

GCE Examiners' Report

English Language

GCE

Summer 2025

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2025



Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

Contents

	Page
Executive summary	5
Unit 1	7
Unit 2	10
Unit 3	15
Unit 4	19
Unit 5	24
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	28

Executive Summary

This year's Unit 1 exam showed encouraging engagement, particularly in Section A (Analysing Language), where many students demonstrated strong contextual understanding and effective use of linguistic terminology. Teachers are commended for embedding AO4 connections into teaching, as this was evident in many responses. However, some candidates still relied on generic or pre-learned answers, especially in Section B (Contemporary English), which limited their ability to respond to the specific data provided. Teachers should continue to emphasise the importance of text-specific analysis, purposeful evidence selection, and critical engagement with 21st-century English concepts to help students access higher bands.

Unit 2 explores 'Language and Situation' and 'Language and Power', with tasks assessing analytical, creative, and reflective skills. Strong responses demonstrated integration of theory, context, and genre conventions. Teachers should note that weaker responses often lacked exemplification or misapplied theories. Most candidates performed well, showing solid preparation and time management. Key areas for development include deeper analysis of wider examples, stronger adherence to genre conventions and ensuring sufficient time is allocated to reflective commentaries.

The Unit 3 exam assesses candidates' understanding of Early Modern English and language change through short answer questions and an extended comparative essay. Most candidates demonstrated clear awareness of question requirements and managed their time effectively. Strengths included accurate identification of grammatical features and thoughtful engagement with genre and context in the essay, which compared newspaper reports of royal events across time. Weaker responses lacked precision in word class identification or focused too heavily on feature spotting. Centres are advised to continue emphasising contextual analysis, accurate terminology, and comparative structure to support strong, well-developed responses.

Unit 4 assesses spoken language analysis and creative re-casting. Most candidates engaged well with the three interview transcripts, showing strong analytical skills and applying linguistic terminology effectively. Successful responses explored context, genre, and communication strategies, with thoughtful use of theory. Section B responses demonstrated sound awareness of writing for a publicly funded careers website, though some lacked planning or fell short of the word count. Stronger pieces were well-structured, fluent and tailored to audience and purpose. Centres are encouraged to reinforce planning, genre awareness and accurate terminology to support consistently high-quality responses.

The NEA investigation, Unit 5, allows candidates to independently explore language and identity. Most chose engaging topics across self-representation, gender, culture, and diversity, using varied data sets and linguistic theories. Strong submissions showed analytical depth, clear focus, and effective integration of theory. Some investigations were less successful due to broad or vague titles, which made it harder to sustain focused analysis. Centres generally marked the investigations accurately, though moderation procedures varied. Advice to centres includes guiding candidates to define focused titles, applying theory meaningfully and managing data effectively. Accurate word counts, clear appendices and internal moderation are essential. The moderation team were, overall, very pleased with the quality and originality of the NEA submissions this year.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Wider examples need to be supported with exemplification which is analysed in relation to the question	Language and Situation - crafting an essay using wider examples Language and Power - crafting an essay using wider examples	Blended Learning resource - interactive self-study content covering how language is used to convey meaning
Use evaluative language to comment upon the intended effects of language choices	How Language is used to convey meaning	Blended Learning resource - interactive self-study content covering analysing features of contemporary English to create meaning
Planning and developing essay responses	Essay Writing Skills	A series of resources to develop essay writing skills
Improve knowledge and understanding of grammatical features and word classes	Teaching Grammar	A resource, covering word class, clauses and sentence structure, and exploring techniques such as slow writing and 'pointless prepositions'
Exam practice	English Language Units 1,2,3 and 4	A series of unannotated and marked responses to SAMs questions for Units 1, 2, 3 and 4, to support teaching and assessment
NEA Task Structuring Guidance and NEA Standardising Guidance	A Level English Language Task Structuring Guidance A Level English Language Standardising Unit 5	<p>Guidance for Structuring Investigations on 'Language and Identity'</p> <p>The Principal Moderator for the A level English Language Non-Examination Assessment has used extracts from legacy assignments to exemplify to centres how the assessment objectives are to be applied when marking and internally standardising the NEA investigations.</p>

