



A Level **English Language**

7702/C

Report on the NEA

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Summary

Overall performance compared to last year

Student performance was very similar to last year with a slightly higher mean mark overall. The quality of marking continued to be of a very high standard. Moderators enjoyed reading the range of work and were grateful for the very clear and accurate assessment by teachers.

Students produced a wide range of language investigations on different topics and with different methodologies, as in previous years. It was good to see so many students engaging with their subject matter and focusing on issues that were important to them. This year, there were more investigations looking at representation of social issues (eg migration, racist riots, international conflicts, misogyny online).

The best original writing often showed a clear and conceptualised grasp of the form and genre being used, with a sense that the writer was manipulating the structure and register to achieve their purposes. A wide range of forms and genres was used by students, with some excellent work produced.

AO2 was often an area where students (and some of the marking) were a little uncertain. It is important to have a bigger linguistic question at work behind the analysis, with ideas from language study providing a foundation for exploring this. AO2 contains two strands, both relating to 'ideas from language study'.

The first is the design of the methodology itself which needs to be informed by ideas from language study in the sense that linguistic methodologies should be studied and evaluated before students decide which approach to use with their own data. One way to build more understanding of this strand is to look at the methodologies used by linguists in various studies over the last 50 years, perhaps as part of work on 7702/2 in areas such as regional and social variation and language and gender.

The second strand of AO2 is about the application of theory, linguistic concepts and research to the investigations, and more specifically, to the analysis and interpretation of the data. In previous reports and AQA training sessions, many other suggestions have been offered about more relevant and contemporary research that can be used; centres would be strongly advised to make use of these in future series.

Areas where students excelled

- Application of language levels to data
- Engagement with choice of topics
- Range of forms and genres for original writing
- Effective use of style model to inform the commentary

Areas where students struggled

- Effectively discussing reasons for data selection
- Applying and integrating relevant ideas from language study
- Integrating AO1 and AO3 in the analysis of the investigation to reflect understanding of the impact of contextual factors on text producers' language choices.
- Addressing genre effectively in the commentary

Assessment objectives

AO	Common student errors
AO1 Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.	• Treating all 2nd person pronouns as a form of ‘synthetic personalisation’. • Using a purely quantitative methodology (ie counting features of language) without engaging with specific examples in context. • Using a very technical and terminology-heavy style while forgetting to communicate clearly and concisely. • Going significantly beyond word count and losing control of the shape and structure of the investigation.
AO2 Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use.	• Reliance on very general understanding of theory and concepts. • Reliance on outdated and inappropriate gender theory for the data being analysed (eg applying theory from spoken interaction uncritically to written texts; relying on Lakoff & Jespersen to support discussion of very specific interactional contexts). • Neglecting discussion of the rationale for data collection in the methodology. • Overly ambitious and unachievable aims in a 2000-word investigation. • Lack of discussion of genre and/or form when writing the commentary.
AO3 Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning.	• Lack of awareness of specific contextual factors to language use (eg how a character’s language in a script/novel might have been crafted to represent them in a certain way; how a speaker’s choices might be influenced by their communicative aims rather than just their identity).

A04 Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods.	• Lack of balance in the quotations and examples from the style model and the original writing.
A05 Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways.	• Tense consistency in narrative writing. • Capturing a sense of individual voice in opinion or review writing.

Individual elements

Language Investigations

How students did well

Students did well when they:

- weighed up different options for data collection: the kind of data, its sources, the ways in which different variables might be at work, the validity of the methodology etc
- applied their grasp of linguistic approaches to help them make sense of the ways in which language works around them in the real world.
- used critical discourse approaches, which were often very helpful in unpicking the ideologies and positions behind the language
- recorded, transcribed and analysed their own data, with political debates and discussion shows (TV, podcasts, radio) once again featuring prominently
- used data from social media and messaging apps– WhatsApp, Twitter/X, TikTok, Instagram and other platforms
- drew on useful rhetorical frameworks and were able to make use of more specific research
- offered a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches, often identifying interesting patterns of language at a bigger picture level before zooming in for more detail
- explored patterns and complexities
- applied more relevant and up-to-date theory and research
- showed evidence of detailed and wide-ranging language analysis,
- used accurate terminology to describe strategies and patterns of communication at a discourse and text level
- showed evidence of detail, range and precision in the use of linguistic terminology, not just for word classes, phrases and lexical choices, but also for phonology, graphology and more demanding syntactical patterns
- used critical discourse analysis which enabled a very close link between AO1 labels and productive AO3 meanings and representations in context
- analysed useful avenues for interpretation passive voice, agentless passives, nominalisation, modal verbs, conceptual metaphors and patterns of semantics
- explored discourse structure, rhetorical strategies and discourse-pragmatic/orthographical features such as emoji, typographical tone of voice and punctuation in analysis of online texts
- focussed on the functions of language as well as the forms in spoken language analysis
- explored the strategies that people use in interaction
- engaged with the substance of research and theory, applying these ideas to the data being analysed
- chose to explore issues of power in relation to spoken interaction
- ranged more widely or made use of more contemporary research and ideas (eg applying Shaw to political debates, using Cameron's ideas to challenge gender as being the main influence in certain interactions, using Holmes to consider the functions of language in interaction).

