

Examiners' report

AS LEVEL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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

H070

For first teaching in 2015

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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

In Section A, candidates were instructed to write an introduction to a podcast that critically engaged with the statement 'we need to embrace linguistic variations, not condemn them.' Most candidates understood that this meant producing a text that had elements of both speech and writing, but less successful candidates produced either an essay which had few or no elements of speech and no acknowledgement of the audience, or wrote a piece more akin to a transcript, with too many elements of unscripted speech such as hesitations and fillers.

Section B required analysis of data, which was understood by most candidates. Question 3, the Language and Gender question was perhaps a little more popular than Question 2, Language and Power. It was always obvious which question was being answered.

Candidates generally managed to finish the paper and appeared to spend an appropriate amount of time on each question, provided they had the required knowledge. Some students chose to answer Section B (the question which carries more marks) first, presumably as a way of managing their time effectively.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- wrote with flair, creating an appropriate voice for a scripted podcast. - used subject terminology consistently and accurately. - analysed patterns of language in depth, e.g. semantic fields, and gave carefully chosen examples - offered alternative explanations of patterns and features if appropriate - demonstrated an assured knowledge and understanding of theories and concepts - explored the effect of a range of concepts on language production and reception.	- wrote in an unsuitable style for form and audience - wrote either an essay, or produced a transcript - used little subject terminology, or used it incorrectly - did not engage with patterns of language. - presented theories or concepts without linking them to data - repeated the same basic contextual points or made very little reference to data.

Section A overview

Most candidates understood the need to respond to the non-specialist nature of the audience and the spoken form of the task, therefore fulfilling the requirements of AO5. Various interpretations of AO2 were possible, so candidates generally found something they had knowledge of, but some responses were conceptually thin.

Question 1

- 1 Write the opening script for a podcast that critically engages in any way with the statement above and persuades listeners to agree with a particular point of view. Your podcast should be aimed at a non-specialist, reasonably well-educated audience. You should write about 500 words. **[24]**

Most candidates seemed to be comfortable with this question and approached it with enthusiasm. Candidates were able to choose whichever area of language variety they knew about or found interesting; responses covered topics such as accent, dialect and historical variation, and aspects feeding into these, such as location, age and education. The role of Standard English and attitudes to this and other dialects were discussed, as were the attitudes of people of different ages to modern varieties of English and to slang. Some candidates also discussed the influence of the increasingly ethnically diverse population on the English language. Most candidates supported the idea that language should be allowed to change and that varieties should be celebrated; some set up a discussion between people supporting different viewpoints which was an effective way of presenting opposing ideas.

It was possible to achieve a high mark in this question without reference to theorists, provided the candidate had a wide knowledge and understanding of varieties, the reasons for them and possible attitudes to them. Some candidates did bring in theorists, including Sapir-Whorf, used to back up discussion of the relationship between language and culture. Fairclough's social hierarchy and John Swales' discourse community theories were also called upon in some scripts. Less successful candidates lacked the depth of knowledge to maintain a discussion on the topic.

A large proportion of candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of spoken language conventions necessary for a successful script. They were asked to write the opening section of the podcast and understood that this required a greeting to the audience and agenda-setting. Many made up appropriate titles for their podcast, e.g. 'Let's talk Language' or 'Legacy Language', which were used in their opening statement and showed an understanding of the form and the ability to engage the audience from the beginning. Higher-attaining candidates were able to maintain this appropriate form and relationship with the audience throughout, using rhetorical devices and glossing successfully to maintain the genre and audience requirements. Mid to lower-attaining candidates tended to slip into either an essay form or a transcript style. The former lowered the mark they achieved on AO5, as they lost any acknowledgement of the audience. The latter lost AO2 marks as it reduced opportunities for structured argument and critical consideration but also lost AO5 marks as it was not the specified form and too much time was often spent on 'social aspects': overlong greetings, jokes and inappropriate personal comments.

Exemplar 1

1	A: Hello guys and welcome back to another episode of the Podcast. Today we're going to be talking about linguistic variations, such as ranges in people's accents, dialect, and general way of speaking in day-to-day life. B: I think it's safe to say that there's definitely a lot of linguistic variation here in the UK. Even from a young age, I say that you're raised with the understanding that everyone is linguistically unique - whether you learnt that from friends, family, social media, or school, I think it's something we realise quite early on. A: Interesting. Now would you say that is a reason why there is aspects of prejudice against linguistic variations? Because it starts in childhood? B: This may be a factor, yes. Children may change their way of speaking to fit in with others, which can cause negative reactions from professional institutions like school, where they may even be punished for how they speak. However, it is also important to note that linguistic variation can change over the course of someone's life. It stems from multiple factors ^{like} is heritage, location, class, the identity, and more. Though factors such as heritage and family may not change, factors
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such as location and identity do.

