

Top Tips for A Level English Language Exam Preparation

With the summer exams fast approaching, here are some of our top tips and ideas to aid A Level English Language exam preparation and help students to get the most from their revision time.

The key requirement for both exam papers

Five of the six questions across the two exams will require students to **analyse unseen texts**. Reading and annotating of a wide range of non-fiction and media texts for example, The Guardian or The Times columnists are key to building confidence with the types of texts the exam board favour.

Successful exam preparation - Assessment recap

Paper 1 - H470/01 Exploring Language: 2 hours 30 minutes

Question 1 comes in two parts and must always be answered separately.

- Question 1a– **Identifying and analysing the use of lexis and semantics in Text A**
- Question 1b– **Identifying and analysing the way that sentences are used / grammar is used in Text A**

In these questions students should use specific linguistic terminology e.g. proper noun rather than 'name', and should illustrate points made by quoting from the text. It's also worth noting that there is no hard and fast rule as to what should be discussed in each question but analysis of a particular feature should be clearly linked to the relevant area i.e. pronouns discussed in a) must focus on their linguistic value whereas if they are discussed in b) it must focus on their grammatical impact.

Question 2 - Writing in a given form about a topical language issue

Students should carefully consider the audience and purpose of the task. The audience will be a non-specialist one so students should gloss terms and references that a generic reader may not necessarily know. Students should show a broad understanding of issues and consider alternative views but their response needs to remain grounded in the language issue being explored.

Question 3 - Comparing the way in which language is used in Text B and Text C

Students should try to integrate comparison of both texts throughout. Comparisons could be made of the basis of language levels or through topic or purpose. Good responses will analyse language use in relation to context, using linguistic terminology and backed up by quotations from both texts.

Paper 2- H470/02 Dimensions of linguistic variation: 2 hours 30 minutes

Question 1 – Analysing Text A, focussing on the development of children’s spoken language

Students should consistently analyse the data in the transcript, making links to context.

It’s better for students to be tentative when suggesting the grammatical stage of the child/children’s language.

Question 2 – Identifying and analysing patterns of language use in Text B, exploring the significance of gender and/or power and/or technology and/or change

While this is a media text, students should maintain a focus on language and patterns of language use in relation to context. Students should explore contexts in detail.

Question 3 – Comparing the way in which language is used/has changed over time using Text C and Text D

Language analysis and comparisons could be explored through different language levels, through theme/topic or through purpose. Students should analyse language features and patterns in both texts in relation to contexts.

As this question is synoptic, responses could encompass elements from across the course.

Successful exam preparation

Students have been issued with booklets for each component/question of the exams which contain a range of revision resources, exam questions and exemplars.

There are also very useful revision and wider reading sections for students to actively use on Google Classroom.

Additional Revision ideas

Language and Gender

- Deborah Cameron’s blog, ‘language: a feminist guide’ provides a useful resource for the study of Language and Gender, as well as for topical language issues.

Linguistic terminology

- Quizzes, quizlets and terminology bingo all work well at testing knowledge of language terms. Actively use the Glossaries in the Subject Handbook and the OCR Glossary of Terms and Main Language Theories handouts.

Topical language issues

- Construct mind maps for language issues, showing the relationship between theorists.
- Find an opinion piece on a language issue and write the opposing view or change the form/audience.

- Keep a record of current news stories on language issues to use as supporting evidence in topical issues.

Theories and concepts

- Revise and make cue cards using the theorists information given in each topic and the OCR Guide to Theorists handout.

Child Language Acquisition

- Mystery stage identification activity: use a range of transcripts from the revision pack and quickly identify stages of the interlocutors and present evidence as to why
- Use the texts from your folder and revision pack to create a timeline of development and identify key features at each age/stage.

Language in the media

- Identifying the bias/representation of a particular group in a text then alter the language choices to reverse that bias/representation
- Consider print and online versions of the same story from the same publication
- Make a list of the patterns of language which could be in a media text and then produce it.

Language change

- Produce a timeline of change. Students could look at a specific genre and its evolution, for example cookery or royal reporting
- Produce a PowerPoint on different time periods e.g. decades of the 20th century, considering things like key events, figures, music, fashion, technology, factors affecting class and the impact of these on language use. This helps to cover historical and social context which in turn aids language analysis
- Students can engage with this topic through etymological research activities e.g. tracing a word's history. The [Google Ngram Viewer](#) is a useful tool for this and can reveal the frequency of word used over time. The [WebCorp Live corpus](#) is also helpful
- Recast modern texts using features of earlier versions of English @Chaucerdohtweet is an interesting starting point.

TRIAL EXAM 2: weeks beginning 23.1.23	CONFIRMED DATES OF ACTUAL EXAMS:
PAPER 2: Dimensions of linguistic variation 2 hours 30 minutes	H470/01 PAPER 1: Exploring language (2 h 30 min): Thursday 25 May AM H470/02 Dimensions of linguistic variation (2 h 30 min): Monday 5 June AM

REVISION CLASSES will begin in the Spring Term on Tuesdays in EN2