

A LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE H069/H469

DELIVERY GUIDE

Section B, 'The Language of Popular Written Texts'

June 2015



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Bringing English to life

Introduction

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

- Content: A clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
- Thinking Conceptually: Expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
- Thinking Contextually: A range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected which best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

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KEY



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Curriculum Content

This is an Optional Question in F653/O1 *Culture, Language and Identity*

The question requires the application of a range of linguistic methods to communicate relevant knowledge using appropriate terminology and coherent accurate written expression **(A01)**. It will require a critical and illustrative understanding of the concepts and issues related to the construction and analysis of meanings in written English **(A02)**. It will require analysis and evaluation of the contextual features associated with the production and reception of written English **(A03)**.

Students will engage in a number of different analysis, description and reaction to the features represented in a range of textual extracts. Furthermore they will show some understanding of the range of approaches to formal linguistic terminology as applied to these texts. This will be supported by comment and analysis of the contextual factors generated by these texts.

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Thinking Conceptually

For the purpose of this topic popular texts will be selected from the following:

- press and general journalism
- advertising and publicity
- writing for children
- writing for teenagers
- fictional writing
- informational and guidance writing
- writing with elements of the graphological/illustrative.

There will be no texts drawn from canonical writing, as exemplified in English Literature syllabi.

The approach required in addressing the chosen texts will be broadly that of textual/linguistic stylistics. The stylistic emphasis will be upon the structures and supportive features which create meaning(s) and textual cohesion. There is also a requirement to link such analytical address to the broader contexts which are generated by specific styles of writing and subjects.

This delivery guide will not be a systematic study of different genres - more a way of offering students an approach to a variety of texts.

The following paragraphs of guidance and possible teaching activities can be easily adapted to suit specific teacher expertise and class-room work. All activities, as far as possible, should be based upon actual written data and not purely abstract conceptualisation and notes.

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ACTIVITIES

Activities	Resources
<p>Genres</p> <p>Students should see this as those basic features in any text which distinguish it from other texts. Quite often these features are relatively stable and should be familiar in broad terms. It is important to emphasise this feature because the broader cultural implications of generic features can be part of the contextual appraisal of the writing.</p> <p>Lesson Activity 1 should enable students to understand this.</p>	
<p>Lexis and Semantics</p> <p>Principal Examiner Reports have often remarked upon Lexis and Semantics as an area of candidate insecurity. Yet it is vital that individual lexical items and their connotations are discussed; and seen as linking to the broader semantic field of the particular piece of writing. They are also features which lead to understanding of <i>collocations</i> and features of <i>modality</i>.</p> <p>Nouns provide the best way to develop this approach. Are they formal; colloquial; standard/non-standard; field specific; taboo; unusual or impenetrable; sociolectic or idiolectic; acronymic; archaic; foreign etc. This approach is more likely to yield the elements of analysis, rather than such simple assumptions that 'longer' words are invariably Latinate. If this approach is productive it can lead to the understanding that words have a range of connotations which reach out far beyond their grammatical categories. This extension of meaning is often a feature found in metaphorical language.</p> <p><i>Collocations</i> are an important lexical feature, where two words occur together to produce a noun phrase. Simple instances are found in such as <i>black and blue; time and tide; here and there etc.</i>, They can occur in articles on specific subjects and be more lexically complex. For instance, from a past examination paper, the following occurred in an article on fashion: <i>feelgood fulfilment; product knowledge; environmental situation; digital revolution; super consumerism; atomised age</i>. Apart from their purely grammatical attributions, they open up a range of interpretative opportunities in analysing and responding to both the writer's style and issues of contextualisation in terms of the broader social contexts of fashionability and the culture(s) which surround its presentation in an article.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Grammar</p> <p>It is likely that the best way to introduce this is to work some formal elements into specific lessons, rather than trying to cover it in one block of teaching. To try and introduce it as an abstract technical subject in its own right is not recommended. Remind the students that it is one part of the examination process. They are not required to analyse the whole of the passage(s) in purely formal grammatical terms.</p> <p>If students have not used the suggested lesson activity on Lexis and Semantics, then they could use Lesson Activity 2 as a way of introducing the topic to students or if they have already done this activity they could go straight to Lesson Activity 3</p> <p>Then use Lesson Activity 4 as a way to work through different grammatical structures.</p> <p>If a teacher is enthusiastic about grammar, then after using the 2 lesson activities, a further logical step would be the introduction of adverbials and adjectivals.</p> <p>It is not necessary, should examples occur of any spoken language in the text, to address this form via specific grammatical analysis. This should be analysed in terms of its being either direct speech or indirect speech. If the lexis in the speech shows any specific features of dialect or sociolect this should invite analytical comment.</p>	
<p>Practice for Exams</p> <p>Use Lesson Activity 5 to think how to approach the exam question.</p> <p>The Activity will use past exam questions, students are not directly answering the question by writing an essay but will be having a growing familiarity with the type of text and possible approaches needed for this exam question.</p>	

