



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE (NEW)
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2017

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**WJEC
GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (New)**

Summer 2017

UNIT 1

Candidates were generally well prepared for this unit. Most were able to demonstrate a reasonably sound understanding of the assessment objectives; it is encouraging to note that some of the issues raised in last year's report, surrounding candidates' ability to make purposeful connections for AO4 in Section A, have been addressed by centres, on the whole. The choice of texts proved accessible, stretching and challenging the more able candidates, at the same time as giving the less able candidates a solid base from which to work.

Section A: Analysing Language

Candidates were asked to analyse three texts with differing contexts; the unifying theme of the tasks set was to analyse how language was used in each text to explore the relationship between present and future events. Text A was an extract from a 19th century novel, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, in which the novel's protagonist, Ebenezer Scrooge, encounters the Ghost of Christmas Future and considers what his future life will be like if he continues to be mean-spirited. Text B was a blog entitled *Creative Ideas for Starving Artists*. This text advised artists and dreamers to cease "living in the subjunctive mode", a mode of being which the writer views as synonymous with wishful thinking. The final text was a short extract from a magazine article reviewing an event called "The Future Is Here". This scientific event was organised by the Smithsonian Institution, a group of American museums and research centres. Whilst all three texts tackled concepts surrounding future events, their audiences and purposes varied significantly.

Most candidates showed an ability to produce sensible discussions on how the three texts portrayed the ways in which future events are shaped by present actions. The varied nature of the contexts of the three texts enabled candidates to discuss how the purpose of each text informed the distinctive use of language for the writer's audience. Stronger candidates were able to tease out subtle contextual similarities and differences (for AO3 and AO4), such as the fact that in Text A and Text B, future events were represented as being very much the consequence of current actions and behaviour, whilst in Text C, the future was represented not as being subject to the present, but very much of the present, i.e. already happening. By contrast, weaker candidates tended to latch on to the thematic connections between the texts (discussions of the future) without securely grounding those connections in the specific contexts and consequent use of language.

As with last year's examination, successful candidates were able to achieve the top marks by approaching this section using a variety of methods, all of which were sensible. For example, some candidates chose to write a detailed exploration of how in Text A a remorseful Scrooge is desperate for reassurance that his past actions will not make certain a horrible future, before moving on to discuss how Text B by contrast focused on enjoining readers to avoid obsessing over what has passed to instead live in the present moment, taking action now to create your own future. Stronger candidates were then able to examine how in Text C, language was used to celebrate the incredible scientific advances of the recent past and to establish clear connections between those advances and the bright future on the horizon in the scientific world. By contrast, other strong candidates adopted an approach of interweaving discussions of how all three texts tackled the concept of conditionality of events, and the relationship between past, present and future actions. Weaker candidates struggled to tease out the aforementioned connections, and instead tended to produce superficial discussions on audience and purpose, without anchoring such discussions in the specific linguistic evidence.

Many candidates were able to identify specific language features in each text. There was much fertile discussion, for example, of the emotive language used in Text A and Text B, such as the pre-modified noun phrase "neglected grave" in Text A and the pre-modified noun phrase "latent regret" in Text B. This discussion was sensibly contrasted with the more scientific language in Text C, illustrated by the abstract nouns "genomics" and "geo-engineering". The most able candidates produced some insightful discussion of the relationship between the differing use of grammatical tense in the three texts and the presentation of the concepts of past, present and future. In other words, these candidates made sophisticated points about how the imperative mood in Text A reflected Scrooge's pleading tone ("hear me" and "answer me"); candidates examined this alongside Dickens' use of conditional clauses, which reflected the contingent nature of future events, for example "if persevered with...". They compared this use of grammatical mood with that in Text B, where imperatives ("Get on with it!") also featured, but noted that rather than the resulting tone being one of pleading it was one of jolting the audience into action. Finally, they noted that the use of the present tense in the title of the event described in Text C ("The Future Is Here") was indicative of the idea that there is less conditionality and uncertainty about the scientific future, as it is already taking place in the present time.

Weaker candidates understandably struggled to articulate such sophisticated links between grammar and meaning, and instead in some cases latched on to feature spotting. Some of these candidates resorted to over-exploring Text A's literary qualities at the expense of linguistic analysis. It would be prudent to remind candidates that they should refrain from meaningless feature spotting. There was some confusion between syndetic and asyndetic lists, as well as some generalisation about Text B's use of colloquialisms; weaker candidates tended to miss the subtleties of tone because even though Text B in particular did indeed adopt some colloquialisms, the overall tone was not colloquial.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Sustained engagement with all three texts
- Connections established and sustained throughout
- A sophisticated method which enables candidates to craft their discussion
- Frequent and relevant use of correct terminology, which is integrated into a sound discussion of the three texts and their contexts

Areas for improvement

- Avoid feature spotting
- Take into account the texts specific contexts when constructing discussions
- For connections, consider similarities and differences
- Avoid overly lengthy introductory paragraphs; proceed briskly to analysing the textual evidence

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Texts should always be read within their contexts and production and reception
- Connections must be sustained throughout the discussion
- Analysis must be supported by purposeful selection and relevant linguistic terminology

Section B: Contemporary English

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 to responses in this section.

Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate the ways in which writers use language in YouTube comments. They were given an online thread of comments responding to a video clip from *BBC Stargazing Live*, posted online. *Stargazing Live* covered a rocket launch, where British astronaut Tim Peake and his Russian colleagues set off for the International Space Station in December 2015. The comments in the data expressed a variety of attitudes and opinions towards the clip.

On the whole, candidates demonstrated a secure awareness of how contextual factors shaped the construction of meaning for AO3. In particular, candidates were secure in considering how the immediacy of events and the international platform of YouTube affected the commenters' language choices. It was also encouraging to see that candidates considered the impact of the medium (YouTube) and genre (comment thread) for AO2, and in some cases this led to fruitful discussion of the conventions of language used in social media, and in particular the acceptability of non-standard grammar in that medium (AO2). It is worth reminding centres that concepts under AO2 include exactly that discussion of grammatical issues, relevant to the medium and genre.

