

Accredited

# A LEVEL

*Candidate Style Answers with commentary*

H470

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Comparing and Contrasting  
different modes of communication

May 2015



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# INTRODUCTION

The following learner response is designed to aid teachers and learners in preparing for the third task in Paper 1 of the A Level and the second task of Paper 1 of the AS Level, both of which ask learners to study language use across two texts, one of which will be spoken. Both texts in either exam will have a common theme. **It is not a standardisation tool** to be used for teachers or examiners to decide on particular levels of achievement. This task is taken from the sample question paper for component 1 of the A Level.



# TASK

Analyse the ways in which language is used in these two texts. In your answer you should:

- explore connections and variations between the texts
- use appropriate linguistic concepts and methods
- consider how contextual factors contribute to the construction of meaning.

*You are advised to spend about an hour and five minutes on this task. Of that time you are advised to spend at least 15 minutes reading and preparing your answer and about 50 minutes writing.*

The bullet points here clearly flag up the AOs to the learner. AO3 is defined as context and variation in this part of the paper and is signalled in the first and third bullets. AO4 invites learners to make connections between texts and is signposted in the first bullet. AO1 asks learners to focus on methods and is signalled in the middle bullet.

Texts A and B both present Simon Pegg's interest in the Star Wars films. However, the fact that they are in two different modes, one spoken and one written, and aimed at what are arguably different audiences, reveals some interesting linguistic variations, particularly in the way Pegg himself speaks and writes.

The fact that Text A has a wide audience means that Pegg is likely to want to use language to present a friendly and approachable face to viewers. From Text B we can see that he can use quite a demanding register and yet, on the Jonathon Ross show, he seems to be deliberately using less formal language. For example, when defining the idea of the nerd he uses the phrase 'spekky idiot'. Pegg is an actor and comedian and so adjectives like 'spekky', which is a slang term to define someone who wears spectacles, combined with the noun 'idiot' are probably there for humour. Interestingly, Ross follows this with the more formal phrase 'socially inept' and gets the greater laugh. The contrast with Pegg's utterance is probably the reason for this response from the audience. It also shows a variation in Ross's language use compared to the generally high frequency lexis he uses in the rest of the extract.

**The first paragraph identifies linguistically significant points of comparison (AO4 – 'connections') across these two texts given the two contexts (AO3): how Simon Pegg varies his language for different audiences and in different modes. Comparing modes is itself a rewarding method, so AO1 is also being set up here. For a top grade answer, some sense of an actual methodology (eg looking at linguistic and non-linguistic variables) might have helped here.**

**Good to use terms like 'adjective'. Could go further and talk about morphology - the morpheme 'y' added to a noun to convert it to an adjective is typical of speech (as in 'thingy').**

**The point about the contrast is a fair one, but arguably, given the time constraints, the learner could have moved on by this point – since Ross's language use cannot be compared across the texts.**

**The focus of this paragraph is formality and, particularly, uses of lexis. It follows a methodical pattern, identifying usage, making a point and comparing with Text B briefly (to keep that connection up). There is also analysis there, which is vital to get AO1 marks, with some proper linguistic terms, with context being wisely used to give possible reasons for language use. The focus could be sharpened with the word 'lexis' at the start, so that we know the linguistic method being used. Perhaps most importantly, offering a more perceptive evaluation of the possible reasons for this usage would get the learner into the top level.**



In Text B, meanwhile, Pegg seems to present a more educated persona, whilst keeping it clear that the text is designed to be a humorous autobiography rather than a dry informative text. Thus, we can see him using the phrase 'space-based nerd fest' which is clearly light and informal; 'nerd' is itself a humorous and now commonly-used term for people who are perhaps slightly obsessive about their interests and 'fest' is a slangy and colloquial shortening of 'festival'. This presents a comical picture for the reader: a congregation of science-fiction loving nerds'. It is then contrasted with words from a more formal register such as 'portentous' (meaning 'grand') and 'virulent', relating to a virus. Both terms have Latin origins and are low-frequency. They show Pegg to be educated and literate and, arguably, help him to connect to his reading public. This audience is likely to be smaller and more niche than that on Jonathon Ross's show and might enjoy the higher level of discussion here.

