trees...’. Candidates need to be able to link their responses to some basic A03 objectives to ensure sufficient coverage of this AO. In the case of both passages the medium chosen and the issues conveyed do use language features germane to popular views and should be evaluated as such in the course of answers. This is at least as important as random trawling for minor grammatical points.

Section C

Language and Cultural Production

Answers to this question showed some candidates rather misreading the aims of (f), largely overlooking (g) and unfamiliar with the conventions of the industry focused press release. The more analytical work tended to give the greatest focus to (f). The collocations of items linked to musical culture, such as ‘pop’s metabolism’, ‘retro’ and ‘Retro consciousness’, attracted lexical comments. These were linked with the idea that the writing in the article was consciously historicist in aims. Therefore, it was produced by someone old(er), for an audience looking back on their own youth. One interesting response linked the adverbial ‘once upon a time’ to the idea that the article was a fictive narrative which reached a sociological conclusion - the revolutionaries have become mere ‘archivists’. ‘Retro’, as both noun and adjective, was seen as the important cohesive device in the writing, filtering the ‘we’ into musical reminiscence. There was almost no address to (g). The linguistic comments focused upon the possible irony of a vegetarian covering herself in chicken bits; or speculation about the noun phrase ‘sexual proclivity’. Passage (h) was not read as a professional discourse about constructing image and popularity. A few commented on the density of proper nouns and the fact that there was some lax grammatical cohesion. The iconic features and the web-links were rather overlooked, the web not being subjected to any discussion of its lexicality or whether it made full syntactic sense. In terms of A03 there were weaknesses in addressing the styles of delivery, with some candidates seeming not to understand the range of conventions used in newspaper musical reviews. Nor was there any attempt to place such writing in a simple frame of history, performance and mediated packaging.

Section D

Language, Power and Identity

There was a range of responses to this question. A few candidates found the second paragraph of (i) incomprehensible, whilst other candidates engaged in very well prepared analytical work. These answers showed a very secure A03 understanding, their contextual A03 work being supported by reference to Reader Response Theory and the social dimensions of writing and reading, drawn loosely from the work of Gramsci. Almost all responses appeared to place passage (i) within the realms of 'older readers', supporting this assertion by stating that the young did not read listings magazines. Because of this, the weaker responses jumped to the erroneous conclusion that the writer was against modern technology. The more insightful analytical work saw the importance of the collocation 'electronic textual-closeness'. They evaluated this important pre-modified noun phrase as a signifier of the complete shift in the way in which language might be regenerated. One candidate summing it up succinctly as 'the semiology of the word replacing the semiology of the image'.

There were some interesting attempts to unpick the lexical connotations of 'modernity' and 'lyric compression'. 'The Dead White Males' and 'divine compilation albums' also were subjected to analysis in terms of the general discourse features. Passage (j) received slightly less critical attention, though a few candidates raised interesting ideas about the ellipsis in the headline; emphasising, as they saw it, the culture shock awaiting the hardback. Several answers looked severely upon the metaphorical 'tornado of digital destruction', pointing out a lack of cohesion in the linking of the natural with the creation of the cyber world. The rhetorical questions were picked up as a feature of journalistic style. The triadic adjectival 'fast, fast ,fast' was also seen as indicator of rhetorical journalese. The linguistic approach in these answers reflected some invigorating teaching. It was pleasing to see how candidates can engage in some depth with both the technical and stylistic formalities in passages. It showed also that the A03 objective of contextualisation can be formally achieved and efficiently integrated into candidates' answers.

As was noted in the **General Comments** there was limited evidence of wider reading filtering into candidates' work in Section B. The following list references those authors who appear to have been used:

Carter R
Halliday M

Fairclough N
Leech G

Freeborn D

This list might be of value to centres in preparing candidates for future examinations.

F654 Media Language

Task 1: Independent Investigation: Comparison and Analysis

This task, which requires candidates to analyse and compare the features of one written, one spoken and one multimodal text, was in the majority of cases expertly executed. Candidates had evidently been encouraged to select linking themes or topics drawn from their own interests and enthusiasms. There was an extensive range covered, from film, fashion and Fairy Liquid to the Dalai Lama, Dr. Who and domestic work. Horses, crime, love, money and vegetarianism appeared, alongside photography, poison and persuasion. One or two candidates did not refer very closely to their linking theme, mentioning it on the coversheet but not in the actual analysis. The analyses were more successful where there was a clear focus on the stated theme or topic.

Centres are now confident with the selection of texts and there was a vast range on display. A small number of candidates made the mistake of submitting multimodal texts in place of written ones. Where a text includes visual features, such as images, charts or diagrams, it must be treated as a multimodal text and the visual features should be analysed alongside the linguistic ones. Centres are reminded of the need to clearly label texts as 'spoken,' 'written' or 'multimodal.'

The analytical task was generally well handled, but there was concern that some candidates gave the multimodal features of texts very little analytical treatment and in extreme cases virtually none at all. This was disappointing as, for the most part, the multimodal texts under consideration were interesting in terms of how the use of colour, images and layout impacted on the meaning and/or cohesion of the text as a whole.

Some candidates would benefit from closer attention to the comparative aspect of the analysis. The aim is to compare and contrast the texts, identifying similarities and differences, rather than analysing them all separately, making few links between them.

Task 2: Original Writing and Commentary

Writing was produced in the spoken, written and multimodal modes, covering a wide range of topics and genres. Spoken texts included formal speeches, monologues, interviews and TV and radio scripts. Written pieces included literary pieces, travel writing, diary entries, song lyrics and book, film and concert reviews. Many multimodal texts took the form of newspaper and magazine articles, with adverts and leaflets also being popular. A number of web-based texts were also produced with great success. The standard of writing was generally high and the accompanying commentaries were detailed and informative.

Application of Mark Scheme and General Administration

In most cases it was obvious that a close match between the Assessment Objectives and task setting had been achieved, with the result that the application of the mark scheme was generally accurate. Most of the work was helpfully annotated, with detailed summative comments and evidence of internal standardization. It was unhelpful where work was merely systematically ticked, with no comment provided to indicate how the Assessment Objectives had been met. In some centres there was a failure to identify inaccuracies on the part of the candidates. Spelling and punctuation errors must be corrected, and errors of expression highlighted. Where a submission contains a significant number of errors this should be reflected in the final mark awarded.

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