Some stronger candidates adopted sophisticated methods in approaching the task. For example, they grouped the individual posts in the comment thread according to contexts and attitudes. Centres are also well advised to point out to candidates that in order to demonstrate concise or even apt textual selection, the more successful candidates were able to take a thematic approach to the texts, making points that encompassed discussion of a range of the YouTube comments, whereas weaker candidates tended to take a text by text approach, discussing issues in isolation. Successful responses analysed the skepticism of the conspiracy theorists (Text 1 and Text 2), and juxtaposed that with the more celebratory tone adopted in Text 4 and Text 5. These candidates often then proceeded to examine how the writers' nationalities may have affected their use of language, and engaged with the language features of Text 3, the Russian commenter, and Text 6, the American citizen. Such perceptive considerations of contexts and medium were rewarded with the higher marks.

Like last year, it is again worth reminding centres that selection of textual support is essential in this section. Some weaker responses presented a list of features associated with YouTube comments, without illustrating their points with evidence from the data in front of them. While it is useful to bring in a mental list of expectations associated with the genre, candidates must very quickly be able to relate those genre conventions to the specifics of the data in front of them, engaging with the specific issues thrown up by the texts themselves.

As with last year, more able candidates successfully engaged with the subtexts of the data. They probed purposefully the construction of a cynical attitude in Texts 1 and 2 by examining specific linguistic features, such as the blended nouns “astrobollox” and “Geoshifter”. Some candidates analysed the more philosophical pragmatics of Text 5, where the determiner “our” signified the ways in which the impact of the rocket launch affected not only the current generation but the future of humanity also. The most able made valid points about the use of scientific language in Text 1, such as the abstract noun “acceleration” in Text 1, commenting on how its pragmatics are to establish the credibility and legitimacy of the conspiracy theory. Most candidates examined the multi-modal nature of the data, and made sensible points about linguistic features designed to mimic speech, such as the interjection, use of capitalisation and deixis in Text 4. Only the most successful responses commented on Text 3’s lack of such features, and its use of standard grammar as a reflection of the possible fact that the Russian observer was perhaps not as familiar with the conventions of written English on such social media platforms as are native speakers.

Finally, it is always worth reminding centres that in preparing candidates for this examination they should draw attention to how their written responses benefit from using linguistic terminology to label their selection, such as, for example, adjective, noun, noun phrase; it seems that some candidates had abandoned the use of such terminology when exploring the issues presented by the YouTube comments.

On the whole, the data provided opportunities for some often insightful and imaginative exploration of the pragmatics surrounding the rocket launch.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Thematic approach to texts, grouping them according to pragmatics and context
- Establish similarities and differences between the data
- Use frequent linguistic terminology, including a range of terms relevant to 21st century English
- Supporting the discussion with purposeful selection of textual evidence
- Strong awareness of genre conventions and a discussion of how these conventions are illustrated or flouted by the data

Areas for improvement

- Avoid feature spotting
- Take into account the pragmatics of the data when constructing discussions
- Consider a thematic approach to the data
- Avoid beginning responses with lengthy prepared discussions of genre features which are not connected to the specific data under discussion

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Pre-planned discussions of genre do not lend themselves to incisive responses to the specifics of the texts under discussion
- A consideration of context is crucial in this section
- Candidates are encouraged to underpin their discussion with precise linguistic terminology which encompasses basic terms (e.g. word classes, phrases, clauses), as well as terms relevant to 21st century English (e.g. acronyms, clipping, capitalisation)

**WJEC
GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (New)**

Summer 2017

UNIT 2

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for this unit. Their essays showed a mostly sound understanding of the assessment objectives and topic areas: Language and Power and Language and Situation. The essays and stimulus material enabled strong candidates to obtain the higher marks, whilst giving enough opportunities for less capable candidates to construct often sensible responses. Candidates clearly enjoyed the creative writing tasks.

Question 2 proved to be the more popular option with candidates.

Assessment Objectives for the essays (1a and 2a)

Most candidates used a wide range of accurate linguistic terminology to analyse the examples and their own supporting examples; however, it is worth remembering that the weighting of AO1 is double in this question so those candidates who used very little terminology could not access the full mark range.

Candidates who did not use other contexts from their own experience struggled to get above band 2 for AO3.

Most candidates were able to use a wide range of theories (AO2) to support their answer, but there were some weaknesses in this area.

There was an over-reliance on Grice's maxims. Grice is a speech theory and the texts presented were written. Several other theories had clearly been taught well – Lakoff's politeness theory, Brown and Levinson, face theory, but, unfortunately, all these theories are connected with spoken language. Some of the ideas behind the theories - relevance, clarity, concision - could have been discussed but not attributed to Grice. I would recommend teaching Grice with a light touch as it can be over-applied even when analysing a speech question.

It is worth remembering that AO2 is worth 10 marks and covers concepts (formality of language, status of the document) as well as theories so it is important to keep a balance between analysis of the example, candidates' own examples, and theories. It is important to use theories to illuminate the example alongside analysed examples using terminology in order to cover all Assessment Objectives.

Question 1a) Language and Power

Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate the linguistic devices used in formal written English to communicate clearly without ambiguity. It was clearly stated that they should use examples from the extract and **their own knowledge** to answer the question. The extract was from a last will and testament.

Good responses were characterised by a clear essay structure. Therefore, essays with an introduction, which discussed the idea of clear written English, then went on to analyse the extract and then broadened the discussion with examples of their own scored highly. While the language was field specific and legal, and the sentences long and complex, it was, nevertheless, accessible.

