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# **AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
AS**

**SUMMER 2016**

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## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

AS

Summer 2016

### COMPOONENT 1: ANALYSIS OF TEXTS IN CONTEXT

*Principal Examiner:* Kristina Petrova-Hill

Generally candidates were well prepared for this unit, and demonstrated an increasingly sound understanding of the assessment objectives; some candidates made precise analytical points, achieving marks for unpicking specific aspects of language and for probing the texts confidently. The choice of texts proved accessible, enabling strong candidates to obtain the higher marks, while giving enough opportunities for less capable candidates to construct often sensible discussions.

#### Section A: Spoken Language of the Media

Candidates were asked to analyse two transcripts of programmes from television and radio in which hosts and guests interacted in different ways. Text A was an extract from the BBC's *Question Time*, during which David Dimbleby moderated a discussion between Ed Miliband, the Labour Party leader, and Nigel Farage, the leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), both of whom were in the midst of campaigning for the 2015 United Kingdom general election. In this extract, Dimbleby had to impose himself as host at a point where Farage had inadvertently offended the live studio audience for the debate, implying that the members of the audience had clearly been selected for their anti-UKIP bias. By contrast, Text B was a transcript of an extract from BBC Radio 2's *The Graham Norton Radio Show*, onto which popstar Will Young had been invited to promote the release of his latest album. More successful candidates could discern that unlike the first transcript, which illustrates a tussle for dominance between host and participant, and among participants, Text B presents a humorous mock confrontation between host and guest, and a mock offending of the audience by the host, who describes 92 year old people using the post-modified noun phrase "our demographic, frankly".

In terms of methods and approaches to answering this question, candidates demonstrated a range of successful strategies. Some chose to analyse Text A in detail, before moving on to a discussion of Text B which drew out the points of comparison and contrast between it and Text A. Others adopted a different strategy, which entailed taking a more thematic approach and comparing and contrasting both texts throughout their response. There are merits in both approaches, and done well both can enable candidates to produce perceptive comparisons and increasingly insightful discussion of how the turn-taking in each transcript reveals the respective texts' complex pragmatics, e.g. political versus cultural and personal. It is worth reminding centres that AO4 is worth two-fifths of the marks for this question. Therefore, connections across the two texts should be teased out. A further key point for centres is that AO1, which rewards candidates' methods of analysis and use of terminology, should cover not only spoken terms, such as turn-taking, utterance, prosody and vocative, but also basic linguistic terms, such as word classes and types of noun phrases.

Text A, the *Question Time* debate, proved increasingly challenging for candidates; most were able to comment on the formality of the event, and on the fluency of Ed Miliband

(EM); some even claimed that EM's extended opening utterance seemed heavily pre-planned. Candidates also confidently discussed David Dimbleby's (DD) ease at managing the agenda of the discussion, for example through the vocative "Nigel Farage", and his ability to take charge once Nigel Farage (NM) had delivered his rebuke to the audience using the clause "this lot's pretty left wing". It also appeared evident to candidates that after this point of the transcript the level of non-fluency increased, as Farage was fighting to regain control, until his final extended utterance. However, only perceptive candidates were able to correctly interpret the use of irony in Farage's adverbial phrase "very carefully", in response to Dimbleby's statement that the audience "had been carefully chosen". Here, Farage's cynicism about the even-handedness of the debate, and the balance of the studio audience, seemed to confound many candidates.

Text B, *The Graham Norton Radio Show* interview with Will Young, proved equally challenging, while enabling candidates of all abilities to make some sensible points. Most candidates appropriately identified the references to gardening, such as in the nouns "lettuces" and "tomatoes", as somewhat unusual in the context of a pop-cultural promotion interview with a music star. Some candidates identified this as phatic talk, and others commented on Will Young's ease in presenting himself in an appealing manner to all ages. Most candidates were able to draw out the contrast between the formality of Text A and the informality of Text B, as seen in the use of colloquialisms such as "dude". As in Text A, more successful responses examined Norton's tongue-in-cheek humour when referring to a question from a member of his listening audience as a "stupid question", and in describing his audience using the abstract noun "demographic" in reference to Will Young's 92 year old grandmother. Again, more perceptive candidates were able to explore Norton's humour and his characteristic prosodic device of raised pitch to feign interest, such as in line 9 "↑potatoes↑", as well as his use of accelerando at the end of the transcript "go go" to mark his mock intention of evicting Will Young from his studio.

