

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/12
Passages

Key messages

Learners need to ensure that they read a wide range of material from a range of diverse sources – such as travel writing, memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, newspaper articles, blogs, advertisements and advertorials – so that they can not only assess the conventions and language associated with different formats and genres but also comment on the effects and qualities conveyed by specific words and phrases; they should be able to comment on how a particular extract is structured in the way that it unfolds and develops in terms of subject, mood and tone. Learners should be able to explore the contrasts and differences between the sections of a given extract; they need to move beyond identifying essential aspects of language and style such as personification, alliteration and punctuation so that the effects of such features are considered in relation to their context and the extract as a whole. Learners who write precisely and economically, maintaining a close focus upon style and tone, are those who tend to achieve the better results. They also need to be able to adapt their own writing style to incorporate diverse directed tasks – for example, letters, articles, diaries – and demonstrate secure familiarity with their conventions and style. A secure degree of technical accuracy – especially in the use of spellings, punctuation and tenses – is required at this level.

General comments

The passages chosen for this series presented the candidates with a varied range of styles and three very different methods of addressing their audience. Passage 1 was generally well understood, and the required focus upon the development of the argument was largely well sustained. Passage 2 was the more popular of the two alternative passages, the third text being chosen by relatively few candidates. There was generally good attention to the demands of the rubric, with only a very few omitting to answer the compulsory question and fewer still attempting to answer all three. The directed writing has stipulated word boundaries of between 120 and 150 words. Some candidates completely ignored this and wrote at considerable length, inevitably losing marks and wasting time in doing so.

There were some excellent responses to the paper; these were often discriminating and discerning, with good analytical skills used to real advantage in many cases. Nonetheless, there were some persistent problems in approaching the paper, which students would benefit from addressing.

There is a continuing tendency among candidates to write introductory paragraphs which either summarise the events of the passage or attempt to define its target audience. It is very unlikely that offering a précis of the text will be helpful in answering the question; defining the target audience is only of use when it throws light upon the style, language or tone of the text.

The objective of the commentaries is to examine the key characteristics of the passage: simply identifying language features, such as alliteration or hyperbole is not, in itself, sufficient; their use must be related to specific effects.

Some candidates continue to conflate the tone of the passage with its subject matter. Examples of this tendency included “a disliking tone” and (in **Question 2**) “a medical tone”. The most overused words in this context are “formal” and “informal”: these are very imprecise and rarely helpful attempts at definition, especially in the case of passages which have obvious shifts of tone.

It is self-evident that the fifteen minutes recommended as reading time should be used as productively as possible, but it is worth remembering that the whole passage should be read with equal attention; focusing too predominantly on the earlier parts of the passage generally leads to an incomplete answer.

Candidates should also remember to give a roughly equal allocation of time to the completion of each question. There were a significant number of candidates who clearly did not allow sufficient time to do their second passage full justice. Candidates are also reminded that it is generally not a good stratagem to attempt the directed writing before the commentary. Completing the commentary first enables the candidate to be fully conversant with the form, style and linguistic techniques of the passage, and consequently better able to adopt them when approaching the directed writing.

Candidates will normally be asked to base their answer upon the style and language of the passage; this should not mean offering a close paraphrase of sections of the original text. They should view the directed writing as an opportunity to demonstrate their own writing skills whilst employing the style and linguistic features of the passage.

Question 1A

This proved to be an accessible text for most candidates and familiarity with print media enabled them to evaluate the effect of layout as well as that of style and argument. There was a great deal to comment upon in this passage and some selection may have been necessary; the better answers made points succinctly and then moved on to the next example. Less effective responses tended to make only a few points which were then repeated or amplified when they should have been looking for additional examples. Some candidates succumbed to the temptation of joining in with the argument and became supplementary voices, attacking the food industry rather than analysing the text.

There was a generally fair understanding of the progression of the passage from proposition to specific examples of the industry's tactics. Also well understood and commented upon was the conversational tone and persistent use of personal pronouns to engage the reader in the argument. There was also good recognition of the repetition of "sugar, salt and fat" to establish the principal culprits in the obesity crisis. Another feature which was almost universally recognised, though not always developed, was the use of the rhetorical question: "Is this ethical?" was the most popular example.

Rather less successful was the identification of significant individual words which were key to the development of the argument. Relatively few candidates commented on the significance of children being "hardwired" to appreciate harmful ingredients. There was a similar lack of response to the significance of the parenthetically emphasised word, "psychology", with its implications of brainwashing and mind control.

A very few candidates completely omitted to mention the layout and typography of the passage but there was also some good understanding of the use of sub-headings and bold type.

