



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2022

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE
General Certificate of Education
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 1 – EXPLORING LANGUAGE

General Comments

Encouragingly, 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 engaging with the material, which led to many of them making sustained and insightful points, particularly on the presentation of artificial intelligence in the data provided for Section A. The majority of the candidates demonstrated a secure ability to make and sustain purposeful connections (AO4) in Section A; this often underpinned their method of analysis (AO1), generating purposeful 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 can result in some bunching of marks for this item around upper Band 2 and lower Band 3. Centres are encouraged to remind candidates to explore how language conveys the writers' identities in Section B, as this is a critical aspect of the contexts of production and reception, as well as the attitudes conveyed. This year, the choice of texts proved accessible, stretching and challenging for the more able candidates, while at the same time 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 were all contemporary and presented a range of attitudes and perspectives but were sourced from different contexts, which was a crucial factor in the presentation of the common theme of artificial intelligence. Text A was an extract from an online magazine article published on the website Wired.com, which specialises in technology issues. Text B was an extract from a news article, published on the website of an international news organisation. The final text was an extract from an online article, published by a UK-based tabloid newspaper. The texts proved accessible, and many candidates seemed to enjoy the material, as evidenced by some quite insightful exploration. Again the material was demanding and challenging, whilst still allowing candidates from the full range of starting points to access some relevant aspects of the question.

AO1

As long as students approached the question in a way that allowed them to apply relevant knowledge to their exploration of the texts, a variety of methods were rewarded. For example, one sensible method was to structure their response following the bullet points supplied to accompany the question; candidates who took this approach examined how the different writers engaged their audiences in their respective texts, before teasing out some similarities and differences in the ways the writers portrayed robots.

Other successful candidates adopted a more holistic method, examining how the different contexts of production and genre conventions of each text framed different perspectives on certain common or differing threads in the representation of artificial intelligence, such as the sense of danger represented in texts B and C, versus the developing enthusiasm for the possibilities of using AI productively in the workplace in text A. 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 tended to generalise about the presentation of AI in each text, such as “All three texts talk about attitudes towards artificial intelligence” without qualifying what these attitudes were, or how language was used to convey nuanced representations of the introduction of AI to everyday life. Any discussion which was unsupported by a specific exploration of the construction of meaning in the text and context, is not a suitable method of analysis and communicates an under-developed approach to the question. It is useful to remind candidates that a successful method of analysis conveys a firm grasp of the content and context of each text. 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, the fact that, as Text A was written for a specialist technology publication, its outlook on artificial intelligence tended to be more positive. In addition, successful candidates explored the humour and almost anthropomorphic presentation of AI in Text A versus the more threatening personification of robots in Texts B and C, where clauses such as “her robot vacuum ate her hair” and “managed to develop their own machine language spontaneously” conveyed a sense of AI’s ominous invasion of humans’ lives. Finally, candidates who secured Band 4 and 5 marks were able to articulate how the discursive elements of the texts allowed for attitudes to be presented in an engaging manner, either through humour in Text A or through synthetic personalisation in Text B or through sensationalist language in Text C. Lower scoring candidates, by contrast, were unable to tease out the subtle difference in the presentation of artificial intelligence.

AO4

The ability to form and sustain connections between the texts is a significant skill assessed in this question. This 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 a narrative approach in Text A; an informative and international angle in Text B; and an almost dystopian emphasis on the dangers of AI 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 artificial intelligence; for example, one candidate observed that the semantic field of “intelligent crime” is employed when describing how the robots are used, where the abstract noun “deception” and the plural noun “criminals” indicate AI development has proved susceptible to misuse by humans for nefarious ends.

Yet in Text A the semantics of the birthing of new life, conveyed through the simile “like a foal learning to walk” functions as a device to capture the potential of AI to help rather than harm humans. 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 robots” 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

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. Nevertheless, 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 Tripadvisor (an international platform) to convey attitudes towards visiting Stonehenge, a neolithic monument in England.

AO2

This assessment objective tested the candidates’ ability to explore how the language used in the data reflects attitudes to visiting Stonehenge and how these attitudes are expressed on the 21st century digital platform Tripadvisor, where writers often evince a less rigid adherence to conventions of 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 elided minor sentence of Text 4, “Freakin lit!!!!”) and some examples where non-Standard English was either abandoned due to the digital nature of this platform (such as the conversational and elliptical style in Text 1). 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 review platform. They supported their discussion with purposeful selection of relevant and appropriately labelled linguistic evidence. For example, one candidate observed that Texts 3 and 4 “are visitors from different countries and so the novelty of a British landmark may have affected their language and grammar choices”. By contrast, weaker candidates did not engage with the identities of the writers, therefore missing out on opportunities to explore specific ways in which language use reflected those identities.

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 post their travel reviews 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 the monumental importance of the attraction as a world heritage site and the freedom that the platform affords for contributors to be earnest in their review of the cost, the educational benefit and even the commodification of the monument into an “attraction”. Another fruitful exploration of context 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 the mother from Text 1 and the teacher from Germany in Text 2 are more likely to frame their experience of Stonehenge through the lens of a nine-year-old child or a group of students respectively. 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.

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UNIT 2 – LANGUAGE ISSUES AND ORIGINAL AND CRITICAL WRITING

General Comments

It was pleasing to see that many candidates despite the Covid-19 pandemic 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 task for question 1 in particular provided candidates with the opportunity to write in a genre and on a topic that they were familiar with. The creative writing task for question 2 was at times misinterpreted, with a significant number of candidates writing a promotional script. Many of the responses for the creative writing tasks demonstrated a large scope of creativity and enthusiasm in the creation of the responses. The accompanying commentaries frequently demonstrated good knowledge and supported the writing choices, in most cases, well.

Both questions 1 and 2 proved to be popular options, with approximately equal numbers of candidates attempting each question. Possibly, the topic of politics frightened some weaker candidates off question 1, opting for question 2 instead.

It was very pleasing to see that there were no rubric infringements this year at all, as all candidates answered the appropriate a, b, and c tasks for their chosen question.

Comments on essay questions (1a and 2a)

The inclusion of a stimulus with a focus on control and dominance in spoken interactions (question 1a) and of one with a focus on the language used by experts (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 the number of marks available in this unit (40 out of 80), as a significant number of candidates only managed to write approximately two sides as a response in their answer books. It should also be noted that often these same candidates then proceeded to write equally short creative responses and commentaries for questions 1b/2b and 1c/2c. This could possibly be the result of the fact that for these candidates, this summer was the first time that they had taken formal examinations, following the pandemic. In some instances, it was clear that candidates had struggled to complete the tasks in the time allowed; perhaps because of inexperience of writing to strict timings.

On a similar note, there were a noticeable number of candidates whose handwriting was of such poor quality that assessing their responses proved challenging at times; and in the case of a few individuals, the poor quality of their handwriting did impact on the overall quality of their response.