Most candidates demonstrated a firm understanding of the context and issue, and produced some insightful comments, using the example and their own knowledge to illustrate their points, using a wide range of terminology. Most candidates demonstrated a detailed understanding of concepts and used a range of theories to support their answer. Theories connected with the campaign for plain English versus legal language, instrumental power and formality were the most useful. The best candidates were able to use the example as a starting point to an intelligent discussion of the issue and then were able to use a range of supporting examples from their own knowledge and experience.

In analysis of the example, most candidates were able to use a wide range of terminology accurately but some lack of precision prevented candidates from gaining higher marks. Phrase is still used much too generally to mean a stretch of language and it would be better if candidates were encouraged to discuss precise phrases (noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectival phrases)

There was some confusion about how to discuss lexis. Lexis is a collective noun; many candidates say, “many lexis”. Lexis is also generic and not precise enough. It is acceptable to say, there is lexis from the field of law, but candidates should then go on to say, for example the nouns, “Trustee, Executor, Codicil”.

Question 2a) Language and Situation

This question was more popular than question 1a). Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate the linguistic devices used in instructions to communicate clear guidelines to the audience. It was clearly stated that they should provide relevant supporting examples from the text and **their own knowledge** to answer the question. The instructions were taken from an old car manual. Again, unfortunately, there was some misapplication of theories; Grice’s maxims and Brown and Levinson (politeness is the expression of the speakers’ intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts towards the listener) are speech theories. Instructions do not call for politeness. Some candidates wanted to apply their knowledge of gender theories and said that it is proven that males use commands and blunt language, quoting Tannen’s report versus rapport, orders versus proposals theories. However, imperatives are expected in instructions, regardless of the gender of the speaker or writer. Several stated that these instructions were for men, because theories state that men discuss things and women discuss emotions. Whilst it may be true that most people following these instructions might be male, it is unwise to state this categorically. It would have been better to discuss the audience as the enthusiast who may need some specialist knowledge and the status of the instructions.

For this question candidates could have used examples from their own experience of spoken instructions, and then it could have been relevant to discuss politeness theories and how speech is different from writing and often calls for a different kind of instruction. Some candidates did discuss these contexts – teachers giving instructions might use disguised directives, “Could you turn to page 10”, for example or considered different kinds of instructions, instructions for a recipe might be quite friendly using 2nd person, “First, you will need to grease...” Some candidates recognised that these instructions for the Hillman Imp were quite old and discussed how many people today would resort to the internet to follow online instructions or watch a YouTube video.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Essay structure with an introduction that addresses the question – features of formal written English or features of instructions
- Analysis of the example given, using accurate terminology
- Wider analysed examples from candidate's own experience
- Knowledge of relevant theories and concepts

Areas for improvement

- Candidates need to be more precise in their use of terminology.
- The terminology used was quite limited.

Key considerations for centres

- Do not teach theories at the expense of grammar terminology
- Theories are interesting but candidates must be selective and think carefully about how they apply these theories. Some theories are not applicable to written texts.
- Candidates need to write a detailed response for part a as it is worth 40 marks and make sure they use a wide range of terminology as AO1 is worth 20 marks

Assessment Objectives for the creative writing (1b and 2b)

Question 1b)

A number of candidates' marks were significantly affected by the misunderstanding of what an obituary is - many also seemed to get fixated on the broadsheet context and ended up writing a news report. The creative writing text is always linked in some way to the essay so it should have been obvious that an obituary is about the life of someone who was deceased.

Some creative writing responses were too brief. It is recommended that candidates follow the word count guidelines.

Question 2b)

The online article for thestudentroom.co.uk about how maintaining your bike or car at university can help you save money appealed to many candidates, who clearly enjoyed this task and produced good informative/persuasive writing, using structural devices, a suitable register and addressing the audience successfully. For this task candidates' writing could have been humorous or instructional.

Some candidates did not mention money or did not give any specific maintenance tips or advice. This was a weakness.

Characteristics of successful responses

- The creative writing is better when it is imaginative rather than formulaic.

Areas for improvement

- Technical accuracy is assessed; many responses were not proof read.
- A number did not stick to the 350 word count suggested for (b) and anything under 300 is limiting what they can achieve.
- Candidates must read the question carefully to make sure they cover the requirements.

Key considerations for centres

- There is advice on practising writing effectively for an audience in the CPD material on the WJEC website.

Assessment Objectives for the critical commentary (1c and 2c)

AO2 is about how candidates have written for their chosen audience, genre and purpose, register – mode, tenor, field, the audience, etc. This is not really about theories; some wanted to restate their knowledge of theories. In this piece they needed to succinctly discuss:

- their use of language and their stylistic choices
- the distinctive features of the text type (with accurate terminology and examples)
- the significance of the contextual factors
- how far their intended effects were achieved.

The recommended length of approximately 250 words is a guide. Candidates need to select some clear examples from their work to illustrate how they have written the piece. They should concentrate on what they consider to be the strengths of their creative piece. Candidates should not bring weaknesses to the attention of the examiner; these weaknesses should, where possible, be corrected in the creative task. It is not a good idea to point out that this is a student website and students do not write using Standard English and cannot always punctuate or spell correctly. Many commentaries were list-like, spotting features and far too long.

Candidates should be aware that not all questions are rhetorical questions.

Spelling is an issue. Homophones cause a problem - brakes was in the original text, tyres was often spelt incorrectly, and the manual was often referred to as 'manuel'.

A number of candidates wrote a very short piece for (a) worth 40 marks and then pages for (c) worth 20 marks.