A: Yes this is true. And I think the act of condemning linguistic variation is quite upsetting as it shuts down the idea of diversity, and prevents person to person from being unique. It not only represents individuality and celebrates history, but also leaves the door open for new advancements in language. If you're proud of your language, then don't forget that it has only been able to thrive through the development of linguistic variation.

B: Exactly. Some people, and I think the most common way of speaking that is seen as superior, believe that standard English is the only correct linguistic variation. What would you say to these people?

A: Well I understand where they're coming from in the notion that Standard English is 'correct', as this is what we were taught as soon as we could read or write. SE exists to unite as many people as possible by providing a way to speak that is mutually understood, to make global communication easier and more accurate. But this doesn't mean that SE should be seen as superior and all other linguistic variations as inferior, much less be condemned. You might not

		even realise your own linguistic variation, because
		you've always seen your language as 'the right
		way', but without it, you can kiss all of your
		individuality goodbye.
		B: [laughs] yeah. I think the first step in
		learning to embrace linguistic variation is just
		accepting that none is superior or inferior. We
		are all just who we are and we shouldn't
		feel ashamed or teach against this. Identity is
		what makes us individual people, and language
		is arguably identity's biggest supporter.

Exemplar 1 demonstrates the use of two speakers to effectively move the discussion on and establishes a good relationship with the audience that is maintained throughout the text.

Assessment for learning



A well-constructed text considers the audience and purpose throughout and is based on a clear knowledge and understanding of the issue under discussion.

Section B overview

Candidates generally understood that this question required them to write analytically rather than creatively as in Section A. Stronger responses had a good understanding of the relevant issue and of theorists that could be used to explain what they had seen in the data. Less successful responses tended to describe the texts and/or theories which were not related to what was in the text.

Question 2

EITHER

2 Language and Power

Read **Text A** in the **Resource booklet** and answer the question.

Using appropriate terminology, examine **Text A** in the light of the ways in which power is represented. In your answer you should:

- analyse the relevant language features of the text
- explore how contextual factors and language features construct meanings
- consider the ways in which your understanding of concepts and issues relating to power in language use illuminates the representation of power within the text.

[36]

This question was based on marketing materials for a vegan oat drink, from the company's website and from the packaging of the product. Although the two texts seemed very different, either or both could be read by people interested in buying the product. However, the website would have to be searched for, whereas the packet could presumably be picked up in a shop, making it more accessible.

More successful responses understood the multi-modal nature of the text, considering font and image choices such as the representation of oats within the letter 'A', and the pointing finger; an exophoric reference to WW2 propaganda. They recognised patterns of language such as the lexical fields of diet and environment, the use of 'I' and 'we' to create company identity and the repetition of 'no' in 'No milk. No soy. No...', and were able to consider the effects these patterns had on the reader. A few also recognised the humour in the text, created by 'According to our CEO' and 'the color of their nail polish'. Analysis of language features such as these were backed up in good scripts by the judicious use of theories, including Fairclough's synthetic personalisation and Swales' discourse community theory, both linking to the relationship the text was establishing between reader and producer. Fairclough's social hierarchies, Wareing's social power and O'Barr and Atkins' socio-power positioning theories were also used appropriately in some more successful responses.

Less successful responses were often able to spot a range of relevant language features that were related to the representation of power but were descriptive rather than analytical, forgetting to link to relevant theories. This gained them marks in AO1 and they were also sometimes able to make general comments on basic contextual issues such as audience and purpose. If they were able to refer to concepts and theories, they tended to repeat a very narrow range. Candidates at this level should be encouraged to widen and deepen their knowledge and understanding in this area.

Exemplar 2

2	Text A takes on two different formats - product advertisement and and^a web-page from the product's producer. Both look to cater towards an audience of environmentalists and people who wish to live healthily / sustainably. It is clear that the product's purpose is a call for change to move away from consumerism and unsustainable practices. By adopting a pejorative stance and the use of direct address, "you", as a discourse marker, the text reflects a wider global movement against how we go about modern life. The text opens with an evident lexical hierarchy as the brand name "OATLY!" is in bold and a larger font size. This draws attention to the picture of the plant embedded in the "A", establishing a semantic field of ecology and growth. Reflecting the lexical hierarchy in an opposite manner, "*according to our CEO" is placed in small text away from larger elements of the design. On one hand, it resembles that of Ts & Cs on a contract, and so will be^{be} dismissed, possibly playing into Bollinger's theory on the use of language to lie through euphemisms. On the other, the workplace epithet "CEO" is reflective of Fairclough's power asymmetry and accepted social hierarchy. On a wider scale, it is
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reflective of a small number of very wealthy and influential people having an undeserved influence and degree of control. Ultimately this strengthens the didactic core of the product and brand, reinforcing the notion that large corporations are making profit off of cruel and unsustainable practices.

