

# A-level

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2: Language Diversity and Change  
Report on the Examination

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## General

It was very exciting to read the work of students in this first series of the new specification. Examiners reported that the questions provided students of all levels with stretch and challenge as they explored the issues about language diversity and change that were presented to them. There was evidence of a lot of hard work and preparation for a significant end of two years assessment. Examiners enjoyed reading a range of work and the impassioned, committed knowledge, understanding and critical acumen that were on display. It was also impressive to see the range of writing skills demonstrated across the three tasks.

The paper proved accessible to students at all levels of ability. There were however issues of time management for some and unsurprising uncertainty about exactly how best to tackle questions in the new format. Nonetheless there was a lot of excellent knowledge and understanding on display. There was, however, a number of partially completed scripts seen.

While the topics of diversity and change were familiar from previous specifications, and the range of knowledge required to complete the tasks on this paper was not significantly different from before, the types of question are significantly different, and students still need to become accustomed to these. It was extremely enjoyable and interesting to read about World Englishes in section A as students showed their knowledge of, and engagement with, this relatively new area of study.

The questions answered most successfully in the papers were Questions 1 and 2 in Section A. No data for analysis was provided in these straightforward essay type responses. Most students seemed well prepared for this section. There was a lot of good knowledge seen and impressive skills of argument and evaluation.

Question 3 produced some excellently perceptive and sharp critiques. It asked students to analyse how language was used in two passages presenting views about women's language use, compare them and evaluate their effectiveness. Students demonstrated some real ability to 'see through language'. Significant issues were that some students did not apply methods for language analysis and some did not engage closely with the meanings produced by the texts.

Question 4 asked for a response in the form of a feature article about women's language, assessing the ideas and issues raised in the texts in Question 3 and arguing students' own views. This important last and culminating task tested students' abilities to challenge popular perceptions of language and the values entailed and to communicate their linguistic knowledge beyond the world of their A-level. There was some impressive writing: well-informed, skilfully argued and engaging and accessible for a non-specialist. For some the issue was not going beyond the ideas in the texts and being able to classify and critique their views using knowledge from language study.

The new mark schemes worked well and were able to reward students' work effectively. They discriminated well between different levels of achievement and distributed marks effectively to help make judgements about different grades.

## Key messages

- Students must read all the words in the Section A ideas for evaluation and consider carefully what they imply.
- Students need to have case studies and examples of their own that they can use to address the questions' key words in Section A.

- Students need to avoid repeating rehearsed essays that do not fully address the needs of the task set.
- Students need to use methods for language analysis in Question 3.
- Students need to engage with meanings in Question 3, focussing on the ways in which the texts represent language use
- Students need to identify specific ideas from the Question 3 texts to focus their Question 4 response.
- Students need to show knowledge of linguistic ideas and research in Question 4 and critique the ideas in the stimulus texts.

## **Section A**

In Section A students were presented with a choice of two discussion essays. Each question offered students an idea about language diversity and change which they needed to evaluate. There was a relatively even distribution of answers to the two questions, with a slightly larger number opting for Question 1, although in some centres there was a pattern of preference for one question or the other. Statistical analysis suggested that the two questions were of equal demand.

### **AO1**

In Questions 1 and 2 students were assessed on their ability to use appropriate terminology and coherent written expression. Most students wrote in paragraphs with clear topics. Better responses guided the reader through a clear line of argument. Some students dutifully appended a statement at the end of each paragraph that tried to tie what they had just written to the question. This was often a tacked on attempt to link information to the task. In the most successful essays discussion of the question's key words was woven throughout as an integral part of the evaluation of case study evidence. Better responses also used skilful discourse markers to knit together their stages of thought.

### **AO2**

Students were also assessed on their knowledge and understanding of concepts and issues in language study. The majority of students were very well prepared with lots of case studies and theories which they could discuss in their answers. The major discriminator was the extent to which students could apply the terms of the question to their knowledge and evaluate the proposition.

