OCR

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCE

English Language

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H070**

OCR Report to Centres June 2017

About this Examiner Report to Centres

This report on the 2017 Summer assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful

- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection

- points of advice for future examinations

It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

The report also includes:

- An invitation to get involved in Cambridge Assessment's research into **how current reforms are affecting schools and colleges**

- Links to important documents such as **grade boundaries**

- A reminder of our **post-results services** including Enquiries About Results

- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme

- A link to our handy Teacher Guide on **Supporting the move to linear assessment** to support you with the ongoing transition

Understanding how current reforms are affecting schools and colleges
Researchers at Cambridge Assessment[1] are undertaking a research study to better understand how the current reforms to AS and A levels are affecting schools and colleges.
If you are a Head of Department (including deputy and acting Heads), then we would be very grateful if you would take part in this research by completing their survey. If you have already completed the survey this spring/summer then you do not need to complete it again.
The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes and all responses will be anonymous.
To take part, please click on this link: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/KP96LWB

Grade boundaries
Grade boundaries for this, and all other assessments, can be found on Interchange. For more information on the publication of grade boundaries please see the OCR website.

Enquiry About Results
If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our Enquiry About Results services. For full information about the options available visit the OCR website. If university places are reliant on the results you are making an enquiry about you may wish to consider the priority 2 service which has an earlier deadline to ensure your enquires are processed in time for university applications.

Supporting the move to linear assessment
This was the first year that students were assessed in a linear structure. To help you navigate the changes and to support you with areas of difficulty, download our helpful Teacher guide:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/341817-moving-from-modular-to-linear-qualifications-teachers-guide.pdf.

Further support from OCR

Active Results offers a unique perspective on results data and greater opportunities to understand students' performance.
It allows you to:

- Review reports on the **performance of individual candidates**, cohorts of students and whole centres
- **Analyse results** at question and/or topic level
- **Compare your centre** with OCR national averages or similar OCR centres.
- Identify areas of the curriculum where students excel or struggle and help **pinpoint strengths and weaknesses** of students and teaching departments.

http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/support-and-tools/active-results/

Attend one of our popular CPD courses to hear exam feedback directly from a senior assessors or drop in to an online Q&A session.
https://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk

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[1] Cambridge Assessment is a not-for-profit non-teaching department of the University of Cambridge, and the parent organisation of OCR, Cambridge International Examinations and Cambridge English Language Assessment.

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General Comments:

Q1 and Q2 were now roughly equal in terms of quality overall- the tendency from last year for Q2 answers to be better seems to not be present this time, which suggests candidates are now answering the two tasks with a clearly differentiated approach. However, some candidates still spend too long discussing the overall context of the texts in either question. Short introductions which discussed the audience and purpose in Q1, or general similarities and differences between texts in Q2, could be helpful, but some introductions were well over a page and took up valuable time for analysis under demanding time constraints. An answer which is very general and lacking in detailed exemplification and discussion of language is only ever going to achieve in the bottom Bands. Some answers with no real introduction were highly effective, as they naturally incorporated context alongside their analysis. There is no need to write either an introduction or a conclusion- the latter especially are nearly always simply a summation of what has already been written.

It was impressive to see the range which some students covered, especially in Q1, when they only had around 30 minutes to write their answer. Many responses engaged with most, if not all, language levels, and found valid and often interesting comments to make in response to the texts in the paper. It cannot be over-emphasised that this is a data driven paper, and that the best responses always seek to work outwards from the set extracts rather than fit these extracts to pre-learnt frameworks and concepts.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

Although the language levels clearly provide a helpful checklist for candidates in Q1, they should not be afraid of arranging paragraphs around topics or themes rather than simply one level at a time. The danger with the level-by-level approach in such a time constricted task is that candidates sacrifice depth of analysis for breadth of points: at its worst this means that an obviously perceptive candidate with good knowledge and understanding fails to get much beyond assertion and generalisation.

Some very helpful patterns of language use emerged, and allowed insightful comments on context, when students explored how elements of different language levels worked together to create a similar effect; for example, how the second person pronouns and colloquialisms positioned the reader as a 'Nitty Gritty mum' on the first side of the card, before the discourse structure led them onto the second side by assuming they had bought the comb, and then gave them imperatives to instruct on how to use it.

Many candidates have clearly been taught that identifying patterns of language use is important in order to achieve the higher end of the mark scheme. However, candidates should be wary of simply using the word 'pattern' without identifying these or using them to develop their analysis in detail. For example, some responses might state that they had found 'a pattern of concrete nouns' but then fail to discuss this further. Some candidates ended up feature spotting, or, at best, only singling out one feature at a time, as a result of this approach.