The essay questions end with an explicit reminder to candidates for the need to provide their own examples in their analysis and discussion, and it was very pleasing that almost all candidates did include references to wider examples.

For question 1a, this meant that candidates were required to refer to other examples of spoken interactions in which a speaker uses language to control and dominate others. However, while many candidates did include references to their own examples, not all of these included actual examples of language used to dominate or control; indeed, a number of candidates included brief references to interactions between a powerful and less powerful speaker such as teacher-student interactions without any references to the kind of language features a teacher might use to control students. Where candidates indicated some actual examples of language, such examples were accepted and rewarded accordingly; however, where candidates did merely list examples of spoken interactions in which a speaker might control or dominate for question 1a, responses could not be awarded the full range of marks. This meant that they struggled to achieve above band 2 for **AO3**.

For question 2a, this meant that candidates needed to discuss the language of experts, which could include both spoken or written examples, since mode is not specified in the question. Again, a significant number of candidates listed examples of situations with experts, such as classroom interactions, but without actual analysis of the language used by the experts, which again meant few of these responses being awarded above band 2 for **AO3**.

Thus, for both essay questions, a considerable 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 (sometimes every paragraph), which lacked in discussion of effect and/or context and analysis. In other words, the more successful responses demonstrated fewer examples which were explored in more detail, rather than a larger number of examples referenced without little or no discussion.

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 large 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 the latter two were frequently applied incorrectly, with 'verb phrase' often used to refer to simple clauses. 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, with a significant number of candidates confusing "adverb" with "adverbial phrase" or "adverbial". Also, a number of candidates used 'exclamative' when the example they had identified was an 'exclamatory' sentence. 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. Similarly, some candidates overstated the issues of power in this particular transcript; likewise, some candidates in question 1a and 2a applied Fairclough / synthetic personalisation on the use of the 2nd person pronoun 'you', rather than realising that this is inappropriate in a conversation between two speakers, where there is nothing 'synthetic' about the direct address between the speakers. The application of inappropriate theories or concepts cannot be rewarded.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that successful responses were able to incorporate discussions of Goffman / Brown & Levinson, Giles' Accommodation Theory, and power / politeness / Lakoff's Politeness Principle / Leech's politeness maxims in a more nuanced manner that demonstrated some real insight of the stimulus materials for 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 in the stimulus material or in their own examples. Presenting theoretical knowledge in a general fashion without it being embedded in the analysis of the stimulus materials or own examples will limit a candidate's ability to produce a successful response.

Question 1a) Language and Power

Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate the linguistic features of spoken interactions where (a) participant(s) use language to control and dominate others. It was clearly stated that candidates must use the extract as a starting point and that **they must refer to other examples of texts**. The extract was taken from *The Anatomy of Power*, a book by a political journalist, which is a non-fiction account about British Prime Ministers. Although the extract is not a transcript, it featured a description of an interaction between Prime Minister Clement Attlee and a minister, who is being sacked. Almost all candidates responded well to the stimulus: discussing both quoted speech, as well as descriptions of communicative behaviour, such as Attlee "barking" in response to the minister's question.

The strongest responses had a clearly structured response which was led by the stimulus material and the examples provided by the candidates themselves. Most of these responses detailed the way in which Attlee was very direct with little regard for the minister's face. Attlee's informal pronunciation and clipped speech was often successfully contrasted with the minister's formal, standard English responses. Concepts such as Face and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson), as well as the difference in status and power (Wareing's types of power) were employed successfully, often in connection with a discussion of the turn-taking in the extract and Attlee's off record, brusque strategies. The strongest responses featured a wide range of language features being discussed, including the use of minor utterances, contractions, paralinguistic features, as well as vocatives, discourse structure / turn-taking, sentence moods, utterance lengths, asyndetic listing, and modal verb usage. Similarly, the best responses made it clear that they were discussing an interaction in a formal setting, but between speakers who had known each other for twenty years.

The extract was very accessible to all candidates and many were able to produce some insightful analysis of the stimulus text. The quality of responses for Question 1 suggests that possibly stronger candidates preferred Question 1 over Question 2.

There were also some productive discussions of wider context examples, such as student-teacher parent-child, police / legal professional – suspect/defendant, and employer – employee interactions. However, as noted above, a significant number of candidates merely listed these examples, without detailing the language features speakers in these situations might use. Furthermore, a significant number of candidates appeared to write about pre-learnt examples, which were briefly mentioned in a list-like fashion without much or any analysis and use of linguistic terminology.

More successful candidates were able to provide a detailed example (usually a classroom interaction), which they then proceeded to analyse in a similar fashion to the stimulus material. Other candidates successfully referenced work place interactions between staff and customers, as well as staff and managers.

Many candidates managed to successfully discuss contextual issues in the stimulus material and link these to their discussion of how speakers can dominate and control others, because of an established relationship between speakers, a formal setting, or a distinctly hierarchical situation.

Question 2a) Language and Situation

Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate how experts use language, which allowed them to explore both spoken interactions in a wide range of situations, as well as written texts. This made the question accessible to all candidates. Although the question itself did not specify spoken interactions, perhaps because the stimulus material was a spoken interaction between a doctor and patient, almost all candidates provided wider examples of spoken interactions.

Here, candidates made sensible and insightful comments about the interaction between the doctor and patient, but a majority of candidates lost focus of the question topic as that about the language used by experts and started to discuss the stimulus and their own wider examples in terms of interactions between powerful and less powerful speakers. This became especially pronounced in the discussion of their own examples, and as a result responses could not be awarded the full range of marks for both **AO1** and **AO3** (the latter in the case of their own examples). Of course, the application of power concepts and issues, and theories such as Waring's types of power, are also applicable to a situation in which an expert explains something to a non-expert, but the issue of power must be linked to the fact that the speaker is an expert in the interaction, and that their expertise gives them their power. Some candidates did do this well and were rewarded accordingly.

The stimulus material consisted of an extract of a conversation between a doctor and a patient, which most candidates were able to make sensible and at times insightful comments on, highlighting the way in which the doctor is trying to put the patient at ease, in their role as the expert. For a small number of candidates, the stimulus material's nature led to very productive discussion of examples from other expert-non expert situations, such as classroom interactions.

The examples that candidates provided for this question were all appropriate examples of spoken interactions, focusing mostly on familiar scenarios, especially interactions in the classroom, and in other workplace settings, especially between an employee and a superior, or an employee and a customer.

The strongest responses focused on the specific instance of the interaction: the doctor managing the interaction, while converging down to the patient. Some insightful responses detailed the nature of the communication as taking place in a situation in which the patient may be nervous and the doctor, as expert, being aware of this and using their knowledge and skills to re-assure the non-expert patient. This often led to a constructive discussion of professional language from experts, as well as the 'expected' predictable responses from the non-expert.