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE

Summer 2025

UNIT 1 – EXPLORING LANGUAGE

Overview of the Unit

- This unit contains two sections: Section A, Analysing Language; and Section B, Contemporary English. Section A assesses AO1 (methods of analysis, use of terminology, and coherent expression and discussion); AO3 (analysis of the contexts of production and reception); and AO4 (connections). Section B assesses AO2 (critical understanding of concepts and issues relating to 21st century English use); and AO3 (analysis of the contexts of production and reception of 21st century English).
- In Section A, students were asked to read three texts from a variety of contexts, all presenting attitudes to staycations. Text A was an extract from youmatter.world, the website of an organisation that aims to provide citizens with tools and information to help them understand and take action in our constantly changing world. Text B was an article about staycations from the Travel section of The Guardian online website from December 2020. Text C was an extract from a promotional website of a company selling holidays in the UK. Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate how the language used in each of these texts represented attitudes and perspectives on staycations. The question tested the candidates' ability to analyse language using appropriate terminology to evaluate how the contextual factors (e.g. the purpose or perspective of the writing) have shaped meaning, and to explore meaningful connections across the texts (e.g. how the language reflects the different reasons for the rising popularity of staycations).
- In Section B, candidates were asked to read a selection of dating profiles taken from dating websites. Candidates had to use their knowledge of contemporary English to analyse and evaluate the ways in which contributors used language in online dating profiles. This question tested the candidates' ability to analyse and evaluate the ways in which contextual factors (e.g. the identity or experiences of each contributor) affected their linguistic choices. Candidates had to demonstrate that they understood how language was used through critical selection of relevant 21st century language and issues (e.g. the abandonment of, or adherence to, Standard English forms as a reflection of the respective contributors' voice).
- Generally, candidates engaged well with both sections of the examination paper, with Section A being slightly stronger in terms of the quality of analysis.
- Whilst the paper was challenging on the whole, candidates were able to access the full range of marks available, including a few candidates who were able to achieve close to full marks. It is pleasing to note, the culture of embedding connections for AO4 in Section A seems well established in many centres. Furthermore, for Section B there was less evidence that students had been drilled in advance with ready-made responses which simply did not meet the full requirements of the specific task they had been given, and which were used by the student to set down everything they had been taught about a particular topic. Centres would do well to remind candidates that they *are* encouraged to include in their discussion prior knowledge of 21st century English genres, as they are invited for AO2 and AO3 to 'use [their] knowledge of contemporary English'. However, responding to the data they have been given in *this* examination paper, rather than making more general points, would prevent bunching of marks at the top of Band 2 and the bottom of Band 3. Finally, it was encouraging to see that, overall, in Section B, the selection of evidence was done to purposefully aid the discussion of 21st century English concepts that were relevant to the texts in question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- In Section A, candidates on the whole demonstrated a solid grasp of the key language constituents, with many considering how contexts shaped meaning.
- Connections were strongly considered on the whole, with candidates either teasing out aspects of the advantages and disadvantages of staycations as conveyed in Texts A and B, versus the persuasive nature of Text C, which sought to encourage and fully endorse staycations as a form of holiday.
- In more successful responses, discussion was anchored securely in the specific context of each text's production and reception. Selection of textual evidence was precise and purposeful. A balanced selection of linguistic features and more general linguistic features was demonstrated. Clear links were established between language features and the bias of the texts, with Text A framing staycations as a sustainable tourism solution, whilst in B the phenomenon of staycations was represented as an invention borne of necessity in the context of a global pandemic. Finally, in Text C, language was used to present staycations as a new product on the holiday market with diverse appeal (e.g. families, nature lovers and thrill seekers).
- In less successful responses, candidates simply made general points about staycations, ignoring the nuances about staycations having specific benefits, such as reducing the stress of organisation and improving the local economy in Text A, or being a viable and at times desirable alternative to foreign travel in Text B, for example. As with last year, it appeared there was little misreading of the source texts, which was gratifying to see. As usual, centres should discourage candidates from focusing on only a narrow range of textual evidence and discourage them from feature spotting.

Section B

- Candidates appeared to apportion their time well, allowing them enough time to tackle Section B. Generally, there was a solid understanding of the concept of 21st century English as the prism through which the analysis in their responses ought to be delivered.
- As with last year, in Section B, more candidates anchored their discussion within a successful grouping of the data according to the attitudes expressed by the contributors, or indeed their identities. For example, they looked at language use by students (Text 2 and 3) to convey appeal versus the language used by the teacher (Text 4) and police inspector (Text 6). Some candidates grouped the texts by the similar identities of the contributors; others grouped by 21st century English concepts, e.g. use of Standard English versus the use of Non-Standard English. Still, some candidates examined the data one text at a time, which sometimes led to feature spotting.
- On the whole, analysis teased out specific aspects of factors affecting the construction of meaning, e.g. to convey self-deprecating humour (Text 3) or wit (Text 1 and 5). Furthermore, a feature of successful candidate responses was the connection made between the aforementioned contextual factors and the overall colloquial and overall purpose of the platform to present each contributor's wish to show their unique appeal which distinguished them from the rest, which often, but not always, includes Non-Standard English as a device to convey uniqueness, as well as a convention of such online platforms.

- In unsuccessful responses, candidates skimmed through the surface features of the data one text at a time, failing to engage in depth with any one text or concept. Such candidates often made sweeping generalisations and used what appeared to be pre-learned responses, rather than engaging with the specifics of the actual texts in front of them. Centres are reminded to discourage this practice.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE

Summer 2025

UNIT 2: LANGUAGE ISSUES AND ORIGINAL AND CRITICAL WRITING

Overview of the Unit

Candidates have the choice of two questions based on the language issues of 'Language and Situation' or 'Language and Power.' Each question has three tasks assessing the same assessment objectives, outlined as follows:

Questions 1a and 2a assess the application of analytical methods, use of terminology and coherent written expression and organisation (AO1) worth 20 marks, plus the exploration of language issues and concepts (AO2) worth 10 marks and the analysis and evaluation of contextual factors affecting the construction of meaning (AO3) worth 10 marks. A total of 40 marks was available for these questions.

Questions 1b and 2b assess the candidates' expertise in creative writing, either in fiction or non-fiction texts, for a specific audience and purpose while adhering to appropriate genre conventions (AO5). A total of 20 marks was available for these questions.

In Questions 1c and 2c candidates reflect upon their own language use in their creative writing task (Questions 1b or 2b). They are assessed on their exploration of language issues and concepts (AO2) worth 10 marks and their analysis and evaluation of contextual factors affecting the construction of meaning (AO3) worth 10 marks. A total of 20 marks was available for these questions.

Question 1a focused on 'Language and Situation' in which candidates were given an extract from a counselling training website which provided guidance on speaking strategies when counselling clients. They were asked to use the extract as a starting point, analysing and evaluating how speakers use spoken language in professional settings in both the extract and in their own wider spoken examples. Question 1b asked candidates to write a dramatic monologue in which a character is making an important decision. Question 1c asked candidates to write a commentary for the text they had produced, analysing and evaluating their language use.

Question 2a focused on 'Language and Power' in which candidates were given an extract from return instructions which came with a pair of shoes that were bought online. They were asked to use the extract as a starting point, analysing and evaluating how the language of advisory/instructional texts encourages audiences to comply in both the extract and their own wider written examples. Question 2b asked candidates to write an opinion piece for a newspaper which discusses the advantages and/or disadvantages of internet shopping. Question 2c asked candidates to write a commentary for the text they had produced, analysing and evaluating their language use.

