



A-LEVEL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

7702/1 Language, the individual and society
Report on the Examination

7702/1
June 2023

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2023 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General

This year's cohort were taking public exams for the first time having had Teacher Assessed Grades for their GCSEs. Students had been well prepared for this exam, and examiners were impressed by the linguistic knowledge shown for all sections of the paper. Examiners were pleased to note that most students were able to respond to all sections of the exam paper, with equal focus on section A and section B, with only very few students struggling to complete the paper.

Section A

Section A offered students three questions, all of which were compulsory. The question frame for question 1 and question 2 asked students to analyse how the texts used language to create meanings and representations. Students who performed best with this task showed a clear understanding of the text as a whole and were able to engage with ideas about different representations within each text. They were able to consider textual meanings in some detail, supported by references to language features rather than being led by them. A less successful approach was for students to consider the assessment objectives separately, identifying language points which were not then linked to ideas about context and representation.

It was notable this year that students did not make extensive reference to specific textual examples, sometimes relying on a couple of quotations across the whole response. Students were able to offer some comment about their chosen quotes; however, such limited focus on the texts did not allow for engagement with a range of representations and meanings, or to consider the texts as a whole.

For question 3 students were required to explore similarities and differences in the ways that text A and text B used language. As with previous years, examiners noted that students were less confident with this question than for question 1 and question 2. For this question, students are assessed for AO4 to consider links and connections between the two texts. This is arguably a more challenging task than for question 1 and question 2, requiring a detailed and focused account of both texts to explore some effective comparisons. As the final question in Section A, this question was often more rushed than question 1 and question 2, with some short and undeveloped responses.

Question 1

Text A was an online BBC news article, focused on an Ethiopian Airlines flight that would be fully operated by women to coincide with International Women's Day. This was an accessible text, with all but a very few students able to offer an interesting and developed discussion of audience, purpose, genre and language content. Many students were able to address ideas about how women were being presented in this text, discussing the positive representation of professional women within a traditionally male dominated profession. The most effective responses saw students exploring the journalistic context of the piece as an article published to coincide with International Women's Day and therefore not perhaps reflective of the standard practices of the airline, and were also able to consider the self-representation of Ethiopian Airlines. Less developed responses tended to understand that the text was about women and considered this the sole representational focus. This rather narrow approach led to limited discussion of the different ways that women were presented within the text, or indeed other representations such as that of the airline.

AO1

It was pleasing to see that most students were able to apply language terms with confidence. Students appeared to be well versed with the level descriptors and offered precise and accurate labelling of terms. Most commonly identified features included noun phrases, verb choices, adjectives and listing. Students made detailed and accurate reference to sentence and clause types, although there was less consideration of cohesive features than in previous series. Occasionally students focused solely on clause types and this hampered meaningful comment about textual meanings or representations. The strongest responses selected language features purposefully, with a view to discussing how language was used within the text.

AO3

The majority of students showed a clear understanding of the positive representation of women in the text. Most students made some comment about the professional roles the women held within the airline and were able to discuss ideas about equality and changing opportunities for women. It is worth remembering that using the word 'represent' does not mean that ideas about representation are being addressed. Sometimes students used the term 'represent' when they were simply addressing the topic content. In order to comment on representations successfully, students needed to focus on interpretation and analysis. The strongest responses were able to do this, understanding the need to link language points to their discussion of textual meanings.

More successful responses:

- explored the significance of the BBC in producing this article and the implied support for International Women's Day to stop gender inequality
- noted that this was part of the BBC's 'news from elsewhere' to suggest that this was not a major news story
- responded to the whole text to consider the hyperlinks as evidence that gender inequality was a global issue
- evaluated whether Ethiopian Airlines was genuinely celebratory and innovative in their support of International Women's Day or whether they were promoting it for commercial purposes
- analysed the implications of patriarchal attitudes behind verb choices such as 'let' in 'it's not the only airline to let women rule the skies'
- identified the semantic field of power in the pattern of verbs and discussed significant verb choices: 'control', 'rule' 'conquering', 'operated', 'honour', 'celebrate'
- discussed the significance of active voice: 'The Lucy's are about to control the skies' and passive voice: 'the flight will be operated by female professionals'

