



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2019

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE
General Certificate of Education
Summer 2019
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 1 – EXPLORING LANGUAGE

General Comments

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for this unit; their analyses demonstrated some real engagement with the material in both sections, as evidenced by the high attempt rate of both Section A and Section B. Responses to the stimulus material in both sections suggested many candidates enjoyed being exposed to this material, making many sustained and insightful points, particularly on the presentation of marriage in the data provided for Section A. In comparison with last year, more candidates seemed to demonstrate a secure ability to make and sustain purposeful connections (AO4) in Section A; this often became the foundation of their entire response and, in some cases, it underpinned the method of analysis, leading to some insightful exploration of the three texts and their contexts. In Section B, candidates were able, on the whole, to analyse key features of 21st century English whilst engaging with the subtext of the material. Centres are still advised to remind candidates to avoid mere feature-spotting here as it inevitably leads to a basic discussion, which, like last year, resulted in some bunching of marks for this item around upper Band 2 and lower Band 3. Encouragingly, like last year the choice of texts proved accessible, stretching and challenging for the more able candidates, at the same time as giving other candidates a solid base from which to work.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Analysing Language

In this section, candidates were asked to analyse three texts with differing contexts; the texts originated from different historical eras and presented a range of attitudes and perspectives but were connected by the theme of marriage. Text A was an extract from a 19th century novel, Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, in which the heroine, Bathsheba Everdene, receives a marriage proposal from farmer Gabriel Oak. Text B was a 2017 broadsheet feature article in which co-authors Pavia and Bannerman examine the social concept of sologamy, a new trend in marriage. The final text was an extract from a 2018 blog about marriage. The texts proved as accessible as last year and many candidates seemed to enjoy the material, as evidenced by some quite insightful exploration. Again, as last year, the material was demanding and challenging, whilst still allowing candidates from the full range of starting points to access some relevant aspects on the question.

AO1

A variety of methods worked well here, as long as students approached the question in a way that allowed them to apply relevant knowledge to their exploration of the texts. For example, one sensible method adopted by many candidates was to structure their response following the bullet points supplied to accompany the question; such candidates examined how the different writers presented varied ideas about marriage in their respective texts, before teasing out some similarities and differences in the ways the writers engaged their respective audiences.

Other successful candidates adopted a more holistic method, examining how the different historical periods and genre conventions of each text framed different perspectives on certain common threads or aspects of marriage, such as duty, obligation and representations of independence. It is worth reminding centres that no method is superior to any other, as long as the discussion is supported by correctly labelled and purposefully selected evidence from the texts. Lower scoring candidates made some sweeping generalisations about the presentation of marriage in each text, such as “the writer of Text B conveys marriage to put the woman on the short end of the stick.” Such lifting of chunks of the source material, unsupported by a specific discussion of the construction of meaning in the text and context, is not a suitable topic sentence and communicates an ‘ad-hoc’ approach to the question, rather than displaying a method of analysis at work. A further useful reminder for candidates is to ensure that terminology is applied in relation to the context in which language is used; for example, the abstract noun “love” in the title of Text C was often incorrectly referred to as a verb. Reading language out of context always prevents candidates from displaying the linguistic precision which is required if they are to earn marks in Bands 4 and 5.

AO3

The contexts of production and reception of each text are significant factors in the construction of meaning; candidates’ ability to evaluate how the context influences the way meaning is shaped is an essential skill in this section. Genre elements also needed to be considered here; the most successful candidates were able to clearly articulate the idea that, for example, Bathsheba’s rejection of marriage, a concept distinct from a wedding, is quite unusual for its 19th century patriarchal context. In addition, they explored the gender politics expressed in the dialogue of Text A as an engaging aspect of Hardy’s narrative. Further still, more able candidates were able to discern that despite their contemporary contexts, Texts B and C incorporated some quite traditional aspects of marriage, such as the presence of a “white dress”, “invitations” and “flowers” in Text B and the significance of “serving, honouring and respecting” in Text C. Finally, candidates who secured Band 4 and 5 marks were able to articulate how the discursive elements of Texts B and C allowed for opinion to be presented in an engaging manner, either through humour or through shared cultural experience. Lower scoring candidates, by contrast, were unable to separate the dominant historical ideology of the context of each text from the actual ideas about marriage each text conveyed; they simply assumed that Text A was quite patriarchal in its handling of ideas about marriage whilst Text B and Text C were purely unconventional and against tradition. Candidates who struggled to tease out both traditional and unconventional attitudes to marriage in each of the texts were unable to produce a discussion worthy of credit in higher bands.

AO4

The ability to form and sustain connections between the texts is a significant skill assessed in this question. As last year, candidates displayed a secure understanding that the concept of ‘connections’ encompasses the similarities and differences in the ways meaning is constructed in each respective text. Here, the most successful candidates recognised that the use of language in each text is framed by a different authorial method, for example, characterisation through dialogue in Text A; a humorous and slightly bemused discussion of the new trend of “sologamy” in Text B; and some unobtrusive ‘philosophical’ advice in Text C. Some candidates were impressively perceptive in teasing out and evaluating linguistic evidence in support of unusual connections in the writers’ presentations of marriage; for example, one candidate observed that the imperative verb “Try” in Text A reflected Gabriel’s expectation that Bathsheba has a “duty to marry him seeing as he had proposed to her” whilst the pre-modified noun phrase “self-married women” in Text B reflected the “suggestion that women need not marry another person in order to lead fulfilling lives.”

Yet (this same candidate suggested) a cynic would claim that both texts incorporate an element of “attention seeking” as the “solo brides” often engage in elaborate wedding ceremonies and Bathsheba proclaims she quite likes the idea of people talking about her, should she engage in a wedding ceremony with Gabriel. Such subtle connections are certainly worthy of the very highest of marks. In contrast, at the bottom end, candidates formed surface-connections such as “all three texts are about marriage” or “all three texts present some attitudes to women” (not necessarily the focus of the question). Such vague and unsupported statements often resulted in Band 2 marks.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- an intelligent method which allows for a developed and insightful discussion
- a frequent, apt and purposeful use of terminology
- a careful engagement with the texts in their distinctive context
- an ability to form and sustain subtle connections between the texts.

Areas for improvement:

- surface reading of the texts out of context
- unsupported sweeping generalisations
- feature-spotting
- basic or underdeveloped connections.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- encourage candidates to consider genre and context factors which affect the construction of meaning in each text
- guide candidates to applying knowledge purposefully and methodically
- remind candidates that the focus of the question must be often tackled and revisited in their discussion.

Section B: Contemporary English

It is encouraging to note that, as last year, Section B produced many highly successful responses, and it was clear that candidates had been appropriately advised by centres of the need to apportion their time in approaching Section B according to the marks available. The attempt rate was high and the data enabled candidates to produce discussions worthy of the full range of marks. However, as was the case last year, there seemed to be a bunching of marks around the borderline Band 2/3 as some candidates are still struggling to develop their analysis of 21st century English by using appropriate terminology.

