A Level English Language

Year 12 Summer Task

Section 1 – Meanings and Representations

In the first Paper of the exam, and your course, you will be asked to look at how two different texts create meanings and representations when writing about a related topic. This will be the section which is most similar to your GCSE but will also be more focused and more specialised than your GCSE.

Like AQA Language Paper 2, you will look at 2 non-fiction texts, from different time periods, and write about how they use language individually as well as comparing their use of language. Unlike GCSE, you will not be asked to look at language separately to structure or presentation, but to consider how everything works together.

What do we mean by Meanings and Representations?

- Meanings is simply how ideas and concepts are put across to the reader or listener by a text to create a certain meaning – basically the effect on the reader.
- Representations is how a person, group in society, idea or activity etc. are represented – how they are made to seem.

Have a look at the advertisement for a national newspaper in this YouTube link – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SsccRkLLzU

- Think about how the skinhead seems at 8 seconds in. What do you expect him to do at this point? How does his outfit add to this representation of him?
- By 16 seconds in, what do you think the skinhead is doing? What do you think of him at this moment in the video 'text'?
- By the end, how has your opinion changed? How does this view represent the skinhead?

This shows you how any one thing can be represented in a range of different ways. But it is not the only thing being represented here: the advert is selling The Guardian newspaper, not skinheads.

Task 1 – Write a PEEL paragraph (100-150 words) answering the question below.

How is the paper being represented here and what does the advertisement seem to be suggesting about its rival newspapers by setting itself out as being 'different' in this?

In the course we will be looking at how words and the way they are ordered and put together create these different representations and meanings. Sometimes the viewpoints expressed will be very similar, and sometimes different. The quotations below are all headlines, or extracts from headlines from the same British newspaper.

What representation of the TV show 'Love Island' is being created by each one?

A

Don't scoff at Love Island.
It's British society laid bare
...

B

Love Island normalises
emotional abuse

C

It's a national disgrace!

D

'It's a microcosm of reality':
why so many have decided
it's OK to love Love Island

Task 2 – Match the following below with the correct headline.

1. Which of the headlines uses a command (imperative) to the audience?
2. Which imitates a spoken exclamation to sound shocked and disgusted?
3. Which sounds like it will go on to offer an explanation?
4. Which uses an emotive noun to represent the series negatively?

Form and Context

We then need to go on to look at how a text may reflect certain aspects of its form and context. These will affect both the language choices the text producer (writer of speaker makes) and the representations they create:

Mode – how does it communicate? Is it written, spoken, visual images? Is it a mixture of more than one of these (multimodal)?

Register – how formal, conversational, academic, complex, simple etc. are the language choices?

Genre – what type of text is it? Letter, email, article, advertisement, conversation in a shop, formal presentation in a meeting, internet forum, you name it, all of these could be A Level English texts.
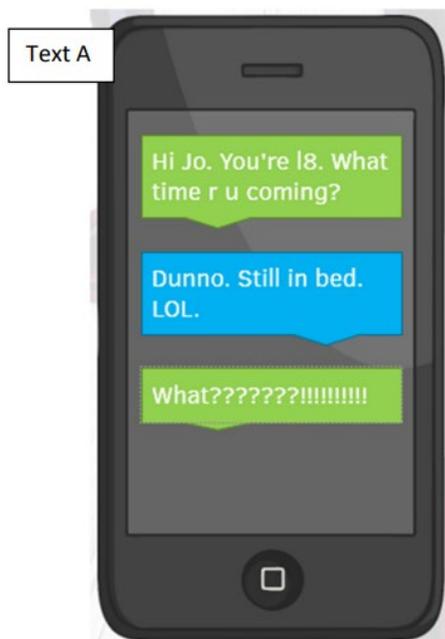
Audience – who is it aimed at? Are the people it is aimed at its only audience? Who will actually see an advert on the back of a bus aimed at smokers who want to give up, a charity advert for women in Africa on the back of the ladies' toilets doors in the Bridges shopping centre? And who has each advert been aimed at, who do the producers expect to respond?

Purpose – what is the text trying to do? Many texts will have more than one purpose: is someone persuading you by entertaining you? Is someone informing you in order to better advise you?

Task 3 – Annotate the texts for mode / register / genre / audience / purpose and answer the questions.