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UNIT 3

It was good to see that candidates showed at least a basic understanding of the introductory nature of prefaces and the importance of the writer, and tried to use their linguistic knowledge to tackle the questions. The contemporary text engaged all candidates, but, as may be expected, the period texts were challenging because of the formality and complexity of the style. Candidates often struggled to demonstrate close reading, and discussion was broad rather than engaged with the details of the texts. In addition, candidates did not always manage to answer the question set. The focus of Question 2 was precise: changes in dictionary prefaces over time. Where candidates did not respond to the question prompt, they were less able to access the full range of marks. Most candidates managed to complete all the questions on the new-style paper, but there were some issues with timing. There was often a mismatch between the amount written and the marks available. In writing three pages for Question 1 (20 marks) and three pages for Question 2 (60 marks), for instance, candidates were misjudging the requirements of the tasks. Short essay responses were equally problematic since candidates were not able to address a wide enough range of points. In such cases, the overall mark for the paper inevitably reflected this.

Language Over Time

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

For Question 2, marks were awarded for each separate AO. For AO2, candidates needed to demonstrate their knowledge of genre explicitly. Discussion of relevant issues (e.g. attitudes to language and each writer's relationship with his reader) was valid where it was linked directly to the content of the texts. The ability to provide appropriate and concise supporting quotation was also critical here. For AO3, candidates needed to engage with the prefaces, exploring details and interpreting meaning. It was important that discussion focused closely on the texts rather than on language change as a broad concept. Addressing context (e.g. the ways in which the prefaces and their writers were a product of their times) was central to the question. For AO4, candidates needed to develop links between the texts which amounted to more than the occasional use of basic connectives (e.g. "however", "also", "similarly"). The use of linguistic terminology was assessed under AO4. Candidates needed to be able to analyse the prefaces using a range of terms which went beyond labelling word classes, and which supported the point being made.

Question 1 (short questions)

This was a new approach to testing candidates' knowledge of language change. The questions are very focused and require precise answers, which often depend on a secure understanding of word classes. For a number of candidates, this was challenging. Their knowledge of historical language features was sensible, but they lost marks because they could not identify verbs, adverbs, nouns and pronouns. The wording of the questions is designed to alert candidates to the kind of content required in each case: (a) focuses on spelling; (b) on language change; (c) on archaic grammar; and (d) on distinctive EME grammatical structures and punctuation. There was a tendency to miss these key word prompts, particularly in (d) where many candidates only identified features of spelling.

Candidates need to be aware of the number of marks for each question, and how these marks are allocated. There is no need to write at great length since precise labelling and concise description of the language change feature in each case is all that is needed. Where candidates wrote 3-4 pages in response to Question 1, they were limiting the time they could spend on the high-tariff essay question. Full and detailed answers should take no more than one page – and could be completed effectively in less.

Part (a)

In this question, 2 marks were awarded for identifying the basic word classes, and 2 marks for an appropriate explanation of the linguistic variation in each case. The verb *pouder* was often identified as a noun. While this is an understandable assumption, it is important that candidates look back to the word in context: the fact that it is preceded by the modal auxiliary *will* should have provided sufficient clues to identify the word as a verb. Despite the *-ly* inflection, the adverb *Fourthlie* caused many candidates problems. The question specifically asks for a word class, so the use of the broad term “discourse marker” was not sufficient. Almost all candidates, however, recognised the *ie/y* interchange. Most were able to make some valid comment about the variation in the vowel pattern (*pouder*), with sensible links to the sound of the vowel substitute.

Part (b)

In this question, 2 marks were awarded for identifying the basic word classes, and 2 marks for two separate points relating to language change. Where words are clearly related (e.g. variant spellings of the same word), there is no need to discuss each example separately. Most candidates recognised the spelling inconsistency of the verb ‘do’, and managed to make an informed point about the archaic noun *middest*. Since this was an example that candidates are unlikely to have seen before, a range of responses was accepted (e.g. “noun”, “superlative adjective”). The language change points could be specific (e.g. inconsistent use of the final *-e*; *middest* is now obsolete; a reference to the PDE noun ‘middle’), or could be related to broader concepts such as Samuel Johnson’s 1755 dictionary and the emergence/role of standardisation. Candidates demonstrated sensible language change knowledge, but should be reminded that they cannot be rewarded for the same point twice. A reference to Johnson’s dictionary, for instance, can only be used to explain one example. Broad references to “the dictionary” will not be credited; candidates need the correct date and the name of the author to gain a mark.

Part (c)

In this question, there are 2 marks for identifying the word class or form of the examples, and 2 marks for describing the archaic language feature in each case. The examples here represent commonly occurring features of EME. Candidates therefore needed to be precise in their linguistic description. They needed to identify the form of the *-eth* inflection exactly to gain the mark (i.e. “a third person present tense verb”). For the second mark, there needed to be some reference to the fact that the inflection is now obsolete, or to its replacement with the northern dialect *-s* form (or to PDE ‘has’). Pronouns continue to cause confusion, but candidates should be familiar with *thou* as an archaic second person form. Many did not identify it accurately, but were able to comment usefully on its function (affective use marking intimacy or disparagement; an indication of the status of the participants).

Part (d)

In this question, candidates needed to select their own examples from the extract given. Where more than the required four points were made, the best four were marked. Discussion of grammatical structures included references to the passive voice, inconsistency in the use of the dummy auxiliary, and the subjunctive (*were not able*). Many candidates effectively described the absence of the possessive apostrophe and random capitalisation. Broad references to “multiclausal sentences” or to “a high level of subordination” must be underpinned by precise linguistic knowledge (e.g. identification of specific examples of subordination and coordination using appropriate terminology). Responses also need to be analytical rather than observational. Non-linguistic generalisations such as “The colon and semi-colon were introduced in the 1400s and we see it used correctly here” or “A semi-colon is used, but nowadays a comma would be used instead” cannot be credited. Explanations must include specific examples and demonstrate evidence of language study (e.g. *these fine English Clerks, will say ...* → comma separating subject and predicator; *translated, from one signification to another, ...* → commas marking out parenthetical prepositional phrases; *the sentence, as precious stones are set in a ring, ...* → commas marking out parenthetical adverbial clauses). In many cases, the focus of the question was missed and candidates only cited examples of spelling change (e.g. *u/v* interchange, presence/omission of final *-e*, variations in vowel combinations). This often meant that no marks could be awarded.