Candidates were asked to use their knowledge of contemporary English in analysing and evaluating how writers use language on Facebook posts on a group page where the contributors responded to an article about a vegan burger, the Beyond Burger. This entirely vegetable-based product is made to have the look, taste and texture of real meat.

AO2

This assessment objective tested the candidates’ ability to explore how the language used in the data reflects attitudes to social issues such as veganism and how these attitudes are expressed on the 21st century medium of Facebook, where writers often choose to abandon the application of Standard English grammar, spelling and punctuation. More successful candidates discerned the difference between obvious examples where non-Standard English was a consciously-adopted tactic to convey, for example, enthusiasm (as in the clipped adverb “defo” in Text 10) or cynicism (as in the blended noun “frankenmeat” in Text 5) and some examples where non-Standard English was either abandoned due to the digital nature of this platform (such as Text 2) or due to the writer’s lack of command of Standard English.

Such candidates commented on the fact that the writer of Texts 6 and 7 attempts to correct previous non-standard spelling of the noun “meat” whilst failing to notice or address his lack of apostrophe for elision in the clause “Its actually ...”. The most perceptive candidates connected genre and medium-related linguistic features to a writer’s identity, status and credibility as a contributor on this on-line Facebook opinion platform. They supported their discussion with purposeful selection of relevant and appropriately-labelled linguistic evidence. Less successful candidates ignored the data and (in some cases) reproduced pre-prepared lists of Facebook language features. The question this year allowed candidates to use their knowledge of contemporary English, but it also required them to apply this knowledge to *these* Facebook posts; such application of knowledge was crucial in order for candidates to earn marks in the higher bands.

AO3

In order to score high AO3 marks, candidates were required to demonstrate a perceptive evaluation of how a range of contextual factors contributed to the use of language and the construction of meaning in each text in this 21st century English corpus of data. Centres are advised to remind candidates that a 21st century digital on-line platform where contributors respond to each other’s comments is only one aspect of context, which, in some ways, can also be covered under the exploration of concepts relating to genre and medium that are assessed under AO2. Many high scoring candidates secured AO3 marks by establishing pragmatic links between the uses of language in the texts and the presentation of some culturally shared attitudes towards current social trends such as veganism. Another fruitful exploration of context, which was evident in high quality responses, was derived by engaging with the contextual information supplied about the identity, status and background of each writer. Therefore, the candidates obtaining Band 4/5 marks observed, for example, that a food scientist is likely to express his cynicism about the idea of a vegan burger by using highly technical language, whilst a stay-at-home-mum is likely to employ an emoji, which may be viewed as strategy for hedging her objections against the ethos of the product. Those not performing as convincingly simply ignored this valuable contextual information provided for them, thus not being able to access the full range of AO3 marks.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- an application of knowledge as relevant to the focus of the question
- frequent and relevant application of terminology
- a careful consideration how medium, genre and context affect the use of language and the construction of meaning.

Areas for improvement:

- avoiding pre-prepared lists of genre/medium features
- lack of development in the discussion
- feature-spotting
- lack of engagement with the supplied contextual information about the identity of each writer.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- encourage candidates to consider genre and context factors that affect the construction of meaning in each text
- guide candidates to apply knowledge purposefully and methodically
- remind candidates that the discussion of concepts such as Standard and Non-Standard English (and what these concepts reflect about the construction of meaning in each digital text) is assessed in AO2.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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UNIT 2 – LANGUAGE ISSUES AND ORIGINAL AND CRITICAL WRITING

General Comments

It was pleasing to see that most candidates were prepared well for this unit, demonstrating a sound awareness both of relevant assessment objectives and the topic areas: Language and Power, and Language and Situation. The questions and stimulus texts facilitated access to higher marks for the strongest candidates, whilst allowing the lower attaining to produce frequently sensible responses. The creative writing tasks clearly provided candidates with the opportunity to write in genres and on topics that they were familiar with. Many of the responses for the creative writing tasks demonstrated a large scope of creativity and enthusiasm. The accompanying commentaries frequently demonstrated detailed knowledge and supported the writing choices, in most cases, well.

Both questions 1 and 2 proved to be broadly equally popular as options, with similar numbers of candidates attempting each question.

In a very small number of cases, some candidates answered part a) Question 1 but then switched to complete parts b) and c) for Question 2. This is a rubric infringement and means that the candidate's b response cannot be awarded any marks.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Comments on essay questions

Q.1 (a) & Q.2 (a)

The inclusion of a stimulus with a focus on persuasion (question 1a) and of one with a focus on spoken data (question 2a) allowed all candidates access, as most provided relevant examples, as well as appropriate and at times insightful comments on the language and its effects in both stimulus texts.

It is worth reiterating that this question is worth half of the number of marks available in this unit, as a large number of candidates only managed to write approximately two sides as a response, which seemed a little too brief to develop ideas fully.

However, often these same candidates then proceeded to write longer commentaries for question 1c/2c, which is worth half the number of marks compared to question 1a/2a. Effective time management in the exam is critical to candidates showing what they can do for each part of the paper.

In this series, candidates were given a more explicit reminder for the need to provide their own examples in their analyses and discussions. For question 1a this meant that candidates were required to refer to other examples of persuasive **written** texts. While many candidates did include references to their own examples, not all of these were written texts; indeed, a number of candidates included references to television adverts and speeches, perhaps a result of employing examples studied prior to the exam.

Since many of these texts are usually scripted, such examples were accepted and rewarded accordingly. For question 2a, candidates were reminded to refer to examples of how context affects spoken language choices, which most were able to do successfully. However, there were still a substantial number of candidates who did not provide any wider or further exemplification; instead they treated the stimulus materials as the sole focus of a general textual analysis question, rather than the starting point for an exploration of language in a particular context or as being affected by a particular issue. This meant that they struggled to achieve above band 2 for AO3. Furthermore, a number of candidates tended to provide wider examples with no exploration of the contexts (other than a short statement along the lines of 'X also uses synthetic personalisation') and no actual relevant example. Candidates should provide a short specific example of language used in a particular context, which is then explored in some more detail, including appropriate language terminology and some discussion of meaning in terms of effect or impact. The better responses demonstrated this by including a few examples, which were then explored in a little more depth, as opposed to less successful responses where candidates provided a 'quick reference' at the end of a paragraph, which lacked in discussion of effect and/or context and analysis.

