

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

H070

For first teaching in 2015

H070/02 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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Paper 2 series overview

In Section A, candidates were instructed to write a blog that critically engages with 'how male-centred our written and spoken language is'. Most candidates were able to differentiate between the journalistic style required to respond to this question, in comparison to Question 2 or 3, which was analytical. In Section B, a larger proportion of candidates chose to answer Question 2 which was based on Language and Power, instead of Question 3 which was based on Language and Gender - this was also evident in the 2022 exam series. All candidates correctly and clearly labelled the question that they were answering.

Few candidates did not have issues with timing on the paper. A minority of candidates skilfully constructed a very lengthy response to Section A obtaining Level 6 marks, however this resulted in Section B being somewhat thin or in some cases unfinished, which did have an impact on the marks. In future series, candidates are encouraged to spend an appropriate amount of time on each section, taking into account the number of marks available for each. A proportion of candidates chose to answer Section B (36 marks) before Section A (24 marks).

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wrote with individuality and flair, curating a realistic voice suitable for a blog • analysed patterns of language in depth and made reference to semantic fields, using appropriate examples • used subject terminology consistently • offered alternative interpretations of patterns and features • demonstrated an assured understanding of concepts and theories • explored the impact of a range of contexts in detail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wrote without consideration of the form or audience • ignored or did not engage with patterns of language • presented a discursive response • used little subject terminology • focused on presenting 'learned knowledge' of theory without linking to the data • vaguely made reference to context and repeated the same or similar points.

Section A Overview

This question was a strength of a majority of responses. Many candidates were able to provide examples of male-centred language. Most candidates used the appropriate tone for a blog and used un glossed jargon, humour and rhetorical flourishes to engage the audience.

Question 1

'If you examine how we usually express ourselves, you will see how male-centred our written and spoken language is.'

- 1 Write a blog that critically engages in any way with the statement above and persuades readers to agree with a particular point of view. Your article should be aimed at a non-specialist, reasonably well-educated audience. You should write about 500 words. **[24]**

Candidates answered this question by focusing on patriarchal and sexist discourses, commonly referring to concepts including marital names and titles. In addition, many candidates used a wide range of examples consisting of contrasting terms to reference men and women in society. Male-centric words and marked terms such as 'mankind' and 'fireman' were commonly used as examples to demonstrate how gender stereotypes are colluded to. In some cases, candidates were able to challenge the status quo by referring to gender-neutral terms such as 'firefighter'. Furthermore, candidates used the following example of the riddle below, to argue that language and certain occupations such as a 'surgeon', is associated with males.

'... a father and son are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad. The son is rushed to the hospital; just as he's about to go under the knife, the surgeon says, "I can't operate—that boy is my son!".'

A large proportion of candidates were able to use a cohesive structure in the blog and understood the elements and tone required to suit the purpose and audience. Candidates commonly introduced themselves, made links to previous blogs and ended with a summary of the key points in addition to topics to be discussed in the next blog. Many candidates modulated the register to suit a non-specialist audience. For example, in cases where the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or Lakoff was interweaved, candidates would explain the jargon used to simplify complex concepts. Taboo lexis was used and carefully placed - in most cases the effect was considered carefully, and it usually contributed to the form and purpose. This was an improvement in comparison to previous years where candidates did not always use taboo lexis appropriately. Rhetorical questions were used effectively along with relatable anecdotes to hook the audience. Some candidates created a title for their blog, and others did not. This small, yet key feature, in most cases contributed to the recognisable structure.

The most effective blogs demonstrated originality and flair. For instance, one candidate wrote from the perspective of a children's book author. This candidate utilised well-placed humour in the opening and referred to experiencing male-centred language in stories over the years, curating a realistic voice.

Exemplar 1

Hello my friends! Hope you're all having a lovely summer.

Today we'll be having a look at how male-centred our language has a tendency to be, even when we don't mean it. If you missed my last post on politicians, ^{be} sure to check it out.

Firstly, let's address those common misconceptions about how women "let their tongues run free" and how females supposedly never stop talking. Aside from the obvious generalisation this statement is and the implications it ^{carries} ~~implies~~ of women's language, it is also incorrect.

Jaret Hyde's recent survey discovered that women speak only 0.11% more than men - ~~an~~ almost a far cry from the loudmouths women are often supposed to be. In addition, Zimmerman and West's ^{study} ~~survey~~ concluded ~~that~~ that 96% of interruptions in mixed-sex conversations - an overwhelming majority - are made by ^{men} ~~men~~. This indicates that men are overwhelmingly ~~as~~ in control of conversations. Perhaps that old folk saying disguises the fact that we are really the ones who have a tendency to speak too much, which is something we should try to avoid.

This candidate demonstrated originality and flair throughout the response, skilfully constructing the blog. The theories and concepts that this candidate made reference to demonstrate a secure understanding of this topical language issue.

Assessment for learning



The use of form is clear and this candidate has appropriately considered the audience and purpose.

Blog writing

Another example of an original blog that demonstrated flair was segmented by the candidate, with corresponding sub-headings. These consisted of five sections that were named:

- The mouthing of men
- It's a man's world and we're just living in it!
- This one's for my girls
- Say it with a smile
- Cultural contexts
- Forever evolving

In some instances, candidates struggled to understand the AO5 requirements of writing a blog, and instead wrote in an essay style, which did not meet the needs of the audience.

