



A-Level

English Language

7702/1 Language, the individual and society

Report on the Examination

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Summary

Overall performance compared to last year

Examiners were pleased to report that students' performance this summer was in line with last year's exam, and indeed, there were some very strong and assured responses that indicated that students were being very well prepared for this paper. This was evidenced in the quality of responses produced this year. Overall, responses showed clear understanding of task requirements, with detailed focus on textual meanings, representations and concepts, and these were explored in detail with close reference to linguistic detail.

Students responded strongly to all questions within Section A and examiners were impressed with the depth of analysis and thoughtfulness offered by many students. Text B was an older text than those used in recent years, published in 1808, so some students may have found the linguistic style challenging. However, examiners were pleased to report that there were no issues with this text choice. Examiners were pleased to report that students were performing well in responses to Question 3. Examiners saw fewer responses at the bottom end of the mark scheme, with students mostly reaching level 3 and above.

As seen in previous years, students tend to perform better for section A than for section B, and that was also the case this year. Whilst students showed detailed understanding of relevant theories and research, there was less detailed linguistic description of data offered. This was surprising, as students were clearly very able and capable of precise and focused linguistic analysis, as evidenced by the Section A responses. This may be an area that centres wish to focus on for future exams.

Data Set A was quite brief, with interactions between the two children sometimes limited to one word or two-word utterances. Despite this, there was a lot of detail that students could explore. It did, however, require a little closer focus than perhaps we've seen in recent years. As has been the trend in recent years, there were very few responses to Question 5. This was a shame as the data set was interesting with lots of detail that could be explored.

Areas where students excelled

- Section A was handled very successfully, with students exploring a range of representations in the texts and showing good understanding of wider social contexts to inform their analyses.
- Students responded equally well to text A and text B, showing assurance with application of analytical tools to explore ideas within texts of very different ages and genres.
- Examiners saw stronger performance for question 3 than in previous years, where students had rooted comparisons between texts in key representations and explored these with reference to carefully selected language detail.
- Students demonstrated confidence with language labelling, particularly for Section A.

Areas where students struggled

- For section A some students made some very effective points about contexts and representations, but didn't link comments to specific linguistic detail, leading to descriptive responses.
- Section B was responded to less successfully than Section A, showing less focused analysis and less secure labelling of linguistic features.
- The data and statements for Section B proved challenging for some students. These students struggled to establish which theories aligned most successfully with the given statements.
- Linguistic description across all sections of the paper was sometimes unclear, lacking clear exemplification of points or referring broadly to features such as semantic fields.
- Some students didn't plan their timings effectively, leading to some very brief and incomplete responses to some questions.

Assessment objectives

AO	Common student errors
AO1 (Question 1 and 2 and 4 or 5) Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.	• Provided quotations without offering any linguistic description. • Offered lengthy quotations where the elements being described were not made clear, e.g. referred to noun phrases or adjectives within full sentences without clarification of which elements were specifically being discussed. • Described whole clauses or sentences as phrases. • Described semantic fields with reference to only one word choice, thus not a semantic group. • Described all sentences as simple or complex as a 'catch-all' description. This were often inaccurate or lacked clear exemplification. • Confused word classes, e.g. labelled 'a slap' as a verb. • Offered minimal linguistic detail, sometimes not extending beyond one or two descriptions. This was frequently the case in responses to Question 4 but was also evidenced in responses to the Section A questions. • Used a very general register, e.g. 'word', showing limited knowledge and application of linguistic terminology.
AO2 (Question 4 or 5) Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use.	• Listed all their knowledge about the topic, not always with relevance to the question. • Referenced relevant theory but without clear development of ideas, introducing ideas but then not commenting on them in detail. • Applied theory that was not appropriate to the task. This was particularly the case for Question 5

	where students tried to apply spoken theory to children's writing examples. • Answered a pre-planned essay question, often a nature versus nurture debate, ignoring the question that had actually been set.
A03 (Question 1 and 2) Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning.	• Offered a descriptive response to the texts, beginning at the start of each piece and working their way steadily through the texts to explain the content. • Quoted single words or phrases and explained what they meant, rather than interpreting or analysing how meanings were impacted by contextual factors. • Focused on a very small part of each text. This did not allow for discussion of different ideas and views and how they were presented throughout the texts. • Made some sweeping generalisations about Australia, or life in 1808. • Were distracted by their own views about some of the issues raised in the texts, leading to a drift away from analysis of the actual texts.
A04 (Question 4) Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods.	• Offered some broad and literal comparisons based on age of the texts, mode, genre and possible audiences, without extending the discussion to consider linguistic examples and details. • Offered an analysis of the two texts rather than discussing comparisons and connections between them. • Began with a clear point of comparison but then drifted into a discussion of each text separately, without returning to ideas about the stated links or comparisons. • Offered discussion of some wider social, cultural and historical contexts but did not link these to specific examples of language use, leading to very general discussion.

