

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

H470

For first teaching in 2015

H470/01 Summer 2024 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.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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Paper 1 series overview

H470/01 is one of two exam papers for 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.

In this series, the source material was accessible, which meant that candidates usually performed well, as there were several obvious elements to discuss. In Question 2, many candidates struggled to focus their responses on Americanisms, and wrote more generally about prescriptivism, descriptivism and standardisation without providing any exemplifications of Americanisms, or not sustaining these beyond a couple of obvious points. Candidates were better at writing in the specified form in this series, with many finding the speech form more accessible than those that have appeared in previous series. The marks given ranged from the bottom of Level 2 right up to the top of Level 6.

There has been some improvement in both the specificity with which candidates are labelling AO1 terms, and the way in which candidates are exemplifying precisely. For some candidates, there remains a reliance on catch-all terms like 'lexical fields' which are vaguely defined, rather than labelling the abstract nouns within a precisely defined lexical field for example.

Candidates appeared to be able to answer all questions effectively within the time given, and for the majority a degree of planning appeared to have taken place. It remains the case that better responses were usually succinct, suggesting that candidates should be spending more time analysing the texts and planning their response rather than starting their writing straight away.

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 lead 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:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planned carefully used terminology precisely considered the source material perceptively answered the question posed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote irrelevant introductions used vague terminology were imprecise in their exemplification were narrow in their consideration of language levels.

Section A overview

Section A consists of two questions which require a precise focus: firstly, on lexis and semantics and then on sentences. Candidates must answer these separately and should maintain a clear focus on the demand of the specific question. This year saw an increase in the use of irrelevant introductions which simply repurposed the contextual information given in the box at the top of the source. Candidates should be encouraged to get straight into the analysis of the language feature, and to refer to context where relevant in their subsequent analysis. There was also an increase in the use of theorists in this series, often by more able candidates. Use of theorists is not credited and should be discouraged because it wastes the candidate's time. This question is designed to be an introduction to the paper and should be treated as this, rather than as a pared down version of Question 3, which is how some centres are increasingly preparing candidates to respond to the question.

Question 1 (a)

1 Giving careful consideration to the context of the text:

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

[10]

Candidates found this to be an accessible text, though some candidates struggled with the concept of it being a written version of an interview and either ignored this contextual element or overcomplicated the implications.

Most candidates were able to comment on the use of semantic fields, high frequency lexis and proper nouns. A significant number of candidates confused high and low frequency lexis in this series; this is something centres must make sure their candidates are not making as it implies a basic misunderstanding of lexical features.

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.

More perceptive responses considered the ways in which the writer used personal pronouns to demonstrate to the reader that Alan Sugar wanted to convey that his constructed TV personality was not necessarily reflective of his real personality in order to create a sense of intrigue around the show.

Question 1 (b)

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

[10]

There was an improvement on the labelling and exemplification in this part of Question 1, with most candidates able to consider sentence types and forms. Candidates have also got much better at discussing the impact of the sentence choices made by the writer, rather than discussing the effect of the lexis contained within the sentence.

Better responses considered the how the patterns of complex sentences worked with the patterns of simple sentences to create an overall impact. Other candidates considered the use of simple sentences to reflect the patterns of speech. Less effective responses overly focused on the use of declaratives without making anything more than basic comments as to their purpose, sometimes making comments that could be applied to any source, rather than this one. Many candidates also mislabelled minor sentences.

Misconception



The use of theorists and concepts is not rewarded and should not be included in Question 1.

Section B overview

Section B is a synoptic question and requires students to develop a critical discussion around a given language issue in a specified form and for a particular audience.

Question 2

2 'Americanisms are taking over the English language.'

Write a speech for an English class arguing for or against the statement.
Aim for 500 words.

[24]

Americanisms was a concept that most candidates were able to show an understanding of. Some candidates had clearly been taught about Americanisms extensively and were able to use numerous examples of phonological, orthographical and lexical features that were relevant and could build a wider ranging discussion about language change and attitudes to such change. Other candidates lacked this knowledge and wrote about language change or attitudes to language change generally with only brief (or no) references to Americanisms.