Linked to the idea of formality is the way in which Pegg varies his usage of standard English and pronunciation in these two texts. It is interesting to note that he uses the glottal stop in his utterances with Ross, in 'talking' and 'phantom'. Given that he is talking using a standard spoken English, without non-standard grammar such as 'we was', this accent feature is significant. It may be that he is converging with Ross, who is also using the feature (eg in 'get out again'), cementing their relationship either genuinely or for the cameras. Equally, it could simply be a part of Pegg's overall self-representation, as someone who is approachable and similar to the majority of his audience, all being good for his career.

**Evidence is being brought in to support points, but it could be more succinct: "The informal noun 'space-based nerd fest' contains the colloquial clip 'fest', short for 'festival', which gives a more light-hearted and colloquial feel to the writing and gives a comical picture of a gathering of science-fiction 'nerds'".**

**To get into level 5, candidates need to be systematic in the way they compare and these two paragraphs succeed in keeping to the idea of formality, with lexis as a particular focus, comparing Pegg's usage in the two contexts. This is linguistically interesting and rewarding and means that all of the three AOs are being addressed here.**

**Whilst AO2 (concepts and issues) is not targeted in this part of the paper, the phrase 'linguistic concepts' appears in the second bullet point of the question, quoted above, and indicates that students look at "appropriate methods of language analysis". Candidates could go further here, therefore, talking about the possibility of these two men engaging in language which gives them covert prestige. This specification attempts to avoid the idea of banning certain ways of exploring data if they are relevant and take a holistic approach to marking.**

**The answer builds on the previous section, but is now looking at a new focus, bringing in different methods, in particular phonology and grammar.**

**Here the candidate is weighing up two possible reasons for a linguistic feature, meaning that they achieve level 5. To 'perceptively evaluate' (AO3 level 6) the candidate could make suggestions about the current context of popular light entertainment shows, where received pronunciation is perhaps likely to be seen as alienating certain viewers.**



In the case of Text B, meanwhile, being in written mode, phonological effects are not significant. Pegg is, however, obeying standard grammatical usage expected of a published autobiography. In the main he uses complete grammatical sentences, many of them complex sentences with several clauses (the sentence 'Nevertheless .... audience hysteria' is a complex sentence with five clauses), something that is usually only found in writing, where planning is possible. However, he does use elliptical constructions, such as 'Strange to think...' where the subject and verb ('It's') have been omitted. Again, this keeps a fairly conversational feel to the writing, balancing the more intellectual passages. The biography is ultimately trying to entertain and this helps that process along by having a conversation with the reader.

Not surprisingly, there are many more spoken features appearing in Text A. Again, though, there are some interesting variations. There are a number of fillers. For example 'sort of you know just the specky idiot'. Fillers like this are usually simply non-fluency features, and these may be there for that reason, like the uses of 'err' and the false starts and hesitations like 'ha-have', used to give the speaker thinking time. However here the fillers may be a deliberate pause, setting us up for the comical 'specky idiot' phrase - all part of Pegg's comic timing.

Interestingly, there are also spoken features in Pegg's writing in text B. Contractions like 'don't' and 'Life's too short' are features of speech and would not be standard in academic writing. They are used here to keep the informal feel, balancing the more demanding elements of the text.

**This could be more succinctly put. The word 'sentences' is repeated three times in one sentence here.**

**Whilst phonological features can't be focussed on in text B, the candidate does the next best thing, looking at grammatical usage.**

**In terms of AO4, the answer takes a systematic approach, comparing back and forth according to methods which are chosen because they can be compared across both texts. There is not much direct cross reference to the other text within each paragraph. Given the frequency of the transitions back and forth and the way the links are made, this should not count against a candidate. That said, if they were to make an apt comparative comment in the heart of a paragraph, this would score highly, particularly if the connection was 'illuminating' as level 6 of the mark scheme for AO4 requires.**

**There is some sense here that there might be more than one reason, given the context, for these fillers. To say it's part of speech is pretty obvious. The candidate does go beyond this, but there are many possible reasons for these fillers here: they could be part of his idiolect; he could be converging with Ross; he could be keeping up a level of informality for his audience; he could be delaying the joke phrase, as this candidate suggests; it could be because he knows that it is an insulting phrase and wants to soften it, to keep him from sounding too judgemental.**



## GENERAL COMMENTARY

This is a very solid answer which would be on the borders of level 5 and level 6. There is more than one way to take it to level 6.