Candidates' overall performance demonstrated that both Questions 1a-c and 2a-c were accessible. The majority of candidates achieved marks in Bands 2-4 with only a very small number of candidates achieving marks in Bands 1 and 5. There were no significant issues of time management. Candidates were clearly well-prepared by centres to manage the three different tasks within the timeframe of 2 hours. Occasionally responses to Questions 1c/2c were slightly shorter. Pleasingly, there were very few instances where candidates committed a rubric infringement by completing tasks from both Questions 1 and 2. Centres have clearly reinforced this message very effectively.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 Language and Situation

- Q.1 (a) Candidates used the extract from the counselling training website in a variety of ways. Some focused more on analysing the language of the extract, whereas others used it primarily as a springboard for wider discussion of theories and concepts relevant to spoken language used in professional settings. Provided that there was evidence of support and accurate use of terminology, both approaches could be successful. It is pleasing to note that fewer candidates this year 'bolted on' their wider examples for this question at the end of their responses. There was more evidence of an integrated approach where candidates used the extract to make specific, supported links to similar spoken language strategies in wider contexts. Wider examples in professional settings included classroom interactions, doctors with patients, and police interviews. Unfortunately, a number of candidates did not support or analyse their wider examples and instead just made passing reference to them as similar 'situations.' Higher achieving responses maintained a tight focus on the question and 'professional settings,' whereas less successful responses provided irrelevant wider examples of domestic or friends' conversations or even written texts. The strongest responses had an effective balance between analysis and exploration of the extract and detailed analysis of their own examples with inclusion of relevant concepts and issues integrated into their points. There was an issue with some candidates' unfocused application of gender theories (trying, for example, to work out if the writer of the extract was male or female). Stronger responses, however, made specific supported links between theories and concepts and the extract and/or their own examples. Relevant theories such as Fairclough's synthetic personalisation, Wareing's power types and Giles' Accommodation Theory were often quoted. Grice's Maxims were also used frequently but were most effectively employed alongside specific support from either the extract or from candidates' wider examples.
- (b) The candidates who chose this question often engaged enthusiastically and very creatively with the form of the dramatic monologue. The majority of candidates kept a tight focus on the need for the speaker to consider an important decision. Some of these decisions involved truly dramatic life-or-death scenarios: others were more comic and ironic choices (hairstyles, outfits or food!). Provided that these were delivered in a controlled way, with a clear sense that these were the words of a single speaker, then all these approaches could be successful. Some candidates were very confident using the dramatic form, skilfully creating a character and including stage directions or other indicators that this was a speech to be performed. Others were unable to sustain the form and often slipped into narrative.

Lower achieving candidates were often able to engage with the topic ('an important decision'), but not the form and, instead, produced a short story, which became self-limiting. The most successful responses were also technically accurate, with controlled expression, paragraphing and accurate punctuation throughout.

- (c) Candidates used the first person effectively (or occasionally the third as 'the writer') to account for their conscious language decisions. Higher achieving candidates would also analyse a range of language features at word, phrase and sentence level. These language features were generally explored in relation to the contextual factors in the production and reception of meaning (AO3). The strongest responses here engaged thoughtfully with how their language choices reflected the genre conventions and the spoken form. For example, they applied concepts and theories relevant to spoken interactions such as non-fluency features, Giles' Accommodation Theory or Goffman's face theory, to good effect.

- Q.2
- (a) Candidates found the question accessible and mostly made very good use of the extract (return instructions for a pair of shoes bought online) which gave them plenty of opportunity to discuss language use and employ a range of terms in their analysis. They were able to engage effectively with the influential power of the extract and explore how the language used encouraged readers to comply. They drew effectively upon other relevant examples of the language of advisory or instructional texts in their responses. Wider examples included examination rules and regulations, dosage instructions on medicines, recipes and warning signs of various types. There was an issue with some candidates including spoken language examples as wider contexts or written/spoken examples which were neither advisory nor instructional. As with Q1(a) above, reference to wider examples, without exemplification or further analysis, was self-limiting. Again, as above, there was some unfocused application of gender theory in a number of responses (for example, linking the use of politeness features in the extract to the possible gender of the writer). Higher achieving candidates, however, were able to integrate their discussion of the language and contexts of the extract with relevant concepts and theories and supported wider examples. Theories such as Fairclough on power, synthetic personalisation, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and Goffman's face theory were employed in many responses. In weaker responses there was an over-reliance on Grice's Maxims (which are *conversational* and therefore less relevant when applied to written texts). Strong responses, however, maintained the question focus on 'compliance' and linked their analysis fruitfully to supported wider written examples from their own study or experience.

- (b) Candidates demonstrated an enthusiastic engagement with the topic of internet shopping and were able to confidently explore its many advantages and disadvantages. There was, however, a less effective engagement with the genre conventions of a newspaper opinion or column genre in many responses, which became self-limiting. The most successful responses were able to craft personal, heart-felt pieces about the highs and lows of internet shopping, often including very thoughtful personal anecdotes. Higher achieving candidates were also very mindful of the newspaper audience (potentially an older reader, possibly less familiar with the online world) and crafted their responses with this in mind.

Lower achieving responses lacked the characteristic personal voice of the newspaper opinion genre and were merely lists of the advantages and disadvantages of buying online; some of these were clearly directed at an exclusively teenage audience which, again, made them less successful. Most candidates kept to the advisory word count, but it was noticeable that some candidates far exceeded this (possibly because the topic of online shopping was very familiar to them). Again, this became self-limiting because of timing issues as it left less time for candidates to work on their responses to Question 2 (c).