Many responses focused on the difference in power, with most attributing more power to the doctor, because of their professional role and status. Some insightful discussions linked this difference in power to the doctor's role as expert and featured useful applications of Brown & Levinson / Face theory, as well as Giles' Accommodation 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 situation influenced the patient's flouting of the maxims of relevance and quantity, possibly because of nerves. However, in less successful responses, candidates focused purely on the difference in status between the speakers, and treated the question as a language and power question: discussing the doctor's language as an example of how powerful speakers employ language in the exercising of power. This is not the focus of the question, and as such prevented a significant number of candidates answering this question from being as successful as they could have been, if they had linked their discussion of power to the situation of the doctor as the expert. 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 word classes, 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 for discussion of the most 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 that is shaped by the question's precise focus and the nature of the stimulus.
- Sustained focus on the detail of the question.

Areas for improvement for questions 1a/2a:

- Better focus on the essay question; question 2a especially featured many responses where candidates were not discussing how **experts** use language.
- More detailed discussion of the examples of wider context, beyond merely stating 'this particular feature also appears in X', or 'another example of speakers dominating others is in classroom interactions between a teacher and students'.
- Covering a wider range of language levels in the analysis of both the stimulus and own examples, moving beyond word class terminology only.
- More precise application of linguistic terminology, especially: phrases (verb phrases in particular), sentence types, pronoun types, possessive determiners, and exclamatory mood.

- More precise selection of linguistic concepts and theories to support analysis rather than applying every theory that a candidate knows of.

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

- The “information for candidates” on the front cover of the exam paper suggests that candidates should spend approximately 50 minutes on question 1a/2a, with 35 minutes each for questions 1b/2b and 1c/2c. As so many candidates wrote similar amounts for question 1a/2a as they did for 1c/2c, it is important to remind candidates of the heavier weighting of question 1a/2a.
- Linguistic terminology – it is important to not only focus on accuracy (especially a concern with regard to phrase level terminology), but also to encourage a wider language level approach that goes beyond mere word class labelling.
- Selective application of linguistic concepts and theories, rather than discussing every concept and theory a candidate may have come across in their studies. Selective application of theories especially will also encourage embedding of theories in the linguistic analysis of the stimulus and examples, allowing for more focus on AO1 (which is doubly weighted compared to AO2).
- Knowledge of possible wider context examples for AO3 marks is very important – candidates might consider a variety of potential sources for these, including SAMS, past papers on this unit, as well as resources referred to in the Teachers’ Guide and materials on the WJEC website made available for teaching this unit.

Comments on original writing questions (1b and 2b)

For this task, **AO5** is the only Assessment Objective. Whilst technical accuracy and fluency are part of this, 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, were significantly under the recommended word count (between 150 – 200 words) and thus self-penalising.

Question 1b

The question was very accessible to all candidates as it specified a “newspaper report” about the “sacking of a high-profile figure”, which most candidates interpreted as a popular tabloid news report. Many candidates successfully used famous, controversial, figures in the news, ranging from political leaders to managers of top-flight sports teams. A significant number of candidates invented their own fictional high-profile figure with equally successful outcomes.

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 about the sacking without much further contextual information, and as a result there was little development of the writing.

While almost all responses included at least some typical stylistic conventions of news reports, weaker responses tended to drift into narrative, rather than reportage. Again, a significant number of weaker responses (usually the ones much below the word count) tended to be written as news reports online which proceeded to invite readers to submit their comments. While this is a feature of some online, popular news reporting, sometimes the public comments took up a significant amount of the response. However, candidates were still rewarded for their use of language devices appropriate for a news report, including those written for online publication and consumption.

Question 2b

Since this question specified a script for an audio guide for tourists to a local area, many candidates did indeed write about their local area. However, some candidates wrote about favourite destinations and often were very successful, as their enthusiasm resulted in an effective guide. Where perhaps a candidate made errors in factual details (such as New York being on the Pacific Ocean), this was ignored, as long as appropriate stylistic features of an audio guide were present.

Many of the sound, as well as most successful responses were carefully constructed with the audience being taken on a guided tour of a locality, often with humour and enthusiasm that was well-suited to the task. Successful responses included sensible deictic references, direct address and a clear discourse structure, making sure that the needs of visiting tourists were always being met.

However, a significant number of candidates misunderstood the task and while producing a script for an audio file, ended up producing a promotional text, aimed at encouraging tourists to come to the area. As a result, information about transport links and places to stay were included rather than a detailed audio guide for tourists already in the area. Frequently, weaker responses ended up as lists of shops and restaurants located in the area, which did not make for an engaging audio guide. Many of these weaker responses were among those that were significantly below the specified word count of 350 words.

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

- Planned in advance (not necessarily by producing a written plan in the answer booklet), but evident from structure of writing and ability to work to recommended word count.
- 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.
- Many responses demonstrated little evidence of advance planning, both in terms of content, but also in terms of structure for the piece.
- Technical accuracy is assessed; many responses were not proof-read thoroughly, resulting in issues of poor tense management (especially in the news report in 1b) and confusing pronoun usage / anaphoric referencing.
- A number of candidates, especially in question 2b, did not reach the recommended 350 words; by writing significantly under this limit (often around half the number of words), they limited their achievement.

- Paragraphing still remains an issue, with some candidates not paragraphing at all.
- Legibility of handwriting was in some instances a problem, and as the creative task is less predictable, it is harder to interpret what a candidate is writing; in a few instances it is likely that poor legibility limited these candidates' achievement.

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

- Practice in both interpreting the writing tasks and planning for these accordingly is recommended.
- Candidates should be discouraged from deliberately “planting” pre-learnt linguistic devices in their responses to b tasks (often done so that candidates can comment on these in their subsequent responses for c tasks).
- The importance of proof-reading skills to ensure technical accuracy and fluency should be reinforced. Focus on particular areas such as tense management, (anaphoric) referencing, and writing dialogue / indirect speech would be beneficial.
- Candidates should be encouraged to develop confidence in finding their own creative writing voice – even those obviously less naturally gifted are able to achieve a good mark on these tasks by demonstrating this.
- Candidates should be encouraged to practise interpreting creative writing tasks in ways that suit their personalities and interests; e.g. a Harry Potter fan could write an audio guide for tourists visiting Hogwarts.
- Candidates should be encouraged to practise handwriting for a sustained period to build up stamina and maintain legibility.
- There is advice on practising writing effectively for an audience in the CPD material on the WJEC website.

Comments on commentary tasks (questions 1c/2c)

For this task, **AO2** and **AO3** are the Assessment Objectives. **AO2** assesses the candidate's understanding of the task (e.g. genre, purpose) as well as their application of relevant concepts and issues in the analysis of their own writing. For **AO3**, candidates are assessed on the analysis of contextual factors, discussion of the construction of meaning and evaluation of their own writing. Since this task is a linguistic analysis of their own creative writing, it is pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates adopt first person rather than third person references to “the writer”. While the majority of candidates understood that in order to evaluate their creative writing, they are expected to discuss the effect of their creative language choices, rather than discussing perceived weakness in their writing, there were still a significant number of candidates highlighting areas of weakness in their writing with suggestions for improvement. This limited candidates' access to the higher bands for this task.