How students did less well

Students did less well when they:

- described what they would do with their data without fully explaining what their data was, where it was coming from or why they had selected that data and not something different.
- planned methodologies that were not realistic and manageable in the space of a 2000-word investigation.
- tried to explore too many aims
- did not account for variables
- made too much use of transcripts of police interviews and second-hand sources (eg interviews with serial killers and/or court reports)
- used data that had not been recorded and transcribed by the student, with much of the context missing
- treated scripted speech as spontaneous and ignored the representational dimensions
- focussed on political speeches where the original speech was not in English
- relied too heavily on general spoken interaction research, which was often limited in its relevance to their specific contexts
- analysed texts, without reference to ideas from language study
- just namechecked a theorist or study
- relied on a very narrow range of theorists and studies in many investigations into gender
- applied Zimmerman & West to political debates, Lakoff and/or Tannen to classroom discourse or courtroom exchanges and Jespersen to anything
- focussed on gender when it was not genuinely a significant factor: for example, many students chose to analyse data from the Harris-Trump debate from 2024, using gender as their focus, but so many other variables were at work alongside this and arguably much more significant than gender: political ideology, age, ethnicity, social and occupational background and individual personality
- simply counted the number of times certain features were being used and did not look at specific examples in enough (or any) detail.

Original writing and commentary

How students did well

Students did well when they:

- made their own choices of form and genre and wrote a text in which they were able to showcase their skills
- developed an individual voice where the writer's personality shone through in the best opinion pieces and reviews
- wrote narrative-based pieces that were controlled, carefully structured and written with a balance of flair and clarity
- discussed and reflected on the similarities and differences between their piece and their style model
- had a good understanding of genre and demonstrated a very clear understanding of the generic conventions of the style model and how these could be used and manipulated

- made references to world-building in fictional genres, to structural considerations in journalistic pieces and to dramatic conventions in pieces such as monologues
- selected a high-quality style model.

How students did less well

Students did less well when they:

- produced ‘transformations’ of the style model ie changed the genre or form
- used the style model’s content for inspiration for writing in a different genre
- tried to impress with extensive and elaborate vocabulary choices while forgetting actually to make a clear point, tell a coherent story or construct a cogent argument
- wrote news-based pieces which rarely worked well for the original writing because they relied too heavily on factual information and did not allow for a voice to emerge
- wrote poetry and song lyrics which were difficult to execute well unless the student was already very familiar with these forms and alert to their many and varied conventions.
- mimicked the views and opinions of the style model when writing reviews
- used poor style models (eg self-published or anonymously sourced online writing)
- did not make enough specific language connections between their own pieces and the style model.
- did not reference a style model at all (in these cases the maximum mark that can be given for the commentary was 7)
- did not proofread and reread carefully, not just for basic spelling and grammar errors, but for clarity of communication.

Administration and some final notes

The new system of submission seemed to work extremely well in the vast majority of cases. Thanks must be given to teachers and centre staff for making this transition so smoothly.

Some things to ensure:

- Each page is scanned in and uploaded (not every other page of double-sided work).
- Pages are scanned in using the same orientation throughout, wherever possible.
- Pages are numbered so that errors can be spotted quickly.
- Pages are scanned in the right order and the elements of the NEA are in the right order.
- That teacher comments and summative comments, along with evidence of internal moderation are evident on the work itself.
- All elements are uploaded in one document.

This was a year in which moderators reported many more concerns about the use of generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) in the NEA. It is hard to think of any positive use for these in the production of NEA work, because any use of LLM must be factored in to the marking of the work and if any part of the work is not the student’s own, the marks have to be adjusted to take that into account.

Any use of AI must be noted on the Candidate Record Forms and quite detailed guidance is offered by JCQ about how teachers and centres should approach this. In brief, any short-term gains that students think they might accrue by outsourcing their thinking or planning to generative AI, will be lost when it comes to assessing the work, and any attempt to use generative AI to write their work will be treated as malpractice.

Further support

Mark ranges and award of grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [results statistics](#) page of our website.

Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

Use our exam results analysis tool to create and customise as many different reports for comparison as you like.

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