Individual questions

Question 1

Analyse how **Text A** uses language to create meanings and representations.

Text A is an article from Mail Online published in 2020. It is about a campaign in Australia to remove statues of the 18th century explorer Captain James Cook.

How students did well

Students did well when they:

- were able to engage in detail with different representations of Cook, the protestors and people in support of keeping the statue.
- explored ideas about power through analysis of the journalist's descriptions of some of the different people within the text, such as referring to protestors generally, 'one woman', in comparison with the more respectful address of authoritative figures such as the Prime Minister.
- engaged with specific language details that positioned the audience as rejecting the stance of protestors.
- explored how material verbs were used, such as 'torn down', 'two other statues...have already been defaced', 'ripping the pages', suggesting the violence and irrationality of protestors.
- explored how this audience positioning was emphasised through punctuation choices, such as enclosing abstract nouns 'colonialism and genocide' in inverted commas to cast doubt on the assertions about Cook's role in these atrocities.
- evaluated the journalistic context to consider whether Mail Online was being neutral, presenting bias subtly through their language choices, or if they were responding to the global social contexts of the time (BLM).
- offered relevant and perceptive comments about wider cultural and social factors, referencing ideas about colonialism, rights of Indigenous people, British power and rule, as well as recent events such as BLM which may have driven this wave of protests.
- supported these points with carefully chosen linguistic description, applying terms accurately and precisely to analyse and evaluate representations in detail.
- referred to a wide range of features from the text, including noun phrases, verb choices, a variety of verb tenses and varied sentence and clause types.
- were able to comment on how these language choices were used to shape textual meanings, such as the use of passive voice to place emphasis on the destruction of the statue.

How students did less well

Students did less well when they:

- were led by AO1: this meant that they focused heavily on linguistic description, labelling features in detail but not engaging with textual meanings, contexts and representations.
- followed the pattern of providing quotations with linguistic labels but with minimal discussion of the effect of these features.
- focussed on the contexts of the text, referring to ideas about Captain Cook's statue and the protestors in some detail, but lacking any linguistic description.
- applied inaccurate labels to language features, frequently confusing word classes, for example describing 'forced' as a verb without considering its use within the noun phrase 'forced removal'.
- edited quotations from the text to fit their language descriptions.
- described features as a 'pattern' without recognising patterning of features across the text.
- were distracted by their own thoughts about colonialism or BLM, which led to some move away from analysis of language detail and features which created these ideas and representations within the text.

Question 2

Analyse how **Text B** uses language to create meanings and representations.

Text B is an extract from a book titled *The History of Cleveland*, written by Reverend John Graves in 1808. In a section of the village of Marton, Yorkshire, Graves writes about the achievements of Captain James Cook, who was born there.

How students did well

Students did well when they:

- commented on the positive descriptions of Captain Cook within the text.
- offered detailed and thoughtful analyses.
- engaged with the genre of the text as a history book and a local history focussed on Yorkshire.
- responded in detail to the varied representations of Cook within the text, discussing his achievements, legacy, personal ambitions and determination, linked to specific linguistic detail
- explored the writer's reverence for Cook as almost God-like.
- placed this within the local and regional context.
- considered the significance of religion at the time of publication, evaluating the implications of a Reverend describing Captain Cook in such glorified terms.
- explored ideas about patriotic attitudes to Britain's colonial ambitions that Cook had helped to fulfil.
- identified a range of features, including noun phrases, conditional clauses and a variety of modal verb choices.

- identified grammatical patterns in the data of repeated complex, multi-clausal sentences.
- analysed these not only as typical of the time period but linked them to representations of Cook, such as the use of a syndetic list of verbs and the power of adjectives to represent the writer's attitudes to Cook.
- provided sustained reference to language features in detail to explore textual meanings, contexts and representations.

How students did less well

Students did less well when they:

- offered extensive linguistic description but with little discussion of textual meanings and contexts.
- engaged with ideas about Cook and his fame but didn't offer linguistic details to explore these ideas in detail.
- found the older style of the text challenging and found it difficult to move beyond the long S and complexity of sentence types .
- attempted to apply linguistic labels with limited accuracy, such as confusing word classes.
- over-stated the significance of the pronoun 'he' and 'his'
- confused dynamic and stative verbs.
- referred to semantic fields without clear exemplification, sometimes with only one example of a single word, and sometimes with no exemplification at all.
- did not engage with the genre of the text as a history book and a local history focused on Yorkshire which led to missed opportunities to consider contextual factors in detail
- assumed that Cook was Australian, so missed the fact that this was a text celebrating a local, Yorkshire person of note.
- offered their personal thoughts about the ideas expressed within the text and their own response to colonialism and often struggled to move past these to analyse the language use within the text.

Question 3

Explore the similarities and differences in the ways that **Text A** and **Text B** use language.

