

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

**OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in
English Language**

H470

For first teaching in 2015

H470/02 Summer 2025 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 responses 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 2 series overview

Responses to all three sections this session covered the full range of the mark scheme. Almost all candidates attempted all tasks, although on occasion candidates did not use their time efficiently, for example by writing far more than was necessary in their response to one question at the expense of either or both others. While individual achievement did sometimes vary within and between tasks/assessment objectives, there were some particularly perceptive and convincing responses offered to all three tasks.

Where responses were less well-focused, valuable examination time was often taken up with general summaries of content and/or descriptions of superficial features without any sense of purpose. Some responses paid insufficient attention to the evidence in the texts themselves, relying on reproduction of learned material and generic comments around expectations that were not supported by, or were clearly subverted by, the material in hand.

Candidates are advised to concentrate their attention on careful analysis of each text and to be prepared to revisit / refine any initial readings as they develop their responses. While many candidates were generally aware of the need to focus on language and exploration of texts' construction of meaning, there were some examples of opportunities to target higher marks being missed as a consequence of less careful reading and/or unclear explanation.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- explored and analysed language use in the texts in some detail - presented a range of relevant ideas in some depth - made valid connections between theory and texts - using theory to explore texts and using texts to explore theory - considered the context of a text 'through the lens' of its language - had identified in the text(s) the language features and patterns most likely to be of interest before writing their response.	- focused on content over language - described rather than analysed the text(s) - reproduced learned sections of theory / history rather than applying what they knew - confused and/or misrepresented theorists - spent far too long on one of the three questions - offered simplistic, generalised points - used basic subject terminology incorrectly.

Section A overview

The transcript included a wide range of useful examples for exploration and most candidates were able to identify a fairly good number of the potentially interesting features, although not all were able to go beyond simply labelling them. The least successful relied on copying examples from the text with just a brief basic comment and/or misread or overlooked key details. Stronger responses used appropriate terminology when discussing the evidence they had highlighted and were able to make helpful connections to relevant theories. The best responses avoided assertions of what the text 'proved' or 'disproved', instead looking to interpret and evaluate the data with careful consideration of the complexity of the processes involved.

Question 1

- 1 Using the appropriate terminology to explain your findings, examine the language development stage of the child-participant as evidenced in the transcript. You should identify and analyse the phonology, grammar and meaning of her utterances.

Use your knowledge of theories and concepts of child language acquisition to support your answer.

[20]

The majority of candidates were able to consider phonology, grammar and/or meaning on some level, although less successful responses often adopted an assertive or overly simplistic approach. Those who focused carefully on what was happening in the extract and explored what they found there were often best-placed to demonstrate understanding of stage theory.

Where candidates attempted to force into their response references to theorists they had heard of, rather than those who were most appropriate to the discussion of this transcript, responses were least successful. On occasion, responses missed opportunities to fully engage with the material – for example, by painstakingly labelling individual phonemes (not always correctly) and/or listing stages/theorists less relevant to the data.

Candidates engaging with the text often observed heuristic utterances 'what bird is this', 'do they sting' (Halliday) and noted the scaffolding (Bruner) provided by her fathers' interactions 'what bird is she'. Many spotted that Nina confused her labelling (Aitchison) with stronger responses often going on to observe that she did however seem to grasp the difference between hyponyms/hypernyms. A number of candidates highlighted that Nina's speech is occasionally telegraphic in the transcript (for example, 'don't want them fly away') although found difficulties labelling that evidence accurately, for example referring to 'to' as an 'auxiliary verb'. Where candidates considered Nina's fathers' interventions these could be rewarded as evidence of knowledge and understanding provided the focus remained clearly on the child participant. Some of the strongest responses considered the references to real and imagined experience from both fathers to support Nina's contributions.

A number of responses at all levels did not take note that Nina was reading 'my first name is Kate', offering it as evidence of 'her ability to construct sentences' or even suggesting that Nina might be lying or not know her name. Similarly opportunities were missed by candidates who did not consider how her fathers helped Nina to make more sense of what is being described in the book. Stronger responses although often considered explored how Nina was encouraged by both fathers to extend her understanding. They linked this usefully to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, often going on to consider Zac's positive encouragement 'nearly (.) it's a swan' (Skinner) along with the mixture of interrogatives and simple declaratives from both fathers ('why do you think', 'they'll be scared of you'), to support Nina and provide scaffolding.

Sometimes candidates who missed opportunities to target higher marks had not recognised the limitations of such a small data set and/or the complexities of language acquisition. Some of these diluted evidence of understanding by commenting on 'concerning errors' in Nina's use of language and/or attempting unwisely to support judgements related to a grammatical stage by reference to phonology or lexis. Others struggled to label or explain interesting features they had spotted – for example the consonant cluster reduction in swan '/s/b/n/' , although more successful responses dealing with this example were often able to make useful comparisons with Nina's ability to form the consonant cluster in 'sting'.