### **Question 01**

Question 1 focussed on language diversity and in particular on language and group membership.

Students were asked to evaluate the idea that membership of social groups completely determines people's language use (AO2). They then had to express their views in a coherent argument using linguistic terminology (AO1).

A key discriminator was a student's ability to balance conveying knowledge of research and concepts with an analysis of how they demonstrated the effect or otherwise of group membership. Research studies were not always explained accurately or in sufficient detail to support the candidate's argument. Less successful candidates tended to claim that all research suggested that the language of the group 'completely' determined that of the individual.

Students had to begin by deciding what might be meant by a 'social group'. Most identified groups such as friendship groups, groups based on age (almost always the young), occupation, shared hobbies and school or college memberships. Some opted for wider groups including class, gender or ethnicity. There was also discussion of social groups formed around sexual orientation.

Some students defined social groups by using ideas of social networks and communities of practice. The best answers using these approaches explored how groups work as norm enforcing mechanisms and the pressure they exert on linguistic conformity. Some students showed very good knowledge of network strength measurements and the impact of different patterns on language use. Good answers also considered the links between language and group identity.

The majority of students were able to cite some suitable research or case studies to support their views, such as Labov's New York and Martha's Vineyard studies, Trudgill's Norwich studies, Milroy's research in Belfast, Cheshire's Reading study and Eckert's study of groups in a Detroit high school.

Some answers made use of Bernstein's ideas about restricted and elaborated codes. These were often used to illustrate how social group membership affected language use. In the best uses of these ideas there was a critique of this deterministic view.

Some of the most successful answers explored occupational language in some detail, giving precise examples of medical, legal and sports jargon. There was often discussion of occupational groups as communities of practice with close analysis of their development of linguistic practices. These were also the most successful in recognising that the use of jargon did not determine the individual's language use in other situations, such as at home.

Evidence of the effective evaluation of methods was rare. Those who did attempt to evaluate often questioned issues about the definition of social class and the treatment of genders as homogenous groups. There was some discussion of the lack of consideration of context and meanings in quantitative results.

One of the most productive approaches to this question was a case study of Polari, which enabled students to apply theories of divergence, in-group language, and word formation, and to consider the social and historical contexts in which people's language use is negotiated.

Ideas about accommodation and the ability to code switch characterised the most successful answers, demonstrating the ability to 'evaluate' the idea posited by the question. Such answers explored how people were actively, at whatever level of conscious awareness, to modify their language use to suit a variety of situational needs and factors.

The most successful answers ultimately challenged the premise of the idea that people's language is determined by external factors. Sophisticated answers restored a degree of conscious or subconscious choice to people's language use and considered how they might perform identities through language.

**More successful students:**

- addressed the key terms 'evaluate', 'completely' and 'determined' throughout their answer
- identified a number of specific social groups an individual might belong to
- gave specific examples of the language of particular social groups
- identified and explained in detail relevant case studies and research to support or challenge the question's idea
- explored how a social group might function as a norm enforcing mechanism
- examined how social networks could be identified and their strengths measured as a way of explaining language use

- used the concept of convergence to explain why people’s language would become similar
- rejected the idea that people’s language use is determined by external factors in simple, uniform ways
- evaluated quantitative research findings on language and class and questioned whether people spoke in just one way because of their class
- used the concept of a repertoire to challenge ideas of people being determined by one particular factor to use one kind of language
- recognised that within quantitative findings not everyone from the same class used the same kind of language
- recognised that an individual’s language is likely to vary according to context and audience
- explored the interplay of a range of factors that influenced language use
- discussed how accommodation might affect language use
- explored how people might diverge in their language use to signal difference from a social group
- explored how gender might affect language use
- considered whether gender constituted a social group or was an example of biological determinism
- explored the idea that people performed their identity through language.