## **Section B: Written Language**

Section B produced many highly successful responses. It was clear that candidates had been appropriately advised by centres to apportion their time according to the 50:50 weighting of the marks available across both sections. In a small minority of cases, however, where candidates became confused between Text B of section A, and Section B, some students produced responses that became rubric infringements.

Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate how *The Guardian* review of the popular Sunday night BBC drama, *Poldark*, conveyed the show's appeal. Most responses demonstrated a secure understanding of the review genre, and were able to explore some wider underlying popular culture implications of the language used. Most candidates appeared aware of broadsheet conventions; but only more confident candidates handled the subtleties of the contexts, for example male reviewer Sam Wollaston's tongue in cheek appreciation of the programme and its appeal to female viewers. Moreover, a further opportunity to gain marks for AO3 and AO2 was the fact that the Cornish coastline appeared prominently in the programme, and was perceived as being equally as appealing as the show's lead male star, Aidan Turner.

More perceptive responses teased out the writer's praise of the reinvention of the original 1970s programme, and his praise for how the programme successfully responds to modern audiences' demands for "more speed, more action, better techniques and bigger budgets". In addition, candidates sensibly commented on the adjectives "rugged" and "gorgeous", a reference not only the Cornish coastline but also to male lead Aidan Turner, whose sexual appeal conveyed through the pre-modified noun phrase "tousle-haired Aidan

Turner” and the clause “wears the breeches well”, is presented with irony and mock condescension.

Some weaker candidates failed to comment on the fluctuation of the tenor from formal to informal, assuming that the review would be formal throughout, simply by dint of appearing in *The Guardian*. However, more sensible responses commented on Wollaston’s use of interjections, elision and hypophora to convey a conversational and relatable tone, which is typical of the genre.

One common feature of the less successful responses was the lack of precision in tackling linguistic features, and the lack of focus when selecting textual illustration. Candidates are encouraged to be highly selective in their approach, and to source textual evidence which meets the requirement of the specified question focus, which in this case was the appeal of the programme. Random selection often leads to feature spotting, and something centres ought to discourage.

Overall, the text provided ample opportunities for some often insightful and imaginative exploration of the appeal of the popular Sunday night BBC television drama *Poldark*.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**  
**AS**  
**Summer 2016**  
**COMPONENT 2: USING LANGUAGE**

*Principal Examiner:* Sarah Maudson

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for this unit. Across the range of questions provided, candidates demonstrated an increasingly sound understanding of the assessment objectives and were able to unpick specific aspects of language and probe for meaning. The choice of texts in Section A proved to be accessible, enabling stronger candidates to obtain higher marks, whilst also giving less capable candidates the opportunity to construct competent discussions. The creative task in Section B encouraged candidates to produce a wide range of engaging responses, demonstrating originality and flair in many cases. Candidates generally responded well to the final analytical commentary task, producing increasingly sophisticated evaluations of their own language use.

**Section A: Investigating Data**

Candidates were required to analyse a range of short advertisements taken from newspapers and magazines. The corpus provided a varied range of texts for candidates, with extracts taken from broadsheet and tabloid journalism, including magazine advertisements. Each advertisement provided a complex range of linguistic techniques for candidates to unpick, such as Advertisement 3's use of a blend in "Holi'yay" and the parallel syntax employed in Advertisement 5: "Upload Downstairs, Download Upstairs". The questions in this section were designed in order to provide an increasing level of challenge as the questions progressed, and this was usually reflected in student responses.

**Q.1(a)**

This four mark question required candidates to identify two different phonological techniques and briefly explain the effects created in each case. Candidates generally responded very well to this question, providing answers that usually focused upon the alliterative qualities of the phrase "Guardian Gardener" (Advertisement 2), the use of rhyme in "Book your Holi'yay' today" (Advertisement 3) or the deliberate and ironic use of homophone in "Can you spot MISTEAKS" (Advertisement 6). Marks were occasionally lost when candidates failed to explain the effect of these techniques, especially when providing 'empty' points such as "this gets the point across" or "this emphasises the meaning of the advert". Successful candidates were able to unpick the meaning of the phonological device and evaluate its meaning, such as in this answer: "the use of the homophone "can you spot MISTEAKS" creates humour, as the audience are aware that the advertisement itself contains a spelling mistake. This encourages the reader to believe that they can spot mistakes - they are obviously the perfect candidate for a job in proof-reading".