Question 1B

There were some sophisticated and well expressed responses to this element of the question with an excellent sense of audience and of the original style. However, some responses underlined the importance of reading the question carefully, to see exactly what is required of the candidate. The question asked for an extract relating to "children and exercise" but there was a tendency in many responses to carry on inveighing against the evils of fast food and make little or no reference to the importance of exercise. Not all responses reproduced the original's use of listing and sub-headings, which might have helped in creating a stronger sense of purpose and a concentration upon exercise as the topic of the writing.

Some candidates seemed to be under the mistaken impression that technical accuracy was less important in the directed writing than in the commentary section. There was some very careless spelling and some severe confusion of tenses. Attention to accuracy is important throughout the paper but in particular when approaching the directed writing.

Question 2A

This proved to be the more popular of the two alternative passages and though not possessing an abundance of language features, there was much to be commented upon. There was also a persistent sense of irony and indeed of impending tragedy which might have been considered. The better answers had a clear overview of the passage and concentrated upon the often sardonic tone of the writer and the sympathetic but quizzical presentation of Dr Shroff. Weaker responses tended to focus upon presenting the narrative of the text rather than examining its methods; the use of lengthy quotations suggested a lack of confidence in investigating style and language.

Direct speech, metaphor, personification and repetition were all recognised and commented upon, though not always with a clear sense of the effects they created. The writer's use of metaphor in the first paragraph was generally referred to and the better answers picked up the suggestion that Dina was swimming out of a past which threatened to drown her. There was also intelligent consideration of the image of the "corridors" of Dina's mind and the suggestion of a maze in which she found herself trapped.

Most candidates, quite rightly, made the presentation of Dr Shroff the focus of their answer; but not all of them recognised that there was a degree of sympathy, even admiration, for his idealistic approach to his vocation. Some candidates allowed themselves to be distracted into wider consideration of Indian society in general, which, however interesting, was not relevant to the question. There was far too little consideration of the role of the chorus of small-minded, materialistic "friends and relatives", viewed against whom Dr Shroff seems an even more heroic or misguided figure. The more assured answers picked up the irony of the medical language used to diagnose Dr Shroff's failings and also the image of disease scything down the villagers with "deadly sickles".

The conclusion of the passage was often correctly given as much attention as the opening, though few remarked on the mystery of why Nusswan "would have ruined any chance of changing her husband's mind."

This passage rewarded close examination of the effects of specific word choice; Dr Shroff had a "fervour" to ease humanity's suffering but only a "desire" to make money for his family. In a relatively short extract, candidates needed to look carefully at the effects of individual words and phrases.

Question 2B

Some candidates who struggled with the commentary section came into their own here, with inventive and controlled continuations of the passage. Some interesting subterfuges were presented to lure the doctor away from his medical concerns and there were sympathetic portrayals of all the characters concerned. Relatively few took up the plot strand offered by Nusswan's obviously uneasy relationship with his father but there were some deft developments of the plot.

Some otherwise purposeful responses were marred by technical inaccuracy or by apparently complete indifference to the stipulated word boundaries. In an exercise such as this, where plot development is clearly essential, candidates do have to keep an especially sharp eye on word limits and technical accuracy.

Question 3A

This was, by a long way, the least popular of the alternative passages. Close and careful reading was essential for clear understanding of the text and some candidates obviously started writing without fully working out what the passage was about. The title, set in bold type, was "Fountains", yet this was sometimes forgotten and several answers made very little reference to the fountains at all. Responses which lost focus upon the fact that the fountains were the principal point of reference found themselves very confused, often reduced to making random language points which had no particular direction or purpose.

Those candidates who concentrated on the allusive and wide ranging elements of the style produced some purposeful and engaged work.

The opening paragraph, with its transition from the Roman populace to the "characters of the fountains" and its reflection on "the Anglo-Saxon mind" was not often fully understood. As a result, candidates tended to seize an easily recognisable alliterative phrase, "total and terrible" in the second paragraph. Similarly, the repetition of the word "indecent" was generally commented upon but without examining the different meanings of its usage. The phrase "smiling sadism of dreams" was also commented on, sometimes, very arguably, being described as an oxymoron. However, there was little attempt to connect it with the opening sentence of the passage, which it clearly echoes. The remainder of the paragraph needed more sustained attention to the nature of the language employed and the way in which the writer suspends making her meaning clear until the following paragraph. The stronger answers sometimes picked up the significance of the brief, two-line paragraph which carries the writer's core message, but this was rarely fully developed.