#### **Less successful students:**

- were able to show knowledge of research that linked language and group membership
- did not attend to ‘determined’ and ‘completely’
- seemed very uncertain what might be meant by ‘social groups’
- were happy to accept that an individual’s language might be completely determined by their membership of one social group
- wrote general pre-prepared essays that answered the question with more or less precision
- offered few specific examples of language, contenting themselves with ‘very formal’, ‘slang’ or ‘incorrect’ language
- confused convergence and divergence
- confused Labov and Lakoff
- wrote about language change or World Englishes without regard to the question
- used paragraphs, but not to develop a line of argument, only offering a series of illustrations of different groups and their language
- showed weak control of expression, punctuation and spelling.

#### **QUESTION 02**

Question 2 focussed on language change and in particular whether it can be controlled or directed.

Students were asked to evaluate the idea that language change can be controlled and directed (AO2). They then had to express their views in a coherent argument using linguistic terminology (AO1).

The majority of students understood that they were expected to weigh up the evidence as to whether language change can be controlled and directed. Most decided that it could not, usually quoting David Crystal in support of this. Many gave examples of attempts to control language change but did not explore whether they had actually been successful

Standardisation was often explored as a process of directing and controlling language. Students frequently gave examples of ‘successful’ standardisation through the printing press, Johnson’s

Dictionary and Lowth's grammar rules. There was frequent discussion of the Academie Francaise but less of the short-lived Queen's English Society.

Some students used programmes of language reform as case studies of attempts to direct language change. They were often able to explore the success of changes like Ms, chair and the ironic use of sexist language to consider whether reform had worked. Attitudes to PC were used to examine the countering of reform attempts. Pinker's idea of the euphemism treadmill was used to argue that change could not occur without social change happening first.

Some students took the opportunity to use this question to discuss World Englishes, focussing on attempts to control and standardise language use but also the way the spread of the language made control ever more difficult.

Students also used technology to explore the question. They demonstrated how technology could be an agent of standardisation but also an agent of grass roots uncontrolled change.

The role of education in attempting to control change, when it was addressed, was often well understood and its success carefully assessed.

Students who wrote about the processes of language change usually concentrated on word formation, though sometimes without any specific examples. Functional and need based explanations were used as examples of change not being directed and controlled by some and being controlled by necessity by others.

Many cited wave and s-curve theories, sometimes inaccurately and with limited understanding of how to apply them to the question. Some were able to use the exponential growth modelled by the s-curve to argue for change being difficult to control. Some students made productive use of their knowledge of ideas about the processes and stages of standardisation.

Common explanations of change that were considered involved random fluctuation, substratum, evolution, and functional theories. Students often cited prescriptivist views as predicated on a desire to arrest or direct change. Many were able to cite Jean Aitchison's metaphors but there was some confusion about Aitchison's own stance.

Some students, having been undecided which question to answer, moved between addressing Question 1 and Question 2, or, having expected a question on World English, wrote entirely on this topic, sometimes making it completely relevant, sometimes less so.

#### **More successful students:**

- argued that language change can sometimes be directed, but seldom controlled
- explored issues of agency of change with subtlety of thought and analysis
- when World Englishes were addressed, cited and explained Singlish as an example of a failed attempt to control change, the prestige of Standard English in India, and the importation of Australian English to the UK owing to media influence
- evaluated language reform as successful benign prescriptivism or as a 'short term fix' because of the Euphemism Treadmill
- briefly and accurately explained historical attempts to standardise English and evaluated pressures on the maintaining of standard English
- explained Functional Theory and offered a range of modern examples as an example of change not being controlled but driven by need

- explained Substratum Theory clearly and gave a range of examples of ‘borrowed’ words showing how linguistic proximity gives rise to undirected changes
- examined the imposition of colonial language policies as attempts to control language
- explored the nature and causes of Random Fluctuation as way of arguing that change is it not controlled
- explained and evaluated Prescriptivist views, explaining clearly Aitchison’s decay metaphors and challenging their view that change can be arrested and controlled
- explored the role of technology, e.g. printing, controlling and standardising language
- explored the role of technology, e.g. the internet, in democratising language and spreading changes rapidly
- considered the need for standardisation for the sake of clarity and intelligibility
- explored the processes and stages of standardisation in detail
- explored how the growth of Englishes across the world affected its control by inner circle varieties
- explored how education worked to control language use through its specifications and examinations, including the rubric of this very paper
- supported their argument with detailed examples throughout the answer.