- (c) Candidates used the first person effectively (or occasionally the third as ‘the writer’) to account for their conscious language decisions. Higher achieving candidates also analysed a range of language features at word, phrase and sentence level. These language features were generally explored in relation to the contextual factors in the production and reception of meaning (AO3). The strongest responses here engaged thoughtfully with how their language choices reflected the specific genre conventions of the opinion article form. For example, they explored concepts and theories relevant to the newspaper context (including Goffman on face theory, synthetic personalisation and Giles’ Accommodation theory) and were able to analyse how their language choices conveyed personal opinion and connected with a likely newspaper audience.

Characteristics of successful responses

- engaging directly with the printed extracts and the question focus in (a)
- integrating analysis of the extract with discussion of relevant concepts, issues and contexts throughout the response in (a)
- integrating wider examples with exemplification in (a)
- good written technical accuracy in (b) and clear adherence to genre conventions
- analysis and evaluation of a range of language features in (c) with clear links made to genre features and audience.

Areas for development

Question 1a/2a

- candidates should read the question focus carefully, use the extract as a starting point for analysis and evaluation, but include a range of wider examples
- wider examples need to be supported with exemplification which is analysed in relation to the question
- concepts, issues and theories need to be directly linked to language use either in the extract or wider examples
- candidates need to note carefully whether the question focus is on written, spoken or multi-modal examples.

Question 1b/2b

- candidates need to become familiar with a range of genres (of both fiction and non-fiction) and their stylistic conventions: adherence to these conventions is crucial to ensure success
- in particular, centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with a wide range of journalistic genres (e.g. opinion article, feature, news story, review etc.)
- candidates should be mindful of advisory word counts and of the need for controlled expression (spelling, paragraphing and accurate punctuation).

Question 1c/2c

- candidates should consider how their language choices relate to audience, genre, purpose and register (AO2)
- candidates should use evaluative language to comment upon the intended effects of their language choices (AO3)
- candidates should leave enough time to fully develop their response to 1c/2c which is worth 20 marks.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE

Summer 2025

UNIT 3 – LANGUAGE OVER TIME

Overview of the Unit

The first part of this unit comprises four short answer questions which assess candidates' linguistic knowledge of orthographical, lexical and grammatical variation in Early Modern English, plus their understanding of the processes and concepts driving language change. In Question 1 (parts a-d) candidates can demonstrate their knowledge by describing distinctive Early Modern English language features concisely and accurately and by using precise linguistic terminology to identify examples (AO1). Question 2, the extended essay question, assesses candidates' ability to analyse and compare noteworthy features in three unseen texts chosen from different historical periods of English. Candidates, guided by the question focus, need to demonstrate their understanding of genre, the writer's purpose and each text's relationship with the target audience (AO2). They need to engage with the meaning and issues explored in each text, how these are shaped by context and to evaluate the effects of each writer's language choices (AO3). They also need to make meaningful connections across the three texts and, while doing so, select and accurately apply a range of appropriate linguistic terminology and concepts in their analysis (AO4). The short answer questions (AO1) combine to a maximum total of 20 marks. The extended essay question is worth a maximum of 60 marks with the assessment objectives (AO2, AO3 and AO4) equally weighted at 20 marks each.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The responses to the short answer questions this year demonstrated that candidates were clear about the different requirements of each of the four parts of Question 1. Most notably, there were fewer candidates who made comments about archaic spelling and lexis in 1d which could not be credited as this question tests candidates' knowledge of distinctive grammatical and punctuation features of Early Modern English. In Questions 1a-c, however, some uncertainty and inaccuracy regarding basic word class identification was noted, despite most candidates being able to comment effectively upon language change features. This lack of precision in identification of word classes became a limiting factor for some candidates. Candidates this year were, on the whole, well-prepared in terms of managing their timing on the short answer questions, leaving them enough time to tackle the extended essay question which carries 60 marks. The attempt rate for Questions 1a-d and the mean marks this year demonstrated that candidates found both the short answer questions and extended essay task accessible.

Candidates this year engaged very effectively with both the genre and the topic of the three texts: newspaper reports of royal events. Overall, they were able to make relevant points about genre change over time noting that Text A, an Early Modern English extract from the London Gazette, included both an unusual direct address to the new king along with reports of coronation celebrations from around the country, whereas Text B, a Modern English extract from a Welsh newspaper, provided a very descriptive account of Queen Victoria's jubilee celebrations for readers not able to attend in person. Candidates were also able to note the more dramatic and sensationalist reporting evident in Text C, a Present-Day English extract from a tabloid newspaper.

There was, therefore, plenty of scope to explore genre change over time along with shifts in public attitudes to the royal family and to make productive connections between the texts (AO4). Candidates were able to compare the deference to the monarchy evident in Texts A and B and compare it to the scandalised, gossipy focus on royal family disputes in Text C.

Most candidates managed their time well, but responses to Question 2 which were less than 3 sides in length were self-limiting due to their under-development. It was pleasing to note that most candidates were able to maintain focus on meaning and context (AO3) in their responses and were less reliant on standard headings to shape their essays. In addition, very few candidates approached the essay question by exclusively listing language change features or repeating the content of the short answer questions. Centres have clearly provided candidates with clear guidance about maintaining a focus on meaning in context in their essay responses. Pleasingly, the attempt rate for Question 2 was 100% and there was a slight increase in the mean mark for the extended essay question this year compared to previous years. This is a positive reflection on centres and the helpful guidance they have provided to candidates about approaches to the essay.

Q1 (short answer questions)

Most candidates were able to show their linguistic knowledge and understanding of language change concepts in the short answer questions and were aware of the different requirements of the question parts.