How students did well

Students did well when they:

- compared language features across the two texts so were able to move into level 3.
- linked language with aspects of context and representation.
- began their comparisons with a focus on language which proved a useful starting point from which they could then explore wider ideas and representations.
- compared language features such as syndetic listing, the role and function of graphological features, proper nouns and noun phrases and verb choices.
- developed their focus on language comparisons to discuss how these features linked to wider contextual factors, such as changing attitudes towards Cook and his legacy over time.

- evaluated these shifting attitudes in light of the texts themselves, especially in comparison of a history book and an online article.
- considered the role of the text producers in shaping the information for their audiences.
- reflected on changing attitudes towards colonialism and imperialism.

How students did less well

Students did less well when they:

- took the opportunity to extend the analysis of their texts for Questions 1 and 2 and so did not fully engage with comparisons and connections between the texts.
- simply repeated their analysis from the earlier responses neglecting to engage with the requirements for this task.
- offered some interesting ideas about different representations within the two texts, but without linking to language detail.
- offered quite broad comparisons, noting differences of genre, the age of the texts and audiences, but without considering language detail.
- produced short or partially complete responses due to time constraints and time management.
- rushed their responses as they were keen to move on to Section B.

Question 4

‘Experimenting with language is essential to a child’s language development.’

Referring to **Data Set 1** in detail, and to relevant ideas from language study, evaluate this view of children’s language development.

Data Set 1: David (4 years, 8 months) and Seth (1 year, 10 months) are talking in the back of their father’s car. They are on their way home for their evening meal after spending the day with their grandparents.

How students did well

Students did well when they:

- made close reference to a range of features, mainly adjacency pairs, imperatives, types of nouns and prosody.
- labelled structural patterns of the interaction, such as the use of imperatives, linking these to David’s role in leading the discussion and resulting in the subsequent pattern of Seth’s use of concrete nouns.
- discussion of verb + object patterns, sometimes linked to Brown’s classification of syntactic structures.
- referred to examples of simple structures as illustrative of child directed speech strategies.
- provided some detailed description of phonological features.
- demonstrated secure knowledge of a range of theories and research.

- were able to discuss ideas about social interaction and the role of the more knowledgeable other, whether that was David or Dad.
- addressed Behaviourist views in some detail, with clear reference to imitation and reinforcement.
- referenced Chomsky and discussed ideas about Universal Grammar.
- took examples from outside the data, such as reference to Berko-Gleason's study.
- engaged with strategies to shape Seth's schema.
- addressed ideas about cognitive stages of development or object permanence
- discussed Seth's use of 'indowdoor' as illustrating affixation and morphological structures.
- referred to Tomasello and engaged with ideas about intention-reading and pattern-finding.
- engaged with the nature of experimentation, seeing it as a factor of play and evaluating its pragmatic function.

How students did less well

Students did less well when they:

- struggled to engage with the focus on experimentation, showing less certainty with the application of relevant theory.
- provided detailed accounts of learned theory, discussing ideas surrounding nature and nurture, thus losing focus on the actual question.
- tended to drift from the data set, with minimal focus on the exchange between David, Seth and their father.
- attempted to apply innatist views, but not always successfully, such as describing aspects of Seth's language as featuring virtuous errors.
- noted cognitive development but did not discuss it in detail.

Question 5

'Giving detailed scaffolding to guide children's writing is the most effective way to develop their skills.'

Referring to **Data Set 2** in detail, and to relevant ideas from language study, evaluate this view of children's language development.

Data Set 2: Written at school by Miles, aged 8, in his English Skills book.

How students did well

Students did well when they:

- considered the teacher's role in scaffolding Miles' writing.
- reflected on the purpose and function of the learning objectives to guide and support writing development.
- referred to behaviourist views, reinforcement and the role of a more knowledgeable other were effective in considering the teacher's role.

- commented about the teacher's input and how this shaped Miles' second attempt at his writing.
- provided thoughtful comments about creativity, accuracy and rule-based approaches.
- referred to theories, mainly Abbott, Rothery and Barclay.
- discussed stages of literacy development as well as ideas about genre.
- reflected on the requirements of the national curriculum.
- offered detailed description of Miles' construction of a narrative and his use of descriptive language, noun phrases and adjectives to construct his imagined world.
- analysed Miles' shaping of language to meet multiple purposes: to entertain through this imagined world, but also to promote his planet using discourses typical of holiday advertising.

How students did less well

Students did less well when they:

- evidently hadn't studied literacy development.
- attempted to apply spoken child language theories to written data with only partial success.
- focussed unconvincingly on Chomsky and Piaget given the data set and question focus.
- offered little linguistic description, sometimes identifying a couple of examples from the data but not applying any terminology to discuss them.
- adopted a deficit approach, focused primarily on Miles' errors rather than on the work that he had produced.
- criticised the teacher, with statements about how the teacher's lack of intervention would lead to poor lifelong literacy skills, thus showing limited understanding of different strategies that can be used to scaffold development of children's writing skills.

Further support

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