A-level English Language Paper 1 SAMs commentary

This resource explains how the questions in the specimen assessment materials for A-level Paper 1 address the assessment objectives, with some suggestions as to how each task might be approached. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every point that could be made, but it provides teachers and students with some guidance that will support their work on this paper.

A-level Paper 1 Questions 1 and 2

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

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

The AOs assessed in these questions are AO1 and AO3 (AO1 10 marks, AO3 15 marks).

AO1: Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression

Each of these questions tests students' ability to carry out a text analysis. In order to analyse how the text uses language to create meanings and representations, students will need to apply appropriate methods of language analysis to demonstrate how different features of language are used within the text for this purpose (e.g. semantics and grammar)

Furthermore, in their response to this question, students will need to use correct and relevant terminology for the context (e.g. 1st person pronouns, tense, visual design features, semantic fields, ellipsis) in order to accurately demonstrate how the text uses language to create meanings and representations.

Students will also need to use coherent written expression in their answer in order to efficiently communicate how the text uses language to create meanings and representations.

AO3: Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning

Through these questions, students will be focusing on the construction of meaning, including evaluation and analysis of those language features associated with it. They need to show they understand how the language features build into patterns of meaning to create representations and interpretations. This involves the interpretation of the features identified and labelled and credited in AO1. For

example, semantic fields can construct a shared perspective, ellipsis can construct informality.

In addition, for Text A students might focus on how opinions and experiences are described and represented through language. Different or shared viewpoints of the message board posters might be examined and the stance or position of different posters discussed. The contextual factors affecting meaning – the online nature of the discourse and the interaction between posters – might be another area to explore.

For Text B, students might choose to look at how the accident is represented, the participants are described and the scene set. The contextual factors affecting meaning – the newspaper source of the text and the unfamiliarity of motor vehicles at the time – would also be useful to examine.

A-level Paper 1 Question 3

Explore the similarities and differences in the ways that Text A and Text B use language.

The AO assessed in this question is AO4 (20 marks).

AO4: Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods

By exploring the similarities and differences in the ways Text A and Text B use language, students will be exploring connections between them. They may look at similarities and differences in terms of intended audience or purpose, mode or genre, for example. Exploring these connections will require students to refer closely to linguistic concepts about variation – for example, historical variation, the different modes of the texts, and the different audiences and purposes of each text.

In exploring the similarities and differences between the texts, students will be employing a commonly used linguistic method of analysing norms and variations.

Note: While it is possible for students to repeat points made in Questions 1 and 2 about contextual factors in their answers to Question 3, there is a clear difference in what is being assessed by AO4. Some of the same points about individual texts might well be relevant (historical and technological factors, for example) but AO4 focuses more on evaluation of the two texts together.

A-level Paper 1 Question 4

"Interaction with caregivers is the most important influence on a child's language development."

Referring to Data Set 1 in detail, and to relevant ideas from language study, evaluate this view of children's language development.

The AOs assessed in this question are AO1 and AO2 (AO1 15 marks, AO2 15 marks), and this is made clear to candidates through the question wording. AO1

is pointed to through "Referring to Data Set 1 in detail", and AO2 is pointed to through "Referring to...relevant ideas from language study".

AO1: Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression

In order to evaluate the view that interaction with caregivers is the most important influence on a child's language development (by referring to the data in detail and to relevant ideas from language study), students will need to apply appropriate methods of language analysis, particularly in relation to their reference to the data provided. For example, the data can be approached semantically, by looking at the child's vocabulary, phonologically, by considering his pronunciation, or grammatically and pragmatically, by considering how the interaction proceeds.

In their response to this question, students will need to use correct and relevant terminology. For example, terms such as 'imperative', 'plurals', 'semantic field' or 'non-fluency feature' will be required.

Students will need to use coherent written expression in their answer in order to efficiently evaluate this view.

AO2: Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use

In evaluating the view that interaction with caregivers is the most important influence on a child's language development, students will be able to demonstrate critical understanding of concepts relevant to language use by children (particularly spoken language, given the nature of the data provided for this question). They will be able to evaluate and challenge different ways of explaining children's language development, integrating examples (either from the data set itself, their own examples, or a combination of both) to support or challenge a model of language development as wholly interactive.

Furthermore, students will also be able to demonstrate critical understanding of issues relevant to language use by children, particularly in relation to their interaction with caregivers. They will be able to demonstrate a synthesised and conceptualised overview of issues, and evaluate and challenge views, approaches and interpretations of linguistic issues.

For example, they may look to evaluate the nature and effect of correction and reformulation in this context. Research suggests that adult corrections don't really work, which might lead one to argue that there is little point in interacting with adults, but on the other hand, in interacting with this adult, the child is gaining a lot in trying out real world discourses (of being a waiter), using language to control others (when he warns the adult about the books) and reaching for new expressions (eg 'saucy pan').

A-level Paper 1 Question 5

"Accuracy is more important than creativity."

Referring to Data Set 2 and Data Set 3 in detail, and to relevant ideas from language study, evaluate this view of children's language development.

The AOs assessed in this question are AO1 (15 marks) and AO2 (15 marks), and this is made clear to candidates through the question wording. AO1 is pointed to through "Referring to Data Set 1 in detail", and AO2 is pointed to through "Referring to…relevant ideas from language study".

AO1: Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression

In order to evaluate the view that accuracy is more important than creativity in the context of children's language development, students will need to apply appropriate methods of language analysis, particularly in relation to the data provided. The data includes examples of both accuracy/inaccuracy and creativity to which students will need to apply relevant methods of language analysis, for example, the pragmatics of storytelling, grammatical aspects of point of view, semantics of a story theme, grapho-phonemic relationships in spelling.

In their response to this question, students will need to use correct and relevant terminology, for example, 'pronoun', 'clause', 'semantic field'.

Students will need to use coherent written expression in their answer in order to efficiently evaluate this view.

AO2: Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use

In evaluating the view that accuracy is more important than creativity in the context of children's language development, students will be able to demonstrate critical understanding of concepts relevant to language use by children (particularly written language, given the nature of the data provided for this question). They can evaluate and challenge different ways of explaining children's language development, for example, evaluating the nature and effect of correction, reformulation and feedback, and exploring a range of different contexts and literary practices, such as exposure to a range of writing models, writing technology or learning styles.

Furthermore, students will also be able to demonstrate critical understanding of issues relevant to language use by children, particularly in relation to accuracy and creativity in their writing. They will be able to demonstrate a synthesised and conceptualised overview of issues, for example, how creativity is defined and how rules of correctness may change, the significance of different genres of writing, how our evaluations may change as a child gets older, the effects of cycles of accuracy-based testing, and how new technologies are redefining what literacy is.