- a. The identification of word classes in this question was generally secure for *fill'd* and *bonfyres* but it was noteworthy how few candidates were able to identify *ouer* as a preposition. As noted above, basic word class identification is a key skill to master at this level of study. Candidates also need to note that with *fill'd* the contraction related to the past participle *-ed* inflection/suffix. It was not sufficient only to note that in Present Day English the spelling would be *filled*.
- b. Most candidates were able to identify the word class of *royal/royale* and *Regent-street* and to comment effectively on language change. With *Regent-street* candidates needed to explain that the variation was either the hyphenation of street names or use of the non-standard lower case '*street*'. It was not sufficient to merely note there would be no hyphen in Present Day English.
- c. It is pleasing to note that candidates have clearly been well-advised to be very specific when describing verb inflections. Most candidates here were able to provide *both* the tense of the verb and the person of the inflected ending of '*hath*' (present tense, third person verb inflection) which is required to gain full credit. With *Majesties* reference to the omission of the possessive apostrophe or non-standard plural was required to gain credit.
- d. There were plenty of features typical of Early Modern English in the extract which candidates could identify. It was pleasing to note how many candidates were able to provide concise examples of more complex features such as subjunctives, passive voice and specific clause types in multi-clausal sentences. The best advice for centres and candidates who require further guidance on approaches to Question 1d is to look at past papers and mark schemes.

Characteristics of a successful response:

- clear understanding of the different requirements of each of the questions 1a – d
- precise and accurate labelling of word classes, forms and/or grammatical features
- accurate identification and description of typical or distinctive spelling, grammatical or punctuation features of Early Modern English.

Areas for improvement:

- accurate identification and description of basic word classes in context
- continue to develop skills (for Question 1d) in the identification and naming of more complex features of Early Modern English grammar and punctuation (e.g. subjunctive, passive voice, specific clause types in multi-clausal sentences) using past papers and mark schemes as a learning resource.

Q2. (essay)

In this question candidates are tested on their ability to analyse and evaluate the content and meaning of three texts which have been selected from different historical periods. In their responses they should connect their points about language features (which should be supported and described using accurate terminology) to relevant language concepts or issues, and, also, to the contexts in which the texts were first written. Throughout their responses, candidates should use the question focus to make and explore noteworthy connections, comparisons and contrasts across the three texts.

The newspaper genre of the three texts this year was certainly an accessible one and candidates were clearly able to use the contextual information provided to usefully frame their analyses. For example, many noted the direct address to the king which opened Text A (*'May it please Your Majesty'*), the highly descriptive nature of the report in Text B with precise details of Queen Victoria's clothes (*'a dress of striped black satin broché and silk...'*) and the use of dramatic journalese in Text C (*'crunch talks', 'bombshell announcement'*). There were some perceptive discussions and evaluations of the way in which newspapers of the time engaged with royal issues and these were successfully linked with context (AO3). For example, candidates noted in Text A the extreme deference to the king and reference to his Divine Right to rule (*'We your Majesties most Loyal and Dutiful Subjects'* and *'Succession to the Throne of your Ancestors (Your vndoubted Right)'*). In Text B candidates noted the shift from reporting on public celebration (*'spectators who fervently waved'*) to recording of dramatic newsworthy events (the man who *'sustained fatal injuries'* and the bystander who *'threw a lighted match in the straw of a huge bonfire'*) and how this marked a change in news values. In Text C, candidates were able to note the lexis of emotion (*'a great deal of hurt'*) and the newspaper's depiction of the royal family in crisis to a 21st century preoccupation with intrusive 'celebrity' culture. Text C's constant references to money (*'the taxpayer footing a £2.4 million bill'*) and to unnamed sources also allowed candidates to explore how public attitudes to royalty have moved from respect to scepticism. It was good to see that candidates were clearly aware of the importance of comparison (AO4) and that they structured their essays in ways which brought this to the fore. There were many different essay structures which were successful: some responses worked from the newest to oldest text, rather than the other way, or used a thematic, integrated comparative structure throughout.

The weaker responses, however, were often very short (two sides or less) or had much less focus on meaning in context and were instead mainly concerned with feature spotting. These responses tended to focus exclusively on less significant language features such as the use of pronouns or titles for royalty. Some essays lacked a language focus and made general points about context without support from the texts or, indeed, any language analysis using relevant and accurate terminology. Others opened their essays by reproducing the contextual information already provided for each text (sometimes at length). This then limited the time these candidates had available for credit-worthy analysis and development. Essays with pre-learned structures were, however, less evident this year, as were essays which

focused exclusively on the language change features assessed in the short answer questions. This message has clearly been reinforced by centres.

Characteristics of a successful response

- well-developed and supported essays which focus on meaning in context
- thoughtful selection of noteworthy points of connection, contrast and comparison
- productive engagement with contextual information which is used to support language analysis
- consistent language focus with accurate use of a range of terms at word, phrase and sentence level.

Areas for improvement

- careful focus on meaning and content, linked to context
- work on producing concise, comparative overviews rather than over-generalised introductions
- consistent language focus and support with use of a range of terms
- work on timing to ensure sustained and developed essays.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE

Summer 2025

UNIT 4 SPOKEN TEXTS AND CREATIVE RE-CASTING

Overview of the Unit

- Unit 4 assesses AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO5. AO2 features in both Section A and Section B. AO1 and AO3 are solely in Section A, and AO5 is only in Section B.
- Section A focuses on analysis of spoken language, and Section B focuses on writing which creatively re-casts material for a specific purpose and audience.
- Candidates seemed to have been well prepared for this unit. Nearly all candidates found the three texts to be accessible and engaged thoughtfully with the language features displayed. As in 2024, candidates seemed to have prepared for the double weighting of AO1, using their understanding of linguistic terminology to drive their response. Most candidates focused directly on the question that was set and explored the different ways people use language to talk about professional experiences. Only a minority conducted more generalised analyses of the transcripts, ending up with discussions which operated at a more basic level.
- Most of the responses showed at least a sensible awareness of the requirements of the task in Section B, developing website introductions that demonstrated a sound understanding of linguistic choices that would feature in a publicly funded domain. Many candidates generated content that would genuinely inspire young people to think creatively about their future career. As in previous years, a minority of responses fell disappointingly short of the indicative 400-word guidance and therefore could not sustain or fully develop their response. Again, very few candidates appeared to have planned out ideas for content or intended approach before beginning to write.
- Most candidates constructed analyses that attended to all three texts in Section A in an even manner. There were very few uneven discussions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Analysing Spoken Language