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Thinking Contextually

Activities

Dealing with Contexts

In the examination students are asked to make specific comment upon contextual features of the set passages. Lesson Activity 6 introduces students to this idea.

At an interpretative level this would include some comments about the kind of book, journal, publication in which the article appeared and the attitude struck by the author. For instance:

- an article about feminine issues written by a man could raise contextual issues about possible gender bias
- a television personality writing about her favourite shops could be promoting specific establishments; or the buying of desirable consumer objects.

So there is a biased social dimension in the writing. If students read carefully they are alerted to some of these functions, inherent in the lexis and the syntactic forms. The writing might be either trying to question and challenge our attitudes on the chosen topic; or it might be trying to persuade us.

These kinds of reaction raise points about things which are socio-linguistic or socio-cultural. They function as a kind additional discourse.

An example taken from an article on fashion that was written in a similar style to the one mentioned above might state: 'the internet has... created online companies...to be creative...to go into new markets'. The language used here raises concepts about technologies, creativity and selling products.

These are contextual features in that they fill out and add to the dimensions of the syntactical and lexical organisation.

These features could be seen as another critical and evaluative strand forming a part of contextual analysis.

It is helpful to students, at a later stage of studying the Topic, if this kind of elementary appraisal of the what can be termed ideological features embedded in the language are given some address. Evidence suggests that work which reaches the highest mark levels has absorbed some of the above concepts and practices which are important defining features in socio-linguistics.

Resources

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Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Topics for written work and exam practice Obviously, these could be drawn from past Examination Papers.</p> <p>OR Choose an example of a popular written text and do a detailed analysis of the significant linguistic constituents.</p> <p>OR Contrast two different texts within the same popular genre. In what ways do the lexical and syntactical features differ between the two texts?</p> <p>OR Choose a popular text which has an informal approach to the chosen subject-journalism in popular magazines can be a helpful source. Discuss how the lexis used by the writer creates 'a discourse of informality'.</p> <p>OR Choose a popular text which covers a topic of interest to yourself. This could be an opportunity to explore web-based writing. Underline a number of the major nouns used by the writer. Using a dictionary identify the origins of these words. How far do these origins reflect the way the writer has used them in the text?</p>	
<p>Resources for further reading and guidance www.universalteacher.org.uk/lang/revision.htm Andrew Moore's resource site can be found under the universal teacher heading</p> <p>www.markedbyteachers.com/as-and-a-level/english/how-can www.slideshare.net/BCALevels-english-glossary</p> <p>Strongly recommended Textual Resources: <i>Working with Texts: A Core Book for Language Analysis</i> (Routledge Intertext Series)</p> <p>Also in the Intertext series: The Language of Fiction The Language of Newspapers The Language of Advertising: Written Texts</p> <p>The last three provide suitable frameworks for extending basic stylistic analysis and offer some clear examples of methodologies for analysis and contextual comments.</p>	

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Lesson Activity 1

This can work well with pairs co-operating.