The neologistic collocation "You are one of us now" is somewhat resemblant to the war-time phrase "We want you!" which could be indicative of a larger movement and motive at play. The multi-modality in text A reinforces the war-time feel through the depiction of the pointing finger. Overall, the imagery and wording links to both Wareing's social power and Swales' discourse community theory. - the branding aims to promote inclusivity and belonging as can be seen in the online aspect of the text: "regardless of religious beliefs [...] sexual orientation". The use of ad-speak as theorised by Fairclough also is an exhibition of positive face (Goffman), an advertising method used to appear favourable. Pragmatically, the brand is promoting the product as the single best alternative to regular milks which some businesses obtain through less favourable means.

In the marketing information, the brand user

		the plosives "pursuit of profits", "planet",
		"politicians" to direct the blame at people in
		power who can make changes yet are reluctant
		to do so. By further exhibiting Wareing's
		instrumental power, the brand aims to act
		as a catalyst for societal development and
		reform as others are unwilling to act on their
		"responsibility". In some ways, this could
		be seen as a face-threatening act against
		those exhibiting a negative face. By threatening
		face, people with power come under scrutiny
		and so are more likely to act.
		In conclusion, text A is a physical representation
		of the desire for a more sustainable and
		inclusive society with the didactic core
		being evident throughout. Large corporations
		and politicians are presented as the reason
		this type of society does not exist. It is
		possible then text plays into O'Barr and Atkins'
		socio-power position theory; as the brand is
		the one with the voice and promoting a movement,
		it holds power over the ones it believes are at fault.

In this exemplar there are a range of language features analysed with examples and linked to relevant concepts and issues. It analyses in detail how contextual factors are associated with the construction of meaning.

Assessment for learning



The ability to use relevant concepts and issues to discuss a range of language features is key to a good response in this question.

Question 3

OR

3 Language and Gender

Read **Text B** in the **Resource booklet** and answer the question.

Using appropriate terminology, examine **Text B** in the light of the ways in which gender is represented. In your answer you should:

- analyse the relevant language features of the text
- explore how contextual factors and language features construct meanings
- consider the ways in which your understanding of concepts and issues relating to gender in language use illuminates the representation of gender within the text.

[36]

This question asked candidates to consider how gender was represented in a text produced to show parents and carers what to expect if their child became a Guide. It focused on what the Guiding Association offers girls and aimed to persuade parents and carers that joining the Guides would benefit girls greatly. Although the obvious audience was parents and carers, there was a secondary audience of the girls themselves, with quotations from girls at different stages of Guiding. The strongest responses showed a sophisticated understanding of contextual factors and theoretical integration.

Successful candidates explored a wide range of language features which challenged or confirmed traditional gender stereotypes. These might include the inclusion of some stereotypical female activities on the list of possibilities, but also some more likely to be associated with males, such as car maintenance and abseiling. Really subtle approaches would recognise the use of 'try' and 'conquer her fears' suggesting that these activities are not what is expected for girls. The images could also be interpreted in different ways. The pictures are of girls playing together, suggesting a feminine collaborative approach, but they are playing outside, and the pink wellington boots are covered in mud which subverts the gender stereotype.

Many candidates recognised the pattern of the use of 'girl' and the semantic field around that; 'girl-only', 'daughters', 'young women'. Girls were represented as empowered: 'girls leading the way', 'girls shape and lead everything we do', 'find my voice'.

Relevant and useful theories included Tannen's difference theory, suggesting that females use supportive language and talk about feelings more, which could explain the repetition of 'we' and the use of 'I love', 'I'm excited about...'. Candidates also discussed Schultz's theory that a female prefix as in 'girl guides' pejorated the meaning; Fishman and Coates' dominance theory, and Lakoff's empty adjectives.

Less successful candidates lacked depth and sometimes summarised theories without fully analysing their relevance to the question or the data, tending to be descriptive rather than evaluative.