Less successful responses tended to focus on formality and the idea of a text being 'friendly', whereas the better responses looked at ideas such as reader positioning, the interplay between persuasion and instruction and the balance between the implied expertise of the creators

alongside their representation as simply mums. A few candidates got side-tracked into trying to apply either theories of genderlect or Grice's Maxims to the text, always unsuccessfully.
As with last year, the best answers were those that synthesised the address to AO1 and AO3 throughout their analysis.

Question 2

Generally candidates seemed more comfortable with text B than text C, and many responses were uneven as a result, which impacts upon overall achievement, especially in terms of AO4.

There was clearly much to talk about in text B, with the false starts, self-repairs and other features of spontaneous or semi-scripted speech. The less successful answers tended to restrict themselves to these features, and state that they were not in text C because it was planned. In terms of the comparative element, some answers really got no further than a very general comparison of mode (spoken and written) and tended to spend too long explaining why a feature was absent from the second text because it was written.

Similarly, candidates seemed more comfortable with the pragmatics of text B than text C. Many responses discussed Ferguson's apparently 'off the cuff' approach alongside the likelihood of some planning taking place, the building of a community with his listeners, and some of the specific references to Manchester United and in-jokes. Only the better answers appeared to engage with similar features in text C, discussing the humour and development of a community of readers who had followed the Secret Footballer's accounts of playing football over some time. Many less successful answers misunderstood the context of text C, explaining why they thought the Secret Footballer book wasn't really written by the footballer himself, why the footballer was jealous of Ferguson or trying to claim sympathy after the Fabrice Muamba incident, and saw the word 'wit' as a non-standard word which was part of the footballer's idiolect, like the use of 'bubbling' for Ferguson. Others described 'wit' as slang, taboo language or declared themselves mystified as to its origin and meaning.

Responses which discussed one text first, then made comparisons with the second, were generally less successful than those which compared the texts throughout. A text-by-text approach limited comparisons and often led to uneven responses in which the candidate would spend well over half of their time on their favoured text (usually B), and then repeat many of the same points by mentioning that most of these features weren't in the other text. A very successful approach is to compare how the two texts open, develop, and then conclude.

As with Q1, candidates should not necessarily go through the texts one language level at a time. Some successful responses did do this, but often the more insightful comparisons came from first highlighting a shared contextual factor (for example both texts addressing an exclusive audience, or both texts switching between humour and a more reflective tone), and then discussing how the specific linguistic features in each text showed this.

Some candidates brought in background knowledge on the topic of football, which was often helpful and allowed some engagement with pragmatics; for example, the importance of Ferguson singling out Paul Scholes as a long-serving player, Ferguson's famous chewing gum, or his reputation as a hard-line manager who would not be expected to cry. However, the contextual information provided with the texts was ample to allow some insightful comments. Candidates are advised to read this carefully, as some responses made avoidable mistakes regarding context such as missing the point that Ferguson's accent was Scottish, or stating that the Secret Footballer had told us he played for Tottenham.

H070/02 Exploring contexts

General Comments:

In a similar way to last year, the paper was approached in a productive manner by many candidates and both sections allowed candidates with varying strengths to prove their learning. The range of concepts and approaches taken to both sections illustrates the breadth of learning candidates and centres have undertaken in preparing for this paper. Centres should be commended on their thorough preparation for this paper with so many candidates having understood its demands so clearly.

The two sections of the paper require different approaches to expressing linguistic and conceptual knowledge. A number of responses showed a good understanding of the differing demands of the questions and of the need to target both a non-specialist audience in Q1 and a specialist audience in Q2/Q3. Some candidates still need to focus on adapting their style of answer to meet the demands of these two questions.

The most successful candidates showed a breadth of conceptual knowledge which they were capable of glossing appropriately in Q1 and which were explored and weighed up in relation to the data in Q2/Q3.

Section A contains one compulsory question and Section B offers a choice of two questions focused on either the representation of power or the representation of gender in a text. As was true last year, Q3 was more popular with candidates; however, the difference was less marked. Approaches to both questions in Section B were equally successful and allowed a range of responses which focused on a variety of concepts and linguistic knowledge to gain credit. In general, comments on multi-modality were made in a more integrated and detailed manner on Q2. A number of candidates numbered the Section B response incorrectly when answering Q3. Rubric infringements were rare and most candidates seem to have understood the requirements of the paper. On occasions, some candidates attempted both questions and, in even rarer cases, approached Section B as a comparison of the two texts. This should, of course, be avoided.