Give out four genre titles which should be reasonably familiar. For instance: *Romance writing; Travel writing; Press article about street crime; Advertisement for luxury consumer goods.*

Ask the class to write down what specific lexical items-nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs they might expect to find in each.

To add further flavour, ask them to think of any likely speech that might be encountered in such writing. From the feedback from this task it is often possible to see that many common features of the language and style are already inherent in the broader cultural knowledge of the students. They have, in fact, shown a contextual dimension, whilst searching out specific features of the writing.

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Lesson Activity 2

Lexical items are features which lead to understanding of *collocations* and features of *modality*.

- Nouns provide the best way to develop this approach. Are they formal; colloquial; standard/non-standard; field specific; taboo; unusual or impenetrable; sociolectic or idiolectic; acronymic; archaic; foreign etc. This approach is more likely to yield the elements of analysis, rather than such simple assumptions that 'longer' words are invariably Latinate. If this approach is productive it can lead to the understanding that words have a range of connotations which reach out far beyond their grammatical categories. This extension of meaning is often a feature found in metaphorical language.
- *Collocations* are an important lexical feature, where two words occur together to produce a noun phrase. Simple instances are found in such as *black and blue; time and tide; here and there etc.*, They can occur in articles on specific subjects and be more lexically complex. For instance, from a past examination paper, the following occurred in an article on fashion: *feelgood fulfilment; product knowledge; environmental situation; digital revolution; super consumerism; atomised age*. Apart from their purely grammatical attributions, they open up a range of interpretative opportunities in analysing and responding to both the writer's style and issues of contextualisation in terms of the broader social contexts of fashionability and the culture(s) which surround its presentation in an article.

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Lesson Activity 3

Outline: An initial approach to grammar

A very good introduction to the topic is to ensure that all students have read Chapters 13 and 16 in Professor Crystal's *Encyclopedia of the English Language* before any other activities take place. This will require judicious teacher intervention to help with some of the terminology. A lively way to initiate a basic discussion about grammar is to have a session where the idea about 'incorrect grammar' is aired. Ask students to offer examples of what they think is incorrect and why it might be so. This can produce examples like 'starting sentences with a conjunction'; 'not splitting the infinitive'. Write up the responses on a white-board. If any examples of letters to the press complaining about 'declining knowledge/use of grammar are available, distribute them to the class.

Class then works in small groups. They are to imagine that they are linguistic experts answering queries about grammatical incorrectness. The following have been submitted and they will need to give the precise grammatical reasons why the sentence is thought to be incorrect:

Let us go then you and I; Hardly had I left; Play stopped due to rain; The students were disinterested in studying grammar; Will you loan me that book; I and John saw her; She switched on it; Running away together into the night, happiness could be felt; Thankfully the weather was fine; The cohort of students in the party was twenty five.

The feedback from this can lead to discussion about how far it is possible to legislate about what is correct/incorrect; and what features of incorrectness seem to create anger in letter writers. Further popular topics such as: using like as a conjunction; sentences without verbs; use of who and whom; different from and different to; doubling pronouns like I myself are all useful additions for discussion. Encourage students to see that the work outlined above is a secure method for acquiring a simple technical vocabulary.

The demise of The Queen's English Society has meant a diminishment of anger from those with extreme obsessions about grammatical issues. However, there are still some web sites offering a range of further materials, which can be adapted in order to initiate discussion and appraisal of grammatical features. Encourage students to do some research upon them and share them with the class. These methods of developing a fundamental technical knowledge about grammar are preferable to attempts to work through chapters of highly formal textbooks.

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Lesson Activity 4

A reasonable way to understand grammatical structures is to work on **syntax** (the units of grammar that make up a sentence).

- **Nouns** are a vital ingredient in introducing the subject of a sentence. There are different categories of nouns under the headings of *common and proper*.
- There are **verbs** which are equally vital. These are basically addressed under the headings of *tense and modality*. The concept of modality is an important grammatical one which can significantly alter the meaning of a sentence.
- Also important are the terms **active and passive voice**. These are interesting features which basically change the position of subject and object in a sentence.
- *Sentences* can be built up by **clauses**. The two major clausal features are those of *complex and compound*.
- There are 4 **sentence types** which are: *Declarative; exclamatory, interrogative and imperative*. If you can master these features, you will have acquired a reasonable analytical vocabulary.

