

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**H470**

For first teaching in 2015

**H470/01 Summer 2022 series**

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## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

### Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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## Paper 1 series overview

H470/01 is one of two exam papers for the A Level English Language. This largely synoptic component requires candidates to apply their knowledge of linguistic terms, context and theory to unseen texts as well as use their knowledge to create a piece of writing in a given form. To do well on this paper, candidates need to be comfortable applying their knowledge and understanding to unseen texts as well as producing their own writing on a topical language issue

This year marked a return to a full exam series, with candidates having been given some advanced information around genres ahead of the examinations. The impact of this was most clearly seen in Question 2, with many candidates well equipped to write a speech for a podcast. Some candidates had not capitalised on this information which resulted in lower marks for AO5.

There was some regression in this series in terms of the way that candidates had used feedback from previous series to refine their responses and make sure that they were meeting the assessments objective requirements. A particular issue in this series was the lack of specificity around the labelling of AO1 features. Too many candidates are relying on catch all terms like 'lexical fields' which are vaguely defined from which to hang their analysis, rather than labelling the abstract nouns within a precisely defined lexical field, for example. There was also an increase in this series of candidates being imprecise in their exemplification, for example talking about compound and complex sentences, but only offering one example, or referring to the use of adjectives but quoting noun phrases. It is important that the examiner is left in no doubt that the candidate understands the particular language feature they are discussing. It was however, pleasing to see more candidates glossing in Question 2, which gave candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of particular features and concepts in creative ways.

Overall, candidates responded well to the source material for Questions 1 and 3 and the format for Question 2. The paper was appropriate for the range of candidates' abilities and the majority of candidates were able to access both the unseen texts and demands of Question 2 without any obvious difficulties. The marks given ranged from the bottom of Level 2 right up to the top of Level 6.

Candidates appeared to use their time effectively on this paper; there was little evidence of candidates running out of time. Better responses were often succinct, suggesting that high performing candidates are spending more time analysing the texts and planning their response rather than writing, which generally leads to more analytical responses.

In order to achieve top levels, candidates should aim to achieve conceptual overviews of texts. This means not necessarily looking at language points in isolation but considering how combinations of language features create patterns, for example how contractions and colloquialisms leads to an informal register. This leads to more dense analysis and more perceptive discussion of context. Candidates should be wary of simply using the term 'pattern' without exemplification or analysis.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used terminology accurately</li> <li>• exemplified with precision</li> <li>• made perceptive links to context</li> <li>• planned their responses carefully.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• made general points not explicitly linked to linguistic evidence</li> <li>• were overly simplistic in their consideration of producers and receivers</li> <li>• were narrow in their consideration of features.</li> </ul>

## Section A

### Question 1 (a)

1 Giving careful consideration to the context of the text:

(a) Identify and analyse patterns of lexical and semantic use.

[10]

Most candidates in this series answered the two questions separately, leading to more focused responses on the two separate aspects of the question. Candidates were generally able to access the text effectively, although there was once again a cluster of responses at the top of Level 3, with candidates lacking the depth of analysis needed to move into Level 4.

The majority of candidates were able to comment on the use of semantic fields, collocations and high and low frequency lexis. Higher performing candidates considered aspects such as the semantic references to justice and the tools, such as puns, that Rayner used to create humour.

Once again, examiners reported candidates using the word 'pattern' without necessarily exemplifying patterns or analysing the impact of a pattern. Often candidates can demonstrate their appreciation of patterns through a density of analysis and considering the impact of the text a whole.

Candidates were able to comment on the basic contextual elements of this text, but only the most able were able to really appreciate the use of subtlety and humour by Rayner. Many candidates fell into writing basic comments about Rayner 'informing' or 'persuading' any audience, and some made observations about the readership of the Observer that were too broad. Centres are advised to encourage candidates to 'step back' and consider what a text is really trying to achieve, rather than looking to simply feature spot.

### Question 1 (b)

(b) Identify and analyse the way sentences are constructed.

[10]

Candidates typically did less well on this section. It is important that candidates focus on the specific focus of the question; a number of candidates lapsed into discussing elements of lexis or discourse which could not be credited.

More effective responses considered the how the patterns of complex sentences worked with the patterns of simple sentences to create an overall impact. Less effective responses overly focused on the use of declaratives without making anything more than basic comments as to their purpose. There was some mislabelling of compound sentences by a number of candidates, and some candidates continue to label sentences as 'long' or 'short' without offering any further detail.

## Section B

### Question 2

- 2 'The developments in technology from the late twentieth century onwards have made our language more dynamic, versatile and creative.'

Write the script for a talk on this topic as the opening of a podcast called 'The Way we Talk Now'. You should aim to engage a reasonably well-educated, non-specialist audience. It should be no more than 500 words.

[24]

The focus on technology was an area that allowed most candidates to show off the extent of their knowledge. The most able candidates were able to offer a broad discussion encompassing a number of elements of technology that have shaped language change, although there were a number of candidates who offered a commentary of language change, without specifically relating to technology, or who wrote extensively about the impact of technology without clearly linking it to linguistic examples. It is important that candidates do not get carried away with writing and remember that language will always be a key underpinning of this question.

In order to convey their knowledge convincingly, candidates must make sure that they are exemplifying points they make, much as they would in a more conventional analytical question. It was not unusual this series to see whole paragraphs detailing neologisms or acronyms introduced as a result of technology without a single example given.