#### **Less successful students:**

- wrote about topics and issues suited to Question 1 rather than Question 2
- asserted that language change can never be controlled because it is ‘natural’ and ‘inevitable’ and produced rather simplistic answers with limited exemplification
- could provide detailed accounts of the history of the English Language, often with useful content, but did not address the issues about processes raised in the question
- could exemplify changes and discuss their causes but did not explicitly evaluate what they revealed about whether change can be controlled
- mentioned the influence of technology on change, but gave no specific examples
- claimed that Jean Aitchison is a prescriptivist and could not explain her metaphors clearly
- attempted to discuss language reform but gave confused or unsuitable examples
- gave confused/inaccurate accounts of wave and s-curve theory
- had some idea that someone might be directing language change, but were very unsure who that might be (the government was a frequent choice).

## **SECTION B**

### **QUESTION 3**

Question 3 focussed on discourses about language diversity with a specific focus on women’s language and their use of vocal fry and uptalk.

Students were expected to explore both texts systematically by describing linguistic features (AO1) and analysing how they created meanings (AO3) in order to evaluate the way the texts represented ideas about women’s language, showing connections between the texts as parts of a wider discourse about women’s language (AO4).

Both Text A and B offered students a rich resource for analysis and the great majority demonstrated clear analytical abilities and genuine engagement with the texts. The strongest students integrated accurate linguistic description with close analysis of meaning.



**AO1**

In answering question 3 students were rewarded for their ability to use methods of language analysis to identify and describe salient features of language which contributed to the creation of meanings and representations. Although candidates were asked to analyse and compare how language was used in the two texts, some did not seem to realise that this meant that they were expected to use linguistic terminology to describe language features. Consequently they could not perform as well on AO1 on this question as in Section A.

Some quoted examples without any linguistic terminology, while many used only general terms such as 'word' or 'sentence'. Some identified 'interrogative' and 'imperative' in their first paragraph, then but then did little more.

There was a good deal of mis-labelling of word classes including adjectives and nouns. There was some uncertainty about what person pronouns were. Many who would otherwise been able to receive very limited credit for AO1 on this question were partially helped by their ability to identify and discuss the metaphors of disease and enslavement in the texts.

More successful candidates were able to identify noun, adjective and adverb types, modal verbs and verb tenses and aspect. Some students were able to comment effectively on noun phrases and apposition structures to look at the way people, ideas and language were being represented. Those who carried out clause and sentence analysis were highly rewarded on AO1. Sometimes they were not entirely successful, because often they did not quote clauses accurately. Students were, however, much more successful in commenting on clause order and identifying patterns. There were frequent examples of uncertainty about compound, complex and compound complex sentences.

There was some evidence of students having been taught immensely detailed descriptive frameworks which they sometimes deployed to the detriment of the clarity of their communication (where they would pile up lengthy lists of linguistic terms before every quote) and to the detriment of their engagement with meanings. It sometimes seemed they were driven by a desire to illustrate linguistic features rather than evaluate representations.

The use of AO1 is as a method for analysis rather than an end in itself. Students need to be aware of the function or significance of the features they choose to look at. For example the use of the present tense was seen by many as a device that made what the writers were saying seem true and incontrovertible.

Some students' essays were AO1 led: paragraphs began with the identification of a feature and were then more or less successful in how they progressed. Those that for example analysed the ways metaphors were used were often interesting and revelatory. Those that became a list of rather disconnected features of language lost sight of the overall meanings and communication in the text.