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:

- awareness of the demands of each question
- identification of basic word classes
- accurate and precise descriptions of EME language change features
- the use of appropriate terminology demonstrating linguistic knowledge.

Question 2 (Language Over Time essay)

The essay required candidates to consider dictionary prefaces over time, with a clear sense of who was writing the preface and how the contexts shaped each example. In many cases, this focus was not evident and candidates spent the majority of their essays describing language change features. Observations about spelling and references to the examples cited in parts (a) to (d) do not enable candidates to answer the question because discussion is broad with little reference to the meaning of the texts. The essay is not about language change, but about close reading of texts from different times in the light of a given focus (here, prefaces). Conclusions often highlighted the fact that candidates had missed the necessary focus on prefaces and their writers: “Changes in the language over time show that the spelling of English has got more constant and full stops are more accurate. This shows the importance of standardisation and its role in creating a uniform language.” It is important that candidates read the question carefully so that they can shape their writing accordingly. Responses should demonstrate understanding of the genre, engagement with the texts, and evidence of interpretation.

While the focus on genre was not always fully developed, most candidates sensibly discussed at least some of the key features of dictionary prefaces (e.g. written by the author; states the purpose and range of the work; introduces key ideas about contemporary language, language use and language users; expresses personal attitudes). Most also made some sound comments about the use of pronouns: mainly third person plural in Text A (*they*) to distance the writer from those he sees as misusing the English language, but with some inclusive first person plural pronouns (*wee*) to suggest a common course of action; and first person in Texts B and C, where the writers engage more directly with their material and the choices they have made. The exploration of reasons for these choices was sometimes thoughtful, with candidates linking the relative formality of the texts to the period, and the writer’s relationship with the topic and the target audience. This kind of discussion was effective because it demonstrated engagement with each text’s meaning.

Many candidates explored the writers’ attitudes to language. There was a clear understanding of Cawdry’s dislike of foreign borrowing and overly elaborate language, of Johnson’s grudging tolerance of the irregularities of language, and Peckham’s enthusiastic celebration of linguistic diversity. To accompany this, there was some sound discussion of prescriptive and descriptive attitudes. Some candidates made broad links and recounted their knowledge, demonstrating a good understanding of the language concepts; others were able to link their knowledge effectively to the texts, exploring the attitudes expressed by the writers through the language they use. Well-chosen adjectives were cited to support points made: Cawdry’s use of *ignorant* (including the use of the adjective functioning as a head noun in the noun phrase *the most ignorant*), *outlandish*, *rude*; Johnson’s use of *energetick* and *boundless set against wild and barbarous*; and Peckham’s use of superlatives like *funniest*, *wittiest* and *truest*. Discussion in the upper bands developed this with reference to abstract nouns (Text B: *adulterations*, *irregularities*, *anomalies*; Text C: *insights*, *diversity*, *quality*) and non-finite verbs (Text B: *disentangled*, *regulated*, *registred*, *to correct or proscribe*; Text C: *to explain*, *to express*). The most successful comments were tied directly to details of the texts.

Candidates often demonstrated secure knowledge of language over time, but they need to be careful that such information is directly linked to the texts. Paragraphs of pre-learned information which made no connections with the prefaces were not relevant. In some cases, lengthy sections discussing orthography, Samuel Johnson's 1755 dictionary, Robert Lowth's grammar book and standardisation made no reference to the texts at all. While demonstrating broad knowledge, this approach did not allow candidates to answer the question. To fulfil the assessment objectives, such information about language change should be embedded within discussion of the genre and the writers. For instance, reference to random capitalisation in Text A could be linked to nouns of thematic importance: references to different kinds of influential speakers (e.g. *Preachers, Clerks*), and to different types of language (e.g. *Court talke, Country-speech*); the seventeenth century adjective *curious* could be linked to Cawdry's attitude to contemporary language and his context – since this meaning is now obsolete, LME readers would interpret the word in a more positive way (an example of amelioration). Similarly, for AO2, candidates need to ensure that broad discussion of gender is more than a basic recount of general knowledge of the position of women in the EME period. Where candidates linked gender issues directly to the texts, on the other hand, discussion was often meaningful: a frequent use of gendered nouns such as *men, gentlemen, man* is evident in Text A (set against the reference to *mothers*); the non-gendered plural nouns in Text C such as *people, users, teenagers, kids, students*.

Understanding the texts in context is an important part of the question. Some candidates were able to make reference to *ynckhorne termes* and to the fashion for overseas travel, which Cawdry believed was changing language (Text A); to Johnson's research-based approach and his criticism of contemporary writers for creating *irregularities* in language as a result of their *ignorance or negligence* (Text B); and to the speed at which new words emerge and are disseminated in a digital age (Text C). It was very good to see that most candidates had read the contextual information carefully and used it effectively to underpin their reading of the texts (e.g. the increasing size of dictionaries, the kinds of words chosen, Johnson's use of supporting quotations). Where candidates explored the link between the writer and the kind of text produced, the comments tended to be very broad addressing levels of education and intelligence. Such speculation is not an effective way to engage with the texts. Discussion was better where it forged explicit links e.g. Cawdry's advisory tone (his four recommendations) and his instructive approach (his advice on how to use the dictionary, an unfamiliar form); Johnson's description of his methodical process (e.g. past tense verb phrases *I took, I found, I turned*) and his sense of *duty* as a lexicographer; and Peckham's humorous and entertaining account of UD's writers and users (e.g. his use of non-standard language, neologisms, and disrupted collocations).