Similarly, there is an expectation that candidates can draw on their knowledge of concepts and theorists and reformulate this information in a way that is accessible for a wider, non specialist audience. Candidates were generally able to discuss prescriptivism and descriptivism with accuracy, and better responses did so in a way which led to a critical discussion opening up. Many candidates were able to use the views of David Crystal with accuracy, though there remains a pervading misunderstanding among many candidates of Jean Aitchison's standpoint, with her often being mislabelled as a prescriptivist. Other regularly used viewpoints included John Humphries and Lindsay Johns. Examiners were pleased to see a small number of candidates using a wider range of theorists; some of these are detailed below and centres are encouraged to share some of these more widely with candidates to encourage breadth of discussion in this area.

The podcast genre was something that many candidates were able to adopt effectively, using engaging introductions, sign offs and strategies to engage a distant audience such as anecdotes. Less successful candidates did not employ these features or wrote in a manner more akin to a blog or an article. Some candidates struggled to find an appropriate level of formality and settled on an approach that was too informal for the general audience specified in the question. More successful candidates were able to use extended metaphors or cyclical structures to demonstrate sophistication.

Some candidates wrote podcasts with more than one speaker, and some wrote transcripts rather than scripts. Where more than one speaker was used, it was successful if the focus remained explicitly on the language issue in question, whereas for some too much time was taken creating incidental discussion between the speakers.

### Examples of linguists used successfully in this question

- Ian Cushing
- Penny Eckert
- Jacob Eisenstein
- Norman Fairclough (Conversationalisation)
- Michael Halliday
- Susan Herring
- Robert McCrum
- Gretchen McCulloch
- John McWhorter
- Emanuel Schegloff
- John McHardy Sinclair
- Tony Thorne (#coronaspeak)

## Section C

### Question 3

3 Using appropriate linguistic concepts and methods, analyse the ways in which language is used in these two texts. In your answer you should:

- explore connections and variations between the texts
- consider how contextual factors contribute to the construction of meaning.

[36]

Candidates appeared to find the source material accessible and engaged with the ways in which the respective producers conveyed their views on deprivation within the UK. As in previous series, candidates were often more comfortable analysing Text B, perhaps because of its more obvious discourse features and because it was produced for an audience of their age group. There did appear to be less of a comparative approach taken in this series compared to earlier series; candidates are reminded of the need to compare on a linguistic basis throughout. Topic sentences and comparative connectives are useful tools to signpost comparisons to the examiner. Candidates should also avoid comparisons that highlight that the other text 'doesn't do' something as this limits the analytical comments that can be made.

Language levels were often used as a structure to work through the texts, though this is by no means the only way of structuring a response; those that focused on theme for example, also worked effectively and were arguably more successful for higher scoring candidates. Candidates appear most comfortable discussing lexis and were able to consider the use of lexical fields, with more successful responses exploring the composite elements in greater detail. Candidates also considered accent and dialect with some precision. There was more variability in the analysis of discourse. More successful responses considered the contrast between the voice over and participants in Text B for example (and furthermore the similarity between the voice over in Text B and the narrative voice in Text C), whereas less successful candidates fell back on offering basic observations about the use of subheadings in Text C.

Discussion of context was a strength in this question, with most candidates being able to articulate the differing purposes and audiences of the respective texts. As in previous series, this was most effective when integrated into linguistic analysis rather than forming standalone introductory paragraphs. More effective responses considered the ways in which the producers created empathy for the Geordie girls and areas of deprivation in the UK.

Concepts were also used more infrequently in this series compared to previous series; the most successful approach was where concepts were integrated into a wider analytical point. Concepts such as face and accommodation were considered successfully by a number of candidates.

Planning remains an essential tool for candidates in delivering a successful response to this question; where candidates spend time selecting the most fruitful examples for analysis spanning language levels, plan meaningful connections based on methods and make sure they have incorporated accurate labelling and concepts, their succinct writing will score highly. Where candidates do not plan, they often produce less successful, winding narrative pieces which do not fulfil the demands of the mark scheme.



## Exemplar 1

		When referring to people on benefits, the lexis in text B is informal and often slang such as 'chavs' and 'lazy on the dole' as well as hyperbolic language
		like 'millions of kids'. This seems to reflect the informal nature of the conversations and the social attitudes of those speaking. It is specified that these women are on benefits or of working class backgrounds so it is unsurprising that they use this language that they hear being used to describe them. They also seem to use the word 'posh' in a similar way, carrying negative connotations. Their lexical choices appear to reflect their social attitudes especially in regards to social class. In text C, however, the writer consistently uses the terms 'deprived' and 'deprivation': 'highly deprived' and 'financially deprived'. She chooses to use more politically correct language, linking to the formal nature of the article. This also mimics the political language of the statistical reports that she is referencing, reinforcing that factual tone and ensuring that the language is tailored towards a reasonably well-educated audience that we would expect to be reading an article such as this.

This paragraph is indicative of a response which is effectively able to blend assessment objectives as well as take a comparative approach. The lexis is labelled and exemplified with a tentative approach taken to the analysis of effects. The context and purpose of the producer is given careful consideration. The candidate builds upon their point by introducing analysis of 'posh'; this building approach and density of analysis is often a feature of more successful candidates. A more precise labelling of 'posh' would have been beneficial. The point of comparison is made clear, with a similar analytical structure occurring. The concept of political correctness is introduced, as well as perceptive judgements around audience and purpose.

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