



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

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

SUMMER 2018

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2018
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 1 – EXPLORING LANGUAGE

General Comments

Whilst the paper provided challenge, it was pleasing to see that candidates were able to access the full range of marks available, including a few candidates who were able to achieve full marks. Centres had addressed some of the key messages arising from last summer's examinations. In particular, the culture of embedding connections for AO4 in Section A seems well established in many centres. Furthermore, for Section B there was less evidence this year that students had been drilled in advance with ready-made responses which simply did not meet the full requirements of the specific task they had been given, and which were used by the student to set down everything they had been taught about a particular topic. It is still worth reminding candidates that they are allowed to include in their discussion prior knowledge of 21st century English genres, as they are invited for AO2 and AO3 to 'use [their] knowledge of contemporary English'. In order to avoid bunching of marks, however, around the top of Band 2 and bottom of Band 3, centres would be advised to encourage candidates to respond to the data they have been given in the examination paper.

Time management seemed a strength for many candidates, who seemed to apportion their allotted time appropriately in order to tackle the three texts in Section A and the full range of data in Section B.

Section A: Analysing Language

Candidates had to analyse the language used in three texts which presented a range of views on the election in November 2016 of President Donald Trump. They were required to tackle texts from differing contexts: an editorial in Text A, an online article in Text B, and a Facebook post from the official account of the British Prime Minister in Text C. The writers of each of the texts used different linguistic techniques to express their respective views on Trump's success. Text A was an editorial from the *New Yorker* magazine in which the author, David Remnick, mounted a scathing denunciation of Trump's election, using clearly biased language to offer a pessimistic analysis of what this event represented. By contrast, Text B's biases in support of Trump's victory, though present, were more subtly rendered. Finally, Text C was much more measured in its tone, and used diplomatic language designed to express an official congratulations, being careful to avoid hyperbolic or tendentious lexical choices.

AO1

The higher attaining candidates were able to intelligently analyse the three texts, establishing a clear method of analysis. For some of these candidates, this method of analysis involved taking a thematic approach, for example comparing and contrasting the perspectives of the three texts and how language and grammar constructed meaning. Other high scoring candidates based their method of analysis on an exploration of linguistic and grammatical techniques, for example, the examination of adjectives and pre- and post-

modification being used in differing ways to reflect the respective attitudes towards their subject. Either of these approaches can be successful, provided they are well supported by judicious and confident use of appropriate linguistic terminology. The second of these approaches – identifying lexical or grammatical techniques first then examining how these techniques enabled authors to express their viewpoints – did carry a risk for lower attaining candidates who were not able to avoid merely feature spotting; their analyses tended to be much more superficial. For example, stating that the main difference between Text A and Text B is the use of pronouns is not going to lead to strong analysis, unless it is explicitly connected to a discussion of how these pronouns construct each writer’s perspective on the outcome of the election.

AO3

Under AO3, candidates had to explore how the differences in the specific contexts of production of each text affected the context of reception construction of meaning and the context of reception. Here, the higher attaining candidates were able to produce an intelligent evaluation of the similarities and differences of audience and purpose across the three texts. For example, high scoring candidates deduced from Remnick’s critical stance of the ‘right-wing’ that the audience of Text A was likely to be composed of educated liberals who would have been critical of Trump and dismayed at his election victory. Similarly, although Text B did not deploy obviously tendentious language, these candidates could discern, for example, through the use of passive voice in referring to how Hillary Clinton the defeated opponent ‘was thwarted’ in her bid for election, that the stance taken by the publisher of this piece was pro-Trump. For Text C, many candidates could see that the audience for the Facebook post was international, and that the purpose to express an official response to the election result, and at the same time affirm an ‘enduring’ and ‘special’ relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Some candidates missed opportunities to examine the specific links between contexts and subtexts, and instead simply copied key aspects of the rubric, accepting them at face value without interrogating them sufficiently.