The three texts focused on interviews where people discussed their professional experiences. Text A was part of a promotional event for an autobiography, whilst Text B and Text C were both interviews between radio presenters and celebrities. In their analyses of Text A, most candidates were able to explore the way in which the interviewer created a space for Simon Reeve to talk at length about his experiences and his inspirations, and the differing ways they both used humour to help promote Reeve's book. Many candidates were also able to explore the ways Reeve used language to make his experiences relatable to the audience, and the ways he used language to underline the strength of his beliefs about travel and exploration. In Text B, most candidates were able to explore the way in which Laura Whitmore elicited information from Arlo Parkes and how she subsequently responded to the insights that Parkes shared. Many candidates were also able to analyse the language Parkes used to convey her musical influences in a way that mixed humility with measured personal disclosure. Turning to Text C, most candidates discussed the language features that marked it out as a more formulaic broadcast interview. They were able to analyse the ways in which Tim Peake selected everyday details from his experiences in space to help to bring it to life for listeners, and how he communicated his sense of awe and wonder. A few candidates took on the challenge of analysing the subtle cues used by Lauren Laverne to indicate that she was asking questions on behalf of an imagined audience.

Across the three transcripts, most candidates identified at least a reasonable range of language features to discuss. There were hardly any responses that were too brief. Equally, there were very few examples of candidates planning out the essential points they wanted to make in advance of writing their response.

AO1

This year there seemed to be a sustained focus for the vast majority of candidates on applying their analytical skills to the task set in the question, using the exploration of professional experiences as their point of reference. As last year, barely any responses spent time just summarising content. Some candidates managed to deploy a wide range of terminology to sharpen their discussion, and, as last year, most candidates got into an analytical mode of writing very quickly, usually by focusing on the initial interchange in Text A. This year there seemed to be a slightly higher general accuracy in terms of identifying core word classes (adjectives, adverbs or different types of pronouns), and it was clear that most candidates had been well-trained to incorporate their linguistic knowledge into the process of their analysis. As last year, most candidates utilised their knowledge of different language levels and did not restrict themselves to a discussion of a relatively narrow range of features, such as micropauses and fillers. The majority of responses were mostly accurate in terms of expression, and many were confidently articulated.

AO2

As in the last few years, most candidates used appropriate textual support, and there was very little use of unfocused, over-long quotation. Barely any responses made limited or even infrequent use of textual support. Use of relevant references to language theories was generally judicious, and good application of Grice and/or Fairclough was frequently apparent. It was clear that candidates had been well-prepared to make swift and deft references to theory when appropriate, rather than over-labouring points. Candidates were equally split on whether they thought Arlo Parks was a man or a woman. Fortunately, the vast majority recognised that the conventions of broadcast interviews were likely to have a greater impact than gender theories of language use. In summary, there was a positive sense this year that candidates were making a secure judgement about when to apply the theories they had covered in their studies.

AO3

As last year, the vast majority of candidates explored the effect of contextual factors in ways that were at least sensible. For example, in Text A, most candidates made successful use of the overall promotional context, and the effect of the audience in the bookshop on the language choices made. Similarly, most candidates made at least some exploration of the effect of the more creative and artistic context in Text B, and the more formal, established broadcast context of Text C. Most candidates made relevant evaluations of the effectiveness of different communication strategies across the three texts. In Text A, they discussed the effective way, for example, that Simon Reeve mobilised his anecdotal recollections of his grandmother, whilst in Text B, they explored the subtle manner that Arlo Parks projected her engaging humility. Most candidates made good analytical use of the way Tim Peake, in Text C, strategically focused on some key space station routines to communicate his experiences effectively.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- an evenly balanced discussion that willingly engages with the complexities of all three texts
- a clear and repeated focus on the driving phrase in the question
- a range of terminology deployed across the different language levels.

Areas for improvement:

- in many cases, developing an outline plan would reduce the likelihood of some responses meandering backwards and forwards through their discussion
- avoiding responses that only focus on a small number of spoken language features
- for some candidates, having clarity on basic word classes would offer firmer foundations for their responses.

Section B: Creative Recasting

Virtually all candidates understood the remit of the task and mobilised their knowledge of existing careers advice they had experienced to create an engaging introduction. The key stylistic features and formal features of publicly funded 'official' websites were clear to most candidates. Many candidates made very effective use of either the careers covered in Section A, or even the celebrities themselves to generate examples of ambitious and imaginative career choices.

AO2

Most candidates demonstrated that they had at least a sensible awareness of the writing genre set out in the question and constructed an introduction that engaged the reader with the concept of an ambitious career choice.