As indicated in the margins, not all of the writing is as succinct as it could be. Tightening it up a little here and there, as in the example alongside the fifth paragraph, would allow room for one or two more features to be covered.

The discourse structure of the two texts, with one following a mildly combative question and answer format and the other using chronology and paragraphing, would be well worth examining. This would allow candidates to look at features like verb mood; text A needs to use questions whereas text B can be declarative throughout. This would certainly allow the candidate to show another key method in their pursuit of the range of methods required for full marks for AO1. Discourse is also something which can be applied across both texts, to ensure that high marks for variation and comparison/connection (AO3 and AO4) are forthcoming. It would also have the advantage of bringing Ross's language use more into the frame.

However, keeping the elements that are there and simply demonstrating more level 6 skills, could also take it to full marks. Candidates could offer alternative reasons for the ways in which contexts might affect language use. Are fillers like 'sort of you know' part of Pegg's idiolect? Is he converging with Ross? Being informal to appeal to his audience? Hedging? This kind of fine tuning demonstrates perceptiveness in terms of handling context (AO3) and is a key feature of level 6. Likewise they could offer more depth at times, to get at the requirement to analyse closely (AO1). For example, once you have got hold of a word like 'spekky' morphology could come into play. This could all be made relevant to the discussion.

In terms of AO4, which is steering learners to compare and connect texts, the candidate sensibly chooses to focus on Pegg's language usage. The single comment on Ross's use of lexis, where he suddenly changes his register with 'socially inept', almost to wrong foot Pegg, for comic effect, does tackle variation and is relevant and no doubt more could be done with other ways in which Ross varies language; but it is much easier to study variation in Pegg's language. Indeed, as suggested above, the fact that Pegg is a common element is something that would be attractive to linguists, since it limits non-linguistic variables, and thus brings out differences that appear as a result of his mode of communication and the two contexts of reception (a television broadcast on a popular light entertainment programme as against the more focused writer-reader relationship in the case of the biography). If this could be flagged up to the examiner it would show the level of perceptiveness needed for level 6.



# TEACHER GUIDE

## FOR USING THIS RESOURCE IN THE CLASSROOM (WITH LEARNER ACTIVITY SHEETS)

Below are a variety of activities that can be used with the candidate style answer and commentary.

1. Print [Learner Activity Sheet 1](#). Ask the learners to use the assessment objectives and to highlight the answer in three different colours, switching between colours according to whether the candidate here is addressing AO1, AO3 or AO4. Whole class discussion to see if the groups arrived at the same ideas about which parts address which AOs. Have a class discussion about what aspects of the question are missing in the answer.
2. Half the class are given the first half of the answer with commentary ([Learner Activity Sheet 2](#)) and the second half with no commentary ([Learner Activity Sheet 1](#)). The rest of the class are given the first half without the commentary ([Learner Activity Sheet 1](#)) and the second half with the commentary ([Learner Activity Sheet 2](#)). The two halves of the class ask questions of each other, such as 'Can you give an explanation of ways in which the answer is systematic?', or give them a task to do, such as to rewrite sections that they consider to be not as sharp as they could be and read it out to the class.
3. Before seeing the sample answer, learners are given the question and work in groups to produce a diagram on A3. These diagrams are then moved around the groups, and each group should add at least one point before they hand the diagram onto the next group. When the diagram gets back to the 'home' group, they should identify the three most interesting points that have been added, and feed back to the whole class. Learners must try not to add the same point to every diagram they see!
4. Learners respond to the question in an essay plan or a timed response, and then compare it to the resource.
5. Take the resource, without the commentary ([Learner Activity Sheet 1](#)), and ask groups to mark it with comments added to the sheet. Groups will then swap their marked version with that of another group. The group then marks and add comments so that the class is starting to standardise. Have a whole class discussion about the grades and the reasons for awarding them.
6. Remove the first paragraph of the resource, leaving in the commentary ([Learner Activity Sheet 2](#)). In pairs the learners should write a paragraph that responds to the commentary. Compare with the original, and comment on what is gained and what is lost.
7. Give the learners the resources with only the commentary featured ([Learner Activity Sheet 3](#)). The learners should write an essay plan (three bullet points for each paragraph) that responds to the features identified in the commentary.
8. The learners should work in a pair to arrive at three more points that they think should be included in the answer. In a group of four, they should agree on two more points. In a whole class discussion, they should debate for a single important point that they think is missing from this response. Given that there would only be 50 minutes to write this essay, there would not be room for more!
9. The learners should work in pairs to analyse the response in terms of its structure; reducing it to a plan that shows the construction of the response (eg introduction: three main points etc.)
10. Divide the learners into groups and each group is responsible for finding something else to add about lexis, sentence structure, pragmatics etc.
11. Cut up the resource ([Learner Activity Sheet 1](#)), and ask the learners to work in pairs to re-order it, giving reasons for the essay structure they have chosen.
12. Hand out the resource with only the first sentence of each paragraph remaining ([Learner activity Sheet 4](#)). In pairs or groups the learners should complete a paragraph and then pass it on to the next group. They should not replicate a paragraph twice.
13. Re-write or add to the commentary using the terminology from the band indicators and the AOs.
14. Create a group essay, before seeing the answer, where each member of the group is given a framework or method to apply comparatively across the two texts (lexis, for example). The team write the essay up. They then receive the model answer and rate their essay against it. Can be standardised by another group. The teacher can take in the small number of essays and mark them, awarding a prize for the best group essay.