The final paragraph brought together the strands of thought spun out previously, and amalgamated the fountains of the city with its inhabitants, clearly echoing the language and preoccupations of the first paragraph. Only the strongest responses echoed this sense of connection; the weaker answers homed in on the rubbish in the basins, with one response suggesting the writer was being critical of Rome's public services.

Candidates who attempted to relate language and style to a clear narrative generally struggled. Others, in being unable to distinguish a defining narrative, tended to “translate” words or phrases rather than examining the techniques employed to create effects.

Question 3B

There was a generally stronger and more confident response to the directed writing than was the case with the commentary. Mumbai and Delhi were popular choices of location, and the necessary mixture of attractive and seedy aspects was often well caught. Some candidates, in attempting to catch the allusive quality of the writing and its sudden changes of direction, simply became confused; others offered straightforward travelogues which did not really echo the original style and tone.

The stronger responses showed attention to the idiosyncrasies of the passage and exploited them to create to create some effective city pictures. Personification of the setting was commonly used, as in “you see the eye of the city peering at you” (London). A few candidates caught just the right tone and sense of thriving for poetry: “Windows, from which the tears of loneliness are shed, dreams of young love woven, the fort of rebellious youth, the retreat of the frowning wife” (Delhi).

Some candidates clearly relished the opportunity to write about locations they intensely liked or disliked, but sometimes got carried away and lost any relation to the style and language of the original.

As in both previous pieces of directed writing, there was a tendency to relax attention to technical accuracy, particularly the use of apostrophes and punctuation, just when it should have been at its most punctilious.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/22

Writing

Key messages

In order to prepare successfully for this exam, candidates should make sure that they focus on the prescribed instructions within each question: for example, in this paper, 'sounds and atmosphere' for Question 1, 'character and mood' for Question 2, and 'enthusiastic attitude' for Question 4.

They should ensure that time management skills are used effectively, thus ensuring that they avoid producing overlong narratives in Section A, that often lead to short, self-penalising answers for Section B. As such, they should be prepared to spend a few minutes thinking about, and writing out, a short plan to ensure the sound structure of an answer.

Although practising past questions is strongly advised, candidates should also adapt to the live questions in the exam rather than producing prepared, generic and formulaic answers.

Candidates should be encouraged to read a wide variety of newspaper and magazine articles as background preparation for Section B.

General comments

For Section A, strong responses were typically those with an original flavour and a convincing sense of place, character or atmosphere: examples of this included instances where the reader was able to vicariously undergo the shopping experience with the narrator in Question 1; relate to the main character and also gain an insight into the motivations of the peripheral characters in Question 2; or share the anticipation, joys and disappointments of the teams in Question 3. Where some candidates fell down in their imaginative writing, it was often due to lack of structural control (sometimes a Question 2 response was devoid of paragraphs, even for new speeches in dialogue) or a lack of suitable language devices to create effects. A number of answers were hampered by tense confusions.

The more successful Section B answers kept the target audience in mind throughout and adopted language and structural techniques to match that audience. Weaker responses were less able to use the conventions of different forms, establish a mature and credible voice, or develop a well thought out, logically organised line of argument. This was particularly true of some responses to Question 5.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: 'Looking for a bargain'

Although candidates were encouraged to write a 'descriptive piece', some leeway was given to answers involving narrative elements, since a first person 'narrator' is stipulated in the question. Responses were generally handled well with most candidates focusing on the 'bargain' element.

Many of the better responses concentrated on specific descriptive detail, including pen-portraits of individual shopkeepers, atmospheric 'sounds' beyond that of vendors' shouts, and the energetic hustle and bustle of a typical street scene. The relationships between the narrator and their bargaining companion, often a mother-figure, were well portrayed and occasionally presented with deft and ironic humour. Many of the conditions of a typical Indian market were itemised; moreover, one candidate, reporting a holiday in Greece, compared the local market very favourably with the noisy "human jungle" of his home city of Chennai.

Less successful answers were dependent on a repetitive narrative, describing bartering techniques in an unvaried tone, often losing focus on the 'sounds/atmosphere' requirement. Many candidates appeared to

have looked at a previous paper asking for a description of 'a market', and omitted the 'bargain' topic completely. Sometimes responses were overwhelmingly narrative, and occasionally from a third-person point of view.

Question 2: 'I never expected that'

A very open question, with few restrictions on form and content beyond that of the title, this was the most popular choice of the three options. Most candidates fulfilled the requirement of focusing on 'character and mood', though usually only the character of the (most frequently) first-person narrator.