Now, consider the following two texts. One is a string of three text messages; the other is written on a sticky note attached to a fridge door in a shared house. Think about the following points and try to answer the questions as you look at the two texts:

- Make notes on the mode, register, genre, context, audience and purpose of each text
- What is each text about?
- How does the text producer/s represent themselves?
- If there is an intended reader/audience, how does the text producer want the reader to view themselves?
- Identify any words that you find particularly interesting or effective.

Text A

Hi Jo. You're l8. What time r u coming?

Dunno. Still in bed. LOL.

What???????!!!!!!!!!!

Text B

Thank you to whoever used my milk last night. I really would have liked a cuppa this morning. Next time, BUY YOUR OWN!!!!!!!!!
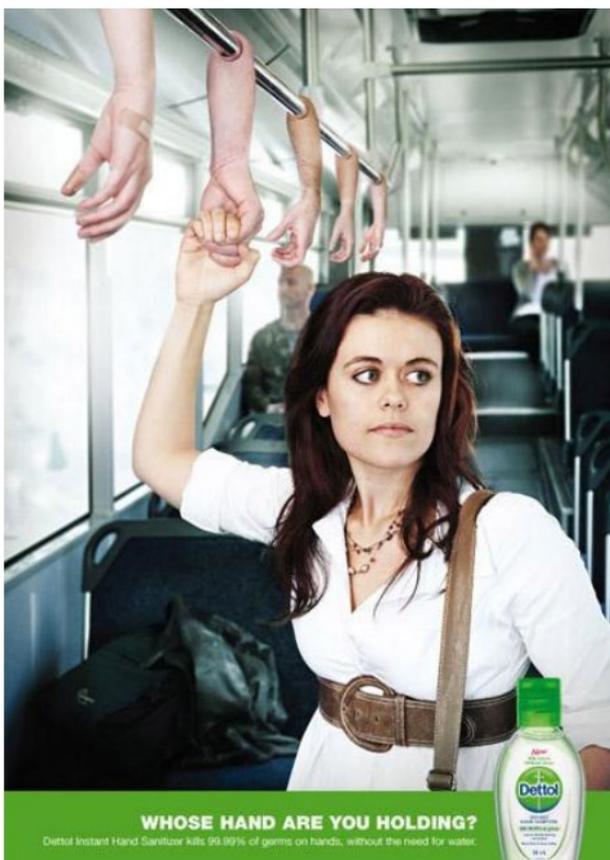
Language Methods

One of the ways we look at language is by considering the different 'methods' a writer uses when creating it. One way of looking at these is moving from smallest to largest:

- from individual sounds, PHONOLOGY
- to the words which are chosen, LEXIS
- to the way words are modified and changed for purposes (e.g. hope, hopes, hoped, hopeful, hopefully), GRAMMAR / MORPHOLOGY
- to groups of words and the way they are put together, GRAMMAR / SYNTAX
- to the way we infer meanings which aren't actually stated, PRAGMATICS
- to the way a whole text is organised and developed, DISCOURSE
- to the way it is presented on the page and how any images, colours or fonts add to the representations, GRAPHOLOGY

You can see several of these at work in the texts above. In both, words have been chosen because of the effect they will have 'Lol', 'really liked'. When you look at the words, you are looking at the *lexis*. Both imply meanings which aren't actually stated and only the context allows us to understand what the writer actually meant by "What??????!!!!!!!!!!" or "thank you...". This use of context to create the meaning is *pragmatics*. Text A is laid out as a question and response. This is a *discourse* structure. Also, the note uses capital letters. This is a *graphology* choice which the writer has made to emphasise their feelings.

Usually, we will be looking at longer texts (articles, web pages, etc.) but adverts are a good way to practice the skills we need.

Task 4 – Have a look at the following adverts and use the questions to identify the representations and some of the key language used to create these.

WHOSE HAND ARE YOU HOLDING?

Dettol Instant Hand Sanitizer kills 99.99% of germs on hands, without the need for water.

Dettol disinfectant hand gel advert from a supermarket magazine

Mode:
Genre:
Audience:
Purpose:

What representation of public transport is created, especially its cleanliness?

What representation of reader is created?

What representation of product (hand gel) is created? What does it do? What can it do for the reader?

The advert uses an interrogative sentence (a question).

How do you think this makes it more effective?

How does graphology add to the representations created?

