

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

H070

For first teaching in 2015

H070/02 Summer 2018 series

Version 1

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

Paper H070/02 series overview

The paper, whilst attempted by fewer candidates this year than previously, still generated a range of responses which showed the quality and breadth of learning undertaken by a range of candidates. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this paper remains the need to adapt styles from Section A to Section B; however, the vast majority of candidates were able to appropriately differentiate between the academic style required in Section B and the more journalistic style of Section A. In some cases, candidates maintained a polemical style into, most commonly, the gender response and they would be well reminded in future series that language analysis should be data-led and objective if it is to remain effective.

Section A features one compulsory question and this was attempted in all responses seen. Section B features an optional question in which candidates select either a power-focused question or a gender-focused question. As with previous series, gender remains the most popular choice; although this difference was less marked than in previous years. This may be a reflection of the texts and the similarities in their genre and purpose.

There were a number of instances in which candidates numbered the questions incorrectly. Whilst this had no impact on the mark credited, it is best to be avoided.

Section A overview

This section encouraged a range of responses and, as with previous series, was frequently the stronger of the two sections across the paper. This series saw a greater number of well-written responses that were conceptually thin and candidates and centres should focus on showing depth as well as breadth of conceptual understanding when engaging with the issue stated.

Centres would be well advised to ensure candidates understand how to signal form through language choices and tone rather than through drawing pictures or writing in self-drawn columns in the exam. Whilst both practices are still relatively rare, there was an appreciable rise in this across the responses. This does not impact the mark awarded by the examiner but given the time and thought taken to do this by candidates, may well have the effect of being self-penalising.



<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-english-language-h070-h470-from-2015/delivery-guide/delivery-guide-ladq001-topical-issues/>

Question 1

'Women use the English language differently from men because society is sexist.'

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

The task specified a “newspaper article” as the form and the majority of candidates were able to address the needs of this form through the use of relatively straight forward features. Headlines were used to good effect as a means of signalling form and many candidates chose to use this as an opportunity to set the tone, with the use of humour or puns proving popular. In some cases, candidates chose to establish a more formal, broadsheet style which dealt with the issue as one of great seriousness whilst others chose a more ‘tabloid’ style. Both were considered appropriate to the task and neither was favoured by the examiner. Candidates who used the statement from the question as a headline were credited with using a feature appropriate to the form but centres may wish to highlight the opportunity to engage with the form more creatively from the outset of the response.

The issue stated allowed for and resulted in a wide range of conceptual knowledge and approaches which included but were not limited to:

Possible Areas Relevant to the Issue

Dominance, deficit, difference and diversity
 Socialisation
 Linguistic relativity, determinism or reflectionism
 Interpellation
 Hegemonic Masculinity
 Media Representations
 Spoken language conventions
 Written language conventions
 Prestige (overt and covert)

The most popular concepts remain those of Lakoff and Tannen and a large number of responses focused on dominance and difference theories. Responses that considered diversity approaches and used these as a means of challenging the veracity of the statement were more rare but were often better able to show critical engagement with the issue itself. Rarer still were responses that noted the reference to maleness as the norm in the statement itself.

In some cases, candidates focused on the final part of the statement that "society is sexist". These responses often did not focus clearly on language and relevant concepts and, instead, presented a socio-cultural response on women's rights and patriarchy. Both of these issues are clearly relevant to the statement but candidates must ensure that the response has a clear focus on language concepts and/or language in use.

The most difficult aspect of this task is integrating the specialist conceptual knowledge of the candidates whilst maintaining an engaging tone for a generally well-educated audience of non-specialists. Overt glossing remains the most common approach to balancing the needs of audience and the needs of the question and this was often done well. The strongest responses integrated the two in a way which showed skill and flair.

Exemplar 1

allowed to vote." We rolled up our hoop skirts and demanded it.

This is why Deborah Cameron was written 'The Myth of Mars and Venus'. She knows that language is more reliant on context than what's inbetween our legs. If both a man and woman are going in for a job interview, they would both naturally exhibit features of powerful language.