Many of the better responses, however, were told from an omniscient point of view and thus afforded the writer more narrative control. Much good writing concentrated on the vagaries of fate, destiny or karma, and the roles mere human beings try to play within those contexts; for example, "Cupid's arrow" was invoked in one engaging story to good effect. Some better structured answers had a twist-in-the-tale element, where the key to the surprise was cleverly half-concealed in the first half of the narrative; on one memorable occasion, the narrator was revealed as the family pet, rather than a previously-supposed child, who was therefore unable to raise the alarm after a family emergency. Many examples were seen of realistic dialogue, especially in confrontations between family members or friends.

Many of the less convincing responses were undermined by unnecessary technical errors. A lack of paragraphing was frequently evident, even at times when introducing a new speaker. Tense confusions were common, and not just where immediacy in action sequences was misplaced, but also often where candidates were struggling to improve the structure of their narratives with frames or flashbacks. There were also many examples of overlong answers, sometimes as long as 1300–1400 words, which needed severe editing (and probably an initial plan) to eliminate diffuseness and digression. This sometimes impacted on certain Section B answers, which through lack of time management were of insufficient length. Many of these diffuse stories had an 'I never expected that' ending tacked on after the denouement, with little signposting in the earlier sections of the narrative.

Question 3: 'A sports team before and after a game'

This question generated some strong writing in a few cases, although most responses were somewhat mired in cliché, as described two paragraphs below.

The better answers conveyed a strong sense of tension before the game and elation or disappointment afterwards. For example, some team members showed an introspective obsession with winning a trophy after many years of effort and preparation, which automatically led to the tension, without any heavy-handed and/or repetitive description of tense players: one candidate memorably captured this feeling in the phrase "steely determination". The role of the coach went beyond clichéd pep-talk in many of the better answers, when they were in a reminiscent mood about their own triumphs as a player, or disguised their own natural melancholy mood (at not being an active participant on the field of play) in order to motivate their charges and embody the team's straining for glory. Often, defeated teams' 'atmospheres' were more interesting than a relatively banal description of winning, for instance involving "taking positives" from a "silver medal" outcome or when a defeated group were sportsmanlike in their appreciation of their opponents' victory.

Quite often the archetypal "India versus Pakistan" clash generated a more compelling tension than adopting a European fan model, inevitably an "El Clásico" confrontation between Real Madrid and Barcelona, where the knowledge of the teams seldom extended past a lengthy list of players' names, thus hampering a realistic approach. Less convincing answers did not describe specific teams or indeed, in some cases, even which sport was being celebrated. Clichéd approaches were frequent and took the form of invariably "tensed" [*sic*] players or hackneyed pep-talks given by inwardly nervous captains who always scored the last minute winning goal themselves anyway. From the perspective of structure, responses sometimes did not show 'differing atmospheres' between the two pieces and therefore could not show 'contrasts'. Often the 'after the game' piece was much shorter than the 'before' part and under the 300 word limit, mainly because of a lack of descriptive detail about the emotions concerned with winning: for less capable students, tension and drama are perhaps easier to write about than happiness.

Question 4: 'Growing, not shopping'

Some very effective answers were seen for this question, which gave candidates the chance to both generate an 'enthusiastic attitude' and temper the tone of that attitude with some realistic reflections on the social and personal contexts of such a change in habits and customs.

Many of the better responses had a clear understanding of the article format, and engaging and enjoyable answers were seen which had a strong and lively voice as well as thoughtful and interesting content. Some examples involved reviving the tradition of growing one's own food before the rise of the supermarket ethos, or describing the personal health benefits against a backdrop of global changes in the environment, and specifically climate change. One or two of the stronger responses were very engaging in their use of human interest stories; those interviewed had compelling reasons for converting to a different lifestyle, including one candidate's interviewee who was a retiree with "something to look forward to" when adopting this change and who "beamed with pride" at the fruit and vegetables he had nurtured. The advantages of economy and better health were also cogently conveyed in some answers.

Less successful responses tended to list the advantages in a generalised way, without much specific detail beyond the good use that growing food made of one's balcony space. The health and economy benefits were also often briefly listed, in clichéd terms and without much exploration; in fact it was clear that this was a question which required particular emphasis on planning and organisation in order to produce a coherent and logically sequenced argument. These shortcomings also limited the level of enthusiasm that could be generated.

Question 5: 'The voiceover of a film about a zoo'

Very few responses were seen for this question; even fewer involved a genuine 'voiceover'.

