



Student responses with examiner commentary

AS English Language 7701

Paper 1: Language and the Individual 7701/1

For teaching from September 2015

For assessment from June 2016

Introduction

This resource gives examples of marked student responses to questions from our AS English Language specimen materials, with accompanying examiner commentaries illustrating why responses have been placed within particular levels of the mark scheme.

The responses in this resource all relate to Paper 1: Language and the Individual. Please see the separate resources for examples of marked student responses from Paper 2.

Paper 1: Language and the Individual (7701/1)

As detailed in the specification (3.1), the aim of the part of the subject content examined in this paper is to introduce students to language study, exploring textual variety. This area of study introduces students to methods of language analysis to explore concepts of audience, purpose, genre, mode and representation. The question paper examines students' knowledge across these areas.

In this paper, students are presented with two texts, linked by topic or theme. They answer a question requiring analysis of one text, a question requiring analysis of a second text, and a question requiring comparison of the two texts.

Question 1:

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

Assessment objectives covered:

AO1 (10 marks)

AO3 (15 marks)

Total marks available: 25

Student response

Text A is from Mumsnet and is a forum discussion about school Proms. The purpose of the discussion, initiated by the participant *woollyideas*, is to seek reassurance from other Mums about her view that school Proms are unnecessary and extreme. The purpose of the website, Mumsnet, is to promote the site and encourage other parents to join. Some affordances of using forums are that an individual can interact with many users, and they are distant from other participants, so they can afford to convey their opinions strongly. However, some constraints of forums are that the absence of face-to-face conversation means that ideas mean that meanings can be misconstrued, mainly due to the fact that participants cannot use paralinguistic features, emphatic stress and intonation. The overall representation of school Proms in text A is that they are ridiculous, extreme and unnecessary and Mumsnet is represented as authoritative, useful but also friendly.

The participant *woollyideas* uses the stative verb “want” in the interrogative “What sane parent would want to pay an entry fee to go to a “Prom Fair”...?” This represents parents as emotionally involved in and passionate about school Proms which, as it is used within the interrogative, shows that the efforts parents go to for their child’s Prom is ridiculous. The expressing of strong opinions like these represents Mumsnet as a place for debate. The mode of text A means that *woollyideas* is distant from the group of parents whom she is targeting, so she can afford to convey her opinion more strongly without directly offending them. By attacking this group of parents, *woollyideas* positions herself above them.

woollyideas goes on to target this group of parents even more later on in the response when she groups them by using the determiner “these” in the interrogative “Who are these parents who think that this sort of expenditure... is ok?”. In the post, *woollyideas* goes from saying “What parent” to “these parents”- in the earlier part of the response; she is being more general and using the singular form, then she later using the plural grouping “these” parents in order to target them more directly, which again puts them in a lower position than herself. It represents such parents as ridiculous and conveys *woollyideas*’ disgust at the amount of money they spend.

The participant *MuckyCarpet* uses the subordinating conjunction “although” in her response: “Don’t be a grump!

Although the helicopter is way OTT!”

At first, she expresses her strong opinion about Proms but makes this more moderate by using the subordinating conjunction to contrast her view. This allows her to conform with the other participants, perhaps because she wants to avoid starting an argument or causing offence. This shows that whilst Mumsnet is a place for debate, it is still friendly. The use of the subordinating conjunction shows that the participant has a balanced viewpoint.

A number of interrogatives are used in the forum, but for different purposes. *woollyideas* uses interrogatives such as “Who are these parents that think this sort of expenditure is ok...?” and “AIBU in thinking my DD’s school should not be promoting limo hire etc., at its “Prom Fair”?” Here, she is using interrogatives to seek reassurance from other mums. Through targeting “these”

Comment [A1]: Shows awareness of a view in the text and a purpose in posting a message

Comment [A2]: Good focus on affordances of web forum

Comment [A3]: Good on possible limitations of this communicative context. Not yet tied to specific eggs

Comment [A4]: Offers a view on how proms are being represented

Comment [A5]: Considers representation of the forum and website itself

Comment [A6]: Verb type (AO1 Level 4)

Comment [A7]: Sentence function (AO1 Level 3)

Comment [A8]: Close focus on how views are expressed (AO3 Level 4)

Comment [A9]: Clear sense of how the message board/online environment allows some views to be expressed more harshly (AO3 Level 5)

Comment [A10]: Very effective combination of AO1 and AO3 to explore how poster positions herself and expresses critical views (Level 4 AO1 and Level 5 AO3)

Comment [A11]: Detailed word class (AO1 Level 4) although the effect is not discussed until afterwards, so the AO3 is rewarded later.