This is a section of a response that maintained this level of integration between AO5 and AO2 throughout. The humour shown in the "hoop skirts" final thought is used as means to introduce the topic sentence reference to Cameron and the relatively simple but effective use of humour both engages the stated audience and makes the concept's main idea clear.

Section B overview

Both texts in this section were taken from magazine interviews with famous women. As a result, the power question was more popular than in previous series; although still not as popular as the gender question. There were rare instances of candidates focusing on both texts to answer one question in which they compared either the representation of gender or of power across both texts. Such responses can only be credited for the engagement with one text which meant they were self-penalising in terms of the engagement with the text and the level of depth they were able to reach. Even rarer than this were the candidates who attempted both questions separately. As with the first rubric infringement, these responses were self-penalising.

In some cases, candidates used the power text to focus on gender or vice versa. Whilst there is an undoubted crossover between the two conceptual areas, candidates should be reminded that a clear focus on the question is required if they are to select relevant concepts with which to analyse the text.

Whilst 50% of the marks for this question come from AO2, candidates and centres should pay careful attention to the level descriptors. All three assessment objectives make reference to “language” or “patterns of language”. Language analysis should be the driving factor behind exploring the texts in this section. There were a number of responses which presented related concepts in some depth but did not securely link these to the language of the texts. Similarly, contextual factors were referred to briefly or implicitly by a greater number of responses than in previous series and centres may wish to advise candidates on how best to integrate exploration of a range of contextual factors into the analysis of language consistently across a response. The bullet points provided on the question paper are a useful guide for how candidates might structure sections of their response to ensure they cover all relevant aspects during their analysis but, as with previous series, there is no one set structure that is favoured by the examiner.

Finally, representations and the ways in which they are created through language are an appropriate and productive method of showing a conceptualised understanding of the data (thus meeting the AO2 criteria) and many responses chose to go down this route. Candidates would do well to signpost this to the examiner by using the word representations explicitly in their responses.

<i>Most successful responses</i>	<i>Least successful responses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on language use and engaged with both patterns and examples which were analysed in depth • Used precise terminology • Engaged in detail with contexts (going beyond simply identifying genre, audience and purpose) consistently throughout the response • Offered alternative interpretation of patterns and features • Maintained objectivity in analysis • Used knowledge of language, concepts and contexts in an integrated manner to explore power/gender in the relevant texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on presenting ‘learned knowledge’ of theory without linking to the data • Ignored or did not engage with patterns of language use and examples of language use • Used little terminology • Relied on spoken or conversational theories to explore written aspects of the texts • Adopted an indignant or polemical tone when analysing • Were reductive or vague about contexts • Focused on content at the expense of a focus on language

Question 2

2 Language and Power

Read **Text A** in your **Resource Booklet** and answer the following 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 featured an edited extract from a Mhairi Black interview in The Times magazine. The strongest responses were able to discuss how Turner (the producer) and The Times (the institutional producer) represented themselves and Black through various language levels and the multi-modality of the text. Contextually, the narrative structure of the interview and the mediated representation of Black by Turner were features of the strongest responses. These responses were often able to consider the impact of The Times' political standpoint (and that of its audience) as a means of exploring the contrasting representations of Black whilst balancing this with an awareness of the article's place in the magazine and not the main paper. Most responses were able to make sound and reasonable points about influential power, members' resources, synthetic personalisation and types of power. A focus on the register of the text and the shifts in tone often led to good engagement with patterns and with representations.

As the text features direct speech, there was scope to apply spoken theories to the data and this was done well by most of the candidates who selected this route; however, there were some examples of conversational theory, such as Grice's maxims or face theory, being stretched to make points that would have been better focused on representations, agenda or contextual factors.

Some candidates did not consider the notion that there are multiple producers and agendas in the text seen through Black's direct speech and Turner's mediation of the interview context but the strongest responses engaged with these ideas. Less common were candidates who misinterpreted the context and considered Black as the sole producer of the text. Such responses were suggestive of a lack of understanding of the context in terms of production but were often still able to achieve well when considering context of reception.