Areas for development:

- responses that treated the text as an online article focusing solely on mode/genre features did not address the topic and thus struggled to engage with textual meanings
- some students overlooked the text producer and any significance associated with this
- some students offered broad assumptions about 'feminists' as the sole audience for this article
- some students offered valid discussion of the presentation of women in the text, but selected examples that did not support their comments
- responses relying on graphological features or very few language details from the text remained straightforward, with general comments about meanings and representations
- some students used terms generally, eg 'word', 'lexis', or identified 'phrase' or 'clause' without specifying which type of phrase/clause
- terms were referred to precisely but without clear exemplification, eg identifying noun phrase or verb phrase and then quoting whole clauses or sentences

- exemplification was sometimes unclear or relied on very lengthy quotes with minimal focus on language detail.

Question 2

Text B was a magazine article focused on 'Flying for Women', published in *The Bystander* in 1928. This was an accessible text, allowing for attainment at all levels of the mark scheme. Even at the lower end of the mark levels, responses showed understanding of flying as 'safe' and 'speedy', whilst ideas about self-representation and social class factors allowed for the higher mark bands to be accessed. As an older text, there is the possibility that unfamiliar language choices or social factors may be more challenging. However, there were very few instances of students struggling with the older nature of this text and most students were able to comment on some interesting aspects of audience, purpose, mode and topic content. The most effective responses recognised Lady Bailey's attempts to persuade her audience through her personal experience with flying, and her use of humour to position and influence the audience.

AO1

Students identified a variety of language features with varying degrees of precision and accuracy. As with Question 1, textual examples were sometimes limited, but most students were able to identify aspects of adjectives, first person pronouns and noun phrases. The older nature of this text saw more examples of complex sentences than might sometimes be seen in more modern texts, and many students were able to identify complex sentences and different clause types. There was also some consideration of patterning through discussion of juxtaposition when describing flying, and the shaping of the discourse structure to include Lady Bailey's views followed by a personal anecdote. Some students tended to limit their discussion to aspects of graphology, or labelled all sentences as compound-complex, perhaps in the hopes that they would be partially correct. The strongest responses showed careful selection of language features that would best support their discussion of meanings and representations, rather than simply labelling features that could access the higher mark bands.

AO3

Most students were able to make sound comments about audience, purpose, genre and content. There were a number of representations students chose to explore, including female pilots, women of the social elite, people wary of flying, both men and women, and ideas about 'civilised parts of the world', with some interesting discussion about the othering of the 'plucky American' and 'exploits..in South Africa'. The most successful responses explored Lady Bailey's purposes and views in writing this article, placed within a clear understanding of wider social and cultural values. Some students misunderstood 'Lady', considering it a marked term rather than a title, thus not allowing for engagement with the writer's social status and influence.

More successful responses:

- analysed the different representations of flying as safe, exciting and also as potentially dangerous
- analysed Lady Bailey's views about aviation, examining the juxtaposition of 'safe and speedy' with 'trouble and discomfort', and discussed her views of other people as 'chief objectors' and 'the timid or cautious'
- explored the self-representation of Lady Bailey and the use of the first-person pronoun to present her experiences as a way to persuade her readership to try flying
- recognised that women were still being represented in more stereotypical ways, despite flying planes, as needing to be rescued by men, eg the anecdote about Ruth Elder

- understood that these women’s experiences reflected their higher social status and access to money in order to fly, rather than representing the ability for all women to be able to fly if they wanted to
- considered the dominant patriarchal views that required Ruth Elder to be ‘rescued’, Lady Bailey’s reliance on her instructor and the numbers of women who might prefer to be ‘passengers’.