Comment [A12]: Looks effectively at how language is used to present a face to other users and enact a type of relationship online

Comment [A13]: Looks at use of questions and their purposes

parents and making her opinion clear, the participant is clearly confident in her ideas but is trying to persuade others to agree, which puts her in a position of **authority**. This shows how Mumsnet is a place where strong opinions are **expressed**. Other participants use interrogatives such as “How old are they 11 or 16?” and “What’s a Prom?”, which are examples of where the forum is slightly transactional as the participants are asking questions to obtain information. Therefore, whilst Mumsnet is a website for debate, it is also friendly and interactional.

Comment [A14]: Could develop this a little further by exploring other posters’ reactions, but there is some good focus here

Comment [A15]: Again, shows awareness of the context of this discussion (AO3 Level 4)

Within the first paragraph of the text explaining the rules of the forum, a complex sentence is used: “Please bear in mind that whilst this topic does canvass opinions, it is not a fight club.” The conjunction “whilst” is used to introduce the subordinate clause “whilst this topic does canvass opinions”. The fact that this clause is subordinate shows that the offering of opinions is not the most important thing about the forum. “It is not a fight club” is the main clause of the sentence, which shows that the most important thing to the creators of the website is that users stay safe and that the debate is **friendly**. This represents Mumsnet as a safe place for debate that welcomes everyone. A constraint of an online message board is that if arguments occur, there is not a person there to mediate as the interaction is not face-to-face. Therefore, the use of sentence structure here almost acts as this **mediator**. Furthermore, the positioning of this sentence right at the beginning of the forum makes it clear to participants the conventions of the debate in order to make them think before they **post**.

Comment [A16]: Very close and detailed reading of syntax and shaping of language to convey meanings (AO1 and AO3 Level 5)

Comment [A17]: Relates this to the context of the message board.

Comment [A18]: Very good on how Mumsnet represents its own forum (AO3 Level 5)

Overall, text A represents school Proms as extreme and unnecessary, with the participants, mainly *woollyideas*, focusing on the extents to which parents go to prepare for their child’s Prom. This representation is created by using language features such as the stative verb “want” and the determiner “these” as well as interrogatives. The website Mumsnet is represented as being a safe, friendly and trustworthy website on which users can debate about parenting issues. This representation is created through the use of sentence structure and **conjunctions**.

Comment [A19]: Concludes answer with overview.

Examiner commentary:

This is a well written and purposeful response that allows the student to combine very close reading of language with some perceptive discussion of meaning creation. The context of the message board environment is well understood and there is a clear grasp of how this impacts upon the relationships created online.

AO1: very close attention to grammatical features (word classes, detailed word classes, sentence functions, clauses and shaping of syntax). There is less focus on other language levels, such as graphology and semantics, but the student has chosen some of the most salient points to analyse. This would score a mark in Level 5.

AO3: perceptive discussion of the context of the message board: both affordances and limitations. Very strong grasp of how language creates meanings and representations. Some subtlety of interpretation and a strong grasp of how Mumsnet itself produces a representation of its own forum to encourage certain kinds of discussion. There is perhaps not as much focus on interaction between the posters as might have been and the focus tends to be on single users rather than how they address each other. However, this is accomplished and perceptive and would score a good Level 5 mark.

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very accurate and detailed AO1 language analysis • Very good linking between AO1 language analysis and AO3 interpretation of meaning • Strong sense of message board context and how this affects the creation of meanings • Fluent and well-structured writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few weaknesses, but a more varied range of discussion across different language levels (pragmatics, semantics and graphology) might have shown more of a holistic view of the text |

Question 2:

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

Assessment objectives covered:

AO1 (10 marks)

AO3 (15 marks)

Total marks available: 25

Student response

Text B is from the money section of the Mirror website and is about how boys are spending almost as much as girls on their Prom. The purpose of the text is to inform readers, particularly parents of teenage children, about the pressure boys feel to look good for Prom. The purpose of the website is to reassure readers that the advice they give is trustworthy. Whilst the article is a written text and is received through the visual channel, it is still an example of computer-mediated communication. An affordance of the text being written is that it can be referred back to, so the writer can afford to make use of more complex sentences with multiple clauses to add extra information. The overall representation of school Proms is that the efforts people are going to are increasingly extensive, but due to the fact that this is a newspaper article it does not portray this as a positive or a negative thing. The Mirror's money website is represented as being reliable and authoritative.