This paper awards 50% of the marks for AO2 and candidates accessed these marks by considering theoretical models and through a consideration of representations of individuals, texts, or producers. Both approaches have their merits and no one approach is favoured by the paper. The breadth of conceptual knowledge shown across the paper has been pleasing this year with a number of candidates considering audience response theory alongside representations.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Question 1

The Topical Issues question was worded in an open way to encourage a range of approaches to the task:

'Language is power: It forces us to think and act in certain ways'

This task allowed candidates to consider power in terms of both speech and writing and to define their understanding of what 'think and act' mean. Many responses addressed the issue as a discussion of whether language is power and this was done well by candidates who made the link back to notions of influencing thoughts and actions. A variety of concepts including overt and

covert prestige, face theory, divergence and convergence and attitudes to accent/dialect were used and all of these were considered appropriate to the issue. Linguistic relativity/determinism was used by a number candidates and this allowed for detailed and interesting arguments to be made in those responses that showed a good understanding of it. Some candidates sought to reframe the debate as focusing on gender. These candidates focused on the influence of androcentric language on the thoughts and actions of women and of people talking/writing about women. This approach was considered valid and successful. Again, it is important that centres advise candidates to make sure the link to the issue/statement in the question is made explicit even when re-framing the debate.

As with the previous series, there were candidates whose approach to the question was to present a historical or social study of notable figures who used language, amongst other things, to gain power. In some responses, discussion of Hitler, Donald Trump, Martin Luther King Jr and others was used to show a detailed understanding of the practical ways in which power can be enacted in speech. For example, responses using Trump to exemplify and explore the power of language referenced a number of 'trumpisms' from the election and were able to show a detailed understanding of the relationship between power and language. Some candidates presented a history of these figures and did not use them to present an understanding of concepts or relevance to language use. These responses were less successful in meeting the requirements of the mark scheme.

The task required candidates to write a "speech" that "critically engages" and many were able to meet the needs of both the form and purpose. The best responses established a clear and engaging tone at the outset and maintained a strong sense of their audience throughout. The parenthetical aside was a device employed to good effect by some high achieving responses and there were clear attempts at humour. Some candidates integrated a range of rhetorical devices into their writing which allowed them to prove their ability to meet the task requirements. Only rarely did candidates write in a formal essay style which did not meet the needs of the form. In many cases, these candidates were able to show an ability to adapt their writing by addressing the needs of audience.

The task will always identify a 'non-specialist, reasonably well-educated audience' and many candidates showed their ability to adapt specialist knowledge to the needs of this receiver. This particular task identified an audience of "6th formers" and many responses were able to write engagingly for this audience. Candidates who used overt glossing, often through parenthesis, were able to prove an awareness of the needs of the audience. Some candidates integrated specialist terminology and concepts with anecdotal evidence of their use and this proved a successful approach. In some cases candidates used a range of specialist terms without glossing and thus weren't able to prove their ability to target non-specialists effectively. There were some instances of candidates using a range of taboo lexis and puerile humour to meet the needs of the audience and, in some cases, this was done with moderation and some success. In others, it was felt that consistent taboo lexis failed to meet the needs of the form and the subject matter. Candidates would be well advised when aiming at an audience of their peers, to remember that the needs of form may often militate against an entirely colloquial tone.

Once again, many candidates produced responses which were considerably longer than the suggested 500 words. These responses included candidates across the marking spectrum and this was not seen as a factor in awarding marks. Longer responses in some cases allowed for detailed knowledge to be explored; in other cases, it resulted in responses which did not remain focused on the issues or concepts named. Centres would do well to remind candidates of the need for careful planning and should advise them to follow the timing guides given in the paper. Some responses also used stage directions, references to applause, laughter, etc.; these are not necessary when writing the text of a speech.

Section B

This section assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3 with a 50% weighting on AO2. Centres would be well advised to emphasise to candidates the importance of focusing on the data. Linguistic knowledge is the driving factor behind identifying patterns through which concepts and contexts are explored and many candidates met the needs of the task by methodically exploring these patterns. In some cases, candidates gave explanations of relevant theories prior to drawing links to the data. In other cases, no links to the data were drawn. Candidates should maintain a clear focus on exploring the data in the paper and use conceptual knowledge to illuminate that exploration rather than reproducing learned knowledge. Some responses used a large proportion of the essay to present learned knowledge which, whilst relevant, went unlinked to the data and there is a limit to how many marks can be gained when not explicitly exploring the data. In spite of the number of AO1 marks being low for this question, centres would be well advised to note that 'patterns of language use' is part of the AO2 descriptors and the focus of this section should be on exploring the language of the text.