Misconception



In her longitudinal study of the acquisition of first words by 18 children 1-2 yrs old, Nelson (1973) found that more than half of their first 50 words (65%) were nouns. It should be remembered that 'first words' typically appear between 10 and 16 months, not at the age of the child participant in this extract.

Exemplar 1

		at conversations with her father. She shows
		frequent usage of Halliday's heuristic function
		through use of interrogatives such as 'what
		bird is this', which shows that she is
		curious and wants to learn new things. She
		is prompted by Kobe to use her imagination
		through his interrogative 'why do you think'. This
		prompts her to use her imagination, which
		shows Halliday's imaginative function, in her
		utterance 'I might fly away', where she
		uses the modal verb 'might' to show possibility
		as it is only imaginative. Throughout the text she

In this extract, and throughout the response as a whole, this candidate makes assured reference to interesting language features, with appropriate and well-selected examples supporting a focused analysis. Earlier in this response there is specific relevant comment on Nina's fathers' interventions with the focus remaining on the child participant and here the candidate has recognised that Nina is able to enter into Kobe's imaginative use of language ('I might fly away').

Section B overview

Text B as an online article contained characteristic features of multi-modal texts and followed an established format of identifying the technology, providing a brief history, and evaluating it through the eyes of a range of industry experts. This offered lots of opportunities for candidates to recognise and respond on at least a basic level to familiar features and/or approach. Where candidates were careful to move beyond simply feature spotting and/or summarising content, they were often able to engage critically with the material and explore/evaluate a range of contextual factors and language features effectively, targeting higher levels.

Question 2

- 2 Using your understanding of relevant ideas and concepts, investigate how language features and contextual factors construct meanings in this text. [24]

Stronger responses to this task evaluated in careful detail how contextual factors and language features might be associated with construction of meaning in this particular text. Many were able to identify the sense of ongoing dialogue with the reader and references to synthetic personalisation/Fairclough were common, although not all carefully considered who the target reader might be – with some assuming that the reference to 'Teen' in the title indicated that Hernholm was addressing a teenage readership.

Answers in the mid-range had often identified characteristic graphological features of the genre and/or labelled features such as the use of metaphor or particular lexical field. However, unlike higher-scoring answers, these responses often missed the opportunities to consider how these features contributed to the text as a whole.

A number of candidates attempted to discuss their own use of/knowledge of ChatGPT rather than consider how the writer uses their experience of being unable to use the ChatGPT AI chatbot (because the site is busy) or her experience of working with teen entrepreneurs, to reflect on the rise and potential, positive and negative, of this technology. Where candidates had focused on the way the writer positions themselves in relation to the reader and/or explored the explicit reference made to the power of the teen entrepreneurs set against increasingly powerless educators, they were better positioned to evidence a reasonable understanding of the data, make relevant connections and target higher marks.

Partially successful responses – sometimes those working line-by-line through the text without a secure sense of the whole – had often overlooked the positive representations of the teen entrepreneurs. Some of the less successful responses made generic reference to use of images, hyperlinks and/or bold text/subheading without considering the specific examples in this text. In more secure responses, there was often some helpful evaluation in relation to the use of each image and in particular the screenshot from the video call.

Those considering the text 'through the lens' of its language use had often identified and exploited some interesting contrasts, for example between the representation of that 'perfect demographic' and the 'group of people age 40 and older' / 'teachers and school administrators ...scrambling to catch cheating'. Those exploring the text with the relationship between producer and receiver in mind, curious to see what they would find, were often able to discuss and exploit the various assumptions about shared values and knowledge to good effect

Assessment for learning



Students should be encouraged during their course to regularly revisit, challenge and refine their understanding of language use in the media. Some find it useful to undertake language trawls – identifying examples of the 'same' feature in a number of online texts then exploring/discussing differences in how, when and why these are being used.

Exemplar 2

Lexically, the writer uses hypophora, which is conventional of an article, as it shortens the distance between text producer and receiver, by predicting the questions they are likely to ask and immediately answering them, seen in "But is it really 'cheating'?" And is that what teens are really using it for?" ~~the~~ Here, the ^{repeated} intensifiers "really" and fronted coordinating conjunctions "But" and "And" could aim to reflect spoken speech, possibly mimicking the commonly asked questions regarding chatgpt. Alternatively, this could be to position the text producer as having expert power (French and Raven) as they contrast the less formal hypophora with ^{a subsequent} anecdote using ~~the~~ work jargon (subject specialist lexis) like "demographic" and "entrepreneur". This makes Herndlholm appear knowledgeable ^{and experienced} on ChatGPT's potential effects, ~~aiding~~ aiding Forbes' reputability ~~and~~ whilst

This extract from an effective response illustrates one way in which candidates were able to bring together disparate language features into a pattern to explore and evaluate, rather than simply feature spotting. This kind of analysis is often indicative of the most successful responses. The response makes use of carefully selected examples and understanding of relevant concepts to inform their analysis of the text's patterns of language use.

