GENERAL

aice english language paper 2 examples

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Introduction

For students preparing for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, the AICE English Language and Literature course is a cornerstone of the curriculum. One of the most challenging components of the assessment is **Paper 2**, which tests a student's ability to analyse and interpret a range of texts and to produce a well structured, critical essay. In this article we will explore everything you need to know about the AICE English Language Paper 2, from its format and marking criteria to concrete examples of past exam prompts and model responses. Whether you are a student, a teacher, or a parent looking to support your child, this guide will provide practical insights and actionable strategies to help you master the exam.

Understanding AICE English Language Paper 2

Paper 2 is a written assessment that typically lasts 2 hours and 15 minutes. It is divided into two distinct tasks:

1. Task 1: Comparative Analysis – Students are given two or more non literary texts (e.g., news articles, essays, speeches, advertisements, social media posts). They must compare and contrast the texts, focusing on aspects such as purpose, audience, style, and rhetorical devices.
2. Task 2: Thematic Essay – Students choose a single text and write an essay that explores a theme, argument, or issue presented in the text. They must demonstrate a deep understanding of the text and support their analysis with evidence.

Both tasks require critical thinking, close reading, and clear, coherent writing. The exam is designed to assess not only the student's knowledge of language and rhetoric but also their ability to engage with contemporary texts and to communicate their ideas persuasively.

Exam Format and Marking Criteria

The exam is assessed against a set of criteria that are consistent across all IB subjects. For Paper 2, the main criteria are:

- Criterion A: Understanding and Interpretation – Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the texts and effectively interprets their meaning.
- Criterion B: Analysis and Evaluation – Provides insightful analysis of language, structure, and rhetorical strategies.
- Criterion C: Organization and Development – Presents a clear, logical structure with well developed arguments.
- Criterion D: Language and Style – Uses a range of linguistic devices, demonstrates grammatical accuracy, and maintains an appropriate register.

Each criterion is graded on a scale from 0 to 6, with 6 being the highest. The total mark for each task is 24 (6 x 4). The final paper score is the sum of both tasks, giving a maximum of 48 marks.

Sample Paper 2 Prompts

Below are representative examples of prompts that have appeared in past AICE English Language Paper 2 exams. These examples illustrate the variety of text types and the analytical depth required.

Task 1: Comparative Analysis – Example Prompt

Text A: A news article from *The Guardian* discussing the impact of remote work on urban economies.\\n*Text B:* A corporate blog post by a major tech company promoting flexible work policies.\\n*Task:*Compare and contrast the two texts, focusing on how each author constructs their argument, addresses their audience, and uses rhetorical devices to persuade.

Task 2: Thematic Essay – Example Prompt

Text: A short story by a contemporary author that explores the theme of identity in the digital age.\\n*Task:*Write an essay that examines how the author uses language and structure to develop the theme of identity. Use specific examples from the text to support your analysis.

Example Responses

Below are excerpts from model answers that demonstrate how to structure a response, integrate evidence, and apply critical analysis. These examples are simplified for brevity but illustrate the key elements of a high scoring essay.

Task 1: Comparative Analysis – Model Excerpt

Introduction: The Guardian article and the tech company blog both address the rise of remote work, yet they diverge in tone, purpose, and rhetorical strategy. While the Guardian adopts a journalistic stance that highlights socioeconomic concerns, the corporate blog frames remote work as an opportunity for innovation and employee wellbeing.

Body Paragraph 1 – Audience & Purpose: The Guardian's audience is the general public, and its purpose is to inform and provoke debate. It employs a balanced tone, citing statistics and expert opinions. In contrast, the corporate blog targets potential and current employees, aiming to persuade them of the company's progressive culture. Its language is more emotive and aspirational.

Body Paragraph 2 – Rhetorical Devices: The Guardian relies on data-driven evidence and occasional counterarguments, using logos to establish credibility. The blog, however, uses pathos through personal anecdotes and vivid imagery, creating an emotional appeal. Both texts use ethos, but the Guardian's credibility stems from reputable sources, whereas the blog's ethos is built on corporate authority.