There were also responses that drew on gender concepts and this was considered relevant to certain parts of the text. When done well, candidates were able to link this back to power clearly.

Exemplar 2

In terms of power, this article demonstrates a large amount of influential power, as the Producer is using personality (Wavering's personal power) to ~~pers~~ inform the audience of Mhairi Black, and persuade them to like this political figure. This relates to Hall's theory of preferred reading, as the producer is hoping that audiences will accept the ideology being presented. An example of personal power being used is when 'I fear that this sounds patronising'. This metadiscourse, where producer turns attention to the audience, creates the impression that she does not want to be patronising.

This response integrates discussion of language, concepts and context in a way which is perceptive and shows full engagement with all relevant aspects of the question and the text. Potentially, more precise analysis of the language in the example or links to this ideology being shown in other areas of the text would have made the point even stronger. There is an implicit but very clear understanding of the producer's aims which is suggestive of a discerning engagement with contextual factors alongside the overt reference to purpose. In terms of knowledge, understanding and analytical skill, it is difficult to imagine an AS Level candidate being able to produce something much better than this.

Question 3

3 Language and Gender

Read **Text B** in your **Resource Booklet** and answer the following 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 featured an edited extract of an interview with Kimberley Wyatt from Hello! Magazine. The strongest responses engaged with representation of gender through the multi-modality and linked this securely within discussion of other language levels both in the caption and pull quote along with the main body of the article.

A number of spoken language theories – focusing primarily on deficit and difference – were used to explore the text and these were well-used when focused on Wyatt's direct speech and on the representation or audience reactions that resulted from the language choices selected by the producer.

As with the power text, the strongest responses engaged with the notion that Wyatt's interview has been mediated by the agenda of the producer – Hello! – and with the agenda of Wyatt in creating a self-representation in the interview. There were a range of responses that engaged with gendered noun phrases and used Lakoff to explore the lexical aspects of the producer's 'genderlect'.

Some of the strongest responses went beyond deficit and difference and considered the representation of idealised femininity and the extent to which Wyatt, the producer and the audience were equally complicit in the construction of gendered identities which, responses noted, were very traditional or stereotypical.

Lexis and semantics were the most commonly considered language levels with references to discourse, pragmatics and grammar proving less common. There were some rare instances of candidates attempting to discuss accent which was considered a less appropriate means of engaging with this written interview.

One notable shift in focus in this series saw candidates often using the work of Tunstall on media representations of women to engage with Wyatt's presentation across the text. When this was clearly linked to language and to context it led to some interesting and higher ability responses.

Exemplar 3

The text represents women in a narrow - constricting strongly to historic social stereotypes, ~~was~~ portraying many of traditional female roles as the norm and showing Wyatt to be a typical, accepted idea of the roles of women. The text conveys the stereotypical role of women as "queen of the kitchen", implying that women are inherently dominant in that role through the use of the noun phrase's metaphorical nature. It also presents Wyatt as a typical housewife, presented in the context of "looking after her" "scrumptious serenneth old baby", while ~~feeding~~ displaying "the art of mouthwashing", supporting the stereotype of women as proficient housewives and mothers and wives before individuals with their own right and detail shown by the presentation of Wyatt in the context of her family life, constant references to "husband and baby", despite the prestigious career of Wyatt as "dancer, DJ, screen presenter".

This section of the response integrates all of the assessment objectives in a detailed and precise manner. The focus on representations shows an assured grasp of the way the text sits within the context of reception and is used to link precisely labelled linguistic features from across the text. The embedded references synthesised from different parts of the text show a conceptualised understanding of the patterns of language use and their effectiveness in creating the representations stated. As with the question 2 exemplar, there is an argument to suggest that greater precision in labelling and analysing the individual features of the examples could have made this even more impressive. However, once again, the examiner is aware of the demand and limitations of study at AS Level and there is little more the candidate could have been asked to do in this section.

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