It is also worth remembering that the weighting of **AO1** is double in this question so candidates who use little terminology were unable to access the full mark range. The best responses demonstrated a range of linguistic terminology, where candidates explored the different language levels focusing on the effect of a writer's or speaker's language choices. However, for a significant number of candidates, linguistic terminology is mainly restricted to word classes, which does not allow for a developed and sustained analysis of both the stimulus materials in the questions or the candidates' own examples. There was a lack of precision that prevented some candidates from gaining higher marks. In particular, as has been commented on in previous series, the use of 'phrase' to refer to any stretch of language, rather than its specific syntactic application. There were efforts to use 'noun phrase', 'adjectival phrase', and 'verb phrase', but these were frequently applied incorrectly. Similarly, there were frequent errors of candidates referring to clauses with deontic modal verbs as 'imperatives', as well as frequent errors in identifying adverbial phrases. However, candidates' written expression was generally very accurate.

In both questions 1a and 2a, candidates applied a wide range of linguistic theories and concepts to support their answer for **AO2**, which was very pleasing to see, especially as many candidates did so successfully. However, there were still a number of candidates who appear to apply theories regardless of the stimulus; a number of responses for question 2a featured a rather unhelpful and often irrelevant discussion of gender, which led candidates to speculate about the gender of the speakers in the stimulus transcript. Some candidates overstated the issues of power in this particular transcript; likewise, some candidates in question 1a focused their application of Fairclough / synthetic personalisation merely on the use of the 2nd person pronoun 'you', rather than exploring the wider range of language choices that writers employ to create this effect.

Furthermore, successful responses were able to incorporate discussions of Goffman / Brown & Levinson, Giles' Accommodation Theory, and power / politeness / Lakoff's Politeness Principle in a nuanced manner that demonstrated some real insight of the topic of both questions. Grice's Maxims were also applied in responses to both questions, but a significant number of candidates were unable to apply these to illuminate their discussion of the language.

Presenting theoretical knowledge in a general fashion without applying it to the analysis of the out applying it to the analysis of the stimulus materials or own examples will limit a candidate's ability to produce a successful response.

Q.1 (a) Language and Power

Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate the linguistic features of persuasive written texts, the extract taken from the website of the drink brand Ribena.

The strongest responses were clearly structured, led by the stimulus material and the examples provided by the candidates themselves. Most of these responses detailed the different audiences for this text (such as (grand-)parents, as well as children) and explored how the website's text aimed to create a sense of a relationship with its audience. Concepts such as Fairclough's synthetic personalisation, as well as the issue of shared knowledge and cultural awareness were employed successfully, often in connection with a discussion of the discourse structure of the extract, establishing a 'story'. The strongest responses featured a wide range of language features being discussed, including the use of adjectives, as well as post-modification of noun phrases, discourse structure, neologisms and a range of sentence functions and structures, and even tense usage.

The extract was very accessible to all candidates and most were able to produce some insightful analysis of the stimulus text. The familiarity of candidates with advertisements meant that almost all were successful in discussing language features used to persuade readers. There were also some productive discussions of wider context examples, such as other advertisements. Some, however, appeared to write about pre-learnt examples, which were briefly mentioned in a list-like fashion without much or any analysis or use of linguistic terminology. More successful candidates were able to provide a detailed example (usually a short quote such as a slogan from an advert), which they then proceeded to analyse in a similar fashion to the stimulus material. Other candidates successfully referenced election leaflets, opinion pieces, blog posts and charity websites or leaflets as examples of persuasive written texts.

Many candidates managed to successfully discuss contextual issues in the stimulus material and link these to their discussion of persuasion.

Q.2 (a) Language and Situation

Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate how contexts affect spoken language choices, which allowed them to explore spoken interactions in a wide range of situations, which made it accessible to all candidates.

The examples that candidates provided for this question were all appropriate examples of spoken interactions, focusing mostly on familiar scenarios such as interactions in the classroom, between friends and family, or in other workplace settings, especially between an employee and a superior. The stimulus material consisted of an extract of a conversation between a pilot of a plane with engine problems and Air Traffic Control (ATC), which most candidates were able to make sensible and at times insightful comments on, highlighting the emergency situation and how this particular contextual aspect affected the interaction. For a small number of candidates, the stimulus material's nature led to very productive discussion of examples from other emergency situations, such as telephoning 999.

The strongest responses focused on how this very particular context affected the professional register and stereotyped interactions between ATC and flight crews. Some insightful responses detailed the nature of the communication as taking place over radio, which often led to a constructive discussion of professional language, especially where there are predictable or expected responses, such as between individuals working for the emergency services and their central command posts.

Many responses focused on the difference in power, with most attributing more power to ATC and highlighting how the emergency was diminishing this power. Some insightful discussions featured useful applications of Brown & Levinson / Face theory, but in a number of instances the use of these theories and concepts was not used to illuminate the analysis of the language. Similarly, some successful responses made use of Grice's Maxims, highlighting how the emergency influenced the pilot's flouting of the maxims of relevance and quantity. However, in less successful responses, candidates focused on the maxim of manner or negative face threats with the ATC's perceived use of an apology or mitigation strategy with "sorry". A small, but still significant number of responses featured inappropriate attempts to apply gender theories and concepts to the stimulus materials, which led to unhelpful speculation about the participants' gender and their perceived communicative behaviour.

While most responses, especially the more successful ones, featured a range of language features being discussed, a significant number of responses focused detrimentally on non-fluency features, which did not allow for detailed or insightful comments being made.

Characteristics of successful responses for questions 1a/2a:

- Focus on the question's specific issue or context that allows to select interesting language features in both the stimulus materials and own examples
- Close analysis of the stimulus materials and own examples with accurate linguistic terminology
- Inclusion of wider context examples with (short) quotations which are also closely analysed
- Application of relevant knowledge, concepts, issues, and theories shaped by the question
- Sustained focus on the detail of the question.

Areas for improvement for questions 1a/2a:

- better focus on the essay question; question 1a especially featured many responses where candidates were not discussing **written** persuasive language as specified by the question
- inclusion of examples of wider context
- more detailed discussion of the examples of wider context, beyond merely stating “this particular feature also appears in X”
- covering a wider range of language levels in the analysis of both the stimulus and own examples, moving beyond word class terminology only.

Summary of key points for questions 1a/2a:

- use suggested timings on the front of the question paper
- use of accurate linguistic terminology in a wider language level approach that goes beyond word class labelling
- selective application of linguistic concepts and theories
- knowledge of possible wider context examples for AO3: candidates might consider a variety of potential sources for these, including SAMS, past papers, Teachers’ Guide, etc.

Comments on original writing questions (Q.1 (b) & Q.2 (b))

Whilst technical accuracy and fluency are part of **AO5**, the main focus is on the ability to write a text that engages the target audience, meets the purpose (and/or genre conventions) of the task’s specifications. The vast majority of candidates’ accuracy and fluency were secure. Most candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the relevant genre conventions and particular audience needs, as well as an increasingly confident use of language to create specific effects. The best responses also demonstrated the creation of an individual voice. Some creative responses, especially for question 1b were significantly under the recommended word count and thus self-penalising.