AO4

It is encouraging to see that centres have addressed the significant weighting of this AO when preparing candidates for the examination. AO4, the ability to establish and sustain connections, is worth 40% of the marks for this section of the paper. As in previous years, there was a range of approaches, many of them valid. For example, some higher attaining candidates produced an overview of all three texts, before going on to discuss Text A. Following this, they discussed Text B, bringing in to their discussion of that text some aspects of Text A which lent shade and nuance to their discussion of this text. Finally, this approach involved discussing Text C in the light of ideas explored in the previous two texts. Other candidates adopted an equally successful approach which involved sustaining connections between the three texts throughout rather than dealing with each text in turn. Nevertheless, there were still some candidates who only tackled AO4 in a paragraph at the end of their response, without offering any evidence from the texts to support their discussion.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Purposeful selection of textual evidence and application of linguistic terminology.
- Sustained connections between the three texts.
- Insightful engagement with contexts and subtexts.

Areas for improvement

- Avoid feature spotting.
- Ensure balanced coverage of all three texts.
- Ground discussion securely in the texts’ specific contexts, rather than simply repeating the key points of the rubric.

- Avoid extracting evidence from the precise context of its use (e.g. the writer of Text A uses the noun 'friend', therefore the tone of the whole text is informal; the writer of Text B says the victory of Trump is 'stunning' when the precise pre-modifier is 'establishment-stunning', a phrase, the meaning of which is completely different).

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Remind candidates that they must give evidence for every point they make to avoid generic discussion not securely grounded in the texts.
- Remind candidates that connections between texts must be sustained throughout the response, since AO4 offers the greatest weighting of marks for this section of the examination.
- Terminology should support the discussion and not drive it in order to avoid feature spotting.

Section B: Contemporary English

Section B was worth 25 marks. It was encouraging to see that many candidates had given themselves sufficient time to tackle this section accordingly. A further pleasing aspect was that more candidates grouped the texts according to attitudes or self-representation (AO2) or contexts (AO3), and avoided 'surfing' through texts one by one. Although AO4 (connections) was not assessed in this question, it is always worth encouraging candidates to group in this way in order to produce a coherent critical evaluation of the data that can be successfully managed in the time.

Candidates were asked to use their knowledge of contemporary English in order to evaluate how context affected writers' use of language in Instagram bios. It is worth emphasising that the wording of the question steered candidates towards *these* bios, rather than simply discussing Instagram bios more generally. Many candidates included in their own examples of language used in Instagram bios. This was appropriate under 'knowledge of contemporary English', but they were only awarded the higher marks if they then brought their discussion back to the specific data in front of them.

AO2

Under AO2, candidates were expected to examine the medium of Instagram bios. They gained marks if they were able to explore the self-representational aspects of the bios and the constraints imposed by the fact that Instagram is a medium for predominantly pictorial images and therefore text should be minimised. Successful candidates discerned the writers' differing approaches to representation themselves. For example, some (like the authors of Text 2 and Text 4) were humorous, while others (for example, Text 3) were more earnest and philosophical. Higher scoring candidates were able to see how certain genre elements of Instagram bios (such as the use of the hashtag) were features of the wider field of genres available in social media, such as Tumblr or Twitter. Most crucially, any discussion here had to be supported by concise selection of textual support, using relevant linguistic terminology. It is worth reminding candidates that when selecting features they could prioritise aspects of language associated with 21st century English, such as non-standard capitalisation and punctuation, clipping, non-standard compounding and blends, initialisms and acronyms. It is still important, however, to refer to core linguistic terminology, such as word classes, phrases, clauses and sentence moods. Band 1/2 responses featured very few specific references to the data and very few terms.

AO3

For AO3, candidates were required to consider how contextual factors contributed to the construction and reception of meaning in the data provided. It is worth reminding candidates that significant aspects of the contexts of each text are provided for them in the brackets following the text number. For example, Text 1 is identified as being written by an American politician. Awareness of this fact enabled stronger candidates to consider how self-representation is affected by the specific social or professional or cultural background of each contributor. Other aspects to consider here are the number of 'followers' and 'following', as these contextual details could lead to a discussion of the concept of popularity, as well as a fertile exploration of the audience and purpose of each bio. A key differentiator between stronger and weaker responses was the ability to engage with a close reading of language and subtext. For example, higher scoring candidates were able to point to the reference in Text 6 to it being from the 'official' account of the Prime Minister and use this as a way into discussing the phenomenon of 'fake news' and fraudulent online identities.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Discussion was anchored securely in the specific context of the text's production and reception.
- Selection of textual evidence was precise and purposeful.
- A balanced selection of linguistic features typical of 21st century English and more general linguistic features.
- Clear links established between language features and self-representation.