Most candidates made a concerted effort to make connections between the texts. These were most successful where they went beyond the identification of broad features (e.g. multiclausal sentences, declaratives) and explored similarities and differences in terms of the genre, context, writer and themes. Some sound discussion emerged based on the common theme of understanding and communication, on the writers' shared passion for language, and on the different ways each writer engaged with their readers. While there was an impressive range of terminology in some scripts, in many it was very limited. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of using appropriate terms to underpin their discussion: this paper focuses on the analysis of unseen texts and there must be evidence of relevant linguistic knowledge if candidates are to access the higher bands.

Characteristics of successful responses:

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

Areas for improvement:

- close reading of the texts
- engagement with meaning and interpretation
- the use of a wider range of terminology (beyond basic word class labelling)
- more careful focusing of the essay content
- technical accuracy and fluency of expression.

Summary of key points: key considerations for centres

- grammar teaching needs to underpin all work on the 'Language Over Time' paper
- candidates must learn to apply their knowledge rather than recount it
- responses should contain explicit references to the content of the unseen texts.

Conclusion

Candidates had clearly been prepared for the paper and demonstrated a range of appropriate knowledge. In some cases, lack of exam technique meant that this knowledge was not used effectively to answer the questions. There was evidence across the bands, however, that candidates had followed a language course and were trying to address the demands of a challenging paper.

**WJEC
GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (New)**

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UNIT 4

Candidates seemed to be generally well prepared for this unit. In Section A, they showed a mostly sound understanding of the assessment objectives and on the whole applied them well to the spoken texts. The more confident candidates were precise in their analysis making specific comments and the choice of texts proved quite accessible, offering enough on which to comment for candidates of all abilities. In Section B, most candidates showed an awareness of what was being asked of them and general familiarity with the text type involved. Some stronger candidates used the question as a basis for original and engaging work, but the task provided enough scope for candidates of all abilities to engage with aspects of genre, audience and purpose, while making use of their writing skills.

Section A

In this section, candidates were asked to analyse three examples of spoken comedy, all of which, in this instance, shared a common theme of shopping. Text A was an extract from a stand up comedy performance by Sarah Millican at the Royal Variety Show, in which Millican tells an anecdote about shopping in Asda. Text B was again an extract of stand up comedy, this time performed by Michael McIntyre at the Apollo Theatre. McIntyre discusses the eccentricities of the high street shop Argos. Text C offered a different approach to comedy, involving a pre-scripted and pre-recorded sketch involving the comedians David Mitchell and Robert Webb. Mitchell and Webb's sketch makes use of two characters a – shop assistant and a customer – and the contrasts between them. Most candidates seemed able to recognise and respond to the ways in which comedy was being created in each case, demonstrating a sound understanding of each transcript. The majority of candidates were able to comment on some aspect of each comedian's attitudes and their relationship to the different audiences. The strongest candidates were effective in their observations of how each comedian manipulates language and paralinguistic elements to express both their attitudes towards the respective subjects of their routines and to build their routines towards the punch line.

AO1

The majority of candidates seemed well prepared for analysing a transcript. The most successful responses were able to precisely pick apart the language used by each comedian, commenting on the effect of the techniques used in detail and linking these regularly and effectively to the question posed. The stronger responses also showed some interesting analysis of the wide range of vocabulary used by each comedian. All candidates were able to use relevant terminology to some extent, including spoken terms. Weaker candidates commented on basic word classes and spoken techniques such as pitch, and tended to feature spot – an approach which is to be discouraged. Able candidates generally used a very wide range of terms, including a good spread of spoken terminology. Some candidates showed a tendency to ‘list’ the terminology used in a certain quotation before commencing their analysis, while the most successful were more likely to integrate the terminology into their analysis. Candidates who scored more highly often took the opportunity posed by the transcripts to discuss aspects of accent and dialect, with some fruitful comments on Millican’s use of her Newcastle accent in Text A, McIntyre’s use of RP and the conflict between Mitchell’s character’s RP and Webb’s character’s use of Estuary English in Text C.

AO2

Most candidates showed some awareness of the conventions of the comedy genre, both stand up and sketch based. Candidates frequently commented on the relationship between the performance and the audience and how this was manipulated to create comedy. Stronger candidates often made some interesting comments on the tendency of comedians to break the rules, especially in Text C, linking the language used by Mitchell’s ‘Shop Assistant’ character to Grice’s Maxims of manner and quantity, and Brown and Levinson’s face theory. In terms of Text A, there were some interesting comments linking Millican’s use of language and in particular her accent, to Giles’ accommodation theory, suggesting that ‘Millican could be diverging from the language of the royal family to add a comedic overtone to the text, or converging to the language of viewers at home, helping her to connect with the audience’ as one candidate put it. Another candidate successfully discussed the adherence (or lack of it) of Millican’s language to Lakoff’s theories, pointing out her use of tag questions and empty adjectives as being typical of her gender, while her sense of humour obviously subverts his ideas. In general though the discussion of theory was not commonplace and tended to only be seen among the more highly scoring candidates. There was some interesting discussion of issues among able candidates, although again this tended to be an area in which the majority of candidates found more challenging. Weaker candidates tended to make sweeping statements about gender, particularly relating to Millican, while in more successful responses Millican’s reference to ‘tache cream’ was one area for comment, linking to societal ideas of femininity but also to audience relatability. Quite a few responses effectively explored the implicature behind McIntyre’s simile of Argos being ‘like a theatre for the poor.’ Some responses also examined the presentation of class issues in Text C, successfully picking apart the comedic power struggle between Mitchell’s upper class sales assistant and Webb’s more middle class customer.