Areas for development:

- attempts to discuss wider social and historical factors were sometimes incorrect, eg misdating when women achieved the vote, and sometimes broad, assuming that women’s roles in the 1920s were limited to childrearing and housekeeping, thus missing the social status of the women referred to in this article
- attempts to discuss social factors were not always rooted in a discussion of language, leading to broad and general comments
- students sometimes did not recognise that this article had been written by a woman for women, thus not fully engaging with ideas about self-representation or audience positioning
- responses reliant on graphology or few lexical examples led to straightforward and sometimes general discussion of meanings and representations
- unclear exemplification or very lengthy quotes made it difficult for students to clearly address specific language points.

Question 3

This question proved the most challenging for students this series, both in terms of time available for this response and in comparing aspects of language, context and representation across the two texts. Students were able to move beyond literal comparisons of topic content, audience and genre (level 2) to consider purpose and some language comparison, often discussing similarities of positive adjectives and noun phrases or different pronoun uses to reach level 3. Stronger responses were able to consider representations in the texts, discussing these with clear focus on language detail to illustrate points. Also, at level 4, students connected ideas about purpose and genre to specific language detail. It was more unusual to see students performing at level 5 this series. Students appeared familiar with the level descriptors and chose to discuss social and/or historical factors. Often, however, these comments were not linked to language detail or textual examples, making it difficult to meet level 5. Sometimes students repeated their analysis from question 1 and question 2, with identification of a range of language features. It is worth remembering that AO1 is not assessed for this task.

More successful responses:

- realised that the texts were more similar than different in that gender inequality still needed to be highlighted and challenged
- compared the occupational opportunities for women in aviation today as compared to the leisure and pleasure aspect to flying in the 1920s, supported with exemplification from the texts to support the change in jargon used
- compared the newness of aviation in the 1920s to the commercial and ubiquitous nature of flying in the modern world
- connected ideas about representation or context to language examples.

Areas for development:

- focus on language links was often sound, but a lack of exemplification made it difficult to move beyond literal connections
- language links were sometimes exemplified inaccurately, eg comparing adjectives but quoting nouns and verbs, thus rendering the links unconvincing

- some students listed a wide number of language links. Fewer links with more developed discussion would have led to more thoughtful consideration of connections between texts, which may have led to attainment at the higher levels
- discussion of wider social and/or historical factors that lacked language examples led to general, broad discussion of topic content
- some students offered a short statement about links between the two texts, but then moved into a discussion of each text separately, losing sight of the connections stated.

Section B

This section of the exam paper is based on children’s language development. Students have the choice of question 4 on spoken language development or literacy development for question 5. As with previous series, question 4 proved the most popular question, with relatively few students responding to question 5. For both questions students were asked to evaluate a statement about children’s language development, reflecting on the data that has been provided and considering relevant ideas from language study.

When approaching question 4 and question 5, there is an equal balance of marks across AO1 and AO2. The most successful students offered a detailed and considered discussion of relevant theories that was rooted in the data, with clear examples to illustrate and/or challenge views and approaches to child language development.

Question 4

The data set for this question showed the interaction between Jo, aged 4, with her mother whilst eating breakfast. The statement asked students to evaluate the view that ‘children’s language development depends on their experiences of the world around them’. The most successful responses carefully considered this statement and used it to weigh up different ideas about interaction, imitation and functions of language use. The data provided ample scope for discussion of a range of theories, including cognitive, innatist and usage based views of language development, allowing students to engage in a debate about children’s language acquisition. Some students focused primarily on theoretical concepts without focus on the data. Some students focused extensively on the data, with only minimal focus on theoretical approaches. Both these approaches did not allow students to engage fully with the task.

AO1

As with previous series, there was less focus on language features for Section B than for Section A. However, it was pleasing to see that students were engaging more fully with language features than in previous series. Most students were able to identify a number of features, applying terms with some precision and accuracy. Most commonly referenced were question/answer, overgeneralisation of irregular past tense verb ‘winned’, inflections, common and proper nouns and use of adjectives. There was lots of scope for detailed discussion of language use, but students tended to address relatively few examples from across the data set. There was a tendency to select a couple of useful examples for discussion, but this narrow approach did not allow for a developed discussion of how Jo and her mother used language in the data.