# LEARNER ACTIVITY SHEET 1

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**Good to use terms like 'adjective'. Could go further and talk about morphology - the morpheme 'y' added to a noun to convert it to an adjective is typical of speech (as in 'thingy').**

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**The focus of this paragraph is formality and, particularly, uses of lexis. It follows a methodical pattern, identifying usage, making a point and comparing with Text B briefly (to keep that connection up). There is also analysis there, which is vital to get AO1 marks, with some proper linguistic terms, with context being wisely used to give possible reasons for language use. The focus could be sharpened with the word 'lexis' at the start, so that we know the linguistic method being used. Perhaps most importantly, offering a more perceptive evaluation of the possible reasons for this usage would get the learner into the top level.**

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**To get into level 5, candidates need to be systematic in the way they compare and these two paragraphs succeed in keeping to the idea of formality, with lexis as a particular focus, comparing Pegg's usage in the two contexts. This is linguistically interesting and rewarding and means that all of the three AOs are being addressed here.**



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**Whilst AO2 (concepts and issues) is not targeted in this part of the paper, the phrase 'linguistic concepts' appears in the second bullet point of the question, quoted above, and indicates that students look at "appropriate methods of language analysis". Candidates could go further here, therefore, talking about the possibility of these two men engaging in language which gives them covert prestige. This specification attempts to avoid the idea of banning certain ways of exploring data if they are relevant and take a holistic approach to marking.**

**The answer builds on the previous section, but is now looking at a new focus, bringing in different methods, in particular phonology and grammar.**

**Here the candidate is weighing up two possible reasons for a linguistic feature, meaning that they achieve level 5. To 'perceptively evaluate' (AO3 level 6) the candidate could make suggestions about the current context of popular light entertainment shows, where received pronunciation is perhaps likely to be seen as alienating certain viewers.**

**This could be more succinctly put. The word 'sentences' is repeated three times in one sentence here.**

**Whilst phonological features can't be focussed on in text B, the candidate does the next best thing, looking at grammatical usage.**

**In terms of AO4, the answer takes a systematic approach, comparing back and forth according to methods which are chosen because they can be compared across both texts. There is not much direct cross reference to the other text within each paragraph. Given the frequency of the transitions back and forth and the way the links are made, this should not count against a candidate. That said, if they were to make an apt comparative comment in the heart of a paragraph, this would score highly, particularly if the connection was 'illuminating' as level 6 of the mark scheme for AO4 requires.**

**There is some sense here that there might be more than one reason, given the context, for these fillers. To say it's part of speech is pretty obvious. The candidate does go beyond this, but there are many possible reasons for these fillers here: they could be part of his idiolect; he could be converging with Ross; he could be keeping up a level of informality for his audience; he could be delaying the joke phrase, as this candidate suggests; it could be because he knows that it is an insulting phrase and wants to soften it, to keep him from sounding too judgemental.**