Candidates found the form of a speech more accessible than other forms that have been examined more recently. The majority were able to use appropriate opening and closing phrases that made it clear that they were constructing a speech. Some candidates continued to use titles, some instead of a speech opening and others did both. Successful candidates were able to adopt a sense of voice, and many were also humorous in their approach. Many candidates forgot that this was writing designed to be received via the ears when discussing orthographical differences such as the absence of the 'u' in the American spelling of 'colour'. More successful candidates made it clear here that they were speaking, such as by spelling the letters out individually. Most candidates were able to adapt well to the audience being their English class; this meant that glossing was not as necessary as in previous series. Nevertheless, many candidates did use phrases such as 'as I am sure you will remember' to include some glossing to demonstrate their own knowledge and skills.

The use of relevant theorists and concepts was much better this year. Most candidates considered prescriptivism and descriptivism to a greater or lesser extent, and both Crystal's 'Wave Theory' and Aitchison's metaphors featured heavily. There remains a minority who label Aitchison as a prescriptivist; centres must make sure that candidates appreciate the way in which she frames her ideas. Candidates who were able to develop their responses further often considered MLE or borrowings from other languages and the way in which those have been received into the English language. Many candidates discussed technology as a feature. Exemplification was pleasing this year; candidates appear to understand that they must provide evidence for the assertions that they are making when constructing a response to this question.

Section C overview

Section C is one question which requires candidates to compare how two texts create meaning. There is an expectation that candidates will show an appreciation of different mode features, language levels and conceptual approaches to the texts.

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]

The sources for this question were accessible, with most candidates able to consider the texts on the DofE award with at least an understanding that Text B considered DofE in a more positive light when compared to Text C. There was a much more even consideration of the two texts in this series, and candidates were more able to find points of comparison between the two. However, there was a marked increase in the number of candidates writing extensive introductions to each source which did little more than recount the information given in the box at the start of the paper. Even when these are framed comparatively, without specific linguistic analysis they do not help candidates move up the mark scheme significantly. The time would be better spent writing an extra comparative paragraph on a linguistic feature. Candidates should weave their understanding of genre, audience and purpose into their analysis as they construct their essay.

Centres appear to be preparing their candidates to write Question 3 responses more effectively; there is greater evidence of planning, more comparative writing and tighter analysis. Concepts are also being used more consistently. Examiners have seen a variety of approaches to integrating concepts, and there is no singular approach that is deemed correct. Where concepts are used most successfully by candidates, they serve to further illuminate the analysis that has already been made. Discussions around accommodation and power were particularly successful.

This series saw for the first time some candidates writing long essays which overly focused on representation at the expense of language analysis. While representation can be a useful tool with which to consider the rationale for the use of linguistic features, candidates must make sure that it is linguistic analysis which is the primary focus for this response.

There is an expectation that candidates can discuss a range of language levels and create comparisons on this basis. Some candidates often focused exclusively on lexical features and spoken mode features or described the discourse structure without analysing the impact of this. Centres should encourage candidates to identify the impact of patterns and how producers bring together different language levels to achieve a specific effect.

Exemplar 1

Although there is informality in C, the intense dialect from B, because of the Scottish origin of the radio show is much more noticeable in comparison. The covert prestige northern dialect features such as "puttin'", "dunno", "fakin'" and "gettin'". Notably, the dropping of the 'g' consonant at the end of words, for Mark showcases his identity and informality to a much greater extent than the colloquial informality in C. Peter Trudgill, a linguistic theorist, references -g dropping in his New Zealand case study to be a showcase of perhaps lower class and dialect. Although I disagree with this, it is still interesting to analyse how he could be accommodating to the dialect of his listeners who also live in Scotland, downgrading, Gles, to seem relatable but possibly also to seem more likeable and connected to the listeners.

In Exemplar 1, the paragraph illustrates an approach that candidates can take to integrating concepts into their analysis. Here the linguistic features remain the principal focus of the response, and these are labelled and exemplified. The use of concept enables the candidate to explore context with greater breadth and depth.

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