Q.1(b) The question was very accessible to all candidates as it specified a “product review” for a “lifestyle magazine”, which most candidates interpreted as a generic, popular women’s (sometimes men’s) magazine. However, since “lifestyle magazine” is a very general category, including some very specific interests / lifestyles, some candidates wrote reviews for products aimed at a more narrowly defined audience, allowing for personal interest to shape the writing, usually very successfully. Product reviews written for a more generic (women’s) magazine, frequently focused on cosmetics or skincare products. A significant number of candidates produced responses that were much below the recommended word limit (often half or less), frequently as a result of writing extremely glowing reviews, where there was little development of the writing.

While almost all responses included at least some typical stylistic conventions of reviews, weaker responses tended to drift into promotion and thus persuasion, rather than review. Again, a significant number of weaker responses (usually the ones veering into persuasion) tended to be written as product reviews one might find on the websites of online retailers, rather than in a lifestyle magazine. However, candidates were still rewarded for their use of language devices appropriate for a review.

Q.2(b) The range of responses was extremely diverse to this question to write a story in which a character had to solve a problem. Many of the sound, as well as most successful responses were carefully constructed with the nature of the problem only being revealed later in the narrative.

Similarly, the nature of the problems varied from the trivial to the deadly serious. While most candidates produced general literary fiction, some, usually more successful candidates, produced a particular genre of fiction, with crime / detective fiction being a popular choice that was well-suited to the task. Clearly, many if not most of the candidates who chose this question seemed to relish this particular task and produced responses that were a pleasure to read.

Characteristics of successful responses for questions 1b/2b:

- careful planning evident from structure and sustained nature of writing
- close adherence to the parameters of the task
- precise, economical written expression
- clear knowledge and understanding of the particular genre and its stylistic conventions
- a clear sense of the candidate's own voice as a writer becoming evident.

Areas for improvement for questions 1b/2b:

- candidates must read the task carefully in order to ensure that all content is relevant
- technical accuracy is assessed; many responses were not proof-read thoroughly, resulting in issues of poor tense management (especially in the narrative task in 2b) and confusing pronoun usage / anaphoric referencing
- paragraphing still remains an issue, with some candidates not paragraphing at all and issues with paragraphing and punctuating dialogue segments in the narrative.

Summary of key points for questions 1b/2b:

- practise interpreting and planning the writing tasks
- candidates should be discouraged from deliberately "planting" pre-learnt linguistic devices in their responses to b tasks for comment in part c)
- proofreading: focus on areas such as tense management, (anaphoric) referencing, and writing dialogue
- there is advice on practising writing effectively for an audience in the CPD material on the WJEC website.

Comments on commentary tasks (Q.1(c) & Q.2(c))

For this task, **AO3** is the only Assessment Objective, which assesses the analysis of contextual factors, discussion of the construction of meaning and evaluation of the candidates' own writing. Since this task is a linguistic analysis of their own creative writing, it was pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates adopted first person rather than third person references to "the writer".

The strongest responses focused on close contextual analysis of the most interesting and/or specific features of their own writing with effective, short quotes for detailed discussion. These responses also featured a broad, language levels focused analysis with a wide range of accurate linguistic terminology that demonstrated a clear awareness of the links between language features and effects created.

However, many commentaries demonstrated a formulaic approach with effectively numbered paragraphs ("Firstly", "Secondly" etc.) or paragraph topic sentences as: "I used ...", "Next I used ...", and "Then I used ..." etc. Sometimes these commentaries would discuss features that had been explicitly "planted" in the creative piece for the purpose of the commentary, but often in these cases, the deliberately inserted language features were not the most interesting to comment on. Equally, most of the less successful responses focused attention on less interesting language features in task b, such as alliteration, which was also a commonly deliberately inserted feature.

These responses also took a descriptive rather than analytical approach, merely consisting of observations of the creative text with no discussion of the meaning or effect.

Characteristics of successful responses for questions 1c/2c:

- wide range of points from across the language levels
- a clear focus on the strengths of the writing piece, supported by well-selected evidence, presented in brief, embedded quotes
- insightful analysis of how meaning is created and effects achieved
- well-contextualised discussion that demonstrates how specific audiences are addressed, purposes achieved and/or (sub-)genre conventions are applied.

Areas for improvement for questions 1c/2c:

- avoid a pre-prepared formulaic approach and a pre-learnt set of basic features
- avoid listing and feature-spotting
- avoid recounting theory where it is not relevant to the creative writing
- support points with selective evidence from own writing
- use a range of accurate and precise linguistic terminology covering the language levels.

Summary of key points for questions 1c/2c:

- candidates should be encouraged to include points from all language levels
- careful planning of the creative piece in task b will allow candidates to develop a sense of the most effective points to include in the commentary
- a clear focus on the specific features of the creative piece as belonging to a particular genre, being shaped for a specific purpose, and /or being aimed at a specific audience should be encouraged.

Conclusion

Candidates had clearly been prepared for this unit and demonstrated some sound knowledge, both of linguistic features and appropriate theories and issues. There were some genuinely insightful analyses, as well as extremely engaging and entertaining creative pieces, and perceptive commentaries, which were all a pleasure to read.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
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UNIT 3 – LANGUAGE OVER TIME

General Comments

Most candidates had a sound understanding of the features associated with information texts, and some demonstrated sensible understanding of the relationship between the writer and the target audience. It was also good to see that candidates were making a concerted effort to answer the question with a clear focus on contextual factors. There were, however, issues with close reading – of the contextual information provided about the texts and of the texts themselves. In many cases, discussion was broad and engagement with the details was underdeveloped. While most candidates complete both questions, there are a significant number who write such short responses for Question 2 (some under two sides) that their discussion is very limited. In writing under three sides (the minimum suggested length), candidates are limiting the range and depth of their response, and this inevitably affects the mark awarded. Most candidates are now organising their time sensibly for the two questions, but there are still some who write as much (and sometimes more) for Question 1 as they do for Question 2. This uses up valuable time which could be dedicated to careful reading of the texts. It is good to see that far fewer candidates are now misjudging the focus of Question 2, but there are still a significant proportion who are writing about language change with little sense of the texts' meanings. While demonstrating a secure knowledge of historical language features, there is little evidence of engagement with the texts or the question. In such cases, the responses recount knowledge rather than analyse and evaluate the texts. This affects the mark awarded because candidates fail to fulfil the requirements of the AOs – in particular, textual support (AO2) is used to exemplify recounted knowledge rather than as the basis for analysis and evaluation of meaning in context (AO3), links are observational rather than engaged (AO4), and it is difficult for candidates to move beyond labelling of word classes (AO4).

Comments on individual questions/sections

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives are equally weighted with AO1 linked to the short questions and AO2, AO3 and AO4 linked to the extended response.