Areas for improvement

- Avoid a narrow range of textual evidence.
- Avoid feature spotting.
- Avoid 'surfing' through the data one text at a time.
- Avoid sweeping generalisations (e.g. 'all writers on Instagram are going to be younger people who can use technology' or 'all Instagram users deploy informal language').
- Avoid bringing in pre-learned responses.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Candidates are well advised to use group the data by perspective or by context.
- Candidates should be guided to read the precise language in the task, which specifically steers them to focus on *these* bios, rather than bios in general.

Conclusion

For section A, candidates' preparation for this assessment is immeasurably improved if they are exposed to a wide array of texts covering diverse genres and contexts, especially focusing on how perspective is constructed in each of these texts. For section B, candidates should be given the opportunity to engage with 21st century texts from a range of contexts.

Finally, a crucial skill assessed in this paper is the ability to focus on precise textual detail whilst at the same time considering how that detail relates to the 'bigger picture' of each text.

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UNIT 2 – LANGUAGE ISSUES AND ORIGINAL AND CRITICAL WRITING

General Comments

It was pleasing to see that most candidates were well prepared 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. It was clear to see that the creative writing tasks provided candidates with the opportunity to write in genres and on topics that they were familiar with and many of these suggested both a good deal of creativity and enthusiasm in the creation of the responses. Commentaries often demonstrated good knowledge and supported the writing choices well.

Question 1 proved to be by far the more popular option.

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

Some candidates used a wide range of accurate linguistic terminology in the analysis of the stimulus texts, although this was less the case with their own supporting examples. It is always worth remembering that the weighting of **AO1** is double in this question so candidates who used very little terminology were unable to access the full mark range. In analysis of the extracts, candidates were able to use a reasonable range of terminology accurately, but some lack of precision prevented candidates from gaining higher marks. There were significant inaccuracies in labelling both sentence types and moods and, as noted in last year's report, there was still fairly frequent use of 'phrase' to refer to a stretch of language, rather than its specific syntactic application. There were efforts to use 'noun phrase', 'verb phrase' and 'adjectival phrase' but these were frequently applied incorrectly. It was pleasing to note that the candidates' own written expression was generally very accurate. Of some concern, however, in regard to appropriate methods of analysis, was a frequent lack of focus on the question, whereby a significant proportion of candidates for 1a) spent far too long focusing on the language of those in positions of power, rather than subordinates, whilst candidates for 2a) approached the question by exclusively undertaking a straightforward textual analysis of the text itself, rather than maintaining a close focus on the linguistic features of mobile phone interactions.

Most candidates applied a wide range of theories for **AO2** to support their answer. It was very pleasing to note the inclusion of many of the speech theories mentioned in last year's report: Grice, Giles's accommodation theory, Lakoff's Politeness Principle, Goffman/Brown and Levinson for face theory as well as some acknowledgement of relevant theories referring to gender and power. Last year's report noted that many of these had been rather imposed upon written texts but this year's inclusion of spoken/multi-modal stimuli clearly meant that there was the opportunity to apply these productively. There was a strong sense that these were taught well but there were some instances of candidates misapplying them a little – quite a few, for example, mistook Grice's maxim of manner to pertain to the idea of 'manners', thereby linking it to politeness, and his maxim of quality to high register formality rather than truth-telling, while there were a number of occasions where negative

politeness/negative face were used to describe rudeness rather than an unwillingness to impose or strategies used to mitigate imposition.

It should be remembered that the 10 marks available for AO2 cover both concepts (formality, genre etc.) as well as theoretical issues. As stated above, the mode of the stimulus texts on this occasion enabled a successful theoretical approach from candidates equipped with this knowledge but stimulus texts can be drawn from both spoken and written modes and, as last year's report noted, the application of speech theories to written mode texts is not good practice and cannot be rewarded. It is also worth stating that general presentation of theoretical knowledge without its being linked to specific examples will limit success.