**Q.2(b)**

This 8 mark question required candidates to identify four lexical and semantic effects and briefly explain the effects created in each case. Candidates were generally well prepared for this question, although some candidates were unable to differentiate between lexis/semantics and grammar, losing marks for identifying invalid grammatical techniques

(such as minor sentences, repetition and listing). Centres should also be reminded that candidates receive no credit for identifying word class without identification of a lexical/semantic technique (such as metaphor, simile or semantic field), as is clearly outlined in the Specimin Assessment Materials. Most candidates were able to successfully identify lexical and semantic effects, with many responses focusing on the use of semantic fields (e.g. semantic field of gardening in Advertisement 2), use of direct address (e.g. use of second person pronoun in the phrase “Power to you” in Advertisement 10) or employment of figurative language (e.g. personification use in “100% of bees would recommend” in Advertisement 9). Successful candidates were also able to briefly analyse the effect of each technique, such as when candidates correctly commented that superlative adjective use suggested superiority and exclusivity over other brands.

### **Q.2(c)**

This 8 mark question required candidates to identify four different grammatical structures and briefly comment on the effects created in each case. On the whole, candidates were better prepared for this question than they were for Q.1(b), although some responses did incorrectly identify semantic techniques (such as metaphor use) and so candidates should be prepared to differentiate between the different language levels. Most candidates were able to successfully identify an impressive range of grammatical techniques, correctly highlighting the use of asyndetic/quadratic listing (e.g. “ONE BANK, 30 MILLION CLIENTS, 76 COUNTRIES, ONE TEAM SPIRIT” in Advertisement 7), use of exclamatory minor sentences (e.g. “so fresh!”) and use of a parenthetical clause (e.g. “(upgrade to standard Premier at a supplement). Most candidates successfully analysed the effect of each grammatical device, such as the comment that the imperative “Discover a range of natural allergy remedies for a sneeze-free Summer” encouraged the audience to “believe that their troublesome hayfever could be cured instantly”.

### **Q.2(d)**

This 30 mark question required a more extended and in-depth analysis of the corpus and advertising genre as a whole. Brief responses were self-penalising, whilst longer responses allowed for more developed analysis. Candidates were required to analyse and evaluate the ways in which advertisements engage their target audiences. Some weaker candidates failed to engage with the corpus of data and their responses were lacking in textual support, however the majority of candidates were able to successfully evaluate a range of features across the corpus, with sophisticated selection of similarities and differences. Higher scoring candidates provided extended and detailed responses that demonstrated confident analysis and detailed understanding of language features and their effects.

In terms of methods and approaches to the question, candidates demonstrated a range of successful strategies. Some chose to use the bullet points within the question to structure their response, whilst others used the language levels as a logical framework (e.g. writing one paragraph on each level: lexis, semantics, grammar, phonology, graphology etc.). Others adopted a different strategy, which entailed taking a more thematic approach of comparing and contrasting the texts through theme and context (e.g. broadsheet and tabloid). There are merits in all of these approaches, and where these were done well they enabled candidates to produce insightful evaluation and increasingly perceptive discussion regarding how advertisements engage their target audiences. It is worth reminding centres that A02, A03 and A04 are equally weighted in this question, and so candidates should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with these objectives and ensure that they have covered these equally within their response. Candidates who were unable to demonstrate connections across the corpus, for example, lost marks unnecessarily. Some weaker

candidates also failed to employ linguistic terminology, and centres should be reminded that the language levels should be central to a candidate's evaluation of the corpus.