AO2

Candidates needed to demonstrate an understanding of information texts, with a clear focus on each writer's purpose, their relationship with the target audience and the attitudes they expressed about pirates. Discussion of issues (e.g. status and religious ideologies) needed to be linked directly to the content of the texts. Language change was relevant where points could be tied to meaning (e.g. thematic capitalisation of nouns, adjectives and adverbs).

AO3

Candidates needed to engage with the texts, exploring details and interpreting meaning. Addressing contextual factors was central to the question (e.g. the writers' experiences of piracy; an understanding of how the target audience and purpose shaped linguistic choices; religious references).

AO4

Candidates needed to develop meaningful links between the texts (e.g. target audience, purpose, tenor, attitudes to pirates, stereotypes, stylistic approach), and to select and apply a range of appropriate terminology. Terminology needed to be selected from across the language levels (rather than just word classes) and used purposefully to underpin discussion (rather than as a means of labelling).

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (short questions)

The approach to the short questions is now well established and many candidates successfully demonstrated their knowledge through precise labelling and concise descriptions. Understanding of key language change features was often secure, but there continue to be problems in identifying basic word classes. Reminders that Question 1 can be answered in under a page are useful to ensure that, even when under pressure in the exam, candidates remember to allocate their time wisely.

- (a) This question tests knowledge of word classes and archaic spelling patterns. There are 3 marks for identifying the word forms, and 3 marks for an appropriate explanation of the linguistic variation in each case.

Most candidates accurately identified the language change features and described the variations succinctly (u/v interchange; single consonant where PDE uses double; doubling of consonant). Where marks were lost, it was invariably for omission of any word class term or for inaccurate labelling. The identification of the adverb *cheerfully* caused most problems with many describing it as an adjective.

The spelling of consonant is frequently wrong ('constanant', 'constinant', 'consont', 'constant') and candidates would be well advised to learn it.

- (b) This question tests knowledge of word classes, language variation and language change concepts. There are 2 marks for identifying the word forms, and 2 marks for two distinct points explaining language change in relation to the examples. Candidates cannot be rewarded for a repeated point.

With *yt/it*, most candidates were able to make sensible points about spelling inconsistency, the lack of standardisation, the nature of spelling before the publication of Johnson's 1755 dictionary, or the *i/y* interchange. There was less certainty about identifying the examples as pronouns, with many candidates either not attempting to label the word class or getting it wrong.

With *cruise*, many candidates mistakenly identified the word as a verb rather than as a noun. It is important to remind candidates to check words in context so that they can make informed decisions about word class.

Useful discussions of historical variation included references to spelling linked to pronunciation and to changes in meaning over time (here, narrowing – with candidates using the footnote to demonstrate semantic/cultural change). References to PDE spelling were also accepted.

- (c) This question tests knowledge of word classes, phrases, clauses and archaic grammatical features. There are 2 marks for identifying the form, and 2 marks for an appropriate explanation of commonly occurring EME features.

In each series, candidates find this question difficult – perhaps because of the precision required. To gain the marks ascribed to form, they needed to describe *I know not* as a **negative verb** (phrase) or as a **negative declarative**; and *dareth* as a **third person singular present tense verb** (the mark was also awarded for a reference to either present tense or third person singular). The other marks were awarded for a point that showed understanding of the archaic features. For the negative, candidates successfully referenced the absence of the dummy auxiliary *do*, the positioning of the adverb (negator) after the lexical verb where PDE puts it before, or provided an accurate PDE version ('I do not know'/'I don't know'). It is not, however, accurate to say there is an inversion of the subject and verb. For the verb, candidates sensibly described the replacement of the southern *-eth* inflection with the northern *-s*, referenced the fact that the inflection is obsolete, or provided an accurate PDE version ('dares').

- (d) This question tests the candidate's ability to identify and describe EME grammatical structures and punctuation patterns. There are 3 marks for identifying distinctive EME usage and 3 marks for selecting and describing appropriate examples. Where more than three points are made, the three best examples are marked.

Candidates find this part of Question 1 challenging – perhaps because the question tests higher order skills with candidates required to find the examples themselves and to move beyond word classes to more complicated grammatical structures. In each series, the EME features in the extracts are very similar (regardless of genre), but there is a significant tendency for candidates to make broad points with an underdeveloped linguistic approach. Successful responses are analytical rather than observational, and clearly demonstrate evidence of language study.

Candidates should be reminded that discussion of EME spelling is not relevant in part (d). Some candidates lost a significant proportion of the marks because their points were based on orthography.

Almost all candidates cited random capitalisation with an appropriate example to demonstrate its thematic function (for instance, nouns such as *Death*, *Bloode*, *Slaues* and the adjective *Daryng*). It is important to remind candidates that they need to distinguish between PDE use for proper nouns and EME usage – citing *Highnes* was not an appropriate example since we still capitalise titles.

Other frequently occurring responses included sensible references to the compounding of the clause *methinketh*; the absence of a possessive apostrophe in the noun phrase *your Majestys better judgement*; the use of the subjunctive in conditional clauses such as *vnless yt be*; and the use of the relative pronoun *which* to refer to people.

References to long, multi-clausal sentences or to compound-complex sentences were only awarded marks where they were accompanied by textual support demonstrating clauses and where there were references to specific clauses (e.g. a main clause + a relative clause). Copying down the beginning and end of a sentence, often with no verbs, does not show understanding of EME sentence structure (e.g. “Another point that can be made is the use of overly long complex sentences. The sentences have been split into multiple clauses using mostly commas and two colons “Now synce ... of Galley-Slaues”).

Observations about ‘incorrect’ use of commas and colons were not credited since they rarely used appropriate terminology and were often based on a false premise. Oxford commas (used before ‘and’ where sentences contain more than one co-ordinating conjunction, or where sections of a sentence need to be clarified), for instance, are not distinctive to EME; the frequent use of commas in EME texts to distinguish between sequences of clauses is not an example of ‘comma splicing’ (the use of a comma instead of a full stop between main clauses). Points recognising the distinctive EME use of colons before co-ordinating conjunctions, however, were sensible. Candidates should be reminded that they are required to support their point and label their example using appropriate terminology.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- concise responses with very focused content
- precise and accurate linguistic labelling of examples
- clearly expressed descriptions of distinctive EME features
- an analytical (rather than an observational) approach.

Areas for improvement:

- the focus of part (d) responses
- the ability to identify and accurately describe word classes
- concise descriptions of EME language change features.

Q.2 (essay)

This question tests the candidate's ability to analyse and evaluate the content and meaning of the texts in context, to establish meaningful connections between the texts, and to apply knowledge of relevant concepts and issues in order to explore the writers' language choices.

Most candidates focused successfully on answering the question, which seemed to be accessible to candidates at all levels in spite of the primary focus being on 'contextual factors' rather than genre this year. Where there was evidence of close reading combined with the application of knowledge, responses were able to demonstrate high order skills.