Your teacher will give you (and your group) an extract of textual data. Work through it identifying the features listed above.

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Lesson Activity 5

Try to use past examination papers. Working as pairs ask students to underline the major verbs and their tenses and note which tenses are used in specific sentences. Then look at how far the modal verbs, if there are any, contribute to the meaning of the sentences.

The same approach can be used to discuss the types of nouns and pronouns used in sentences. Attribute common or proper to the nouns. Encourage students to find out the different types of pronouns used-for instance: *possessive; demonstrative; relative; reflexive etc.,*

By working through a kind of discovery method this assists far more than the mechanical attempts to introduce grammar as an abstract topic. Given time and resources a similar approach can be adopted to deal with grammatical cohesion, such as *anaphoric* and *cataphoric* referencing in texts. Also, the way different types of conjunction can be used. For example: *additive; causal etc.,* demonstrating their respective functions in binding the clauses together and signalling differences between sentences.

Another creative approach to both lexicality and grammar can be to get students to re-write a passage for a different audience. For instance: re-write an article on Celebrities for a website written for mature citizens. Or: re-write a travel article about holidays in Italy for the 9-12 age group. This kind of task does enforce focus on differences in grammar and lexical items and introduces the idea of *mode* and *register* in popular writing. *Mode* and *register* are technical terms linked to the format and style of a passage(s).

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Lesson Activity 6

Outline: Thinking about contexts

Context(s) are a very important aspect of textual analysis and carry a high (A03) weighting on the examination paper. It is suggested that teachers initiate discussion about this as soon as possible and ensure revisionary practice upon it is undertaken.

Some definition of the terms context/connotation/metaphorical and metonymous language could be outlined on a study sheet and distributed. Suggest to students that they are aware inherently of all these issues when they read. However, they will need to examine them, illustrate and comment upon some of them as they address passages. This can be followed up by a simple exercise in pairs.

Give them a short passage taken from a fictional work. The following might prove a good example, adapted from a novel published in 2012.

- *'To me the whole thing is not worth a candle. I do not believe in charity, or any other fashionable gesture. Why play beggar my neighbour with Joe Public? It just raises the hackles and we get another whiff of class prejudice.*

Ask students to discuss how they understand the meanings of the underlined words/phrases in the context of a first person delivery.

This can raise the concept of ideological attitudes foregrounded in the speaker's idioms.

- How much of the discourse, as underlined, is metaphorical and exactly what do these metaphors mean?
- What particular connotations are raised by this choice of language? To whom might the personal pronoun 'we' refer?

Teachers could extend this discussion to include the fact that it should be clear that the context(s) raised are to do with finance.

- What kind of finance is implied by the language?
- There is, also, a clear underlying aspect of prejudice in terms of the speaker's position. Where in the grammar can this be found?
- Is there anything in the discursal aspects which might suggest the gender of the speaker?

Note should be made that some of the underlined items are noun phrases or adjectivals. By setting this kind of task, it encourages students to think in terms of both (A02) and (A03). It helps to limit discursive summarising and unillustrated commentary.

For developing a more methodological approach to analysis Professor R. Carter's book **Working with Texts** is recommended for teacher guidance and illustration. Especially valuable is the Chapter on **Text and Context**. Some of his choices of texts are taken from genres like advertising, travel and food writing. All of these can be placed under the umbrella of popular written texts; and can be subjected to similar analytical practices, as outlined above. Teachers might like to encourage students to find ways of illustrating particular stylistic features. Spidergrams, columnar exemplification and charts can be helpful. It can help students to learn some of the accepted abbreviations for grammatical features. For instance: NP (noun phrase) Adv(adverbial) PrepP(prepositional phrase) V(verb) are all quite acceptable professional features in a language-based written analysis.



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