**AO3 and AO4**

Students clearly found this question very challenging but almost all managed some level of analysis.

The first step taken by more successful students was to identify the views and arguments being expressed in each text. The most successful made careful distinctions between the views of the

writers and the various sources that were quoted. These answers often also examined the way other people and their views were being mediated by the writer of the article.

A second key step was to locate the texts within a discourse about language. Many saw strands of thought about women's language that adopted deficit, dominance or difference ways of thinking. Another set of discourses that students noted centred on prescriptivist dislike of change and the desire to proscribe and prescribe certain uses of language.

An issue was how students used their knowledge of approaches to the study of women's and men's language. Instead of then going on to analyse the language of the texts and linking it to meaning, some candidates, having identified the deficit/dominance stance of the texts, spent most of their answer explaining these theories in great detail, losing sight of the nature of this task, in contrast to those in section A and Question 4.

More successful answers addressed the connections between texts throughout their answer. They often did this by comparing the deficit and difference representations they found in each text, thus engaging with the key focus of their task the analysis of how ideas about language are repeated and disseminated across texts and the way discourses are generated.

Successful answers often organised themselves around a clear analytical method. Such answers often began by identifying material that represented and expressed views about women's language. A focus on the use of metaphors was very productive within this approach. These answers also looked at the modality of the texts and particularly ways in which views about language were made convincing and authoritative.

A second focus taken by these well organised answers was to analyse the ways the texts presented the people whose views were being given and also the way the writer appeared in the text and presented themselves.

The third focus used often looked at how the reader was being positioned by the reader. This, at its best, went beyond simple comments about direct address and explored how the reader's views were being constructed for them.

Some students had obviously been introduced to traditional models of rhetorical analyses (ethos, logos, pathos) and the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis. These were helpful to the extent they were understood but did give students a framework for the discourse analysis required in this task and ways of evaluating the presentation of ideas. They also provided a useful way to structure a comparison.

It was often easier to give students credit for AO4 than AO3, because virtually all of them had recognised the need to compare the texts. Most did this throughout their answer, though less successful students confined their comparison to a paragraph at the end. Almost all compared the shared focus on women's speech and vocal fry. Almost all saw shared disapproval of this type of speech. Most compared and contrasted the sources used and referred to, including the references to celebrities. Consequently, most students could be awarded a mark for this AO in at least Level 3.

The best answers compared at a high level and recognised that the language of these two texts was disseminating a discourse about women's language as weak, deficient or just different and the way readers were being positioned towards these views. High scoring answers also showed sophisticated understanding of how the online newspaper contexts framed these representations

of women and their language and invited readers to engage with and participate in the discourse through the comments and sharing links.

**More successful students:**

- understood and engaged with the ideas that the two texts communicated about women's language
- connected the two texts throughout their essay
- placed the two texts' views within deficit, dominance and difference discourses
- used a range of methods of language analysis to analyse the way representations were constructed
- saw the Mail text as more informative than the persuasive/argumentative Guardian text
- noted that the Mail was presenting others' view for consideration while Wolf was using others' views as a way of advancing her own argument
- compared and contrasted the headlines and sub-editorial material
- examined how the headline of Text A used an interrogative, the adverb *really*, the verb *insists* and quotation marks to question Lake Bell's ideas
- evaluated the vocative *young women* and the imperative and considered how this positioned Wolf and the reader in regard to younger generations of women
- objected to Wolf's tone and address as patronising and accusatory
- saw the implication that women had lost or given away their strong voice
- saw how Wolf was implying that women had betrayed their gender
- evaluated the accusatory tone of the repeated second person pronoun in the sub-editorial introduction
- saw the power of the copular verb to be in this introduction and the modality it created, making Wolf's claims seem true and unquestionable
- examined how Wolf presented herself as intellectual and authoritative through her use of abstract nouns like *ideology* and *patriarchy*
- recognised that Texts A and B were a collage of views that were being mediated by the reporter or Naomi Wolf
- explored the different voices and viewpoints in the texts
- distinguished the views of the unnamed Mail reporter and those of Lake Bell and Carmen Fought
- commented on how the Mail use passive constructions like *are being mocked* and *are often seen* as ways of reporting views rather than endorsing them
- compared and contrasted the way the texts represented women's language
- saw how Wolf and Bell were offering deficit and dominance views while Fought offered a more difference based view
- commented on how Lake Bell wanted to reject women's language style she saw as submissive and powerless
- questioned her desire for women to sound sexy and sophisticated as a model
- commented on how the abstract nouns *immaturity* and *stupidity* represented the way women were seen because of their speech
- evaluated the use of disease imagery: *painfully nasal, have caught chronic 'sexy baby vocal virus', pandemic*
- analysed how Fought used the cataphoric reference *the truth is this* to give her interpretation a very strong emphasis
- commented on Fought's use of the present tense to create a modality where her interpretation was presented as very definite