The one or two cases that constituted focused answers used the proper conventions of a voiceover: a scripted talk with specific reference to visual images – these images were then either overtly listed in a 'stage direction' format, or were implicitly conveyed within the script. These responses also presented a persuasive tone, suitable to a 'promotional film' and involved both the 'fun' and 'learning' aspects of the observation of animals.

Less successful responses often consisted of a playscript format or a transcription of a group of 'younger visitors' enjoying the zoo. While this might convey the informal tone engendered by the 'fun' aspect, it is very difficult to focus on the 'learning' in this way; very few of these answers contained realistic dialogue. No responses were seen where an 'expansion' of the zoo was focused on satisfactorily, principally because, without a context of visual images of say, building work, or an indication of a before-and-after montage of images, there are considerable difficulties involved in describing these changes.

Question 6: 'Extra-curricular activities'

This was by far the most popular choice of question in this section. The responses also had the widest differentials in marks given, reflecting the whole range of ability.

Many candidates' responses were interesting, lively and engaging. The better answers showed that ECAs were complementary to studies and academics, not opposed. They also indicated a wide range of possible approaches to this question. For example, many described the specific details of the sports and hobbies represented, exploring the advantages and why the school should feel proud of its involvement – sometimes recounting the writers' personal experiences as team-members or of realising their hidden potential as actors, musicians, sportspeople and so on. Other effective responses explored the relaxing aspect of ECAs; as one candidate memorably put it "no deadline, no exams, no pressure". Well-equipped facilities, professionally trained coaches and often teachers inspired to go beyond the usual call of duties were brought in effectively. The advantages of having a well-rounded education and the opportunity to practise teambuilding skills and collaboration, in order to prepare oneself for the challenges of real life beyond the school environment, were well catalogued.

Having said all this, there were a number of rather clichéd and unvaried or repetitive answers. Typical of these responses involved a necessity to mention in the introductory paragraph that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" and that school is inevitably a "second home". While these are perfectly acceptable sentiments, they needed to be supported by some rigorous analysis to explore the ramifications of such proverbial statements. Sometimes the audience for this 'school magazine' was lost in the long lists of sports and hobbies, even though many candidates tried to justify their listings with sub-headings. Often there was a rather unrealistic sudden conversion of students from beginners to probable sports stars, even though the benefits of sports clubs were merely generalised in most of these cases, while several unsubstantiated (and unlikely) benefits were also submitted.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/32

Text Analysis

Key messages

Candidates should prepare for this Component by gaining a solid knowledge of linguistics which they can apply when producing a piece of Directed Writing, commenting on the style and language of that piece of writing in relation to an accompanying text, and when comparing two texts on the same subject for their different styles and use of language.

For **Question 1 Part (a)** the accompanying instructions and text provide the context and background information to guide the candidates as they produce their Directed Writing text. In producing their reworking of the original text candidates ought to concentrate on making carefully considered choices of appropriate lexis and register to suit the task set and ensure they achieve the highest possible standards of accuracy and expression in their writing.

For **Question 1 Part (b)** candidates need to ensure they compare both the style and the language of the original text and their own, with a clear emphasis on selecting the aspects of language from both texts that may be analysed to demonstrate the specific effects that are created.

For **Question 2** candidates need to identify specific features of each text's language and style, relate these to supporting textual details to examine the specific effects produced and compare how the texts' differences in purpose, context, and audience affect the creation of different meanings.

General comments

Many candidates were evidently well prepared for a Component designed to test their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of linguistics and to analyse texts in a comparative fashion. However, a sizeable proportion of the responses to **1 (b)** and **2** appear to have been primarily based on candidates "gleaning hints" from the information provided in the Questions' instructions rather than carefully analysing the texts themselves. On the other hand, very few candidates resorted to simply quoting large tracts of the relevant text(s), linked together with short passages of superficial commentary.

Question 1 (a) is a Directed Writing task. Candidates need to follow the instructions carefully to produce a written response *informed by* the style and language of the accompanying text, in this session an article published in the travel section of a newspaper. Their reworking (or recasting) of the original text should incorporate recognisable conventions of the text type identified in the instructions; in this session it was an email report on a specific incident. This requires careful consideration of the target audience (a finite one, as the report is for an expedition's base) and the clear communication of a primarily objective perspective (as the leader of the expedition). Candidates are instructed to produce responses of 120–150 words in length and were expected to write clearly, accurately, creatively and effectively for the prescribed purpose and audience.