The period texts are always challenging, but the rubric offers candidates a framework for reading them, and Text C can offer a more straightforward route into the question. For a number of candidates, this is perhaps why they start with an analysis of the most modern extract.

Candidates needed to consider three extracts from information texts about pirates written at different times, focusing on who was writing, the target audience and the purpose of each text. It was good to see many candidates engaging with the presentation of pirates, recognising where stereotypes were being used and exploring attitudes in context. In the more successful responses, there was a clear understanding that the writer of Text A was offering the King information about the best ways to stop piracy; the writer of Text B was dramatising the life of Blackbeard to thrill readers; and the writer of Text C was simplifying and sanitising information about pirates in Port Royal for children. Being able to provide a summary of the content in this way enabled candidates to engage more fully with the details and the meaning of each text. Where this did not happen, responses could have been about any information texts – for instance, some wrote for more than a page on Text B without mentioning Blackbeard.

There were some interesting connections established between the texts exploring the effects of different target audiences, the status of the writers, changes in tenor, stereotypical references to drunkenness, religious references (or their absence), the use of culturally relevant analogies, references to punishments, and attitudes to pirates. These links gave candidates the opportunity to explore the texts meaningfully. While focusing on the conventions of the genre is useful, topic sentences that did little more than list feature after feature limited the range of discussion (e.g. 'A common feature in information texts is ... Another common feature is ...'). A similar effect was created where an almost narrative approach was adopted (e.g. 'Text A says ... Then it says ...'). In each case, the approach prevented candidates engaging with meaning.

Given the question focus on contextual factors, it was very important that candidates read the rubric information about the texts carefully. In each case, key information was provided to help candidates. Where they recognised the audience, the purpose and the position of the writer, there was some effective discussion exploring attitudes as a direct result of the contextual factors. Those who failed to recognise the very specific target audiences of Texts A (King James) and C (children) produced broad responses because they did not take account of linguistic choices in the light of the intended readers. Generalisations about purpose – that all three texts were intended to 'inform and entertain' – also lacked subtlety.

More careful readers were able to recognise the common emphasis on informing while also distinguishing between the entertainment value of Texts B and C, and the advisory purpose of Text A. Similarly, where candidates did not note that the writer of Text A had been a pirate himself, that Text B was a best-seller or that Text C was illustrated, it closed off fruitful avenues of exploration. In the more successful responses, candidates were well aware of these differences, exploring Mainwaring's status in relation to his reader and his tentative recommendations in Text A, the sensational presentation of Blackbeard as a larger-than-life figure in Text B, and the history-as-narrative approach of Text C.

Most candidates managed to explore attitudes to pirates. They recognised differences emerging according to the cultural relevance of pirates at the time of publication: Texts A and B (written when pirates were a current threat) were seen to present them as a force to be feared while Text C (written retrospectively at a considerable distance) was seen to adopt a more detached tone. There was some appropriate selection of textual support to underpin discussion with candidates recognising the importance of adjectives and adverbs in creating attitude.

In each text, there was some challenge in pinning down the points of view – a discriminating factor requiring higher level reading skills. In Text A, as well as the emphasis on violence, careful readers recognised Mainwaring's underlying admiration for the men alongside whom he had worked. There was some misreading of the verb *pillage*, however, with candidates associating it with the pirates rather than the naval officers. In Text B, as well as the emphasis on Blackbeard as an awe-inspiring character, careful readers recognised the writer's moral judgement. There was some misreading of lines 12-16, however, with candidates missing the prepositional phrase *In the Commonwealth of Pyrates* and assuming that the writer admired pirates. In Text C, as well as the emphasis on their notoriety (in the superlatives *Best-Ever*, *most famous*, *best-known*), careful readers recognised the disapproving attitude emerging in some of the modifiers. There was some misreading of lines 17-18, with candidates missing the distancing function of the reporting verb *claimed* and the passive voice (*was being punished*) and suggesting that the writer himself was making a moral judgement.

There were still a significant number of responses where description of language change features replaced meaningful engagement – either throughout the whole essay or in substantial parts of it. While demonstrating secure knowledge, broad observations about spelling, key linguistic publications, and references to the examples cited in parts (a) to (d) prevented candidates from answering the question. Unless references to language change are directly tied to the texts, they lead candidates away from the task (here, a close reading of information texts about pirates).

It is worth reminding candidates that they need to use a range of appropriate terminology to support their discussion of the texts – linguistic knowledge is an integral part of unseen analysis. This should not, however, result in lists of terms that do not support the point being made. Labelling of word classes per se does not fulfil the AO4 criteria that discussion should be 'informed'; by the use of linguistic terminology.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- well-shaped essay responses that clearly address the question
- discussion of contextual features linked directly to content and meaning
- an explicit focus on genre
- engagement with details of the texts
- the use of relevant terminology to underpin points made.

Areas for improvement:

- close reading of the texts
- interpretation of examples cited
- the use of a wider range of terminology (beyond basic word class labelling)
- more careful framing of the essay and more varied topic sentences
- technical accuracy and fluency of expression.

Summary of key points

- responses should be sufficiently developed, addressing an appropriate range of points and exploring all three texts
- explicit references to the content should form the basis for engagement with meaning
- grammar teaching needs to address all the language levels.

Conclusion

Candidates had clearly been well prepared, and their knowledge of language change was sound. Where candidates were less successful, it was often because this knowledge was being recounted rather than applied, and because their responses were broad with little sense of the texts' details. There was evidence, however, of some distinctive and engaged responses with candidates exploring the texts and commenting with insight on the presentation of pirates in different contexts.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2019

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 4 - SPOKEN TEXTS AND CREATIVE RE-CASTING

General Comments

General Comments

Candidates seemed to be generally well prepared for this unit. Candidates often showed good understanding of the assessment objectives and general awareness of what was required of them in both questions. In Section A, the texts seemed accessible to candidates of all levels with clear understanding and analysis shown, particularly in regard to Text A which took place in a school setting. Most candidates were able to write at considerable length covering a wide range of points in reasonable depth.

In Section B, candidates were able to demonstrate sound awareness of genre, audience and purpose. The stronger responses were often original and engaging showing imagination and flair. As last year, Section B responses were often substantially shorter than Section A. It is important to remember that there are equal marks for the two sections. It was clear that some, more successful, candidates had spent some time planning their responses with careful consideration of both structural and linguistic choices.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: ANALYSING SPOKEN LANGUAGE

These texts were examples of difficult situations with unequal balance of power. Text A takes place in a school and Text B involves the police. Most candidates were able to discuss issues in relation to how the participants interacted or dominated the conversations; how authoritative figures used language to assert power; issues in relation to specific occupations; dialect features of interest; levels of formality and how the participants aired their views and opinions. Many seemed familiar with the style of conversation in Text A and were able to discuss the ways Miss Bland tried to persuade the boys to improve their behaviour. Stronger candidates also noted the way in which her language changed when talking to the boys in relation to her language when talking to the camera directly and considered the dual audience.