- noted that Fought was rejecting deficit and dominance interpretations and offering a difference views based on rapport building as typical of women
- evaluated the comparison of women’s language with *power tools*
- analysed the connotations of *guttural growl* and *ducks quacking*
- examined how Wolf represented women’s speech as a *mannerism*, compared it to a *dreaded* other feature and saw its effect as to *undermine* authority
- analysed and evaluated metaphors of disease, enslavement and fashion
- analysed the parallel adjective phrases *less competent, less trustworthy, less educated and less hireable* as a
- damning indictment of how women’s speech damaged their prospects
- commented on the irony that an actor/actress Lake Bell had little awareness of ideas about performing identity and used the monitoring feature *you know*
- analysed how Text A presented Lake Bell and her views through the verbs *believes, says, admitted*
- analysed how Lake Bell was described as an actress and in terms of her age and how this affected the presentation of her views
- examined how Carmen Fought was given a degree of authority by the reference to her academic position and the heavy used of proper nouns
- analysed the impact of the verb of saying *told* that was used to describes Fought’s communication of her ideas
- examined how Wolf seemed to exonerate men who hated these linguistic features from being anti-feminist
- looked at the characterisation of *devoted professors* and *employers* who only wanted to be fair to women but couldn’t because of their speech
- analysed Wolf’s presentation of herself as a rhetorical, persuasive device: *I myself have flinched* – even the feminist Wolf is forced to be critical of her sisters because of their language
- analysed the exasperated tone of Wolf’s interrogative simple sentence *Well, will we?*
- connected the texts by the way the two papers framed the stories on the website
- explored the construction of female identity by the graphology of the separate Femail section and its sub-topics
- compared the Guardian’s classification of the story under feminism and its placement within the structure of the website’s categories
- discussed how the websites’ sharing links helped to disseminate the ideas and representations
- connected the texts by their use of images and graphic design
- considered the significance of the way the photograph of a woman was cropped to remove her mouth
- compared the Guardian’s duck image and representation of a young woman in its image
- evaluated the texts’ treatment of women as a homogenous group by the use of the noun *women* and the noun phrase *young women*.

**Less successful students:**

- could explain the focus on vocal fry
- could compare and contrast the audience, genre and purposes of the texts
- identified the shared ‘negative’ view of young women’s language
- focussed much attention on the difference between a tabloid and broadsheet newspaper and their respective audiences and political views, often characterised mechanically and stereotypically

- wrote very generally about the texts as online articles
- could identify the use of celebrity references in both texts
- made very few other comparisons between the texts
- did not engage with what the texts were actually saying
- used very few linguistic descriptions or analysis
- wrote at length about research and theories about women's language
- accepted every claim about women's speech as universally true
- spent much time giving their own views of the Kardashians
- could not spell the word 'woman' or punctuate the word 'women's'.