Greenpeace advertisement from an American current affairs magazine

The effectiveness of this advertisement relies on several *pragmatic* features – the reader needs to recognise from the *graphology* a nuclear mushroom cloud and Donald Trump's hair and needs to have the contextual knowledge that Trump tweets messages which insult and offend other world leaders.

Mode:
Genre:
Audience:
Purpose:

What representation of Donald Trump is created?
What representation of the situation the world is in is created?
What 'product' or idea is being sold?
The advert uses an imperative sentence (a command).
How do you think this makes it more effective?
The advert also uses a verb 'retweet'. What effect does this particular lexical choice have? Who is this aimed at i.e., who is likely to 'retweet' and cause a disaster?
What well known phrase is this adapted from and what is the effect of that on the meanings created?
How does graphology create the representations here?

Heinz Ketchup advert from a women's chat / gossip magazine

Mode:
Genre:
Audience:
Purpose:

What representation of Heinz is created?
What representation of the product is created?
What representation of the reader, and what they want from their food is implied?
The advert uses the verb 'grows' instead of a more accurate one like 'makes'.
What representations are the company trying to create about their product and themselves by doing this?
How does the graphology add to this representation?

Focusing on Language

The following two text extracts are from newspaper articles about 100 years apart, both on the topic of voting. Text A is from a 2017 article in *the Guardian* with the headline '**Most people in the world can't vote, we are lucky' – 13 reasons to vote'.**
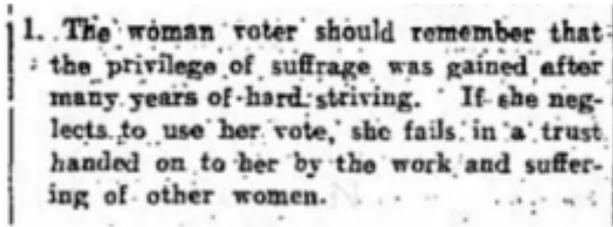
Text A
Because as a young adult and first time voter, I don't want to be part of the problem of low turnout among 18-24 year olds that leaves us ignored and marginalised by politicians who focus on subsidising wealthy pensioners.

Task 5
The table below contains a mixed-up analysis of how some of the meanings and representations in this tiny extract. The first column is in order and explores different meanings and representations in the text, but the quotation and analysis columns are mixed up. Try to decide which quotation and analysis go with each feature identified.

Feature	Quotation	Analysis
The writer represents herself as new to voting, by introducing herself using the pre-modifying adjectives	"I don't want to be part of the problem".	This uses two prepositional phrases to clearly identify the problem but not the reason, avoiding placing any blame. The adjective 'low' shows that less of this age group vote than older people, which suggests they are less interested or are disillusioned with politics whereas the use of statistical data represents the writer as well informed.
However, she represents herself as more politically motivated than other 18 to 24 year olds in the main clause	"the problem of low turnout among 18-24 year olds"	The abstract noun 'problem' indicates that she views other 18 -24 year old's voting habits as unsatisfactory and the use of the indicative mood (statement)shows her clear rejection of this behaviour and her distancing herself from it.
She clearly represents most other young people as less politically engaged than her in the noun phrase	"young" and "first-time"	which would usually be used to suggest she is a novice and doesn't really know what she is doing, especially as in modern times the younger generations are seen as having little interest in politics.
Next, she identifies the problem created by the low youth turnout, representing the politicians as neglecting young people using the verbs	"who focus on subsidising wealthy pensioners"	The verb 'leaves' has connotations of neglect and politicians not attending to their responsibilities. The description of the treatment of youth society as 'marginalised' and 'ignored' implies they feel pushed out; not considered or valued, possibly linking back to, and explaining why so many choose not to vote.
Finally, the writer represents politicians as having the wrong priorities using the relative clause	"leaves", "ignored" and "marginalised"	The juxtaposition of the verb 'subsidising' which suggests the person needs and is receiving financial help, and the adjective 'wealthy' to describe the pensioners receiving these subsidies implies that this financial aid is unneeded and unjustified. It represents the politicians as corrupt or, at best, only interested in those who typically vote so could be seen as an argument for more young voters to actually vote, like the writer plans to.

Text B is from The Manchester Guardian in 1923 and was published under the headline '**Election Day – SIX RULES FOR THE WOMAN VOTER'**.

1. The woman voter should remember that the privilege of suffrage was gained after many years of hard-striving. If she neglects to use her vote, she fails in a trust handed on to her by the work and suffering of other women.