Candidates who did not give wider context examples from their own experience struggled to achieve above band 2 for **AO3**, unless there was particularly insightful understanding of meaning demonstrated. Also rewarded here was the evaluation of the effectiveness of language used both in the stimulus texts themselves and candidates' own examples.

Question 1a) Language and Power

This question was significantly more popular than 2a). Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate how people in subordinate positions use language in response to power. It was clearly stated that they should use examples from the extracts and **their own knowledge** to answer the question. The extracts were taken from two different job interviews.

The strongest responses had a clearly structured approach, with an introduction that identified different types of power and the means by which subordinates can respond to it, (whether through submissive acceptance or more assertive challenge) then moving on to analyse the extract before broadening discussion out to consider their own examples. The language of the extracts proved accessible to all candidates and nearly all used some spoken language terminology to demonstrate their understanding of the extracts' mode. It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of candidates picked up on the marked contrast between Mr Holleman's confidence in the face of interrogation and Mr Jones's nervousness despite the less confrontational approach of his interviewer.

Most candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the context and issue, producing some insightful analysis of the stimulus texts. There was also some productive analysis of wider context examples, though many candidates limited their discussion to the stimulus material or provided very brief references to their own experience that were not entirely relevant to the question or were unsupported by specific quotations, the inclusion of which would have facilitated more productive analysis and discussion of the issue. There was some demonstration of the application of a wide range of terminology, although, in many cases, this was confined to the more straightforward use of word classes. Most candidates did, however, demonstrate a sound understanding of concepts and issues and there was evidence of much highly productive use of theoretical knowledge in a large number of responses. In particular, reference to politeness, face and accommodation theories worked very well, as did application of different power theories, for example, instrumental/influential power and Wareing's work on occupational/personal power. Some candidates also applied gender theory, though this was less successful when used to speculate about the identity of the interviewer.

As mentioned above, many candidates spent far too much time analysing the language of the speaker *with* power at the expense of concentrating on the subordinate. While some brief analysis of the powerful speakers' language was a perfectly acceptable way of contextualising the response of the subordinate, some candidates allowed this to dominate their response, both in analysis of the extracts and wider context examples, subsequently impacting negatively on the essay focus in regard to answering the question. The best responses used their analysis of the extracts as a starting point to an intelligent discussion of

the issue and were then able to explore a range of supporting examples from their own knowledge and experience. These included reference to classroom scenarios, relationships between parents and children, politicians and the voting public, celebrity interviews and police officers/judges/legal representatives with criminals or those wrongly accused of crime. One candidate recognised that the question did not specify a particular mode of language and explored subordinates' responses to powerful written mode texts, which was perfectly acceptable.

Question 2a) Language and Situation

This question was significantly less popular than question 1a). Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate the linguistic features of mobile phone interactions. It was clearly stated that they should use examples from the extract and **their own knowledge** to answer the question. The extract was taken from a guide to 'phonetiquette'.

The strongest responses had a clearly structured approach, with an introduction that identified different types of mobile phone interactions then moving on to analyse the extract before broadening discussion out to consider their own examples. The language of the extract proved accessible to all candidates and nearly all included some terminology associated with contemporary English technological usage.