#### **QUESTION 4**

Students were asked to write a feature article in which they assessed the ideas presented in the texts they had analysed in question 3. Students were expected to show knowledge and understanding of linguistic concepts and issues (AO2) when writing in a journalistic style for a non-specialist audience (AO5). It is the culmination of the students' A-level study as they use their knowledge to engage in language debates in wider society, taking their learning beyond the classroom.

This task produced a very wide range of outcomes. It was sometimes left unattempted, perhaps because of time management issues. It was also sometimes a wonderfully entertaining and thought-provoking way to finish marking a paper.

#### **AO2**

A big issue was that many candidates, having sometimes written at length about Lakoff, Tannen et al. in Question 3, did not recognise the need to refer to this knowledge, however obliquely, in Question 4. The task required them to assess the views presented in the two articles. This needed the deployment of academic ideas to classify the views, placing them within patterns of thinking about language and gender and challenge them, offering alternative ways of thinking.

Many students offered only a generalised response to the views in Texts A and B, often without any consideration of whether these were valid or not. It was common to read answers that demonstrated no additional knowledge about language beyond that provided in the two articles. Ideas and issues raised in Texts A and B were sometimes dismissed with contempt, asserting that women had every right to speak in whatever style they liked. The Kardashians were often held up as excellent role models because of their business empires so their linguistic quirks were irrelevant. Job interviewers were castigated for discriminating against women just because they used odd inflections. On the other hand some responses agreed wholeheartedly with the view that vocal fry and uptalk were annoying and signs of weakness. The problem with both approaches was that they were usually based on assertion with little linguistic knowledge to support them.

Less successful answers were 'rants' – sometimes acknowledged as such by the writers. These took one of two lines; women's speech is awful and must be changed, or women can speak any way they want to!

The next level of response saw students referring to Robin Lakoff. Many were happy to accept the deficit views identified with Lakoff's work, though a few did admit that, even if a deficit model had had some social validity at the time, it was now outdated. Some got as far as describing the views of Tannen (sometimes confused with Cameron), but again did not evaluate or question them. Also at this level were references to research findings, usually Fishman and Zimmerman and West.

Generally at this level deficit, dominance and difference ideas were explained, illustrated and accepted.

The best responses questioned whether there are actually differences between men's and women's speech. Better responses often deconstructed the treatment of women as a homogenous group and considered the impact of other aspects of identity and the significance of context. Some answers introduced ideas about performance of identity. Students introduced their readers to the ideas of Janet Hyde and Judith Butler. Strong answers challenged the interpretation of women's language features as weak or rapport seeking and saw they could be deployed for a wide range of purposes.

Better answers also took Naomi Wolf to task for her prescriptivist leanings and the verbal hygiene she was seeking to apply to young women's language. There was interesting discussion of how attitudes were linked to gender, age and occupation. Better answers also drew on Deborah Cameron's ideas about why the myth of Mars and Venus maintained its appeal.

### **A05**

Very few students misunderstood the need to write a newspaper article or the nature of a feature article which involved the in-depth exploration of issues and the development of an argument exploring their own views.

Some students, in spite of having two 'models' in front of them, were uncertain about how to present a feature article. Some students wrote a letter, 'Dear Lake Bell', but did not present it as an open letter that might appear in a newspaper column.

Most provided a headline and many produced a sub-editorial introduction, using this as a way to introduce themselves. The most successful answers neatly invented anecdotal scenarios to exemplify ideas; at their best these were engaging and amusing. There were many puns making use of fry. One understated headline got to the core of the debate with great economy: *Breaking news: young women criticised by men.*

Some wrote in a very informal register, including expletives, and adopted a very abusive address. Some referred to their piece as a rant which was a warning sign that they had not produced a well informed, well argued critique of the views in the texts. Others wrote in an excessively academic register, making no concessions to their non-specialist reader. They did not always explain terms such as vocal fry or uptalk, and assumed that the readers would be familiar with tag questions. When names of researchers were used a discriminator was how well they were introduced to the reader.

