
AS

English Language

Paper 1: Language and the Individual
Report on the Examination

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General

Now in its second year, it was clear that centres had prepared their students well for this paper. Students of all abilities accessed the data well showing a clear understanding of both texts; the differentiating factors were what the students then did with this understanding. The most successful students approached the tasks with an open mind and a real focus on representation whilst some were hindered by following a whole centre approach which did not always elicit the best responses.

Question 1

Assessment objectives for Question 1:

AO1:

Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression (10 marks).

AO3:

Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning (15 marks)

Question 1 invited students to write about meanings and representations in a transcript of a video clip entitled *Goths descend on UK seaside town of Whitby* from the BBC website. Students of all abilities showed a clear awareness of mode, purpose and audience. Many students, for example, wrote about the dual purpose of inform and entertain and recognised the possible specific audiences of the article (for example, Goths, viewers from Whitby or those with a specific interest in the weekend). Focusing solely on these contextual factors is a feature of band 2 of the mark scheme and centres should remind students of the need to exemplify contextual points by referencing specific examples from the data. It was, however, very pleasing to see that there were far few students this year failing to exemplify. It is also very pleasing to report that the number of students who tried very hard to focus on representation was significantly higher this year. In last year's Lead Examiner report, the lack of focus on representation was highlighted but it was far less of an issue this year. Students commented with confidence on the representation of:

- Goths and their commitment to the weekend
- Whitby as a tourist resort and how it has changed over time
- the financial benefits of the Goth Weekend
- those who attend the Goth Weekend (with a focus on diversity)

- the BBC and the presenter (knowledgeable, professional etc.)
- the Goth weekend (especially its evolution in the past 17 years)

Students who achieved the highest marks for AO3 considered all or most of these aspects of representation. Some students also discussed stereotypical representations, focusing on how these are challenged in the data by presenting goths in a particular manner (although at times, there were some rather sweeping generalisations of all goths being miserable, obsessed with vampires etc.)

With regard to AO1, many students were aware of the need to identify specific language features, use linguistic terminology and exemplify their points. In line with the mark scheme, students were solely rewarded for this accurate identification. This meant students whose responses were rooted in language points scored most highly on AO1 even if the subsequent analysis was not as strong. Schools and colleges are therefore encouraged to ensure that their students in future series annotate and identify a range of relevant language features prior to writing their response; a key word here is 'relevant'. Students need to be aware of the need to identify features which are of value to the task rather than any 'random' feature they have found. They should also be encouraged to be precise when identifying specific language features; for example they will be rewarded for identifying a 'first person subject pronoun' rather than just a 'pronoun'; they will get greater credit for labelling an example as a 'pre-modifying adjective' rather than using the term 'adjective'. Whilst the latter examples in these two scenarios will still be rewarded for AO1, students who achieved the highest marks offered that extra level of precision. Some common examples of students being precise included the identification of:

- non-fluency features such as voiced pauses, fillers and self-correction
- metaphors such as 'modern day Mecca', 'it just exploded'
- post-modifying adjectives such as 'diverse'
- pre-modifying adjectives such as 'vibrant', 'exclusive'
- noun phrases such as 'Goth spotters'

In addition to being precise, students who scored highly for AO1 also identified patterns. As an example of this, they recognised that language features do not always work in isolation and that a particular representation was achieved by the combined use of the second person pronoun, a modal verb and a noun phrase.

- Linking AO1 – AO3 was often a clear focus in students' responses. The most successful linked context to very specific language features, some less successful answers referenced

more general quotations whilst the weakest responses did not make any links. In last year's report, I highlighted how some schools and colleges had seemingly taught students to write a long opening paragraph on context without any reference to the data or language features. It was pointed out how this limited students' success on both AOs. Unfortunately, there were examples of this occurring again this series with students writing, in particular, an opening paragraph on audience and purpose but with no links to the data. Centres are reminded again of the need to reference the data when discussing AO3 if students are to achieve a mark in levels 3 and above (the criteria for level 3 clearly states 'link specific language choices with an aspect of context').

Question 2

Assessment objectives for Question 2:

AO1:

Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression (10 marks)

AO3:

Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning (15 marks)

With regard to question 2, many of the generic points about AO1 and AO3 in question 1 are applicable once again: the most successful students identified a range of language features for AO1 and explored AO3 in detail covering genre, audience, purpose and representation. Students, for example, discussed with confidence the genre of a blog and the various interactive aspects associated with this genre. Many also discussed the more specific audience of this text (as opposed to Text A) and how the writer is using his blog to share personal views and opinions as well as reporting on the weekend. Once again the best responses considered and analysed a range of representations:

- Goths: the old and new generation
- Whitby being 'divided' by different subcultures/visitors to the weekend
- the Goth weekend and how it has developed over time
- Whitby as a tourist attraction
- the financial benefits of the Goth Weekend
- the blogger

With regard to AO1, the students who achieved the lower marks tended to, yet again, identify a narrow range of features, used general terms such as ‘word’ or used linguistic terminology without any exemplification. It is important for schools and colleges to realise that to be credited for AO1 the student must give an example and label it accurately. Once again, the most successful students made judicious choices when identifying a good range of language features. Many identified, for example, the following precise features:

- metaphors such as ‘a line has been drawn...’
- noun phrases such as ‘the jolly-faced older generation’
- pre-modifying adjectives such as ‘peculiar’, ‘popular’
- use of first person subject pronoun ‘I’

To summarise, best practice was seen in questions 1 and 2 when students:

- identified a wide range of specific and relevant language features, using precise and accurate linguistic terminology when labelling
- linked these language features to a range of contextual factors, moving beyond audience, purpose and genre and considering a range of ideas regarding representation

Less successful responses for questions 1 and 2 included:

- a narrow range of language features identified by students (some only identifying two or three from the whole text) or a lack of precision when writing about language
- a lack of exemplification for AO1
- limited discussion of representation
- writing about context without any reference to the data

Question 3

Assessment objective for Question 3:

AO4: Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods (20 marks)

In the first series, a general pattern emerged of students possibly running out of time and the responses not being reflective of their ability or comparative to their achievement in Q1 and Q2. Thankfully, there was far less evidence of this in the summer 2017 paper. Many students responded very positively to the comparative task. Stronger responses made a series of valid connections involving linguistic features well as context and content. Students explored similarities and differences and such students also exemplified their points on language features that linked the texts. Centres should note that such links and references to language are indicative of the higher bands in the mark scheme. Less successful responses relied on paraphrasing the two texts or focusing only on contextual similarities and differences. It was pleasing to see that very few

students were awarded 1-3 marks; the vast majority of students did manage at least ‘one/two explicit connections’ in their response and even those who fell into this category were very much in the minority.

Some of the key links which students made included:

- the similar purposes of the texts
- the possible different intended audiences
- the different modes of speech and writing
- similar representation of Whitby as a tourist attraction
- similar representation of the financial benefits of the Goth Weekend
- representations of Goths
- specific language similarities: use of metaphor, modifiers, noun phrases

To summarise, best practice in Q3 was seen when students:

- compared and contrasted language, context and content offering a range of connections
- exemplified their discussion with specific language features, integrating linguistic knowledge into their comparisons.

Less successful responses to Q3 included:

a focus solely on content to compare and contrast

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks (*delete if appropriate*)

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)