Paper One: Language, the individual and society

Section A: Meaning and Representation:

This section of the exam is, as stated before, the nuts and bolts of the course. It is here that we aim to extensively develop your ability to analyse a text on many different levels, from many different perspectives and in much more detail in comparison to what you were required to do at GCSE. In the past many students have stated that this is the hardest section as there is a lot of new terminology and concepts which need to be learned and understood, but don’t worry we do this step by step together. We use the levels of language as a framework to analyse texts – this includes Lexis and semantics, Grammar, Phonetics, Graphology, Pragmatics and Discourse – which is everything from the words used, the meaning they create, the sound they project and aspects of the texts design, nothing is off limits.

Changing the way we look at texts:

For us a text can be anything. A receipt, a flyer, a poster, a newspaper or even a transcript of a broadcast or interview. We are dealing with language used in the real world and so we need to shift our approach. The key concept that we need to get our heads around is the idea that creating a text is a fluid and dynamic process. A text is not a lifeless extract on a page but a much more complex act of communication or discourse event that involves much more than the writer putting words on a page. Consider the example below:

Writer

Text

Reader

In simple terms we consider the process as one way: the writer writes the text, the text exists and is then read by someone. But it isn’t that straightforward – it involves human beings and therefore the text goes beyond words for the writer and the reader so instead consider it a different way.

1. Firstly, let’s consider the writer. There are a number of questions that we could consider here. Are they a professional writer? Or just a member of the public? Are they being paid to write this piece? Is it on a subject / topic of which they are an expert? Is it just their opinion? What is the writer’s purpose? Do they want to shock or make us agree with them? Are they just relaying facts or is it biased in some way? Who has asked them to write this piece? Why would they want this piece to be written? These types of questions allow us to look at how the writer is presenting themselves in their writing. If I asked you to write a review of a recent film the piece you produce will be very different from someone else’s – you are a product of your experiences and so the process really begins earlier. These aspects are going to be present in the text.

A) Writer

B)Text

C) Reader

1. Equally we need to consider different aspects of the text: What type of text is it? For example you would expect different language choices / layout / features in a newspaper article than you would in a leaflet. Where is this text found? Consider not only the newspaper it comes from but where is that newspaper available? Does it contain interactive features if it is online? Are there rules for its use as in online forums? What does the text say about the publication or websites brand? How are they as a company presenting themselves to the world? Who would be their target audience?
2. Lastly, the reader. We need to consider who is this aimed at? When the writer started this process who was their ideal reader? Male? Female? Middle-aged? Retired? Knowledgeable of the topic? But of course it is not just these “ideal” readers that read these texts and it’s not just one reader (usually) who is going to read it. Again, we are a product of our knowledge and experience which we project onto the text we read. We don’t just take information we interpret and distil and compare.

It is not a simple one way process and if we can apply this idea to a text it opens up a plethora of avenues for investigation and analysis which all must be exemplified in the language and evidenced (yep we still need those quotations). So consider a text as a whole – how is the writer using their language to create meaning? This isn’t just about what their actual words mean but how do they come together to create a wider meaning for the text? How is the writer representing themselves? How is the company or brand being represented? How is the topic / subject being represented? How is the reader being represented?

Exploring Texts:

One of the main areas that students tend to struggle with is having enough experience of a range of texts. A student could be faced with a tabloid newspaper article or an online forum discussion and sure they can analyse and discuss the words on the page but if they don’t understand the dynamics of the text they miss out on a much deeper level of understanding and lose marks. With that in mind I want you to spend some time and build your experience of different texts. In order to become more experienced and intelligent readers you need to immerse yourself in the world around you so you are able to identify and explore the subtle tactics that writers and text producers employ to manipulate and position their audiences. If completed properly this will go a long way in building your confidence with Paper 1. I want you to create a bank / scrap book of texts to ensure you have examples of different text types. This can be electronic or paper.

The following schedule will guide you through the project. For each text type you need to include at least three interesting examples from different sources / aimed at different audiences / topics. The main thing here is to gain a wide range of experience so try your best to explore lots of different examples; use the internet but also look at the stuff that gets put through your post box too! If there are other text types you find that are not on this list then use them as this isn’t exhaustive.

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| Week | Text Type | Examples | Guidance |
| 1 | Newspaper articles: This is an area that would benefit from further research – what is the difference between them? Political affiliations? | * Broadsheet
* Tabloid
* Local
 | For each text you find you need to consider the following aspects of the text:What is the Genre of the text? E.g. What is it?Register? Informal / formalAudience? Who is it aimed at?Subject? What is it about?Purpose? Why has it been written? Entertain? Persuade? Inform? Instruct? Advise? It could have more than one purpose.Where would you find this text? Is it free? Exclusively online? Billboard? Representation: How is the subject being presented to us? Positively? Negatively? How is the audience being positioned? What is the reader supposed to think or feel?How is the writer being presented to us? As an expert? As a friend? Wise? Unsure?How is the publication presenting itself to its audience? Can you identify any aspects of the language that supports your ideas? Annotate them! This includes all aspects of the text e.g. colour, images, fonts etc |
| 2 | Magazine articles | * Gender Specific
* Interest specific
* Sunday supplements (magazines that are part of a newspaper)
 |
| 3 | Advertising | * Products
* Services
* Flyers / leaflets
 |
| 4 | Blog | * Professional
* Fan / amateur
 |
| 5 | Forum | * Subject specific (parenting / sports)
 |
| 6 | Opinion articles Or Reviews | * Regular columnist
* Critic
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