AO3

Most candidates were able to comment on some elements of context, with many responses discussing Text A's setting at the Royal Variety Performance in the Royal Albert Hall in London, in front of members of the Royal Family, and McIntyre's routine taking place at the Apollo Theatre. There were some interesting comments among candidates who scored more highly about Peter Trudgill's Norwich research, suggesting that Millican subverts his idea that speakers are likely to adapt their language in formal settings, making the most of her accent in order to appeal to her audience. Many responses made sensible comments about the varieties of audience who might be watching each of the different transcripts, pointing out that in Texts A and B the audience is made up of the audience in the theatre as well as that at home, and therefore the routine is designed to appeal to both. Able students provided some interesting discussion concerning the various broadcasting channels on which each was aired and how this might impact each performance. In terms of the discussion of meaning, strong candidates used the language as a springboard for detailed and precise discussion while weaker candidates suffered from a tendency to make points which they then failed to develop in sufficient detail.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Integrating terminology into the analysis
- Wide range of terms, including spoken
- Detailed and sustained analysis
- Thorough awareness of genre, concepts and issues, strongly linked to meaning.

Areas for improvement

- Discussion of theory and issues
- Detailed analysis-picking apart the language and discussion of implicature.

Summary of key points: key considerations for centres

- Candidates need familiarity with a wide range of text types and genres
- They need practice in 'picking apart' language and the use of linguistic techniques
- They need to learn how to effectively link their knowledge of theory to their analysis

Section B

This section offers candidates the opportunity to study a wide range of genres and the majority of candidates showed a familiarity with the text type chosen. The task involved producing a script for a spoken advert promoting a new drive through supermarket. It proved an accessible task, providing stronger candidates with many opportunities to be creative with their use of form and language, while ensuring that less able candidates were also able to engage. A few, generally weaker, candidates wrote a commentary to accompany their scripts. Obviously this is not part of the writing task in Section B and it should be noted that this section of the exam candidates are solely assessed on their creative work. There were many candidates who chose to produce their script as a transcript, or with some use of prosodic markers, to varying degrees of success. Where these were effective, use of such a layout gave added weight to the language choices made by the candidate, and in the weaker examples supported the limited engagement with language, making this an unexpected, but nevertheless relevant approach to some extent. The most effective responses provided a true script, with a mixture of spoken and non-spoken elements as prompted in the question, with perceptive links to their chosen audience and to the purpose of the task. There were a few issues among some responses at all levels with timing, where candidates had written more effectively for Section A but had not left enough time to cover Section B, which should be noted.

AO2

The majority of candidates showed awareness of the appropriate genre, making use of the conventions of a script. Many of the responses used two or more speakers and made effective use of appropriate layout and turn taking etc. In addition, there were many scripts which used only one voice and both approaches proved equally valid, giving candidates different opportunities to showcase their skills. Among the weaker candidates there was an awareness of the spoken genre to some extent, although there was less evidence of understanding the conventions of a script. The majority of candidates also showed an understanding of the purpose of such a text, the stronger candidates linking this effectively to their interpretation of the task and the best also showing implicit knowledge of a range of linguistic concepts.

AO5

Most candidates showed awareness of the advertising genre, employing a variety of genre specific techniques such as direct address, use of inclusive pronouns and techniques such as alliteration, tripling and rhetorical devices. Mid band responses showed a tendency to be quite similar, along the lines of 'Have you ever wondered if there was a better way to do your shopping?' This was a perfectly appropriate, if pedestrian, approach, which gave such candidates an effective way to engage with a specific (in some cases) target audience. Most of these responses chose a traditional housewife type character, which, although stereotyped, fulfilled the purpose. It did, however, limit the scope somewhat in a marking scheme which rewards originality and individuality. Weaker candidates seemed to struggle with the concept of writing for a specific group of people. Among the stronger candidates, responses showed inventiveness and creativity, with a specific personal voice. Memorable responses from the higher bands included a 'superhero' themed advert featuring Richard Ayoade, Michael McIntyre, Sarah Millican and Mitchell and Webb saving customers from the monstrous discount grocer, and another, very sweet, response following a grandfather picking up ballet shoes for his grandson at the drive in supermarket. More highly scoring responses inclined towards having a specific audience in mind, and consciously crafting their choice of language around that group, with purposeful selection of language techniques. These responses took advantage of the opportunity to underpin their choice of language with their linguistic knowledge. Many of these responses showed half a page to a page of planning, in which they outlined their ideas and thought carefully about what they wanted to say and who they wanted to say it to – an approach which is to be encouraged.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Strong engagement with a specific chosen target audience
- Creativity and inventiveness
- Convincing evidence of linguistic study
- Engaging lively writing.

Areas for improvement

- Candidates should be able to choose a target audience themselves and have an awareness (from study) of what language to use to appeal directly to this group
- Aim for originality – to conceive creative approaches to the task
- Stress usefulness of planning response before writing
- Candidates will need to be aware of timing and plan this according to their strengths and weaknesses.

Summary of key points: key considerations for centres

- As with Section A, candidates need familiarity with a wide range of text types and their language features
- They also need awareness of the different specific audiences it is possible to write for
- Lots of practice with stretching creative writing skills

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GCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (New)**

Summer 2017

UNIT 5

It was really heartening to note that nearly all centres successfully took on the challenge of this new specification. Despite some initial anxieties, there was much evidence to indicate that centres had familiarised themselves with the requirements of this new 2500 – 3500 word investigation, with most seeing it as an exciting opportunity for their candidates to undertake an independent and more sustained study than previously into an aspect of language use, of personal interest to them. In general, learners demonstrated that they were able to hypothesise a theory in relation to language and identity, gather and interrogate data, and finally reflect upon their findings. The best investigations had a consistently strong linguistic focus, embedded theory, and were written in a coherent, academic style. It was good to note that transcripts were generally used very effectively for data, and that the increased length of the investigations largely facilitated greater depth and breadth.

However, it was apparent that some centres misperceived some key aspects of this new non-exam assessment. Most importantly the focus of the investigation must relate to the theme of language and identity. This was often implied either in the title or the investigation by using one or more of the following terms: bias, stereotyping, perspectives. Using these labels invariably resulted in studies based around differences rather than an investigation into language and identity. Those learners who made reference to identity in their investigation title, tended to be able to clearly demonstrate appropriate methods of analysis, linked to this central theme. It is important that in future submissions, learners are able to demonstrate how their study relates explicitly to language and identity.