Exemplar 3

23	Text B is a grr girlguiding website aimed at parents / carers of young girls and an gives detail on what to expect from girl guides. This may attract, not just parents / carers of young girls, but young girls themselves or even school teachers hoping to encourage at extra-curriculars. The purpose of this text is to inform about about girl guides but also to advertise guides to these aspects of the target audience. The text encoder uses a series of phrases - "guiding ... great ... girls ... daughter ... grows ... dedicated ... adapting" which creates not only an emphatic point but also creates a semantic field of development for young girls - this focus on young girls' actions to become more independent subverts Sara Mills' stylistics which argues that women are described by appearance and men by action. There is no reference to appearance here which, for parents and children alike could act as be relieving as they know there will be no pressure to conform to best beauty standards and they can just be children and "have fun".
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The text encoder also uses ~~two~~ contrasting sets of discourse markers. One set includes "conquer... attend... support... campaign... do... learn" all of which are modal markers which are dichotomous to the idea that women's language is weaker (Tannen Lakoff's deficit model)² due to hedges, ~~and~~ apologetic language, and tag questions. This carries connotations of ~~advice~~ action and a lack of co-dependence suggesting these young girls will be developing their confidence as well as physical skills. The other set of discourse markers include "we... we're... we're" which fits in with the pattern of collaborative collective pronouns seen throughout this ~~fits~~ plays well into ~~the~~ Tannen's theory of six key differences as she argues women ~~prefer~~ use more supportive language - this fits well as the use of collective pronouns presents as the web site reinforcing their responsibility to help the child grow and develop whilst supporting the parent by keeping them safe. Although this could be viewed as synthetic personalisation in order to gain members, the parent / carer is most likely to view

this as comforting.

There is however, a few discrepancies in how gender is represented in the text, despite the subversion of many gender theories relating to lexical asymmetry, the terms "Rainbow", "Brownie", "Guide" and "Ranger" are syntactically semantically dichotomous as "Rainbow" and "Brownie" play into the representation of girls as only concerned with pretty and sweet things whereas "Guide" and "Ranger" do the opposite - they present gender as irrelevant to the names used - ~~any~~ "guide" and "ranger" can be considered as ~~a~~ gender neutral however ~~then~~ there is a large chance that a boy would not want to be called a "rainbow" or "brownie". The first two names here can be explained by Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity - the idea that gender isn't something you are it's something you do. ~~the~~ This theory argues we learn how to perform femininity through social norms such as young girls being all "rainbows" and "brownies" ~~whereas~~ which carry soft and sweet and pretty connotations whereas boys are called scouts which already has

stronger connotations. This gender presentation disparity is shown further by the possessive construction of "girl guiding" which can show elements of being a diminutive.

The adding of a female suffix prefix, as investigated by Marie Shultz, tends to make a word pejorative. This plays into the inherent bias in the English language towards males. The specificity of "girl" here and in "daughter... she... her... girls... girls-only" all act as a way of either minimising the importance of guides by using what is usually an undermining prefix or it is attempting to create an atmosphere of a safe space for young girls to be able to learn and grow with other girls - the sense of community here could be the intended purpose by the text encoder. However the use of "guide" and "ranger" could be indicative of the idea that "brownie" and "rainbow" only became pejorative patronising or even embarrassing at a certain age which requires this change to more mature and gender neutral or marked terms. Socially, children don't tend to hold any negative views regarding gender until they are around 12 in which these biases become

became voiced. This change could be a protective measure as the website really emphasises "fun and freedom - "inspires... passions... have fun... make friends... safe... welcoming... enable". This semantic field not only empowers young girls but also creates a sense of unity and protection from external concerns. This all could link to Cameron's diversity model which argues that in our language use in reference to women, gender is only one aspect, social context also plays a role as seen above.

The multi-modal aspect of the text with images of girls at varying ages, outdoor activities and a "hands in" image can highlight the ~~underlying~~ way in which the meaning of the text is constructed. It intends to come across as an inclusive and collaborative experience in which young girls can enjoy their time there and 'have fun' with new friends. There is an underlying message of these girls leading the way as the central focus which ~~prose~~ not only presents these girls as having conversational power but is supported by the inclusion of quotes from ~~their~~ existing members. These quotes from existing members does

		reinforce the consideration of their opinions in "updating and adapting" but also states allows for Fishman's theory of "interactional shitwork" in which women try harder in conversations and are often less successful which reinforces men's conversational power and female powerlessness. to be brought into question. Here we are seeing women not only be successful in conversation but also in active change. In a sense these girls are displaying covert prestige as they have no need for a low frequency level and standard English as there is an underlying promise that their opinions will be considered. so they do not need any form of upward convergence to gain respect. and understanding.
		Overall, meaning in this text is constructed through the use of the various linguistic techniques and contextual / social factors as seen is above. Gender is presented inconsistently throughout with some stereotypical aspects of femininity but a majority of subverting texts.

This candidate explored a wide range of language features with an assured knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts and issues and a perceptive evaluation of how contextual features are associated with the construction of meaning.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be encouraged to relate contextual features to language features and to concepts and issues, rather than seeing them as standalone points

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