A small number of candidates also included some discussion of the stimulus materials in their commentary; this is not necessary, as the commentary is intended to focus only on the candidates' creative writing in the b task.

The strongest responses focused on detailed discussion of genre conventions and textual purpose, as well as 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 list-like approach with paragraphs consisting of language features with a brief reference to audience or genre. Paragraph topic sentences often looked like: “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 weaker responses focused attention on less interesting language features in task b, such as alliteration, or graphology (especially in discussing the newspaper report for question 1b) which were also commonly deliberately inserted features. Similarly, many weaker responses took an approach that was descriptive rather than analytical, merely consisting of observations of the creative text with no discussion of the meaning or effect.

Finally, many of the weaker responses also recounted theory where it was not actually tied back closely to the writing in task b, which resulted in paragraphs demonstrating knowledge but with little or no analysis or evaluation. In the case of commentaries on 2b, the audio guide, some candidates had forgotten the mixed mode nature of the creative task and discussed the effect of their language choices on the “reader”.

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 meanings created and effects achieved.
- Well-contextualised discussion that demonstrates how specific audiences are addressed, purposes achieved and/or (sub-)genre conventions are applied.
- Where theory and concepts are applied, such as synthetic personalisation (Fairclough) in the audio guide for 2b, this is done as part of the contextualised, analytical discussion.

Areas for improvement for questions 1c/2c:

- Avoid a pre-prepared approach with formulaic approaches and a pre-learnt set of basic features.
- Avoid listing and feature-spotting – all points should be developed to demonstrate effect achieved.
- Avoid recounting theory where it is not relevant or connected to the creative writing in task b.
- All points should be supported with selective evidence from the candidate’s own writing, rather than long quotations that may contain a feature under discussion.
- Candidates should use accurate and precise linguistic terminology from a range, covering the language levels to support all points.

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

- Candidates should be encouraged to include points from all language levels wherever possible.
- 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.
- Careful selection of brief quotes from task b that clearly identify the feature under discussion is essential.

- 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. For future reference, it is essential that all candidates are encouraged to read all questions / tasks very carefully in order to ensure that responses are clearly focused and relevant to what has been asked, with candidates selecting the most effective and appropriate concepts, theories, linguistic features, as well as examples.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2022

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 3 – LANGUAGE OVER TIME

General Comments

Given the past two years, candidates (and their teachers) are to be congratulated on the work that went into preparing for and sitting the Unit 3 exam. In spite of all the obstacles they have faced, most candidates managed to demonstrate that they had learnt a lot about language change and were able to tackle the questions. The advance information gave candidates the opportunity to learn about advisory texts and they all managed to show their knowledge and understanding of the genre and some of its key features. As is perhaps to be expected, some candidates failed to engage with the specific advice being offered in each text, focusing instead on examples of the features they could 'spot'.

Length is still an issue for some candidates – writing under 3 sides means they have very little opportunity to explore the texts beyond broad comments that could be applied to any advisory text. For many, a lack of terminology can also be an issue. While use of basic word class terms is usually quite accurate, few manage to move beyond this. In addition, feature-spotting types of words without engaging with meaning leaves candidates failing to score evenly across the assessment objectives.

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 advisory texts, with a clear focus on each writer's advice, the relationship they create with their target audience, and the period attitudes they express. Discussion of issues (e.g. gender, status and moral/religious ideologies) needed to be linked directly to the content of the texts (women's right to education, Text A; moral advice on leisure pursuits for young women, Text B; and advice on cycling for girls, Text C). Reference to language change was relevant where points could be tied to meaning (e.g. the thematic capitalisation of nouns and adjectives; changes in the meaning or connotations of words).

AO3

Candidates needed to engage with the texts, exploring details and interpreting meaning. Addressing contextual factors was also central to the question (e.g. the gender and role of each writer; an understanding of how the target audience and the advisory purpose shape linguistic choices; the significance of cultural or religious references).

AO4

Candidates needed to develop meaningful links between the texts (e.g. target audience, purpose, tenor, attitudes to young women, stereotypes, stylistic approaches), and to select and apply a range of appropriate terminology. This 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).

Question 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.

The majority of candidates are now answering Question 1 concisely. It is worth pointing out, however, that where candidates answer 1(a) - (d) in note form, the brevity of the responses sometimes means they fail to get marks because their explanations are so cursory. Question 1(a) lends itself perfectly to a brief response with a word class label and a key term such as *i/y* interchange, or single instead of double consonant. Candidates should be reminded that the other questions require a slightly more detailed comment.

Part (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 *i/y* and *u/v* interchanges, showing sound knowledge of EME spelling variations. There were more problems with the sound substitution of *-t* for *-ed* on the adjectival past participle *crampst*. As long as candidates were able to recognise it as a substitution, they were awarded the mark – it is, however, a synchronic rather than a diachronic change. Most were able to recognise the word classes of *crampst* and *vse*, but few could identify *Synce* as a conjunction.

Part (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 *wee/we*, most candidates were able to make sensible points about spelling inconsistency, the lack of standardisation, or spelling pre-Johnson's 1755 dictionary. Candidates should be reminded that any reference to Johnson's dictionary should include his name and the date of publication. Broad references to spelling 'before the dictionary' are not sufficient to gain the mark for a language change concept. Many candidates still struggle with describing pronouns in terms of first, second and third person. However, in this question, as long as they were able to identify the example as a pronoun, any other errors were ignored.

A range of comments on the semantic change of *Gaming* were accepted: either a broadening of meaning (referencing a wider range of games) or a narrowing (referencing a PDE-specific focus on video gaming). Candidates who commented on random capitalisation of common nouns were also awarded the mark for a language change feature.

Where candidates deal with both examples together, they need to be sure that there are two distinct and applicable language change comments.

Part (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.

Candidates continue to find this question difficult. To gain the form marks, they needed to label *hath* as a **present tense verb**. Some candidates appropriately then went on to describe the replacement of the southern *-eth* inflection with the northern *-s*, to reference the fact that the inflection is obsolete, or to provide an accurate PDE version ('has').

For the second example, *afford not*, most candidates were able to describe it as a **negative verb** (phrase) or as a **negative declarative**. The other mark was awarded for a point that showed understanding of the archaic feature. Some candidates were successfully able to reference the absence of the dummy auxiliary *do*, the positioning of the adverb (negator) after the lexical verb where PDE puts it before, or to provide an accurate PDE version ('do not afford/'don't afford'). It is not, however, accurate to say there is an inversion of the subject and verb. Many candidates misunderstood the meaning in context and referenced a missing modal verb.

Part (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.

This question tests higher order skills because candidates need to find relevant examples and move beyond word classes to more complicated grammatical structures. Whatever the genre, EME features in the given extract are very similar each year. Candidates are clearly well aware of the kind of examples they should be identifying, but they tend to make broad points with an underdeveloped linguistic approach. Successful responses are analytical rather than observational, and clearly demonstrate evidence of language study.

Almost all candidates cited random capitalisation with an appropriate example to demonstrate its thematic function (for instance, nouns such as *Time*, *Happiness*, *Truths* or the verb *Cultiuate*). It is important to remind candidates that they need to distinguish between PDE use for proper nouns and EME usage for semantic emphasis.

Other frequently occurring responses included sensible references to the non-compounded reflexive pronoun *her self*; the use of an ommissive apostrophe in the interrogative *Is't ...?*; and the frequent use of passive voice. Where the example did not demonstrate use of the passive, a mark could not be awarded. A number of candidates mistakenly cited the use of the relative pronoun *which* to refer to people, but in this extract the anaphoric references were all to abstract nouns.

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, did not merit a mark (e.g. 'A feature of the grammatical structure of the text that is typical of EME is the use of multi-clausal sentences. An example of this is "Learning ys ... their Time."').

Observations about ‘incorrect’ use of commas and colons were not credited since the approach was rarely linguistic and often based on a false premise. Oxford commas (used before ‘and’ where a sentence contains more than one co-ordinating conjunction, or where sections of a sentence need to be clarified), for instance, are not distinctive to EME. Comma splicing (the use of a comma instead of a full stop between main clauses) is rare in EME – rather, the sequence of clauses is carefully controlled by the use of commas. On the other hand, points recognising the distinctive EME use of a colon between two main clauses (II.18-19), or a semi-colon separating a relative clause from its head word (I.16) were sensible. Insightful points that show linguistic knowledge and qualify EME and PDE usage were also awarded marks (e.g. ‘The writer also starts their sentence with the coordinating conjunction “And”. This is grammatically something that isn’t encouraged in PDE as it is seen to create an informal tenor.’). This response shows an intelligent application of linguistic knowledge.

Candidates should be reminded that they are required to support their points and label their examples using appropriate terminology. Although this is becoming less common, candidates also need to be reminded that discussion of EME spelling is not relevant in part (d).

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 use of very brief notes that fail to explain the language change features in sufficient detail
- the precise labelling of archaic verb inflections and negatives in part (c)
- the focus of part (d) responses
- the ability to identify and accurately describe word classes – particularly conjunctions.

Question 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, taking account of the key information linked to genre (conduct literature) and audience (young women). Where there was evidence of close reading combined with the application of knowledge, responses were able to demonstrate some high order skills. Candidates who were able to apply information from the rubric to their reading and analysis of the texts were also able to develop an effective response.

Candidates needed to consider three advisory extracts offering advice to young women at different times, focusing on who was writing, the way the target audience was engaged, and the advice offered in each text. It was good to see many candidates engaging with the presentation of advice, recognising where gender stereotypes were used or challenged. In the more successful responses, there was a clear understanding that the writer of Text A was advocating the importance of education for women; the writer of Text B was deterring young women from gaming; and the writer of Text C was encouraging girls to be active and in control. 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 conduct literature. This was particularly the case where candidates relied too heavily on pre-learnt material in the light of the advance information.

This information had clearly been used to prepare candidates well for tackling the extracts. They were able to identify and discuss key genre features, showing their understanding of advisory texts. In some cases, however, responses were very formulaic with paragraphs narrowly focused on features such as abstract nouns, evaluative adjectives, modal verbs, pronouns and grammatical mood (imperatives and interrogatives). Topic sentences tended to limit engagement with meaning by targeting a specific linguistic or genre feature (e.g. 'One common feature of advice texts ...', 'Another convention that has remained in advice texts ...', 'Another linguistic technique in conduct literature ...', or 'Interrogative sentences are common in advisory literature ...'). The range of features was appropriate, but candidates often used an observational approach (feature-spotting), citing examples of a particular feature across the three texts without considering meaning in context.

There were some interesting connections established between the texts exploring cultural attitudes in different periods, the gender/status of the writers, changes in tenor, religious references (or their absence), the use of culturally relevant analogies (e.g. reading plays and romances, Text A; worthy pastimes for women, Text B; dealing with drivers, Text C). These links gave candidates the opportunity to explore the texts meaningfully.

Most candidates managed to explore attitudes to the target audience. They recognised differences emerging according to the social and cultural expectations of women at the time of publication: Text A, while adopting a critical attitude to young women's frivolous conversation and tendency to read for leisure, challenges gender inequality and the contemporary belief that women *have no Soules*; Text B reinforces stereotypical domestic gender roles and places emphasis on the importance of reputation for young women; and Text C advocates the health benefits of physical exercise, while warning girls against *showing off*. There was some appropriate selection of textual support to underpin discussion with candidates recognising the importance of loaded language (e.g. evaluative adjectives, connotations of verbs) in creating attitudes.

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 the need for equal education rights, careful readers recognised Astell's more traditional suggestion that an appropriate spiritual education would make young women *more agreeable and vselfull in company*. In Text B, careful readers recognised that the writer's apparently moderate point of view (twice describing gaming as *innocent*) and humble tone (*I beg leave to advance ...*) is undercut by the moral judgement in his choice of language (the deontic modal *may*; the loaded verbs *impairs*, *perverts* and *softens*; the weighted language of his four *Arguments*). In Text C, careful readers commented on the contrast between explicitly female-gendered language such as *mistress* giving agency to girls alongside adjectives like *delicate*, *limp* and *fatigued* that paint a picture of a stereotypical, helpless girl.

Candidates needed to select relevant textual support to underpin their points. This evidence should be focused and concise – there is rarely a need to quote a whole sentence. Where candidates did this, they often then requoted the one or two words they wished to comment on. For the most part, candidates should use quotations to explore meaning rather than to finish their sentences (e.g. ‘Mary Astell mentions the reason why men and women have such intelligent souls “Since GOD hath giuen Women as well as Men intelligent Souls.”). In this case, the candidate did little more than paraphrase the content rather than exploring the effect of the adjective and the religious context. Equally, quotations should be embedded rather than tacked on at the end of sentences.

Limited use of terminology continues to be a problem in many scripts – and this impacts the mark awarded in AO4. Candidates should use a range of appropriate terminology from across the language levels to support their discussion – 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 word classes does not fulfil the AO4 criteria that discussion should be ‘informed’ by the use of linguistic terminology. Where candidates are using appropriate terms, they also need to think about how they are embedding them in their sentences. In some cases, crowbarring a term into a sentence can result in an awkward style (e.g. ‘The idea that someone as important as the proper noun “God” has performed the verb phrase “has giuen” for the noun phrase “women as well as men” connotes that Astell believes men and women are as capable as each other if society would give them equal opportunities.’).

Characteristics of successful responses:

- well-shaped essay responses that clearly address the question (genre and target audience)
- discussion of relevant contextual features linked directly to content and meaning
- 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
- there should be explicit references to the content and meaning of the extracts
- candidates need to use terminology from across the language levels.

Conclusion

Candidates had once again been well prepared, and their knowledge of language change was sound. Where candidates were less successful, it was often because they observed features of advisory texts rather than engaging with details and exploring the meaning of the extracts. There was evidence, however, of some insightful and engaged responses with candidates exploring and commenting purposefully on the advice offered to young women in different periods.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2022

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 4 - SPOKEN TEXTS AND CREATIVE RE-CASTING

General Comments

In general, candidates seemed to have been very well prepared for this unit. Most candidates directly addressed the requirements of the different assessment objectives across the paper in their responses. In Section A, the majority of candidates seemed to find both texts accessible and engaging, and most rose to the challenge of exploring language in the two differing contexts in relevant depth and detail.

In Section B, there was a widespread understanding of the genre and context that had been set in the task. Candidates explored many different aspects of gender in their responses, and many demonstrated intellectual sensitivity and finesse in the subsequent article that was produced. Previous reports noted that Section B responses have often been markedly shorter than the indicative 400-word guidance in the prompt. This year, although there were still some exam scripts where it was clear that time had been focused disproportionately on Section A, to the detriment of Section B, these formed a very small minority of the cohort. Most Section B responses indicated that the candidate had set aside a suitable portion of their allocated time to craft their creative recasting.

Section A: Analysing Spoken Language

The two texts focused on spoken interactions in which participants explored the controversial topics of gender roles and gender pay disparities respectively. The different broadcast contexts implied two quite distinctive functional frameworks for the interactions, and most candidates used these successfully as reference points for their analysis. In Text A, the additional context of the television audience, hoping to be entertained by controversy and interpersonal complexity, served as a nuanced interpretive lens for many candidates. Most candidates managed to explore the shifting power dynamic within the text, and many used their analytical skills to chart this in satisfying detail. Indeed, it was clear that many candidates enjoyed clarifying and exploring the subtle ways in which Camilla Thurlow and Jonny Mitchell negotiated their understanding of feminism and gender roles.

In Text B, many candidates focused on the ways in which the two interviewees used a variety of language forms to present opinion about the gender pay gap. In particular, there was much successful exploration of the balance between planned questions and responses, and the spontaneous speech of a live broadcast. Many candidates also analysed in detail the way in which the host, Jo Coburn, prompted and probed the guests. Most candidates successfully examined the register and lexical choices that would be typical of a political discussion programme on BBC 2.

Previous reports noted that some candidates focused on one text to the detriment of the other, but it was clear this year that the majority of candidates divided their discussion across the two texts in an even way. A small minority of candidates spent rather too long exploring Text A, and did not give themselves enough time to analyse Text B.

AO1

There were many confident, detailed analyses of the transcripts, and the most successful responses used wide and varied terminology to add precision and rigour. There were very few instances of feature-spotting, and most candidates kept their focus firmly on the effects of different language forms within the texts. Some candidates did restrict their analysis to an exploration of spoken language terms only, and often these were the terms exemplified on page 2 of the question paper. This made it difficult for them to conduct a really thorough discussion of the texts. Most responses used generally accurate expression, and there were some very impressive responses that sustained an effective academic style throughout.

AO2

Most candidates supported their discussion with appropriate textual references. This ensured that examination of concepts and issues within the texts was generally tied clearly to specific details in the majority of responses. Most candidates were able to discuss in some detail Camilla Thurlow's approach to handling Jonny Mitchell's opinions whilst simultaneously conveying her own, and most were able to examine how Rebecca Hilsenrath and Sophie Jarvis used language to give weight and significance to their professional opinions. There were many good and successful examples of candidates adopting a light-touch approach to theoretical discussion, using reference points as part of a broader discussion. There were still a few examples of candidates forcing the texts to demonstrate various gender theories of spoken language that were not really supported by the spoken interactions in question, but these did not occur frequently. In these cases, it was difficult for the candidates to demonstrate sound and sensible understanding of concepts and issues. Candidates were split fairly evenly as to whether they assumed the host of Text B, Jo Coburn, was male or female. Either way, most candidates very sensibly focused their discussion on the way this participant used language to organise the interchange, to invite the guests to speak and to probe their responses, and this generated some intelligent and often perceptive responses.

AO3

Most candidates conducted an analysis of contextual factors that was sensibly informed by an understanding of the two different broadcast genres. In particular, there was some effective analysis of the various contextual pressures that were at play in Text A, as the participants felt obliged to find out more about each other and to appeal to each other, whilst also presenting a persona that would be successful in the reality show format. In Text B, most candidates noted the relative formality of the current affairs genre, and the need for guests to balance fine detail in their spoken answers with more rhetorical features. More perceptive responses noted that there was a more complex picture in terms of lexical choices than might have been expected, and that context does not completely determine the language choices that individuals might make.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- nuanced consideration of context and the conditions it sets out for language use
- comprehensive analysis of language features which links clearly to issues and concepts anchored in the text
- light-touch theoretical references within a broader discussion.

Areas for improvement:

- avoid allowing theory to drive analysis against the grain of the language displayed in the texts
- do not restrict analysis to the spoken language features exemplified at the start of the question paper
- avoid over-simplified, over-determined constructions of context.

Section B: Creative Recasting

Most candidates understood the text type that was required in the task and set about constructing an article that would be likely to engage a school website audience. Most candidates restricted their concept of notional audience to students of a similar age, but some reasoned plausibly that a school website could have a broader readership of parents or people from the wider community and adjusted their writing in line with this. For some candidates, the framing device of the website encouraged them to incorporate some appropriate features into their writing, such as clickable links, but this was almost universally done in a light-touch way which complemented, rather than detracted from, the substance of the article. Many candidates assumed they were simply writing an article which would be later uploaded to the website. Both approaches were valid.

A02

Most candidates demonstrated that they had an awareness of the genre. Most took an appropriately selected persuasive approach and used the article to argue for greater awareness of gender issues. Some candidates confidently took the article into quite sophisticated territory and explored a variety of transgender issues. Where this interpretation of the task was adopted, candidates were able to display a secure understanding of language issues, and many explored changing language use in relation to gender with subtlety and sensitivity.

A05

A small minority of candidates struggled to generate content that matched the requirements of the task. These responses found it difficult to move beyond repetitive, vague exhortations to respect gender. Where candidates used material from the texts, this was generally done in a carefully judged manner and details were woven sensibly into the response. Typically, this was developed through successful use of pay gap details from Text B. Occasionally, candidates over-used in-jokes about the school context that they had chosen. In moderation, this was a reasonable attempt to lighten the tone of an article that had a serious topic area, but used to excess, it became less effective. A small minority of candidates made very controversial linguistic choices that would be very unlikely to be published on a school website. Most candidates made linguistic choices that were at least competent, and many produced writing that was purposeful and original. Many drew successfully on their knowledge of current affairs to develop suitable content that would be genuinely engaging for the likely audience. Most candidates deployed some suitable rhetorical techniques, and a few candidates did so with real flair. There were only a few instances of candidates overusing this approach, producing writing that became rather one-dimensional. A few candidates produced an article which was largely focused on appropriate conduct within school. Although this was broadly a suitable approach to developing content, they tended to run out of material and were either underdeveloped in terms of the general guidance about length, or they became rather repetitive. In general, there was limited evidence of planning, and in some instances, a brief plan may have been enough to indicate likely shortcomings before candidates committed themselves to a niche approach.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- stylistic choices that explored the topic in an engaging and thought-provoking manner
- sensitivity to the language of gender difference
- balance between the use of opinion, information and persuasion.

Areas for improvement:

- avoid narrow interpretations of the task which make it difficult to develop an extended response
- avoid overuse of single strategies such as formulaic rhetorical devices, or, in this particular example, repeated jocular asides to the reader
- check all linguistic choices fall within the common sense boundaries of acceptability for the given context and audience.

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

General Comments

The majority of centres submitted their Unit 5 NEA samples in accordance with the examination board's requirements and by the required date. As indicated in the Examiner's Report from 2019, the specification states clearly that 'this unit gives opportunities for language research which has personal relevance. It is designed to engage learners with the theme of language and identity.' It was good to see that candidates had been encouraged by centres to pursue their own language interests and that they had undertaken 'the language investigation independently. However, there were still a significant number of centres and individual candidate folders in which the word 'identity' did not feature in the specific title, sometimes with very implicit or no reference to this focus. As a result of this lack of focus, the quality of analysis and evaluation of the data as well as the line of argument was hindered, preventing some students from being able to access the higher Bands 4 and 5 where secure and perceptive interpretations of the topic and concepts/issues are required. Centres are strongly encouraged to revisit the WJEC/CBAC guidance in respect of task setting located on the WJEC/CBAC website.

Administration and presentation of samples were generally very good, however, there were some instances of missing NEA cover sheet information, for example, centre names, candidate numbers, dates, aspect of study and descriptions of the data. There were rare occasions where candidates had not signed the declaration and it is a regulatory requirement that all candidates sign the declaration. In addition, in a small number of cases, there were some clerical errors in respect of the addition of the different assessment objectives for the total folder mark and discrepancies with what was entered on IAMIS.

The majority of candidates chose the Culture and Gender aspects of study for specific focus of their language investigation. A few students chose Self-representation and fewer still chose Diversity. Although many centres had encouraged candidates to explore different aspects of study, some centres had still encouraged a variety of different investigations under one specific aspect (Culture or Self-Representation). Some high-quality data was obtained and analysed/evaluated fruitfully in the higher achieving folders. Whilst this approach is acceptable, centres should still ensure that there are overviews and introductions to the four different aspects of identity study, so that the breadth of the specification has been covered. Candidates can then make their own informed, independent decisions about which aspect to investigate. As highlighted in the Principal Moderator's Report from 2019, child language acquisition investigations are not a prescribed aspect of study given that this is covered elsewhere in the specification. Unfortunately, there were a small number of investigations submitted this year still focussing on child language acquisition. In addition, there were one or two investigations which focussed on political power, whereas these candidates could have been guided to re-focus their investigations to belief systems as bullet pointed under the Language and Culture aspect of study. It was very pleasing to see that there were no data sets that included translated texts which provide provenance challenges in respect of analysis and evaluation.

Careful selection of an appropriate breadth of data with carefully controlled extra-linguistic variables often resulted in a more sophisticated analysis and perceptive interpretation of the identity topic. There were a number of candidates where only two items of data had been analysed in direct comparison and a smaller number of candidates where too much data had been collected. In both cases, the amount of data can be limiting to candidates to provide effective and appropriate discussion within the word count ranges stated in the specification.

All centres submissions were a pleasure to read and it was clear that centres and candidates had worked hard on this NEA component.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The Assessment Objectives

Centres demonstrated very good understanding and application of all assessment objectives as evidenced by detailed marginal and summative comments. Some centres used highlighted assessment criteria grids by the main assessor and as part of the internal standardising process, which were models of good, rigorous practice.

Centres clearly understand the three different strands to **AO1** with AO1a focussing on appropriate methods of language analysis, AO1b focussing on associated terminology and apt selection and AO1c focussing on coherent written expression and structuring. As part of **AO1a**, it is important that candidates discuss the provenance and rationale for the collection of their corpus of data, whilst avoiding lengthy descriptive accounts of the data, particularly in awarding Bands 3, 4 and 5. Context paragraphs at the top of any data submitted would not be included within the final word count and would simply need some explicit succinct reference within the investigation itself. Candidates achieving high bands for **AO1b** demonstrated a wide range of carefully selected examples from the data set, showing sophisticated and secure knowledge of a wide range of language levels. Word, phrase, clause and sentence level analysis was often seen in the higher achieving folders. In contrast, lower band achievement evidenced work which focussed primarily on word level (lexis, semantics and word classes) analysis. In addition, terminology was often used but without appropriate exemplification. For **AO1c**, the coherent written expression was highly academic, engaging and tightly focussed on the data and identity topic with a strong, cohesive line of argument. Lower achieving folders often demonstrated work which had not been proof-read with frequent lapses in expression, were haphazardly organised and often did not have a conclusion.

AO2 requires candidates to demonstrate critical understanding of language concepts and issues relevant to language use. Whilst theories are not explicitly referenced within this AO, there has been previous CPD training and resources are available on the WJEC/CBAC site demonstrating how theories can illuminate and enlighten data analysis in respect of the identity focus. Higher achieving folders clearly demonstrated critical and perceptive exploration of the relevant identity topic, applying and debating a range of theories in an intelligent manner. Folders at the lower end of the spectrum would not make any reference to theories or if they did, they would be “shoe-horned” in and be quite general in application.

AO3 focuses on the analysis and evaluation of contextual factors such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, situation, etc, and how these affect the production and reception of meaning. The highest achieving folders had strong, confident understanding of a range of contextual factors, whereas the lower achieving folders relied too much on general contextual description without close linking to language analysis (AO1) and the data.

It is recommended to consult the WJEC standardising material for Unit 5 (available on the website), which is good practice, particularly before embarking upon centre assessment and included as part of the internal standardising process.

The Four Aspects of Study

1. Language and Self-Representation

More students chose this aspect of study in comparison to previous years. Higher achieving folders demonstrated the collection of high-quality data which led to sophisticated and perceptive analysis and evaluation of the identity topic. Data included multimodal forms such as Instagram and Whatsapp as well as spoken transcripts in respect of a voice note conversation. Audiences were also varied in respect of discourse with year 11 English teacher, parent and male/female friends allowing for confident contextual evaluation (AO3). Theories such as Goffman's/Brown and Levinson's face theory, Leech's 'Banter Principle' and Lakoff's politeness principles were explored at an intelligent level (AO2). Lower achieving folders engaged with concepts, issues and theories at a more general level and at best sensible discussion with references to politeness and power relationships. Analysis was often limited to word and phrase level analysis. These investigations would have benefited from a sharper title focus on identity.

On rare occasions, there was misunderstanding of the self-representation aspect by collecting data of politicians and celebrities with a focus on their self-representation as opposed to the candidate's own use of language.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *Using relevant data, how does my language in different situations and contexts represent me as a seventeen-year-old female, and construct the linguistic identities that construct my personal linguistic repertoire?*
- *Using two short transcripts of my own speaking, I will explore if and to what extent I change my own identity and accommodate to other people's idiolect and if accommodation theory is the reason for this.*

Two examples of less focused titles:

- *How does my use of language differ depending on a different social situation and contrasting given the context and my target audience?*
- *How does content, context, audience and purpose affect the way I use language?*

2. Language and Gender

This was the second most popular aspect of study this series. A range of very interesting primary data was collected covering political interviews with Theresa May, former British PM, and British writer, Afua Hirsch to Boris Johnson, Kamala Harris and I'm A Celebrity star, Kendra Wilkinson. The higher achieving folders demonstrated a sophisticated range of language features covering discourse, semantics, phonology/prosody and grammar. Lower achieving folders often made sweeping generalisations with loose reference to more limited data sets. There was a tendency for candidates across the levels spectrum to focus on more outdated gender theorists such as Lakoff.

Whilst there was reference to more illuminating theories such as De Klerk's work on taboo language/expletives, centres are advised to advise students to cover the full spectrum of gender theoretical approaches covering deficit (Lakoff), dominance (Zimmerman and West, Fishman), difference (Tannen, Coates), communities of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet) and performativity models (Butler).

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *Using relevant data, is gender or status the most significant factor in linguistic choices in creating a political identity?*
- *Using relevant data, how do script writers of Clueless create identities for the three main female characters?*

Two examples of less focused titles:

- *An analysis of the language used to portray women in perfume advertisements.*
- *Does Adele's use of language on the Graham Norton Show defend the gender and language theory?*

3. Language and Culture

This was the most popular aspect of language study chosen by candidates for independent research. A range of very interesting data ranging across written and spoken modes was collected covering domains such as politics, journalism and celebrities. Identities of journalists/presenters such as American Diane Sawyer, iconic Welsh punk singer Joe Talbot and drag queen Ru Paul were analysed and evaluated with interest and enthusiasm.

High achieving folders demonstrated analysis of a range of sophisticated language features covering grammar, morphology, semantics and linking prosodic features to word classes. Lower achieving folders were limited to word level analysis with some references to sentence functions. Higher achieving folders engaged with speaker behaviour and identity issues and concepts. Some good use of theory was seen in referring to Brown and Levinson's Face Threatening Acts and Thorne's study of the language of stand-up comedians. However, it was noticeable that in many investigations, there was a lack of theory to underpin identity issues and concepts in relation to culture. There was stronger, confident contextual awareness in the higher achieving folders linked to precise linguistic features. Contextual awareness was more generalised and lacked precise linking to language features and the data in the lower achieving folders.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse how stand-up comedians use language to construct their identities for comedic effect.*
- *Using relevant data, investigate the language used by Arnold Schwarzenegger to construct an identity in different contexts.*

Two examples of less focused titles:

- *How does the media treat black and white sports people differently?*
- *How does a politician's language influence the way their voter base acts: Trump and The Capitol riot?*

4. Language and Diversity

For this series, this was the least popular aspect of investigation study. However, the candidates who chose this area, collected a variety of interesting primary data, including transcripts with an individual with a severe learning disability, scripted data from Grey's Anatomy as well as secondary transcripts of American lawyers.

For the higher achieving folders, a range of sophisticated language features were discussed perceptively covering word, phrase and sentence level analysis. Theories were used in an illuminating way to discuss language issues, for example, Giles' accommodation theory in both investigations focusing on individuals with specific educational needs and lawyers. Fairclough's "unequal encounters" theoretical approach was also discussed with intelligence in respect of the language of lawyers. Lower achieving folders attempted were too diverse in tackling a range of extra-linguistic variables such as race, gender and sexuality, whereas a focus on one of them would have been more fruitful. Linguistic terminology was very limited in these investigations, not moving much beyond word class analysis and some spoken forms. There was a straightforward discussion of language concepts and issues with no reference to theory. There was some sensible discussion of how context shaped meaning.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the language used by legal professionals in order to construct their occupational identity.*
- *Using relevant data, I will investigate and analyse how the language within crime news coverage differs when the offenders are of contrasting ethnic minorities/identities.*

A less focused title:

- *The representation of race, gender inequality and sexuality in Grey's Anatomy. Is it done well?*

Summary of key points

Characteristics of successful NEA responses:

- Well focused titles referring specifically to the NEA theme of identity.
- Well selected, high-quality corpus of data with identity and the aspect of study being central in the decision-making process.
- A sophisticated range of accurate language terminology covering word, phrase, clause and sentence level analysis and a range of language levels. Carefully selected examples from the data.
- Intelligent and coherent lines of argument in relation to the title/question.
- Proof-read, edited and accurate written expression.
- Language concepts, issues and theories are carefully selected and discussed, supported, refuted, argued in direct relation to the data set and the identity focus.
- Confident, subtle interpretations of how identity is constructed and affected by different contextual factors.

Areas for Improvement

- Identity should be explicitly referenced in the title and analysed/evaluated throughout the investigation.
- More breadth and depth of primary data rather than relying on one or two sources.
- More range of language levels with well selected examples needed.
- Gender theories should move beyond Lakoff's deficit approach.
- A range of language concepts and issues with underpinning theories should be analysed and discussed in direct relation to the data set.
- Analysis and evaluation of data rather than description.

Summary of key points: advice to centres

- Titles should be reviewed to ensure that they have an explicit focus on language and identity.
- Primary data should be collected with the identity and the particular aspect of study (self-representation, gender, culture and diversity) in mind.
- Candidates should research a range of appropriate and relevant theories, concepts and issues to illuminate their particular area of study. In particular, the broad range of older and more contemporary gender theories should be researched.
- Child Language Acquisition and Power are not aspects of study available for this NEA unit.
- Language and Self-representation should focus on the candidate's own use of language.
- Please follow specific advice and any recommendations made in your centre's moderation report.

Conclusion

My team of moderators and I would like to thank all the students and staff for their time and hard work in producing an A level English Language NEA submission which was a pleasure to moderate. The sheer variety of quality data and specific areas of language and identity study together with illuminating analysis and evaluation was not dissimilar to previous NEA submissions. Students and staff are commended for their valiant efforts in what has been a difficult period. We look forward to next year's submission.



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