In Text B, many identified the ways Rhino managed the direction of the conversation when talking to the upset Post Office worker and how he tried to diffuse tension with humour. Stronger candidates also explored how language choices reflected the working partnership of the police officers and suggested close familiarity between them.

Last year, some candidates focused attention on one text to the detriment of the other; this year responses seemed more balanced in the candidates' handling of the material although some did favour Text A.

AO1

The majority of candidates seemed well prepared for analysing a transcript. The most successful responses were able to precisely label techniques and discuss their effects in detail with relevant and frequent linking to the question. All candidates were able to use some terminology. As last year, some candidates only used spoken terms and there were some who engaged in feature-spotting with minimal consideration of language effect. Less successful candidates sometimes explained what happened in the texts with minimal analytical discussion. The strongest candidates, however, used a wide and sophisticated range of terminology incorporating both elements of linguistic precision and then thoroughly analysed the effects and reasons for use. Most responses showed good general written accuracy.

AO2

Most candidates were aware of conversational features between teachers and students and could discuss how the teacher directed the conversation and managed student responses. Many candidates discussed how the use of language from the person with occupational power controlled the responses of the less powerful and how they were effectively managed into submission in various ways. Some commented on how the boys were reduced to minimal responses, but their attitudes and behaviour seemed unlikely to change as they were not really engaged or invested in the conversation they were having.

In comparison to last year, more candidates were able to structure responses in an individualised way focusing on key areas of interest to the specific transcripts rather than use of a formulaic structure. Some weaker responses were poorly structured with focus on small details and feature-spotting rather than exploring the heart of conversations and nature of the relationships between speakers. Many were aware how regional accent played a part in the success of relationships; some discussed how Miss Bland used more regional slang and idiomatic expression to converge with the boys and help them to understand her point of view. Others reflected on the nature of the police obviously coming from the same area as the criminals and how their accent and dialect helped to gain trust in their community. There was also productive discussion on how the police try to keep the topic on track and manage high emotional responses. Some candidates included effective discussion of theoretical approaches, but often this area was not addressed or was discussed in a very superficial way without linking to textual detail. As suggested last year, a light-touch approach is all that is required in terms of theoretical discussion and it should only be to augment the response, rather than lead it.

AO3

Most candidates were able to discuss contextual issues in some kind of meaningful way. There were some interesting comments on the nature of this genre of television show, particularly with focus on the dual audience and how some of the participants seemed more or less aware of cameras at various points. Some candidates discussed occupational language and how those in positions of power use language to control others. Some looked at how they strategically use accommodation to aid their purposes. Some candidates also looked at strategies the less powerful adopt when under pressure.

There was often productive discussion about how accent and dialect can form the basis of individual identity. Some candidates did not focus enough attention on contextual detail and its importance on how this affects the overall communication.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- engagement with issues and concepts relevant to the transcripts provided
- precise and accurate linguistic labelling of examples and discussion of their effects with relevant and frequent linking to the question
- use of theory augments the response, rather than drives it.

Areas for improvement:

- avoid feature-spotting; always discuss and analyse specific language choices
- include word class terms as well as spoken language terms
- include a range of relevant theoretical ideas and link to specific text detail.

SECTION B: CREATIVE RE-CASTING

The majority of candidates showed understanding of the text type. The task was to write an online guide for teenagers about the best ways to deal with difficult situations involving authority figures. This task was accessible, and candidates were able to engage in the task using appropriate advisory features. There were some issues with tone amongst less successful candidates, where they had written in an overly informal style with very basic vocabulary which became self-limiting. Some struggled to develop ideas within their responses. Candidates seemed less focused on graphology and layout features than they were last year and there was closer focus on appropriate language features, which was pleasing to note. More successful candidate responses demonstrated articulate and lively expression with a strong and authoritative personal voice.

AO2

The majority of candidates showed awareness of the appropriate genre. Higher scoring candidates made sensible choices in terms of structuring the guide. There was sometimes use of “Top Tips” to aid the structure and content. This was usually effective. Some candidates focused on different situational examples as a structural device. Less effective were attempts to discuss issues with overuse of personal anecdote. Some candidates struggled to extend and develop ideas and content was often very thin. Weaker responses often lost sight of the task and were more persuasive or descriptive in nature than informative and advisory. The majority of candidates showed understanding of purpose and were able to include a range of effective linguistic techniques in their responses.

AO5

Most candidates showed awareness of genre. Some wrote it as an article, others as a blog. Some misunderstood the task and became over focused on unrelated content, such as advertising and affiliate links on the guide page. Many employed a range of appropriate techniques such as imperatives, conditionals and modal verbs. Stronger responses had a strong and engaging personal voice and made use of thoughtful figurative devices to respond with confidence and individuality. There was wide use of anecdote and some used teenage dialect phrases and non-standard English choices intentionally to create an engaging tone. Stronger responses included careful vocabulary choices and linguistic devices to appeal to the target audience. The quality of some written responses was somewhat basic with similar sentence types and lengths giving a quite monotonous feel.

More successful candidates varied sentence construction to aid pace and passion to the piece. Humour was sometimes used to engage the target audience. The stronger responses often created a credible writing persona and worked to develop a rapport with the reader.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- sustained focus on the purpose, genre and audience of the task, making well-judged linguistic choices
- clear sense of voice used to engage the reader
- varied, well-controlled sentences in an organised text
- sustained writing in which ideas are fully developed and linguistically realised.

Areas for improvement:

- be clear about the focus and requirements of the task before starting
- consider how structural effects can enhance the overall effectiveness of a response
- build sophisticated vocabulary choices into the response whatever the target audience
- manage time for the whole paper to reflect the weighting of the two tasks and provide sufficient time for a developed response to Section B
- develop engaging openings to creative tasks.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
General Certificate of Education
Summer 2019
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 5 – LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

General Comments

There were very few problems with assessment this year with only a small number of centres having their marks adjusted. Where this did occur it was generally due to very generic investigations with little or no reference to identity, even in an implicit way. The specification states that the NEA *is designed to engage learners with the theme of language and identity*. It is important that centres encourage all their candidates to select an aspect of language study of personal interest to them, however they do have a responsibility to guide and advise their candidates regarding adherence to the specifications. Often this involves helping candidates to frame the focus on language and identity effectively in their investigation titles and there was evidence of much good work being done in this respect. As has been mentioned in previous reports, including the word ‘identity’ in titles makes the focus on this central theme explicit. Candidates should produce titles that clearly show how language and identity will be at the centre of their investigations.