Relevant theories used by candidates in this series

Male firstness

Androcentric language

Marked and unmarked terms

Linguistic relativity, determinism

Dominance, deficit, difference and diversity

Gender stereotypes

Gender neutrality

Section B overview

Text A was an article from *The Guardian's* website that considered the dangers of posting negative comments about an employer on social media. Text B was an online version of an article published in the magazine *Dancing Times*. Most candidates understood the rubric and answered Question 2 or Question 3. Centres are to be praised for well-preparing candidates. It was rare that candidates compared the texts, although this did occur and did negatively impact the marks given. Many candidates understood that the primary focus was to analyse the ways in which language was used to represent power or gender, evaluating how contextual factors inherent in the text were associated with the construction of meaning. In some cases, candidates were descriptive in their approach to the question, which did impact the marks given.

Centres would do well to remind their candidates that this is a language-focused question and that lexical choices, the use of graphological features, and grammatical structures, should be explored in a balanced manner. Many candidates missed the opportunity to analyse the graphology in otherwise strong responses.

Question 2

2 Language and Power

Read **Text A** in your **Resource Booklet** and answer the question.

Using appropriate terminology, examine **Text A** in the light of the ways in which power is represented. In your answer you should:

- analyse the relevant language features of the text
- explore how contextual factors and language features construct meanings
- consider the ways in which your understanding of concepts and issues relating to power in language use illuminates the representation of power within the text. **[36]**

This question featured an article from *The Guardian*, with the author considering the dangers of posting negative comments about an employer on social media. Many candidates were able to refer to the author Philip Landau and his status as an employment lawyer at Landau Zeffertt Weir, which contributed to the representation of power in the text.

Higher-level responses analysed the intertextual reference to the Orwellian 'Big Brother' and discussed the employer being represented as an all-powerful dictator, which enforces a sense of fear in the reader if the advice given in the article was not followed, making links to influential power. Impressively, these candidates were able to identify patterns of language and analysed contrasting semantic fields within the text, linking to convergence and divergence. For example, some candidates were able to contrast the low frequency, polysyllabic lexis used, such as 'tribunal', 'disciplinary' and 'dismissal', with the high frequency lexis consisting of colloquial idioms such as 'land you in trouble' and 'venting their spleen', subsequently exploring the text producer and text receiver's relationship and power. Furthermore, responses of this calibre analysed the graphology of the title '*How your Facebook status could put you out of work*'.

They were able to discuss the function and effect of the bold font and the magnifying glass, while commenting on the juxtaposition of the collocation '*Facebook status*' with the threatening idiom ('*put you out of work*'), to display influential power through framing the agenda of the article as a necessity, outlining the severity of the situation and contributing to an ominous tone.

These candidates used a range of theories and applied them critically, consistently offering a discerning exploration of context.

Lower-level responses gained higher marks for AO1 than AO2 and AO3. These candidates were able to spot a range of relevant features that contributed to power; however, the responses were largely descriptive, with some attempts to make general comments on the context. While this did contribute to some marks being given, candidates are encouraged to show a firmer understanding of concepts and theories at this level to attain higher marks for AO2. Furthermore, candidates who did demonstrate a sound understanding of concepts and theory at this level were repeatedly making reference to the same ones throughout the essay; therefore, a variety is encouraged.

Question 3

3 Language and Gender

Read **Text B** in your **Resource Booklet** and answer the question.

Using appropriate terminology, examine **Text B** in the light of the ways in which gender is represented. In your answer you should:

- analyse the relevant language features of the text
- explore how contextual factors and language features construct meanings
- consider the ways in which your understanding of concepts and issues relating to gender in language use illuminates the representation of gender within the text. [36]

This question featured an online version of an article originally published in the magazine *Dancing Times*. The text itself focused on Dianne Buswell talking to Nicola Rayner, about a new touring show called '*Here Come the Girls*'. Successful responses were able to engage with the ways in which gender, male and female, was represented by the language of the text. These responses explored a wide range of language features which challenged or confirmed traditional gender stereotypes, frequently linking the dominance and difference models.

Perceptive responses analysed the use of 'three dancers' besides 'male professional', which implied that the female dancers were not professional in comparison to the males, due the lack of description and positively marking the males. This was linked by many to the Sapir-Whorf concept of Linguistic Determinism. These candidates were also able to comment on the juxtaposing graphology – the image of Buswell in a commanding pose, linking this to gender representation. Contrastingly, some candidates analysed Buswell's use of lexis, as she referred to the male dancers as 'boys'. This repetition throughout – the presentation of women as the dominant gender, while highlighting Buswell's feminist lens - was further supported by quotations such as 'sisters are doing it for themselves'.

Many candidates identified examples to demonstrate that Buswell's speech conformed to traditional gender expectations while linking this to Lakoff, by analysing examples such as the hedging 'a little bit', the effusive adjective 'supersweet', and the repetition of the intensifier 'really'. In some instances, although rarer, candidates supported their analysis by exploring Buswell's reference to Chloe Hewitt as 'Little Miss Sunshine'. Candidates also critically and perceptively applied Lakoff's theory, challenging gender stereotypes which examiners considered very skilled.

It was rare that a candidate referred to the discrete contextual information at the end of the text, which was an opportunity to make links to context and gender representation perceptively. In addition, few candidates made reference to 'I'm a little bit crazy', which was an opportunity to link to Pilkington.

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