Section C overview

The resource booklet introduced Text C as an 'extract from the book, *A Day with Ludwig Van Beethoven*, written by May Byron and published in 1912', then explained that Text D was 'from an online article posted in 2018 on CNN's website and that CNN is an American news channel.' Simply repeating that information, rather than considering how it might inform their analysis and comparison of the two texts, was often a feature of the opening of the least successful responses. As with every other section of the exam, candidates should remember that the focus of this question is on exploring and analysing language and patterns of language. This analysis should then be used to explore language change in contexts.

Since both texts in Section C were closely linked in terms of topic, although different in genre and approach, the vast majority of candidates were able to access the question well, demonstrate some ability to explore and compare the two texts and go at least some way to consider what they suggested about language change.

Many effective responses seen in this series showed evidence of efficient planning, enabling them to move through language levels, comparing Text C and D concurrently, considering and contrasting features of each text. This often proved helpful to begin to explore connections and to target AO4. Stronger responses had remembered that, in addition to comparison, there should be clear links to language change/development.

Some candidates limited their discussion to expected differences between texts produced in different times, irrespective of the evidence in these texts, and/or reproduced lengthy accounts of historical language change only very loosely related (if at all) to the texts in hand. Candidates are reminded that this is a synoptic task which means a full range of concepts can be used to illuminate discussion of language change, including ideas of representation, lexical and semantic processes of change and that comments in relation to change need to be rooted in the examination and comparison of the two texts.

Question 3

- 3** By detailed analysis of the writing in both passages, discuss and illustrate the variations in language between the 20th and 21st centuries. In your answer you should explore the ways language is used in each text, as well as how contextual factors influence the way meaning is constructed.

[36]

Stronger responses to Question 3 were interested from the outset in comparison of the different ways in which these two texts represented successful musical figures who had experienced hearing loss, often noting more contemporary inclusivity, a more inspirational tone and emphasis on ability and success in Text D. Many successful responses also considered how the quotations from Maxey himself helped to establish the article's credibility and emphasise the extent of the challenge for him, comparing this with the indirect reference to Beethoven's hearing loss in Text C.

The use of a pun (highlighted by the typographical variation) in the headline for Text D was often the starting point for responses in the mid-range, even though fewer compared it to the outline of content in the wording of the chapter title in the older text. Opportunities were missed in some responses that simply spotted features such as subheadings in Text D and/or paragraphs in Text C but did not take time to explore how specifically they helped the reader of these texts.

Candidates who approached the texts without prejudice, responding to what was there rather than what they assumed would be there, were best able to capitalise on and explore examples of change within and between these texts and to establish patterns. Some candidates missed opportunities to do this. There were, for example, candidates who noted the use of a sentence starting with a connective in the later text ('But he isn't just dancing..') yet assumed there would be none and/or overlooked their use ('But his restless, sensitive') in the earlier text, sometimes diluting evidence of understanding further by asserting that this was evidence of some sort of decline of the language from Text C to Text D. Use of the idiom 'mountains into molehills' in Text C was spotted by some and then dismissed as typical of older texts, while idioms used to convey Maxey's approach, such as 'poetry in motion' or 'paint a picture', were rarely noted. Many were able to support suggestions of a relatively educated target readership for Text C, for example through inclusion of the Wordsworth quotation and/or use of the French phrase, 'raison-d'être' with some drawing interesting comparisons to the Outkast lyrics ('What's cooler than being cool?') and references to evidence of American provenance in Text D.

Many candidates were able to identify the extended metaphor of nature in Text C, although had often missed the use of metaphor in the title of Text D ('DEAFinitely Dope was born') and as a consequence offered unsupported claims in relation to the use of figurative language over time. Stronger, data-led responses were able to use these and other similarities as a means of questioning the relevance of any theory they had in mind and to suggest possible reasons for the decisions made by each producer.

Some of the best responses were able to offer detailed analysis of the writing in both passages, discussing and illustrating variations in language between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries – for example in relation to lexis (such as use of musical terms and/or lexis related to hearing impairment). Others overstated differences, missing opportunities to explore what the slightly antiquated phrasing and syntax of 'the most trifling inconvenience' or 'addressed himself to writing assiduously' might suggest in relation to the author's representation of Beethoven, having dismissed it as 'archaic'.

Exemplar 3

		The texts differ in the type of lexis used too. Text C maintains a formal register utilising low frequency lexis like "assiduously", "solare", "apt" and "trifling" possibly to emphasise a sense of prestige which also reflects Beethoven's legacy which was perhaps ^{even} more appreciated in 1912 than it is now. Text C also appears to a well-educated audience by including
		French when Byron writes "raison-d'être" and also the exophoric reference to a poem by Wordsworth to which it is assumed no explanation is given in the actual which assumes knowledge and cultural awareness for the time, indicating the text is aimed at an educated audience which at the time would have also ^{so} meant a more upper-class audience as reference

This section of a successful response to Task 3 considers salient features from Text C, which the candidate then goes on to contrast in the next section of the response with features from Text D, explored in relation to readership, to make points about change based on patterns of language use across the data set.

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