Conclusion: In summary, the two texts differ markedly in their rhetorical approaches, reflecting their distinct objectives and audiences. The Guardian prioritises objective analysis, while the corporate blog prioritises persuasive storytelling.

Task 2: Thematic Essay – Model Excerpt

Introduction: In the short story "Digital Echo," the author explores the fragmentation of identity in an era dominated by social media. Through the protagonist's fragmented narrative and the use of fragmented sentences, the author illustrates how digital personas can become disjointed from real selves.

Body Paragraph 1 – Narrative Structure: The story's non linear structure mirrors the protagonist's fractured self concept. By interspersing present tense reflections with past tense memories, the author creates a sense of disorientation, echoing the theme of identity loss.

Body Paragraph 2 – Language and Imagery: The author employs hyperbolic metaphors, such as "a thousand avatars in a single mind," to emphasise the multiplicity of digital selves. The frequent use of emojis and hashtags further blurs the boundary between authentic self expression and curated online personas.

Conclusion: Through its fragmented structure and vivid digital imagery, the story convincingly portrays the erosion of authentic identity in the digital age. The author's stylistic choices reinforce the thematic core, making the narrative a powerful commentary on contemporary self perception.

Tips for Writing a High Scoring Paper 2 Essay

- Read the Prompt Carefully: Identify the specific task – comparative analysis or thematic essay – and note any instructions about length, structure, or text selection.
- Plan Your Essay: Spend 5–10 minutes outlining your introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. A clear structure will help you stay focused and ensure you address all criteria.
- Use Evidence: Quote or paraphrase specific passages from the texts. Show how the evidence supports your analysis.
- Analyse, Don't Summarise: Focus on how the author achieves meaning through language, rather than simply summarising the plot.
- Show Depth: Consider multiple perspectives, explore underlying assumptions, and discuss the broader implications of the text.
- Maintain Coherence: Use transition words (however, moreover, consequently) to guide the reader through your argument.
- Proofread: Allocate the last 5 minutes to check for grammatical errors and ensure your essay meets the required length.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. Over reliance on Summary: Students often spend too much time summarising the text instead of analysing it.
2. Ignoring the Prompt: Failing to address the specific question or misreading the task can result in lost marks.
3. Weak Thesis Statements: A vague or unsupported thesis weakens the entire essay.
4. Inadequate Evidence: Not providing enough textual examples or misquoting passages can undermine credibility.
5. Poor Organisation: A disjointed structure confuses the reader and can lower the marks for Criterion C.
6. Technical Errors: Spelling, punctuation, and grammatical mistakes can distract and reduce the overall quality.

Practice Resources and Study Aids

To strengthen your Paper 2 skills, consider the following resources:

- IB Official Past Papers: Download past exam papers from the IB website and practise under timed conditions.
- Online Text Collections: Websites such as BBC News, Guardian, and New York Times offer a wide range of contemporary texts suitable for analysis.
- Writing Guides: Books like "The IB Diploma Guide" or "English Language and Literature: A Comprehensive Guide" provide structured approaches to essay writing.
- Peer Review Groups: Collaborate with classmates to critique each other's essays and offer constructive feedback.
- Teacher Workshops: Attend workshops or webinars that focus on IB assessment strategies and marking schemes.

Conclusion

Mastering the AICE English Language Paper 2 requires a blend of analytical insight, rigorous practice, and a clear understanding of the exam's expectations. By familiarising yourself with the format, studying past prompts, and

honing your ability to extract and interpret evidence, you can transform the challenge of Paper 2 into an opportunity to showcase your critical thinking and writing prowess. Use the tips, examples, and resources provided here as a roadmap for success, and approach each exam with confidence, knowing that you've prepared thoroughly and strategically.

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