# LEARNER ACTIVITY SHEET 3

<p>[Redacted text]</p>	<p>The first paragraph identifies linguistically significant points of comparison (AO4 – ‘connections’) across these two texts given the two contexts (A03): how Simon Pegg varies his language for different audiences and in different modes. Comparing modes is itself a rewarding method, so AO1 is also being set up here. For a top grade answer, some sense of an actual methodology (eg looking at linguistic and non-linguistic variables) might have helped here.</p>
<p>[Redacted text]</p>	<p>Good to use terms like ‘adjective’. Could go further and talk about morphology - the morpheme ‘y’ added to a noun to convert it to an adjective is typical of speech (as in ‘thingy’).</p> <p>The point about the contrast is a fair one, but arguably, given the time constraints, the learner could have moved on by this point – since Ross’s language use cannot be compared across the texts.</p> <p>The focus of this paragraph is formality and, particularly, uses of lexis. It follows a methodical pattern, identifying usage, making a point and comparing with Text B briefly (to keep that connection up). There is also analysis there, which is vital to get AO1 marks, with some proper linguistic terms, with context being wisely used to give possible reasons for language use. The focus could be sharpened with the word ‘lexis’ at the start, so that we know the linguistic method being used. Perhaps most importantly, offering a more perceptive evaluation of the possible reasons for this usage would get the learner into the top level.</p>
<p>[Redacted text]</p>	<p>Evidence is being brought in to support points, but it could be more succinct: “The informal noun ‘space-based nerd fest’ contains the colloquial clip ‘fest’, short for ‘festival’, which gives a more light-hearted and colloquial feel to the writing and gives a comical picture of a gathering of science-fiction ‘nerds’”</p> <p>To get into level 5, candidates need to be systematic in the way they compare and these two paragraphs succeed in keeping to the idea of formality, with lexis as a particular focus, comparing Pegg’s usage in the two contexts. This is linguistically interesting and rewarding and means that all of the three AOs are being addressed here.</p>



<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>Whilst AO2 (concepts and issues) is not targeted in this part of the paper, the phrase 'linguistic concepts' appears in the second bullet point of the question, quoted above, and indicates that students look at "appropriate methods of language analysis". Candidates could go further here, therefore, talking about the possibility of these two men engaging in language which gives them covert prestige. This specification attempts to avoid the idea of banning certain ways of exploring data if they are relevant and take a holistic approach to marking.</p> <p>The answer builds on the previous section, but is now looking at a new focus, bringing in different methods, in particular phonology and grammar.</p> <p>Here the candidate is weighing up two possible reasons for a linguistic feature, meaning that they achieve level 5. To 'perceptively evaluate' (AO3 level 6) the candidate could make suggestions about the current context of popular light entertainment shows, where received pronunciation is perhaps likely to be seen as alienating certain viewers.</p>
<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>This could be more succinctly put. The word 'sentences' is repeated three times in one sentence here.</p> <p>Whilst phonological features can't be focussed on in text B, the candidate does the next best thing, looking at grammatical usage.</p>
<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>In terms of AO4, the answer takes a systematic approach, comparing back and forth according to methods which are chosen because they can be compared across both texts. There is not much direct cross reference to the other text within each paragraph. Given the frequency of the transitions back and forth and the way the links are made, this should not count against a candidate. That said, if they were to make an apt comparative comment in the heart of a paragraph, this would score highly, particularly if the connection was 'illuminating' as level 6 of the mark scheme for AO4 requires.</p> <p>There is some sense here that there might be more than one reason, given the context, for these fillers. To say it's part of speech is pretty obvious. The candidate does go beyond this, but there are many possible reasons for these fillers here: they could be part of his idiolect; he could be converging with Ross; he could be keeping up a level of informality for his audience; he could be delaying the joke phrase, as this candidate suggests; it could be because he knows that it is an insulting phrase and wants to soften it, to keep him from sounding too judgemental.</p>
<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p></p>



# LEARNER ACTIVITY SHEET 4

Texts A and B both present Simon Pegg’s interest in the Star Wars films. ....  
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The fact that Text A has a wide audience means that Pegg is likely to want to use language to present a friendly and approachable face to viewers. ....  
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In Text B, meanwhile, Pegg seems to present a more educated persona, whilst keeping it clear that the text is designed to be a humorous autobiography rather than a dry informative text. ....  
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