Successful candidates were able to unpick the differences in language use across the corpus, evaluating and comparing advertisements with increasing flair. Most candidates were able to consider the differences in register, such as the high-register, low-frequency lexis in Advertisement 2 and its reflection of a middle class, intellectual readership. More perceptive candidates were then able to identify the connotations of the borrowed Latinate proper noun "Scabiosa" and compared this successfully to the monosyllabic, low-frequency language used in Advertisement 8. The highest performing candidates were able to evaluate the corpus using a wide range of language features as a basis for their discussion. An example of this can be seen in this candidate's evaluation of Advertisement 10: "The simple declarative heading "LiVe LiFE on 4g" has connotations of the popular idiom "Live life on the edge". This idiom connotes freedom and a sense of rebellion, something which is also reflected within the advert's use of typography and non-standard capitalisation in the verb phrase "LiVe LiFE". Vodafone are therefore encouraging the audience to view the phone as a lifestyle choice rather than just a phone: investing in this product reflects that you are an individual who does not conform to the rules and regulations of society. The brand wishes to present itself as unique and representative of freedom and subversion."

## **Section B: Creative Writing**

Section B produced many highly successful responses, especially for the creative questions. It was clear that the majority of candidates had been appropriately advised by centres to apportion their time according to the 50:50 weighting of the marks available across both sections. In a very small minority of cases, however, some candidates had not left themselves an appropriate amount of time to respond to this section. Cases of rubric infringement were extremely rare, but when they did occur it was clear that candidates had not managed their time correctly.

Candidates were required to write one creative piece followed by an analytical commentary of their own writing.

### **Q.1(a)**

This was the least popular question choice with candidates, but produced some engaging and interesting responses nonetheless. Candidates were required to write a product review for the lifestyle supplement of a broadsheet newspaper. Most candidates chose to review the mobile phone from Advertisement 10, the 'plug plants' from Advertisement 2 or the 'natural allergy remedies' from Advertisement 9, although there were a range of other successful responses. Centres should remind candidates to read the question carefully, as a very small minority of candidates decided to review products that were not included in the corpus.

Candidates were generally prepared well for this question, with most able to employ a range of linguistic techniques suited to a product review. The majority of candidates were able to mimic the tenor of a broadsheet supplement, however some struggled to maintain this challenging style. More perceptive candidates demonstrated flair and originality in their writing, showing a clear awareness of their professional audience e.g: "the lipgloss actually surpassed my expectations - it survived through the morning's hustle and bustle in the office, and the messy affair that is a working lunch".

### Q.2(b)

This was the most popular question choice with candidates, and responses were generally highly successful and engaging. The question required candidates to compose a piece of travel writing for an online blog aimed at gap-year students. Most candidates were able to successfully replicate the playful tone of a blog post using a range of complex language features, such as the following response: “Can you honestly say that you’ve already taken part in a carnival in Barcelona, sped across the rolling hills of Tuscany on a Vespa or kissed under the moonlit Eiffel Tower? Yes, that’s right, I know that your only experience of Europe is sunbathing with your Mum at a 3 star hotel in Benidorm”. Weaker candidates were unable to replicate this style, with some creating a basic advertisement for ‘Costa Holidays’ rather than a blog post.

Most candidates were well prepared for this question, and were able to employ a range of linguistic techniques that were well suited to the blog genre, including emoji use and pragmatic references to social media (such as “taking selfies” and “sharing on Instagram”).

### Q.2(c)

Overall, candidates seemed to be well prepared for this question. The question required candidates to write a commentary analysing and evaluating the linguistic and grammatical choices made in their creative response to 1(a) or 1(b). The question highlights that there should be focus upon language features and their effectiveness. Most candidates produced an extended and detailed analysis, although a small minority of responses were too brief and lacked development. Some weaker candidates were unable to identify language features within their writing, and instead tended to focus on general analysis of graphology such as “I have written the headings in capitals to make them stand out”, these candidates were also unable to select sensible textual illustration. One common feature of less successful responses was lack of linguistic precision and a tendency to feature spot. It is useful to remind centres that this question focuses on A03 and so candidates must be encouraged to analyse the construction of meaning and relevant contextual factors.

More insightful responses were able to tease out particular language features and analyse their effects in a confident and perceptive way. Higher scoring candidates were able to selectively illustrate a range of language features across their writing, reflecting perceptively on their linguistic choices with some sophisticated analysis.

Methods and approaches to the question were varied, but the more successful approaches ensured a wide-ranging coverage of techniques across all of the language levels, including a detailed analysis of more challenging areas, such as grammatical choices.



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