Another misconception apparent in some samples concerned the information included on the front cover. The aspect of study required is not language and identity but rather one of the four prescribed language areas given in the specification. In addition, learners must choose only one of these, not a combination such as gender and culture. More worryingly, some centres allowed their candidates to create their own areas for their language investigation such as political language, advertising and language over time. Fortunately, this was the case in only a minority of centres.

Finally there were some problems regarding the content of some of the investigations. Some learners chose to investigate aspects of child language acquisition. It is difficult when looking at the language of very young children to sustain links to language and identity or to reach relevant conclusions appropriate to this main theme. Another problematic area concerned the use of fictional texts either print or media. As characters are themselves constructions within a narrative, discussions of identity should really focus upon how the writers, rather than their characters, view matters of identity and language. This was not always understood by those learners who opted for investigations of this type.

The Assessment Objectives

There are three assessment objectives for the non-exam assessment: AO1, AO2 and AO3 with AO1 having double the weighting of the other two. It might be helpful to look specifically at the descriptors for Band 4 across the AOs. In order to gain Band 4 in AO1 it is necessary to demonstrate the following: effective knowledge and methods of analysis; secure interpretation of topic; sustained, apt use of a range of terminology; accurate and generally fluent expression and effective organisation. The key words here are **effective**, **secure** and **sustained**. Learners who are able to demonstrate that their study is clearly focused on identity and language, thereby offering a secure interpretation, should score well on the double weighted AO1a. In order to score well on AO1b, it was not enough to use sound and accurate terminology, there has to be evidence of the use of a **range** of apt terms sustained throughout the investigation. Finally for AO1c, the study has to be effectively organised by making use of topic sentences throughout and including a bibliography.

To score well into Band 4 for AO2, learners have to move beyond sound understanding and sensible discussion of concepts and issues. Once again the key word for Band 4 is **secure**. To show this level of understanding, learners need to identify concepts and issues most relevant to their own specific investigation. It is vital that an understanding of genre is present. Theory should be embedded and used to support and inform the learner's particular discussion. Finally to score well for AO3, the key word is **effective**. Learners must demonstrate that they effectively understand how their chosen data offers links between contextual factors and the construction of meaning. It is not enough to indicate that a text was created for a specific purpose. The contextual factors e.g. author, period, place, must be fully investigated in order for the learner to reach insightful conclusions.

The Four Language Areas

No one specific area was more successfully attempted than the other three although language and gender and language and culture were by far the most popular options. There was some fascinating data, both primary and secondary, used across the language areas so it seems sensible to discuss each area separately. It is worth noting here that if there are a large number of tables for example, it might be sensible to include appendices.

1. Language and self-representation

It was clear that this language area in particular really engaged the learners who chose it. They embraced the opportunity to explore and interpret their own idiolect with enthusiasm and interest. For the weaker learners this often did not move beyond an examination of how they might change their communication strategies depending on context and audience. There was much useful discussion regarding the informality/formality of exchanges with different family members and friends both online and during face to face interaction. The best studies were well grounded in theory including Levinson, Grice and Leech. Many learners discussed face theory and politeness theories and related them to their own interactions.

There was some misinterpretation, however, by centres who allowed their candidates to look at how other individuals represent themselves according to context. The specification states quite clearly that this language area is applicable only to the learners themselves. Studies of others' communication strategies must be placed in one of the remaining three areas.

2. Language and gender

As in previous years gender was by far the most popular choice. The range of data used for this language area was extremely diverse including the representation of male and female tennis players by online news organisations; the language used by sports commentaries when covering female boxing matches; and the language used by male and female quiz teams. Gender theory was, on the whole, sensibly used although some centres are still teaching some rather outdated theories. One of the most interesting developments in this language area concerns both gender fluidity and transgender issues. There were some fascinating and enlightening studies into the language of drag queens and how the gender they identify with at different times affects their language choices. There were some insightful studies into the well-publicised transition of Caitlin Jenner and how this has affected her identity through her choice of language.

3. Language and culture

This area was also very popular with learners and, as with gender, the investigations were diverse and interesting. There was much evidence of real engagement, suggesting that learners had been allowed to choose an issue or concept that enthused them, for example an excellent study into migration, the importance of the LadsBible in popular culture, and WW2 propaganda, all linked closely to language and identity. Many of the studies in this area used terms such as stereotyping, ideology and representation to imply identity. The weaker studies didn't really show a grasp of concepts and issues related to their study and frequently did not discuss contextual factors in enough detail.

4. Language diversity

This was the least popular area but those learners who opted for this language area frequently produced some fascinating studies linked closely to identity, for example, how a particular rap style has created its own identity through its lyrics to differentiate itself from other rap styles; the representation over time of Midlands dialect from Chaucer onwards; and the different language choices used by different generations within one family who settled in the UK from Poland some decades ago, and how this is linked to their respective identities. The weaker learners tended to either use quite a limited selection of song lyrics from gangsta rap, for example, or attempted unsuccessful often unrealistic studies into Ebonics without connecting their studies to language and identity.

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 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 for 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 particularly so in language and self-representation
- The use of data that provides enough breadth and depth for an A level investigation
- For centres: the inclusion of the check list at the front of the sample.

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 not just outlined
- Language and self-representation must be an investigation into the learner's own Language choices
- Investigations covering language acquisition or fictional genres can be successful but are often problematical.

Conclusion

Finally my team of moderators and I would truly like to applaud centres for their professionalism and enthusiasm when dealing with the challenges of this new specification. We recognise the huge amount of effort that both centres and their candidates have put into making this such a successful first submission and we look forward to moderating next year's investigations.



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