A large number assumed that their audience would be familiar with the texts, and even referred to Text A and Text B. Many also assumed familiarity on the part of their readers with Lake Bell and Naomi Wolf.

Perhaps Naomi Wolf's initial vocative, 'Young women' set the wrong tone but 'Women of all ages', 'All you women out there' and other invocations sounded clumsy and inappropriate when inserted into the body of the text.

This question was challenging for students whose control of spelling, punctuation and spelling was insecure. On this task AO5 did assess control of accuracy as an important element of effective writing. A significant number of candidates did not add any authority to their argument by spelling one 'woman' as one 'women'.

The best writing took two forms. One was the creation of a lively persona, relating the issues to their own experiences and challenge common views about women's language. The second involved a serious review of the social and cultural issues for a reader interested in cultural analysis. Both combined well documented information, a clear line of argument and a distinctive, well judged voice communicating with the individual reader.

**More successful students:**

- wrote substantial answers in which they reviewed and evaluated different views about women's language
- explained the views of Lakoff and others and analysed these as deficit and dominance views
- explained the difference approach associated with Tannen, Coates and Holmes most frequently
- critiqued deficit, dominance and difference views
- challenged the idea that all women and all men talk in the same way
- explained Hyde's meta-research and gender similarities hypothesis
- explored the idea of gender and identity as performances
- created a clear 'voice' in the article
- imagined new readers, without 'A' level experience, responding to these creative pieces
- introduced the Naomi Wolf and Mail articles, often explaining how they had recently come across these articles
- explained or glossed 'vocal fry', 'uptalk', 'prescriptivism', 'tag questions' as terms that are not in everyday usage
- identified themselves in a by-line or sub-editorial introduction
- managed references to Texts A and B that explained to their reader the context: 'I recently read an article ...'
- briefly explained the views expressed in the articles
- genuinely informed the reader about the linguistic issues
- wrote answers which often incorporated well judged humour
- used sentences which were varied and crafted for effect
- made good use of parallel structures or contrasts
- addressed the reader in an appropriate way
- used often witty and always relevant headlines
- enjoyed the opportunity to pun cleverly in the headline
- provided a thoughtful/memorable/witty conclusion.

**Less successful candidates:**

- wrote only a general response to the texts with little evidence of A-level language study
- made no reference to any research into women's language
- repeated the views expressed in the original articles
- showed uncritical acceptance of the ideas in the two texts
- showed outrage at the views in the two texts with no real counter-argument or analysis
- wrote at length about their own views of the Kardashians
- wrote about the oppression of women with little focus on language
- wrote as if their audience had read Text A and Text B
- used an inappropriately informal style of expression

- presented linguistic terms, ideas and names of researchers with no explanation for their non-specialist audience
- adopted abusive and insulting address to the writers of Text A and B or Robin Lakoff
- showed little control of spelling and punctuation, especially the punctuation of titles and quotations
- wrote no sub-editorial material
- wrote headlines that neither hooked the reader nor gave them any indication of the article's content or line.

### **Advice to students**

To improve performance on this paper, students need to:

- read the tasks very carefully, identifying key words and the exact focus of the task
- understand what key question verbs like 'evaluate' and 'assess' require them to do
- avoid using pre-prepared essays that do not quite match the task set
- treat AO1 as a toolkit to enable AO3 and not as an end in itself
- pay attention to what the texts in Question 3 are saying as well as identifying language features
- spend time clarifying the meanings, attitudes and arguments in Section B texts
- focus on evaluating the ways Section B texts use language to represent language and persuade the reader of their views
- identify the clause or phrase which they are analysing precisely – omitting words from other clauses/phrases
- use their knowledge of language to evaluate the specific arguments raised in Section B texts when answering question 4
- use argument and evidence rather than assertion when producing their piece
- challenge the ideas offered in the texts in Section B.



### **Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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