AO5

As last year, much of the writing in Section B was accurate and sound in terms of expression and formal organisation, and there were many examples in which candidates managed to adopt a fluent suitable style. Most candidates did not find it difficult to generate sufficient content that was at least sensible, and the better responses had sequenced their material to carry the imagined reader through different stages of the introduction. Most candidates thought sensibly about the form of their introduction. It was not a requirement for candidates to mimic the structural features of a website, although some did, and where this happened, it may well have helped candidates to keep in mind the context in which they were writing. It was very positive to see candidates clearly thinking carefully about the opening of their introductions and the sign-offs. There was writing here at both ends of the texts that would genuinely engage the attention of the audience, at the beginning, and leave them to explore the rest of the website with a real sense of purpose at the end. The notion of what might constitute an ambitious career choice was left open for candidates to decide. For some, the bar was set at quite a high-level, focusing on very high-end careers and celebrity endeavours. For others, the definition focused on more achievable professional vocations. As long as they maintained a coherent approach throughout their text, this choice did not affect outcomes. As last year, a small number of candidates didn't focus on the key cues in the question (e.g. 'ambitious') and created texts that might preface a more functional careers website. This tended to have an impact on their ability to match sufficient sensible or effective content.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- well-planned texts that led the reader purposefully through a thoughtfully sequenced set of ideas
- writing that was fluent and engaging but still appropriate as the voice of an official website
- writing that balanced practical examples/details with a more general focus on being ambitious for oneself.

Areas for improvement:

- read and re-read the question to ensure clarity over genre, purpose and intended audience, and then conduct a final sense-check
- use planning time to structure the key elements of a response
- leave time to check for careless errors in accuracy and writing consistency.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE

Summer 2025

UNIT 5 – LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Overview of the Unit

This component allows candidates the opportunity to independently research an aspect of language and identity. Candidates have the opportunity to gather primary and secondary research in relation to one of the following aspects of study as defined in the specification:

- Language and Self-Representation
- Language and Gender Identity
- Language and Culture
- Language Diversity.

AO1 assesses analytical methods and quality of written communication. AO1 is worth 40 marks and there are three strands: AO1a focuses on analytical methods and interpretation of the topic, worth 20 marks; AO1b looks at the use of linguistic terminology, worth 10 marks; AO1c assesses coherent written communication and organisation, worth 10 marks. AO2 explores concepts and issues, worth 20 marks, and AO3 focuses on evaluating contextual factors affecting the construction of meaning, worth 20 marks.

The focus of the NEA is exploring the relationship between language and identity. Candidates then choose one of four sub-aspects of study as identified above.

Similarly to previous series, candidates performed well in response to all the sub-aspects of study, with candidates exploring a full range of different data sets, covering both spoken, written and multi-modal text types. A full range of areas were explored, from how diversity is represented through northeastern accent and dialects to cultural representation in analysis of fascist identities in the language of video games. As in previous series, only rare occasions of Band 1 investigations were seen. Most investigations were awarded Bands 3, 4 and 5, again in keeping with previous years.

It was very pleasing to see that WJEC centres were generally accurate in their marking and internal moderation.

Comments on individual questions/sections

General trends/patterns of performance.

Across this year's sample of NEA investigations, candidates were consistently motivated by topics drawn from personal interests, resulting in a diverse array of enquiry areas ranging from Nobel laureates' acceptance speeches to social media influencer discourse. This genuine engagement often translated into compelling research questions and original data sets. However, while enthusiasm for varied domains was high, the sheer breadth sometimes led to underdeveloped analytical focus when candidates attempted overly expansive or loosely defined topics.

Most investigation titles made some reference to “identity,” yet the specificity of that reference varied considerably. The strongest submissions featured titles that paired “identity” with a precise dimension - such as diversity, cultural or gender identity - thereby guiding candidates towards sustained and coherent analysis. By contrast, titles that relied on vague phrasing like “identity norms” or “professional identity” frequently resulted in superficial exploration of language patterns, as candidates struggled to align their data gathering and theoretical application with a clearly articulated investigative aim.

Data collection protocols showed just as diverse a set of methodologies. Most candidates contributed neat, well-annotated data enabling extensive micro- and macro-level analysis. In such investigations, richly multiform data permitted study of lexis, phonological features and sentence-level analysis. Conversely, explorations with undifferentiated or over-stretched data sets - sometimes dotted around the main body rather than being annexed as appendices - limited the field of inquiry. The absence of unannotated source material in certain submissions further hindered moderators from evaluating the quality of methodology as well as the correctness of candidates' perceptions.

Consistency in marking was strong, with tight agreement between centre and most moderator marks reported. Attention to summative feedback and marginal comments directly related to the Assessment Objectives enhanced transparency in most cases. Demonstration of systematic internal moderation was inconsistent, though: some centres used extensive second marking and moderation proformas, while others offered very limited information on standardisation procedures.

Performance across the Assessment Objectives showed consistent trends. Highest-scoring folders typically integrated high-level linguistic analysis with perceptive application of cutting-edge identity theory, such as Butler's performativity model and Goffman's face theory. These analyses were accompanied by well-integrated hypotheses and showed an ability to situate textual findings within broader socio-contextual spaces. Lower-mark work, on the other hand, was prone to hovering at the word-level, reflecting inaccurate or limited use of language, and involving theory in a descriptive rather than an analytical methodology.

Procedural errors arose in a minority of submissions: a small number of candidates exceeded the recommended 2,500–3,500-word limit without full acknowledgement; some omitted accurate word counts on coversheets; and mis-location or omission of appendices disrupted the flow of moderation. Overly technical methodological explanations in a few folders also diluted analytical content. Generally, these tendencies indicate that while candidates continue to bring enthusiasm and freshness of approach to NEA study, more targeted definition of tasks, careful data management and closer conformity to assessment standards would make future submissions clearer and more precise.

Language and Self-Representation

This sub-aspect offers candidates a unique chance to analyse their own language across personal contexts, exploring how identity is performed or reflected through linguistic choices. It encourages self-awareness and invites investigation into whether language constructs or merely mirrors the self. Some candidates mislabel celebrity-focused investigations as “Self-Representation,” when these are better classified under Culture or Gender based on their identity focus. True Self-Representation requires personal data - language produced by the candidate - and can be explored through theories like accommodation, politeness and face, using spoken, written or multimodal communication. Guidance is needed to ensure that titles reflect definite research objectives, feasible sets of data and an appropriate correspondence with the anticipation of the specification.

