



ASSESSMENT and
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Teacher Support Meeting

AS/A Level English Language Specification B

ENB2: Language and Social Contexts

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ENB2: Language and Social Contexts

Language and Technology

Introduction

This latest topic, the fifth to be included in Module 2, will make its first appearance in the January 2005 series (replacing Language and Gender). It will also be the last new topic under the current Specification. Following the principle of rotation one topic will continue to be replaced each January, but the combination of topics in future years will consist of three from the established five:

Language and Occupational Groups,
Language and Gender,
Language and Power,
English Dialects of The British Isles,
Language and Technology.

Resit candidates in the January series will have that one opportunity to attempt the replaced topic. Thus every January series will contain four questions, every June series three. AQA will give appropriate notice to Centres of the future annual change of topic.

Scope of the Topic

The short description of Language and Technology in the Specification for 2004-05, in keeping with the similar descriptions of other topics, was designed simply to indicate in very broad terms its scope and coverage. As part of a specific topic in this Module, the term “technology” should be interpreted as comprising just four media: telephone, radio, television and computer. In each case the central factor is how the medium shapes and dictates choices in verbal communication. The particular properties of the medium will determine the range of codes transmitted (verbal, prosodic and non-verbal) and will affect the nature of the message and its reception. Context therefore includes an appreciation of the medium and its social functions.

Types of Data

Clearly an extremely wide range of data is available for assessing this topic. In recognition of the several constraints that exist in teaching the Module, the data presented to candidates in any examination will therefore be limited to the following types:

Telephone medium:	Interaction on landline or mobile; Interaction through SMS (texting);
Radio and TV medium:	Spontaneous phone-ins; Commentaries on live events;
Computer medium:	Emails: private, newsgroup or message board; Webpages.

In order to understand context more fully candidates should have some knowledge of recent and contemporary technological developments and their social applications, but data presented in questions will generally be only a few years old, and in any case will not be earlier than 15 years from the date of the relevant examination. More detailed guidance on successful approaches to data-based questions in Module 2, and particularly to the importance of context, is provided in the Examiners' Reports for June 2002 and June 2003. Centres unfamiliar with these documents are strongly urged to obtain copies which can be viewed and down loaded from the *Qualifications* section of the AQA Website, www.aqa.org.uk Alternatively, copies can be ordered from the AQA Publications Department.

What will Questions Demand?

Questions on this topic will make similar demands to those for other topics. Candidates should be seeking to discover the linguistic characteristics of a particular text and to discuss in an informed and open-minded manner its use in a specific context. They should therefore be able to identify, describe and comment on the components of the language, essentially by judicious choice of key features from frameworks (AO3i). In addition they should be able to explore and discuss concepts and issues appropriate to the particular data (AO4), and relate these to context (AO5i). Needless to add, they should certainly not be seeking to find fault with the data, disapprove of its language use, or pronounce judgement on its users.

In addition to their general preparation for this Module, candidates studying Language and Technology should be aware of relevant lexical additions to the language (e.g. jargon, neologisms, acronyms, abbreviations, compounds) and of new meanings to existing words. They should recognise the grammatical compression evident in certain types of data, brought about by economies of time or space and realised through ellipsis and recently established conventions. They should also recognise that in some texts graphology is not so important per se as for its structural and interactive implications; and in relation to pragmatics they should be aware of the specific shared cultural knowledge necessary to using a medium (i.e. the collusive aspect), and ultimately be able to explain why particular language choices have been made.

Resources

Needless to say, books on discourse analysis are as relevant to this topic as they are to Language and Power. Introductions to language and technology can be found in:

Crystal, David (2nd – 2003) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of The English Language* CUP ISBN 0 521 82348 X (hbk) 0 521 53033 4 (pbk). See particularly ch.23 *Electronic variation*.

Goodman, S. & Graddol, D. ed. (1996) *Redesigning English* Routledge ISBN 0 415 13124 3 (pbk). See particularly ch.3 *English in cyberspace* by Simeon Yates.

Other books of central relevance include:

Baron, Naomi.S. (2001) *Alphabet to Email* Routledge ISBN 0 415 18686 2 (pbk).

Boardman, Mark (2004) *The Language of Websites* Routledge ISBN 0 415 32854 3 (pbk).

Crystal, David (2001) *Language and the Internet* CUP ISBN 0 521 80212 1 (hbk).

Shortis, Tim (2001) *The Language of ICT* Routledge (Intertext series) ISBN 0 415 22275 3 (pbk).

For recent background and general reference a comprehensive glossary of new terms and a guide to style is provided by:

Hale, C. & Scanlon, J. (1999) *Wired Style* Broadway Books New York ISBN 0 7679 0372 2 (pbk).

Websites of interest include:

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/websites.pdf>

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/itforschools/story/0,5500,221174,00.html>