AO2

Students had clearly been well prepared for discussion of different CLD theories and many showed a strong grasp of different approaches, commenting on them in some detail. The strongest

responses reflected on relevant theories in light of the task statement and explored the data carefully to illustrate these approaches. These responses showed sensitive understanding of the mother's role in providing a context in which the child could develop her language, eg breakfast time to discuss food and implicit teaching of the pragmatics of conversation. Some students focused on a wide variety of approaches/views in a learned response which ignored the task and data. Lengthy discussion of child directed speech and the case studies of Genie and Jim were not often used productively to explore the task.

More successful responses:

- selected theoretical approaches judiciously, offering a synthesised discussion with salient examples to meet the task requirements
- labelled features with accuracy and precision, using these features to explore AO2 ideas
- selected features wisely to support the theoretical view selected, eg comparative adjectives 'longer' and 'smaller' to exemplify seriation, reference to family members and the natural world as examples of object permanence to support a cognitive viewpoint
- saw that 'winned' in the context of this data set could be used to support behaviourism and also could be linked to innatist views
- analysed patterns across the data, eg the mother's use of varied question types to engage Jo in conversation
- linked points to the question in order to develop and evaluate the debate.

Areas for development:

- some students offered a pre-learned essay response, overlooking the statement completely to present a nature versus nurture argument
- some students listed Halliday's functions without exploring these in light of the data
- lengthy accounts of case studies, eg Genie and Jim or the lack of CDS in Papua New Guinea. Whilst these could be made relevant, lengthy accounts of these case studies distracted from the question focus
- language features were sometimes descriptive, quoting without labelling language features, or comments on recasting and virtuous errors without clear examples
- there was some mislabelling of features, eg 'do' as an auxiliary verb in 'does bees...'

Question 5

The data for this question featured a classroom activity produced by Lily, aged 6 years and 3 months, retelling a story from a different character's perspective. Students were asked to evaluate the view that creativity 'is an essential part of learning to write'. The most successful responses carefully considered this statement and used it to weigh up different ideas about creative versus accuracy based approaches to literacy development. There was also detailed discussion of specific examples from Lily's writing, considering grammar and spelling patterns, as well as reflecting on the genre of her writing. Some students attempted to apply spoken language theories to the data with limited success, particularly when considering innatist views of language development.

AO1

Students who responded to this question focused on specific examples from Lily's writing, applying terms with some precision and accuracy to comment on spelling, conjunctions, common and proper nouns. There was some identification of self-correction and students were able to discuss errors as typical of phonetic spelling or showing aspects of omission. There was also some comment about the task itself, addressing the learning objectives, scaffolded learning and teacher

input. Some students adopted a deficit approach to the data, identifying errors in Lily's writing but without further discussion.

AO2

Reference to theoretical views about literacy development was mixed. More successful approaches showed clear understanding of writing and spelling stages, and ideas surrounding creativity and the national curriculum strategy in promoting a rule-based approach. Less successfully, students drew on ideas linked to spoken language development. Where ideas about positive or negative reinforcement and the notion of a 'more knowledgeable other' pushing Lily to her 'zone of proximal development' were made useful to the discussion, reference to innatist views and the concept of universal grammar was less convincing for this question.

More successful responses

- used the statement as a springboard for debate to weigh up ideas about 'creativity' and 'accuracy' approaches to literacy development
- considered genre and storytelling
- discussed the teacher's role in scaffolding this task and offering praise
- examined a wide variety of language features from Lily's writing, considering patterns and rules, and using precise terminology to describe word classes and graphemes
- considered what Lily was able to do well, eg construction of a narrative, sustain the wolf's voice, maintain tense, use conjunctions, and commented on aspects that required further development, eg digraphs and run-on sentences.

Areas for development:

- some students applied spoken language theories without making reference to literacy theories
- a deficit approach allowed for some discussion of Lily's errors, but provided a narrow focus for discussion of the data set as a whole
- loss of focus on the statement and its focus on creativity and the data set led to some broad and general comments about literacy development.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.