In the simple sentence "Advice you can count on", the object "Advice" has been shifted to the beginning of the sentence. This makes it clear that advice is the main thing that the webpage offers. The sentence then goes on to tell the reader that the advice they give is reliable- the reader is being told that the page offers advice and it is trustworthy. The reader is further reassured that the advice is reliable through synthetic personalisation. The second person subject pronoun "you" is used to directly address the reader and establish a relationship with them. A constraint of the written mode is that it is harder to form a relationship with the reader because it is distant, so the use of synthetic personalisation bridges this gap. This represents the Mirror website as reliable, but also as something that is relevant to everyone. Furthermore, the sentence is placed right at the top of the webpage next to the Mirror logo, so the reader is immediately aware that what they are about to read is worth reading.

Lower down on the page, the imperative "see more stories you'll love" is used. By placing this lower down the page after telling the reader that the advice the Mirror gives is trustworthy, the reader will believe that the stories recommended for them will be of interest. Again, synthetic personalisation is used here with the use of the second person pronoun "you", which makes the reader feel included because the stories chosen will be relevant to them and tailored to their

Comment [A20]: Audience, purpose and topic all succinctly identified

Comment [A21]: Identifies mode characteristics of the text

Comment [A22]: A rather broad comment that does not engage closely with the detail of the text.

Comment [A23]: Identifies key focus of representation

Comment [A24]: Makes a comment about how Mirror Money represents itself but is yet to identify how

Comment [A25]: Misidentifies a sentence type

Comment [A26]: Description is a little questionable here!

Comment [A27]: Better on the representation created for the section of the paper

Comment [A28]: Pronoun type, address and relationship discussed

Comment [A29]: Explores the representation of the Mirror website

Comment [A30]: Would probably be better to move on to other things here, given the tight time constraints.

Comment [A31]: Identifies a sentence function (Level 3 AO1)

Comment [A32]: Comments again on nature of Mirror's own self-representation as trustworthy and positioning of audience (Level 4 AO3)

Comment [A33]: AO1 Level 3

interests. This represents the Mirror money website as reliable and something with advice for everyone.

The representation of the Mirror website as reliable is also created through the noun phrase “Debenhams spokesman Ed Watson”. The use of this noun phrase explains who Ed Watson is and therefore puts him in a position of authority, so that the information he gives is more credible. It also makes the Mirror money website more trustworthy. Furthermore, placing this noun phrase before the quote makes the reader more likely to believe it straight away.

Comment [A34]: Identifies noun phrase and how it is used to reflect authority (Level 4 AO1 & Level 5 AO3)

The article uses the compound sentence “Budding prom kings want to achieve a polished, groomed look and are looking to celebrities such as David Beckham and Daniel Craig for their inspiration.” In compound sentences, clauses have equal importance, so this suggests that teenage boys are looking up to celebrities just as much as they want to look good, which could suggest that they feel a lot of pressure to look “polished and groomed”. Within the first clause, a heavily modified noun phrase is used: “a polished, groomed look”. This reflects the pressure and efforts boys go to to look good. Since the text is written, it is permanent and can be referred back to so the writer can afford to use noun phrases like these.

Comment [A35]: Correctly identifies a compound sentence (AO1 Level 4)

Comment [A36]: Some discussion of potential effects of clauses and sentence type being used (Level 5 AO3)

The active voice is used within the sentence “...fashion icons including David Beckham and screen hero James Bond are smartening up male school leavers...” This shows the direct influence such celebrities have on teenage boys and places responsibility with them for boys spending so much money on their Prom. Again, it represents the pressure teenage boys feel to look good at their Prom.

Comment [A37]: Another noun phrase is identified and some mention made of effect

Comment [A38]: A generalised point that is not engaging with the meanings in context.

Overall, text B represents school Proms as something that teens feel pressured to make a lot of effort for, with the focus being on how boys are spending nearly as much as girls. This representation is created through linguistic features such as the use of sentence structure and the active voice. The representation created by the article is made more convincing by the fact that the Mirror’s money website is represented as being helpful and reliable, which is portrayed through the use of sentence structure, imperatives, quoting authoritative figures and webpage layout.

Comment [A39]: Clear focus on the effect of voice (Level 5 AO3)

Comment [A40]: Clear on main meanings offered in text

Comment [A41]: This might have come earlier and been productive in guiding towards more analysis of representation.

Comment [A42]: Rather repetitive and assertive - not really engaging with text. A weak ending that does not add to achievement.

Examiner commentary:

This is another well written and purposeful response but there is perhaps less engagement with the content of the article than was seen in the answer by the same student on Text A. In this answer, there is some repetition and a few missed opportunities to explore how boys are being compared to girls and how the proms themselves are being represented, but there are several good points about the webpage itself and some of the meanings created. Perhaps the key message here to students is to focus first on the representation of the subject and then consider producer and audience.

AO1: some close attention to grammatical features (word classes, detailed word classes, sentence functions, phrase types and a sentence). There are occasional errors and the style is more “feature-spotting” than the more developed and interpretative answer to Question 1. However, there is plenty of good content here and this would score a mark high in Level 4. There is a limited range of word classes discussed, however, which affects close engagement with meanings and representations.

AO3: some effective discussion of the context of the piece and how Mirror Money represents itself as authoritative. Some close focus on meanings and the effects of pronouns and address, as well as how language is used to position and represent. However, there are gaps and the repetition of

points around the context of the page prevents the student from discussing how proms themselves are being represented, how the language represents the costs of such events and how boys are being represented. There are some very good points here, but it would probably fall short of a Level 5 mark.

A key question to ask about this response is: if you haven't read the text, how much do you know about what it said? This is perhaps the kind of example teachers could use with students to illustrate how an answer will be read by an examiner and what they might be looking for. It is the kind of answer that contains some very good points but which requires a slight recalibration to hit the very top levels.

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly accurate and detailed AO1 language analysis • Some good linking between AO1 language analysis and AO3 interpretation of meaning • Strong sense of Mirror Money context and how this affects the creation of meanings • Fluent and well-structured writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some gaps in content • Some repetition • A few errors in identification • Less engaged with meanings than the answer to Question 1 |

Question 3:

Compare and contrast Text A and Text B, showing ways in which they are similar and different in their language use.

Assessment objectives covered:
AO4 (20 marks)

Total marks available: 20

The texts are similar in that they both use language to convey their shock at how much parents/boys spend on their school Proms. In text A, the participant *Kayano* uses the pre-modifying adjective "crazy": "It's crazy the amount of money some people spend..." This represents the amount of money people spend as ridiculous and out-of-hand. In text B, the author uses the progressive verb "rocketing": "... prom nights are sending sales of tuxedos rocketing". This shows how the amount of money boys are spending on their Prom is increasing year on year. Since it is a progressive verb, it suggests that this increase in spending will continue.

The texts are also similar in that the websites they come from are represented as authoritative and reliable. Both texts achieve this by including quotes from authoritative figures. In text A, The Times describes *Mumsnet* as "The country's most popular meeting point for parents." The superlative adjective phrase "most popular" shows that *Mumsnet* is the best place for parents to meet to discuss parenting issues. As a respected broadsheet newspaper, The Times is reliable so if they say that *Mumsnet* is the most popular discussion website for parents, it is likely to be true. In text B, the noun phrase "Debenhams spokesman Ed Watson" is used to introduce a quote from the Debenhams spokesman. This gives the information he gives more credibility, which represents the Mirror money website as reliable.

Comment [A43]: An initial point is made connecting the shared representation of 'shock'.

Comment [A44]: Not pre-modifying here.

Comment [A45]: Points are made comparing the language used to represent this view in each text.

Comment [A46]: A good tight paragraph on comparing representation of content and views.

Comment [A47]: A link is made about the publishing contexts (Level 4).

Comment [A48]: A good clear paragraph on self-representation of the producer. Language detail and examples are used to support the comparisons drawn between the two texts.

Whilst text A and text B both focus on the topic of school Proms, they offer a slightly different angle on the issue. Text A focuses on the parents of children who go to school proms and places responsibility with them for the extreme preparations they make for their child's school Prom, whereas text B focuses on teenagers and makes them responsible for spending a lot of money on their Prom. This difference in viewpoint is created by using different ways of addressing the groups in question. In text A, the participant *woollyideas* uses the second person possessive pronoun "your precious teens" to directly address parents who go to extreme lengths to prepare for their child's school Prom and attach responsibility to them. This puts the participant in a position of authority and positions such parents as lower down. Text B, however, is much less direct when talking about teenage boys. In the quote from the Debenhams spokesman, he says "a boy", using the indefinite article "a". This is much more general and puts all teens in this group. Since there is no direct address, this suggests that text B could be less opinionated than text A.