It was pleasing to note that fewer candidates used film scripts and novels as data for their investigations, which can prove problematic as candidates fail to investigate the writers’ intentions when creating identities for their constructed characters. It was apparent that a number of candidates who had used such data needed much more specific guidance, as their studies suggested that the characters themselves were making decisions regarding language and identity. It might be helpful if candidates could suggest that characters’ identities are portrayed or presented in a certain way by the language choices of the writers. A small number of candidates chose to study aspects of child language development, or texts from different periods linked by genre. Both these language areas are covered elsewhere in the specification and are not appropriate for studies examining language and identity. There were also some instances of candidates using translated texts as part of their data. Candidates should be advised that for the English Language qualification any texts used should have been originally written in English. In addition some centres seemed to be using the legacy specification, with candidates stating that their chosen language area was The Language of Power.

Some candidates, especially those studying advertising, wasted time analysing and discussing images. They need to be reminded that this type of analysis is not rewarded in English Language. There might be some comments to be made about graphology or typography but only advertising copy should be used as data. Finally, the most successful investigations had a strong linguistic focus throughout; purposefully embedded theory, which was relevant to the area of study; a coherent, academic style; accurate references to texts and sources supplied within a bibliography; and an explicit focus on the main theme of language and identity.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Assessment Objectives

Most centres demonstrated a good understanding of the AOs, shown by their detailed summative comments, but it was apparent this year that **AO1b** and **AO1c** are being over-rewarded at times. In order to achieve Band 5 for **AO1b**, a candidate must use not just a range but a **wide** range of terminology throughout. To achieve Band 5 for **AO1c** there must be **sophisticated** rather than effective organisation. Many candidates using sustained and apt terminology with fluent and accurate expression are being placed incorrectly in the highest band.

In order to score highly for **AO1a** a candidate must outline in the opening paragraphs what area of language and identity is being analysed. There should be no sense that conclusions have already been reached at this point. The candidate must then develop their argument throughout their investigation using an appropriate approach, logical organisation and clear topic sentences.

Candidates are required to demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues to score highly for **AO2**. This requires them to apply their knowledge to develop their argument. This should be supported by textual reference, and the application of theory if relevant. For **AO3**, candidates should explore language choices and their impact in order to make judgements based on the relevant data selected. There must be an understanding of how contextual factors shape meaning and affect linguistic choices. A candidate must demonstrate their ability to analyse and evaluate the content and meaning of their chosen data in context with reference to production and reception.

To support centres with the internal assessment of the NEA, WJEC has produced standardisation material that is available on the WJEC secure website.

The Four Language Areas

1. Language and Self-representation

This was the least popular choice this year but even the less successful candidates were able to discuss how context affects their language choices albeit with limited analysis. The higher scoring candidates were able to extend this by analysing how they present different identities depending upon audience and purpose. Linguistic theory was generally used sensibly with politeness strategies proving a popular option; Goffman's Face theory was referred to by many candidates.

An increasing number of candidates chose a multi-modal approach looking not only at how they use written and spoken language but also their use of electronic media and social networking. It was good to see that only a tiny minority of candidates misinterpreted self-representation this year.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the way I construct my **identity** using communication strategies in both verbal and non-verbal (e-communication) interactions.*

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the influence context has upon language use in the projection of my **identity** during 24 hours of written and spoken communication.*

Two examples of less focused titles:

- *Using relevant data, analyse and investigate how my idiolect changes to suit my audience.*
- *Using relevant data, investigate how my communication changes through the day.*

2. Language and Gender

This was by far the most popular choice this year. There was a huge range of fascinating and engaging studies with many candidates turning to literature to provide data. These studies worked well when the candidates made clear that they were investigating the intentions of the writer rather than the characters' interaction. A sizeable minority of candidates used their own primary data. These were successful when informed by relevant theory. Throughout the cohort, there was an over reliance on Lakoff to the detriment of other gender theorists. Candidates might like to consider using O'Barr and Atkins or Beattie, both of whom question the findings of more established theorists. Candidates are still using terms such as stereotyping and representation instead of identity, which often results in generic studies. Concentrating upon one gender linked to language choices avoids merely presenting gender differences. A minority of centres are still allowing their candidates to use Disney films as data. These studies often lack the necessary scope required for an A level investigation and are therefore self-penalising.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the language choices made by female contestants in The Apprentice. Do their language choices conform to ideas of female **identity**?*
- *Using relevant data, analyse and investigate how female **identities** are portrayed by the writers of the contemporary television series Sherlock.*

Two examples of less focused titles:

- *An investigation into the way sexist language is portrayed towards transgender people in the LGBT community.*
- *Feminism in language.*

3. Language and Culture

There was a clear sense in this area that candidates had been allowed to follow their own interests and this resulted in many fascinating and diverse studies. It was good to recognise that candidates are using their own experiences to engage with identity and language.

Investigation topics included: religion, sport, gaming, literature, politics, mental illness and criminality.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *How is language used to establish the **identities** of South Asian characters in Western movies?*
- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the ways in which speakers use rhetoric to create a shared **identity** with the audience.*

Two examples of less focused titles:

- *A comparison of Theresa May's and Jeremy Corbyn's use of persuasive language in speeches about Brexit.*
- *How do football managers alter their use of language depending on their relationship with the media?*

4. Language and Diversity

The investigations in this language area tended to have a definite focus on language choices and identity, and provided some of the most successful work. Song lyrics were overwhelmingly the most popular form of data with candidates able to interrogate language to reveal the intentions of the writer. Grime and rap both provided fruitful material for candidates to work with. Other candidates investigated dialect and accent often linked to comedians, who choose to present a specific identity when performing publicly. The less successful investigations used stereotyping to replace identity and often produced studies that offered little in the way of originality.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- a clear focus on language and identity
- a range of sustained apt terminology
- a well organised study with topic sentences used throughout
- well-embedded linguistic theory used to inform the investigation
- an understanding of how contextual factors are associated with the construction of meaning
- a familiarity with the assessment objectives and their descriptors.

Areas of improvement:

- a knowledge of genre
- a clearly defined hypothesis closely linked to language and identity
- the selection of concepts and issues relevant to the investigation
- analysis of data rather than description
- the use of data that provides enough breadth and depth for an A level investigation.

Summary of key points: key considerations for centres:

- the main theme of language and identity must be a focus for investigations
- theory must be used to inform rather than drive the investigation
- language and self-representation must be an investigation into the learner's own language choices
- investigations covering fictional genres can be successful but can be often problematic
- when mentioning linguistic research or theories encourage candidates to use contemporary work as well as older studies

- ensure that all candidates understand the requirements of the AOs
- replace terms such as stereotyping, ideology, representation and bias with identity
- remind candidates that analysing images is not rewarded in English Language
- avoid child acquisition of language and language over time as topics for investigations.

Conclusion

My team of moderators and I would like to congratulate centres for their professionalism and efficient administration. There were very few issues this year and many examples of good practice. Without the dedication of teaching staff, it is unlikely that candidates would be able to reach their full potential. The candidates themselves should also be congratulated for the hours of hard work that they too invest in producing their often highly original investigations.



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