An example of an investigation title would be:

Using relevant data from online messaging platforms, analyse and evaluate how the self adapts language across different communicative contexts to construct and perform identity.

Language and Gender Identity

Gender remains one of the most popular areas of investigation, with candidates showing flair and critical insight across a range of topics. Studies included Taylor Swift's challenge to double standards in *"The Man"*, Joey Barton's portrayal of masculine identity in sport, and Andrew Tate's controversial representations of womanhood. Data sources ranged from agony aunt columns and courtroom transcripts to podcast dialogue, revealing the diverse ways language constructs and contests gender identity.

Centres are reminded that while Lakoff's deficit model remains a foundational reference point, it should not be treated as the sole framework for gender-based investigations. The moderation sample revealed a continued over-reliance on Lakoff, often at the expense of more nuanced or contemporary approaches. Candidates should be encouraged to explore a broader range of gender and language theories - including dominance, difference, diversity, communities of practice, and performativity - to support more perceptive and critically engaged analysis. Investigations that incorporated theorists such as Butler, Goffman and Fairclough demonstrated greater sophistication in evaluating how gender identity is constructed and contested through language.

An example of an effective title would be:

Using relevant data from Andrew Tate's media content, analyse and evaluate how language is used to construct and perform gender identity in representations of masculinity.

Language and Culture

A broad spectrum of cultural contexts has been investigated this year, reflecting candidates' continued engagement with language and identity. Candidates applied discourse as diverse as political figures - Donald Trump's and Boris Johnson's interview strategies and Winston Churchill's war-time speeches - to popular music and media, including Taylor Swift's and Lorde's song lyrics, Amy Winehouse's songs' narratives, Dave's rap song lyrics and social-media monologues by Caitlyn Jenner and Amber Heard. Centres must ensure that candidates stay rooted firmly in the intersection between language and identity, not being tempted into being purely political, historical or sociological analysis. Care needs to be taken when dealing with song lyrics or other mediated material: there are a variety of contributors (producers, songwriters, performers) and complexities involved in attributing linguistic choices to a single identity.

An example of an effective title would be:

Using relevant data from interviews, album liner notes and social-media posts, how does Taylor Swift use language to express shifts in her identity across different phases of her musical career?

Language Diversity

Although diversity-focused NEAs remain relatively uncommon, a handful of inventive enquiries have emerged: analyses of the social and historical influences shaping northeastern English accents and dialects; studies of how the TV series *Brassic* constructs Lancashire identity through its portrayal of accent and dialect; and explorations of occupational variation in healthcare language use. Centres should continue to champion these original lines of inquiry, ensuring each investigation remains grounded in how linguistic features construct and reflect identity.

An example of an effective title would be:

Using relevant data, analyse and evaluate to what extent bilingual Polish–English speakers use code-switching and lexical borrowing to construct personal and social identities in family and educational contexts.

Advice to centres:

- Ensure every investigation title clearly references both language and a well-defined aspect of identity to help candidates maintain analytical focus and meet the NEA task setting requirements. Broad or vague titles often dilute the depth of inquiry and hinder alignment with Assessment Objectives.
- Avoid dual-focus or thematically ambiguous titles; candidates should be guided to formulate a single, focused question that reflects the prescribed topic area and encourages sustained, purposeful analysis rather than scattered discussion.
- Encourage candidates to engage with a diverse range of linguistic theories, particularly contemporary gender and identity models such as Butler’s performativity, Fairclough’s views on power, or Eckert’s communities of practice. These approaches allow for richer interpretation and more sophisticated evaluation of data.
- Promote selective and contextual integration of theory within the body of analysis, rather than overly long introductory sections or descriptive overviews. Candidates should be shown how to apply theory meaningfully, using it as an analytical lens rather than background filler.
- Ensure candidates attach complete, clean, unannotated copies of their data in an appendix, distinct from analytical discussion in the main body. This supports transparency, allows moderators to assess the validity of findings and demonstrates procedural rigour.
- Support candidates in building manageable and relevant data sets, encouraging them to make selective decisions that prioritise quality over quantity. Overly large or poorly focused corpora can overwhelm candidates and limit opportunities for sustained linguistic analysis.
- Use marginal annotations that explicitly reference the Assessment Objectives and band descriptors, providing justification for each mark awarded. This not only aids moderation but strengthens internal assessment validity across the centre.
- Ensure internal moderation processes are clearly visible on coversheets. If only one assessor is responsible for marking, a short statement confirming this should be included to support transparency and compliance.

- Remind candidates to include accurate word counts on their coversheets and keep their investigations within the recommended 2,500 – 3,500 word limit. If the limit is exceeded, this should be acknowledged and considered in the AO1c comment to aid fair assessment.
- Submit moderation samples on time, with all pages scanned in the correct order. Use the updated WJEC Unit 5 coversheet, ensuring candidates complete the signing declaration, including reference to AI use where applicable.

The Principal Moderator and moderation team would like to thank all candidates and staff for their hard work in producing the NEA submissions this year. All investigations were a pleasure to read and moderate. The moderation team were impressed with the degree of accuracy in assessments and centres' willingness to act upon the recommendations made in previous centre reports.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4292

Email: gceenglish@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/english-language-asa-level/#tab_keydocuments

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

WJEC Qualifications

As Wales' largest awarding body, WJEC supports its education community by providing trusted bilingual qualifications, specialist support, and reliable assessment to schools and colleges across the country. This allows our learners to reach their full potential.

With more than 70 years' experience, we are also amongst the leading providers in both England and Northern Ireland.



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk