



AS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Component 1: Language and the Individual
Report on the Examination

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General

In the first examination series of this new specification it was clear that centres had prepared their students well, utilising the specimen materials and teaching resources available from AQA. Students of all abilities accessed the data well showing a clear understanding of both texts; the differentiating factors were what the students then did with this understanding. The most successful students approached the tasks with an open mind whilst some were hindered by following a whole centre approach/structure which did not always elicit the best responses.

Textual Variations and Representations

Question 1

Assessment objectives for Question 1:

AO1:

Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression (10 marks)

AO3:

Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning (15 marks)

Question 1 invited students to write about meanings and representations in an online article focusing on Lizzie Armitstead. Students of all abilities showed a clear awareness of genre, purpose and audience. Many commented, for example, on the genre conventions of an online article, particularly the web-based aspect of the text. Students commented on conventions such as the search bar, tabs, images, advertisements and the links to social media site. Many students wrote about the dual purpose of inform and entertain and recognised the possible specific audiences of the article (eg fans of Lizzie Armitstead, fans of sport or cycling). Focusing solely on these contextual factors is a feature of band 2 of the mark scheme. Students who scored in the lower mark bands often made generalised points about linguistic features 'having an effect on the reader'. However, students who achieved a higher mark for AO3 considered other issues such as representation, particularly that of Lizzie Armitstead. Many students discussed how the cyclist was represented as 'down to earth' and not affected by her status. They recognised that she was represented as someone who had no interest in the celebrity life style and was, to quote many students, 'normal'. Such discussions showed a good understanding of the requirements of this task: to consider meanings and representations. Students who achieved higher marks for AO3 also considered other aspects of representation. Students discussed how the writer of the article and the website were represented to an audience. Other students focused on how cycling was represented in the article, discussing both the positive and negative aspects of the sport. On occasions, this was developed by writing about how the Olympics were also represented, whilst other students explored gender representation and the position of women in sport.

With regard to AO1, many students seemed aware of the need to identify specific language features, use linguistic terminology and exemplify their points. In line with the mark scheme, students were solely rewarded for this accurate identification. This meant students whose responses were rooted in language points scored most highly on AO1 even if the subsequent analysis was not as strong. Schools and colleges are therefore encouraged to ensure that their students in future series annotate and identify a range of relevant language features prior to writing their response. Unfortunately, students who scored low marks on AO1 only identified a few language features resulting in a very narrow range covered. Some students, for example, only

identified two or three features from the whole text whilst some just referred to quotations rather than pinpointing linguistic features precisely. This placed them in the lower mark bands as they did not show a range of linguistic knowledge despite the text being of a length which allowed a range to be considered. Some schools and colleges appeared to have taught their students to follow a specific structure, identifying the same features. This was very restrictive as students did not explore the language of the text in detail and schools and colleges are encouraged not to prepare students in this way. It is also important that students are aware of the need to focus on features which are of value to the task rather than any 'random' feature. Lower achieving students appeared to struggle to select the most fruitful material.

Almost all students, regardless of their final mark linked their AO1 points to AO3, thus fulfilling the second bullet point of AO3. However, some schools and colleges had seemingly taught students to write a long opening paragraph on context and representation without any reference to the data or specific language features. This limited the students' success on both AOs.

Question 2

Assessment objectives for Question 2:

AO1:

Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression (10 marks)

AO3:

Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning (15 marks)

With regard to question 2, many of the more generic points about AO1 and AO3 in question 1 are applicable once again: the most successful students identified a range of language features for AO1 and explored AO3 in detail covering genre, audience, purpose and representation. In this text, students who scored the higher marks on AO3 discussed how the various contributors on the forum represented themselves. Many recognised the difference between these contributors whilst the stronger students recognised it as a members' forum and how this was influential. The strongest students recognised the nuances of humour and serious debate, whereas less successful responses misread the contradictory viewpoints as evidence of face-threatening acts and strong disagreement. Once again the best responses considered and analysed a range of representations: the forum itself, 'Singletrack', the forum contributors and the people the members discussed. Most students commented successfully on audience. Some, however, did not recognise it as a members' forum or explore the idea of a discourse community and were far more general, stating it was aimed at 'anyone into cycling'. In terms of recognising the purpose of the text, this was clearly understood by the majority of students and many also were confident when considering genre conventions.

With regard to AO1, the students who achieved the lower marks tended to identify a narrow range of features, used general terms such as 'word' or used linguistic terminology without any exemplification. It is important for schools and colleges to realise that to be credited for AO1 the student must give an example and label it accurately. Once again, the most successful students made judicious choices when identifying a good range of language features.

To summarise, best practice was seen in questions 1 and 2 when students:

- identified a wide range of specific and relevant language features, using accurate linguistic terminology when labelling
- linked these language features to a range of contextual factors, moving beyond audience, purpose and genre and considering a range of ideas regarding representation
- guided the reader through the different representations and meanings in the text.

Less successful responses for questions 1 and 2 included:

- a narrow range of language features identified by students (some only identifying two or three from the whole text) or a lack of precision when writing about language
- a lack of exemplification for AO1
- limited discussion of representation
- a reliance on paraphrasing the data.

Question 3

Assessment objective for Question 3:

AO4: Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods (20 marks)

A general pattern emerged this series of students possibly running out of time and the responses not being reflective of their ability or comparative to their achievement in Q1 and Q2. Schools and colleges should remind students of the need to cover each task with the same level of detail and development. However, many students did respond very positively to the comparative task. Stronger responses made a series of valid connections involving linguistic features well as context and content. Students explored similarities and differences and such students also exemplified their points on language features that linked the texts. Schools and colleges should note that such links and references to language are indicative of the higher bands in the mark scheme. Less successful responses relied on paraphrasing the two texts or focusing only on contextual similarities and differences. It was pleasing to see that very few students were awarded 1-3 marks; the vast majority of students did manage at least 'one/two explicit connections' in their response.

To summarise, best practice in Q3 was seen when students:

- compared and contrasted language, context and content offering a range of connections
- exemplified their discussion with specific language features, integrating linguistic knowledge into their comparisons.

Less successful responses to Q3 included:

- a focus solely on content to compare and contrast
- a lack of focus on language with limited use of terminology or specific reference to the data
- an unproductive use of time by summarising and repeating their comparisons in the final paragraph.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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