Comment [A49]: A key point of contrast is drawn out here.

The texts also differ in the sentence functions they use: text A uses more interrogatives, whereas text B uses more declaratives. For example, in text A, the participant *woollyideas* uses the interrogative "Who are these parents who think this sort of expenditure... is okay?" which shows how Mumsnet is a place for debate. It also represents the participant's anger and frustration at the amount parents spend on their child's school Prom. In text B, there are a number of declaratives used, such as "Boys are kitting themselves out with cufflinks, cummerbunds and silk hankies..." which informs the reader rather than starts a debate. The difference in sentence functions between text A and text B is caused by the texts having different purposes: text A aims to create a debate and the participant *woollyideas* aims to persuade others of her views; text B aims to inform parents about the extents to which teenage boys are going in order to prepare for their Prom.

Comment [A50]: This is subtle and quite detailed in its focus on different language techniques used to suggest different angles and types of address (Level 3 and some Level 4).

Comment [A51]: Good paragraph on address/attitude

Comment [A52]: A good comparative method – a language feature. Links to purpose – could explore more contextual factors causing this?

The texts also differ in their use of sentence structure. Text A uses more non-standard grammar, with participants using shorter sentences or, in the case of the participant *webwiz*, the single noun phrase "Prom fair" along with a shocked face emoticon. The participant conveys her opinion in one single noun phrase. It shows her shock at how extensive the efforts that parents make for their child's Prom are. Text B, however, uses longer, more complex sentences with multiple clauses. For example, some sentences use adverbials such as "spending 24% more on their outfit than a year ago" and "The big party... has snowballed in recent years". Adverbials provide extra information, and in text B they show how extreme Prom preparations have become in recent years to make the issue sound more shocking. Since the purpose of text B is to inform, the adverbials serve this purpose. Furthermore, they help to create the representation that the Mirror money website is helpful and informative.

Comment [A53]: A specific feature of language is used to support a point about a way that Text A uses language differently (Level 5).

Comment [A54]: Again, a good point about grammar and meaning.

Comment [A55]: The points are then linked effectively to different purposes for the texts (Level 4).

Comment [A56]: Good example and identification of influence of web context to text A (Level 5).

Comment [A57]: Close focus on how language is used differently in the texts and how this is linked to their contexts (Level 5)

Comment [A58]: Although the feature is different, this paragraph does not develop the kinds of analysis further.

Comment [A59]: Links effectively to both purpose and publishing context.

Comment [A60]: Clear summary of main points.

In conclusion, whilst the two texts share the idea that the growing expenditure on school Proms is shocking, they both represent this issue in slightly different ways. Text A highlights how parents spend a lot on school Proms, whereas text B places this responsibility with teenage boys. They achieve this through the different positioning of the groups they attach responsibility to. Both websites are represented as authoritative and reliable. The texts differ in their use of sentence function and sentence structure, which is caused by the texts having different purposes.

Examiner commentary:

This is a confident and well-structured answer which manages to include some close analysis and interpretation of language across different grammatical and lexical levels as well as offering comparison and contrast of the two texts. The discussion of purpose and context is strong and there is some interesting discussion of how the texts offer different angles and positions. The topics for comparison are well illustrated and there is good comparative technique on display. It illustrates method at this level really well.

What it lacks perhaps is enough ways of comparing the two texts: eg personal vs. newspaper genres; impact of webpage vs. message board; the frameworks of advertising/hyperlinks to create other contexts; modes. This therefore limits its overall achievement.

It fulfils Level 3, does the last bullet in Level 4 but doesn't really provide evidence of the higher order connections suggested in Level 5 and the rest of Level 4.

Overall, there is enough here to suggest a Level 4 mark, but at the lower end of the band.

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accurate and detailed language analysis to offer intelligent observations about meanings in each text.• Strong focus on both texts, with some contrasts and comparisons drawn out very effectively.• Some good discussion of different positions and perspectives.• Well-organised answer, allowing equal focus on both texts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foregrounds grammar at the risk of missing some important graphological and contextual details; the response could have been more balanced to reflect other language levels.• Representation of parents, boys and proms is discussed, but not developed into a completely coherent overview of the topic. |

Version 1.0

First published 14/09/2015

Last updated 14/09/2015