Many responses were able to show a clear ability to identify patterns by grouping linguistic features in various ways through which representations were apparent. This was considered to be a successful approach to the questions and was seen equally across Q2 and Q3.

Many responses to both Q2 and Q3 applied spoken language theories and this was done with varying success. Discussion of overt and covert prestige when considering written texts was often suggestive of an understanding of representations and could be credited as implicitly showing that understanding but candidates would have been better to focus purely on the representation itself. Similarly, face theory was frequently applied to both texts along with reference to FTAs. Again, this suggested implicit engagement with representations. Less successful were references to parts of either text flouting Grice's maxims. This conversational theory was used by some responses to discuss the texts in a way which did not suggest a secure understanding of how either text had been constructed, or of the theory itself.

Question 2

The data was from a website called 'Startups', which is aimed at people who want to start their own business. Many candidates were able to apply a range of relevant concepts to the data and engage with patterns in language. In general, the multi-modality of this text was well considered with a number of candidates linking the graphology and discourse structure to the inherent features of a webpage. A number of successful responses engaged with the notion of the audience positioning themselves as receivers of the text due their having searched for the webpage rather than simply browsing a written publication. Many responses were able to explore the representations of a number of people/groups including Towers, the company, young people, business, etc. and this was a successful approach to engaging with the language use of the text. There were some responses that identified Towers as the producer and sought to explore his power only. This suggested a lack of understanding of context but still allowed for some good linguistic or conceptual knowledge to be shown. Centres would be well advised to support candidates in identifying contexts specifically before reading a text to avoid such misconceptions.

Many candidates engaged with a range of linguistic features from across the text which showed a tentative and considered approach to explaining their presence. In some cases, candidates extrapolated from single pieces of evidence which led to assertions that could not be considered entirely accurate. For example, a number of candidates focused on the neologised compound "Whizkid" at the start and suggested the text had an informal register. This assertion is not supported by the rest of the text. In general, such assertions were relatively rare and, when present in a response, were often part of an essay which showed a good ability to engage with other features of the text.

The most successful responses:
- Clearly identified patterns in language use, exemplified them clearly and explored the example specifically.
- Looked at patterns of language across the text before exemplifying patterns and specifically analysing them through clear links to contexts and concepts.
- Integrated linguistic and conceptual knowledge with the exploration of contexts.
- Were tentative in suggesting reasons for particular language patterns and their relation to concepts and contexts.
- Considered the ways in which different groups/people were represented by the producer.
- Identified the text producer as having a persuasive sub-purpose alongside the informative main purpose.

Question 3

The data was taken a column in *The Times* newspaper called 'Thunderer'. The most successful responses were able to engage with the patterns of language that Frean used to represent herself and her views. Many responses were able to identify the satirical tone of the opening and used this as a starting point for considering how Frean challenged the views of the email tool. Some responses missed the irony and, as a result, engaged with the notion that Frean was accidently representing herself as powerless. This was not a productive approach to exploring the text. There were clear links drawn to various gender theories and both the deficit and dominance models were very popular in exploring Frean's views and her representations of the email tool producer.

The text features a number of interesting contextual factors and the strongest responses were able to explore the influence of Frean's specific context as a business editor on both her viewpoint and her language use. The multi-modality of the text was not consistently addressed by as many candidates as for Q2. Whilst the graphological features present in this text are, arguably, less prominent than in Q2, they are still significant features and are worthy of comment. The most successful responses drew on the traditional connotations of the image and title and were able to link that to the representation of Frean but also to the wider context of an article in *The Times*. There were very few instances of candidates focusing solely on graphology without linking it to another language level and this was pleasing to see.

There were a greater proportion of responses this year that focused on the content rather than the language of the text. These responses took a largely discursive, almost narrative, approach to discussing the data and, as a result, were unable to engage with language features and patterns in the way that the question requires. Candidates must remember that the primary aim of the question is to explore how gender is represented through language features and patterns of language features.

The most successful responses:
- Looked at patterns of language across the text rather than considering each section separately.
- Clearly identified patterns in language use and explored these before exemplifying them clearly and exploring the example specifically.
- Considered the ways in which the text producer and the implied reader were represented, as well as the female gender more broadly.
- Integrated consideration of gender with the text's context in *The Times* and its purpose to allow writers to express annoyance.
- Were tentative in suggesting reasons for particular language patterns and their relation to concepts and contexts.

- Integrated linguistic and conceptual knowledge with the exploration of contexts.

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