A good working knowledge of linguistics is invaluable in responding to **Question 1 (b)**, where candidates are required to compare the style and language of the email report produced for **1 (a)** with the style and language of the article. Here candidates are assessed for the ability to select and analyse specific textual details, for example those concerning purpose, register (varying levels of formality), format and choices of lexis, and the ability to support any evaluation of speakers' or writers' opinions with close textual reference. Recognition of the level of fluency and the range of lexical choices exhibited in the article and comparing the effects produced with those in the candidate's own reworking was a key discriminator in the better informed and more substantive responses.

In **Question 2**, a sound knowledge of linguistics is again required as candidates are assessed for comparative appreciation of the texts' forms and conventions and awareness of their effects, an

understanding of how purpose, context and audience shape meaning, and an appreciation of linguistic techniques. It is very important that candidates employ some form of comparative approach. A topical approach enables continuous comparison, while a subsequent concluding section can be used to emphasise the essential similarities and differences between the two texts and the relative strengths of each. A significant proportion of candidates adopted a topical approach this session – these also tended to be the candidates who demonstrated more comprehensive linguistic knowledge.

No rubric infringements were noted. It is worth reminding both Centres and candidates that Question 1 (a) accounts for only one-fifth of the total marks available and that the analytical and comparative nature of the tasks for Questions 1 (b) and 2 require adequate time for thorough assessment of the texts and the writing of detailed responses. Candidates are therefore strongly advised to complete Questions 1 and 2 within one-hour time allocations, having begun to carefully assess all the Texts (three in total) in the initial fifteen minutes of the examination (the total length of the examination being two hours and fifteen minutes).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a)

The pieces of directed writing candidates produced featured generally solid engagement with the form and style of an email report, and suitably reworked references drawn from the original material, a printed newspaper article in which its author, Felicity Aston, recalls encountering a potentially hazardous situation when her sledge got stuck during an expedition to the South Pole. Most candidates successfully focused on recasting at least some of the incident's most pertinent details: the harsh environment in which a person on their own could easily become lost and soon perish; that Felicity habitually skied at the back of the party and therefore her absence went unnoticed for a considerable period of time; the strength and direction of the prevailing wind, meaning that her attempts to vocally draw attention to her plight were in vain; and that Felicity's sledge did not contain sufficient 'vital equipment' to guard against exposure if she was left alone for a considerable period of time. Some candidates needed to make more discriminate use of details, ensuring that they were of more than tangential significance to the purpose and audience of the email report (unlike examples such as the expected duration of the expedition and how they were bidding to be 'the most international all-female team to reach the South Pole', details the intended audience would of course already know).

Less successful responses were often too brief and usually did not convincingly adopt the voice of the leader of the expedition authoring the email report. More frequently it was a lack of technical skill that prevented candidates from expressing themselves clearly: such candidates needed to more effectively execute changes of person, tense and point-of-view from the original text (the article) to suit the requirements of the text of the email report they were producing; they also needed to construct each of their sentences using the grammatically correct word-order, ensuring not only that the report conveyed a concise summary of what happened to Felicity, but doing so in a mature style appropriate to both the potential seriousness of the mishap and any health and safety considerations that could be implemented in future.

Based on a good appreciation of context and the ideas presented in the article, the more successful responses were authoritative in tone, whether or not a formal or a more personal register was used (candidates apparently inferring that the expedition leader would have previously developed a close rapport with members of the team at base). Date, recipient and subject lines were often helpfully provided. Some candidates' reports delayed reference to the incident in favour of first succinctly outlining daily aspects of expedition business: rate of progress, weather conditions, wear and tear to equipment and current levels of food and fuel supplies. Candidates often made linguistic choices with clear internal consistency, especially when praising Felicity for the tenacity that led to her freeing her sledge herself and then catching up to the rest of the team, and in incorporating a degree of self-admonishment when demonstrating their appreciation that the incident might have never unfolded as it did if prudent procedures had already been adopted. Such responses were believable in their reworking of the original material, accurate and eloquent in expression, and convincing in their awareness of audience and purpose.

Question 1 (b)

This question required candidates to analyse style and language and to directly compare different approaches and features in the two texts available to them, an article contained in the travel section of a newspaper and the text of the email report produced by each candidate in response to 1 (a). Very few candidates simply paraphrased the contents of the article and their email report. A considerable number of candidates sought to deal with each text separately. Whilst it is possible to compare in this way it is far more

efficient and fluent if a topical approach is used. Textual references were often made without drawing conclusions concerning their functions and lexical properties. Such approaches usually yielded thin and perfunctory responses.