Transcript:
1. The woman voter should remember that the privilege of suffrage was gained after many years of hard-striving. If she neglects to use her vote, she fails in a trust handed on to her by the work and suffering of other women.

Task 6 – Below are a series of representations which might be in the text. Decide which are true and which are false:

Women voters are:
a) Forgetful
b) Unreliable
c) All the same

Voting is:
a) A responsibility
b) Important
c) Only important for men

The right for women to vote is:
a) A privilege
b) Unnecessary
c) Hard won

Which of these features link to each of the representations you identified as true?
- The third person noun phrase "the woman voter"
- The modal verb "should"
- The abstract noun "privilege"
- The prepositional phrase "after many years of hard striving"
- The verbs "neglects" and "fails"
- The noun phrase "a trust handed on to her"
- The prepositional phrase "by the work and suffering of other women."

Task 7 – Write an explanation of how the extract uses language to represent women and voting

Task 8 – Comparison: Are there any features which both extracts use which are similar? Complete the table below:

Feature	Representation(s) created in Text A	Representation(s) created in Text B
Adjectives		
Noun Phrases		
Verbs		

Section 2: Child Language Acquisition

The second topic on exam paper 1, and a topic you will start to look at in Year 12 is how children learn to use language, both written and spoken. The following resources focus on speech rather than writing as this is what we learn first but is only a sample of the whole topic.

Task 1

First, before you begin any study of the topic, try to research the answers to these questions about your own language development:

- How old were you when you spoke your first word?
- What was your first word? What was your first word apart from labelling family members?
- Which words did people actually try to teach you? Names, words associated with manners, objects? What mistakes did you make with your early speech?
- Were there any sounds you found particularly hard to pronounce?
- What words did you clearly understand before you could say them yourself?

Task 2

Now examine your own ideas and beliefs about child language acquisition by answering these questions:

- When do you believe children first start to learn language?
- Do all children learn language in the same way?
- What are a child's most common first words?
- What kinds of mistakes do children often make? What reasons do you have for this - why do you think your answer is likely to be correct?
- Are all letter sounds equally easy to pronounce?
- Do children learn by copying the adults around them? If so, why do they say words adults don't e.g. swimmed? If not, where do they learn the rules of lexis, grammar, discourse etc. which allow them to communicate effectively?

Task 3

Below are a series of links to videos on YouTube introducing some information about Child Language Acquisition (CLA) and some of the key theorists and ideas. Work your way through them (there are many – you don't need to watch them all at once) and make notes on the main points.

Once you have watched them, see if you have changed your mind about any of your ideas in task 2

Patricia Kuhl – **The Genius of Babies** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2XBIkHW954

Crash Course Linguistics – **CLA** Language Acquisition: Crash Course Linguistics #12 - YouTube

Competing theories of CLA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRGwdfQV8kU
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jr_hK2Owq8o

Key CLA Theorists
Chomsky
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Cgpfw4z8cw
Skinner
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-JpKo-uwwA
Piaget
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSiOnfqqiL4
Bruner
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fZiBMkGv-8

Stages of Language Acquisition
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZGKUtZpMaE

Task 4
Below is a transcript of a section of a conversation between a child and its carer. Link the terms and definitions in the boxes around it to the correct feature in the speech

The three year old speaker has made a virtuous error and overgeneralised the 'ed' ending rule, applying it to a verb which does not actually use 'ed' to form its past tense.

The phonetic spelling was used by the writer of the transcript to show this child is struggling to pronounce the r sound (phoneme) and has substituted the easier to pronounce w phoneme.

The child appears to be in the post-telegraphic stage as they can produce quite grammatically complete 'sentences'.

One morning Topsy and Tim woked up (.) when they saw a **rabbit** /wæbɪt/ in the **garden** /gɑden/ and their neighbour catch the rabbit (.) and the rabbit was going /gəʊɪŋ/ to stay at Topsy and Tim house (.) what they did was (.) they **builded** a cage for the rabbit [indecipherable] and they called him **Wiggles** because he wiggled his noses a lot (.)

The speaker has also struggled to correctly apply the grammatical rule that adding 's' indicates something is a plural. The ability to apply this rule is often seen as evidence for Chomsky's theories of Universal Grammar and the 'LAD'.

The speaker appears not to have completely grasped the possessive 's' to indicate that the house relates to Topsy and Tim.