Weaker responses were usually brief, demonstrating very little inclination to analyse language. Perfunctory comparisons were usually attempted, such as suggesting that the article was written for entertainment and informative purposes whereas the email report's was primarily transactional. In more developed responses the article was generally cited as being less formal, found to employ exclamatory direct speech ("Era! Stop!") and short elliptical paragraphs ('Seconds passed. Nothing') for dramatic effect, and also using undemanding jargon for the sake of authenticity ('balaclava', 'sledge', 'ski-pole'). The text of the email report was usually contrasted as being more formal, more factual (details about weather conditions, distance covered), and having a less ornate style.

In stronger responses the autobiographical nature of Felicity's article was considered, especially in light of the opening assertion: 'I was going to die in Antarctica: that much was certain'. Descriptive phrases – 'the empty wilderness of Antarctica stretched away from me', 'my frost-covered body, blanched and lifeless' – were usually interpreted as foreshadowing the potential dire consequences Felicity would face if she could not free her stuck sledge. Some candidates noted how a cluster of active verbs such as 'heaved' and 'hacked' and 'heaved again' could equally imply her increasingly desperate attempts to free the sledge and her steadfast determination to solve the problem herself; the subsequent use of sibilance ('The sledge shot forward, knocking me off balance. I scrambled to my feet and set off after the team') was assessed to register both Felicity's astonishment that she had freed her sledge and her recognition that another supreme physical challenge lay ahead of her before she would again be fully safe. In a few instances Felicity's earlier observation that 'the only feature of the landscape [was] the division between snow and sky' was convincingly interpreted as symbolic of her struggle between life ('snow') and death ('sky', interpreted to pertain to heaven). Observations such as these were skilfully contrasted with the usually more measured, diplomatic language employed by candidates in their email reports.

Question 2

As was the case for **1 (b)**, candidates who did not attempt in responding to **Question 2** to analyse Text A and Text B's language and style in a comparative fashion demonstrated only limited appreciation of the techniques employed and awareness of the effects created. Some candidates ought to have concentrated less on paragraph and utterance length, and on producing lists of the linguistic devices they could identify without appropriate textual support; instead they should include concise quotations and precise comments that would facilitate the communication of a more thorough appreciation of the effects produced in each Text. Some ability was usually demonstrated in recognising the use of form and language to inform readers in each Text, albeit sometimes in isolation from each other. Candidates who used a topical comparative approach were also better able to identify and clearly explain the differences in mode, purpose and audience between the two Texts, and the significance of the differences in their forms and the ways conventions were employed.

Most candidates demonstrated a sure grasp of how Text A has a more specific and detailed focus on a specific endangered species (the Hector's dolphin found in New Zealand coastal waters) than is the case in Text B. They could compare at least a few aspects of Text A's spoken mode (such as the non-fluency features associated with natural speech, and how the question/answer structure of the exchanges between Nick Easton and Jody Weir form adjacency pairs as she co-operates in the evolving (possibly pre-planned) conversation with detailed responses) with those typifying the written mode of Text B, especially how the first paragraph introduces the topic and the main issues, with the principal threats to species in the wild being presented in a numbered list, and how Text B's more complex features of word-order and sentence structure consistently cater for an educated audience, as does its more sophisticated lexical choices (e.g. 'important global indicators of environmental health').

In stronger responses candidates focused on how the semantic field employed by Jodie, the dolphin expert, suggests her expertise and authority in a manner akin to that achieved through the consistent use of the 'objective' third person in Text B. Her initial hesitancy in holding the conversational floor gradually abates, in part as a result of Nick's cooperative topic shifts and her own back channelling. There was also some recognition that the overlapping speech in Text A (lines 28–31) is not predicated on differences in the speakers' gender and status but primarily due to their mutual, excited focus on the Hector's dolphin that has appeared. Grice's maxims – especially those of quantity, quality and relevance – were often considered accordingly. In the strongest responses candidates delved into aspects of context more confidently, especially a recognition that Text B was not only likely edited but its information compiled by a team of experts. The low frequency lexis noted in both Texts was found to be made more digestible for their relatively

broad audiences in a number of ways: the use of clarifications (e.g. in Text A, 'theyre endemic (.) theyre only found in new zealand'; in Text B, the parenthetical listing of animals); colloquialism (e.g. in Text A, 'a big dent in the population'); fixed expressions (e.g. in Text B, 'wreaked havoc', 'fetch high prices'); and imagery (e.g. Text A's 'wall of netting' and 'like a half moon' and Text B's 'perpetual battle').

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/42
Language Topics

Key messages

In order to achieve marks in the higher bands, candidates should make good use of embedded quotes from the passage whilst arguing their points, and provide a full, balanced, articulate and developed explanation of any appropriate theoretical examples.

General comments

Candidates engaged well across the three topic areas. Responses were expected to refer to the extracts provided and to candidates' own wider research and reading. At times there was evidence that responses were theory-led with less emphasis on linguistic analysis. This was particularly evident in responses to **questions 2 and 3**. **Question 1** responses occasionally demonstrated engagement with less important features and some showed lack of familiarity with the conventions of transcription of conversation analysis.

On occasion, shorter responses evidenced 'running out of time': in such cases candidates may benefit from making briefer essay plans and spending a longer amount of time on their full written responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Responses on the whole were carefully constructed, with appropriate reference to relevant language theories. Examples from the text supported points and were suitably punctuated. Those candidates who were unfamiliar with the conventions of transcription (lack of punctuation, for example) were at a considerable disadvantage. Understanding of language theory is best exemplified when a text is analysed by considering the purpose of the text and applying theory to what is being said or written. Answers that work through the text making comments can become repetitive and are often judged to be 'feature-spotting'.

Question 1 allowed for candidates to comment on the co-operative context of a television interview broadcast on an American news channel, including those who appreciated that the nature of the conversation was unusual, as Prince William is normally in a position of power. In the transcript there was much evidence of language accommodation and spontaneous speech, with Max Foster seeming in control. Some candidates wrongly identified Max Foster to be American and described differences in pronunciation which were not evidenced in the transcript. Many, however, were engaged with the structure of exchanges and the frequency of co-operative overlaps and interruptions.

Strong candidates appreciated the highly co-operative nature of the conversation and pursued a line of argument in a balanced and coherent fashion. Commenting on the supportive nature of the conversation was an appropriate way in which to begin a response. A productive theoretical approach was that of Grice.

Many candidates referred to the genderlect theories of Lakoff, Tannen and Cameron; strong candidates developed a counter-argument to these by referring to Beattie and Zimmerman and West. Some responses could be improved by providing a fuller explanation of theoretical principles rather than solely providing the names of theorists. Many candidates also referred to Grice. When doing so, candidates could improve by further explanation and development.

Responses could be improved by maintaining linguistic rather than sociological analysis; candidates should be aware that the latter approach may not produce a linguistic line of argument.

Question 2

The stronger responses to this question were those who could appreciate a balanced argument concerning the complexities of the emergence of a global language. A restricted response on only that which is presented in the extract will usually limit the response. Responses that took issue with the negative opinion presented and which described in depth the many benefits of simplified Globish were often those most cogently argued.

Stronger and more confident candidates engaged with the wider ramifications of a globally intelligible language, making appropriate and sustained connections with the passage provided.

Many candidates had made use of the 'Relevant areas for study' in the syllabus. Stronger candidates had made explorations outside these and were able to include them within articulate responses. A restricted view on what is 'correct' English will usually limit the response. A more accurate response will describe 'standard' and 'non-standard' language and argue in a balanced manner the advantages of these forms. Candidates should be aware of the differences between pidgins and creoles and the manner in which they are created and used.

Some candidates chose to include long discussions on the history of the English language, which meant that more relevant discussion did not demonstrate as much focus.

Theoretical examples tended to focus on Kachru, Crystal and Diamond, although the work of other theorists was occasionally referred to, which provided depth and colour to examples from candidates' wider exploration.

Question 3

This popular question allowed for a range of language acquisition theory to be applied and was, on the whole, well answered. Stronger responses were those which considered the context and purpose of the talk rather than an overview of subjects covered. Candidates generally responded with confidence regarding Megan's developmental stage and linguistic competence, commenting on the evidence of post-telegraphic structures and comparing these with the virtuous grammatical errors.

Many responses attempted to provide a 'deficit' model, describing the child's non-standard forms as 'mistakes', with some referring to these as evidence of limited intelligence or low social status. Stronger candidates commented on the on-going process of language acquisition and the state of achievement demonstrated in the script, including tense, pronoun, turn-taking, topic management and object permanence.

Theorists, such as Skinner, Bruner, Chomsky, Piaget and Vygotsky, were incorporated into most responses with stronger responses selecting examples from the text, providing a linguistic discussion on the example and then explaining why and how this example tests the theory. Strong and confident responses demonstrated knowledge of child-directed speech and how it was being used in the extract provided. Many candidates applied Halliday's functions to their analysis using evidence of at least four of these in their response.

Strong answers considered the context and purpose of the talk rather than an overview of subjects covered in the conversation. Some responses detailed the behavioural rather than linguistic aspects demonstrated in the response. Candidates should maintain a linguistic stance in relation to what is required in the question.