Unfortunately, as mentioned above, many candidates rather missed the point of this question by embarking upon a general textual analysis of the stimulus material, rather than using it as a starting point to explore the context and issue. This was characterised by some speculation of the extract's intended audience and purpose and lexical / grammatical / graphological discussion of the text as a guide, rather than a focused consideration of how it might be made relevant to the question. There was some purposeful analysis, however, of the text messages themselves and the way in which they apparently contravened the guide's 'no-nos'. The best responses actually made a case against the apparent prescriptivism of the guide, arguing persuasively for the use of non-Standard English in the texts as being entirely representative of the form and therefore perfectly acceptable and, most importantly, unambiguous in the context of a close relationship between sender and audience. While it was not specified in the extract whether or not the two text message examples were part of the same conversation (i.e. that the second is a direct response to the first), the better responses kept an open mind about this, rather than imposing a reading on them as a conversation, as this led to speculation about the specific relationship between and/or identity of the texters. A small number of candidates actually interpreted the physical layout of the text messages, with the speech bubbles both 'pointing' to the left, as evidence of this being an example of 'sending more than two texts without a reply', as stated in the list of 'no-nos'. While this was perhaps understandable, it did rather limit the quality of response and lost some focus on the spirit of the question. Those candidates who used the idea of sending multiple texts, leaving lengthy voicemails, cold-calling, call-screening etc. in relation to face and politeness theories were far more successful, particularly when this was supported with quoted wider context examples from their own experience.

As text messaging is a multi-modal form, the use of spoken language theories was entirely acceptable and indeed, particularly for those candidates whose exploration of wider context examples took them in the direction of spoken mobile phone interactions, very helpful in exploring concepts and issues. There was some sound use of Grice, particularly when considering, in context, the brevity of the text message as a language form that should still avoid flouting the maxims of manner and quantity. There was also some application of gender theory in context, although much of this admittedly did take its lead from the 'xxx' used in the first text message example from the extract.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Essay structure with an introduction that addresses the question – different responses to power from subordinates or the linguistic features of mobile phone interactions.
- Close analysis of stimulus material using a good range of accurately applied terminology.
- Several wider context examples – including quotations, where relevant – from the candidate's own experience, closely analysed.
- Knowledge and close application to text/wider context examples of relevant theories and concepts as a means to develop analysis.
- Sustained focus on the detail of the question.

Areas for improvement

- Better focus on the essay question – some candidates focused heavily on speakers with power in 1a) and analysed the text as a guide, rather than selecting the relevant features of mobile phone interactions in 2a).
- More specific examples for wider context – often the scenarios suggested were relevant but not supported with quotations that the candidates could analyse
- Candidates need to be more precise in the application of terminology – particularly at a grammatical level.
- Range of terminology was quite limited.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Grammar terminology – sentence mood/type and precision of using phrase level terms should be a main focus.
- While this year's paper facilitated the application of a wide range of theories, it should be re-iterated that the use of these must be approached with a degree of selectivity and not at the expense of conceptual knowledge.
- Further work on 'exploding the question' in order to ensure sustained relevance is important.
- Candidates should ensure that they write a detailed response to this question, bearing in mind it is worth half the available marks of the paper, also remembering the double weighting (20 out of 40 possible marks) for AO1.
- Knowledge of possible wider context examples for AO3 marks is very important – candidates might consider a variety of potential sources for these, not least from SAMs and past papers on this unit.

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

AO5 is the sole Assessment Objective for this task. For this, candidates are asked to "demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways". As the marking grid suggests, this can be considered in relation to technical accuracy and fluency (which was largely secure), awareness of audience and genre conventions (mostly sound), choice of language to create specific effects (often quite confident) and the creation of a sense of individual voice (rather more variable). Some creative responses were significantly under the recommended word count and thus self-penalising.

Question 1b)

Writing an advice sheet for students preparing for job or university interviews clearly appealed to many candidates who enjoyed the task, producing engaging responses with a good sense of language chosen for audience and purpose, demonstrating a sound awareness of genre conventions, including appropriate structural and formatting devices.

There were just a few recurring issues: some candidates lost a little focus on the type of interview scenario they were advising on, particularly when they set out to advise on both job and university interviews. Sometimes, by attempting to address the audience in an appropriate tenor, candidates wrote too informally while, conversely, some candidates risked losing audience engagement by writing too formally. A number of candidates also lost focus on the set task by including content on CV/application form writing that would, of course, have happened in the application process rather than in interview. While the majority of candidates paid close attention to the graphological features of the genre, some failed to paragraph effectively: a key feature in maintaining audience engagement.

Question 2b)

Due to the popularity of question 1, far fewer students attempted this task, which asked them to tell a light-hearted or comic story in which a phone conversation is used to develop the plot. There were, however, a number of highly original and engaging responses that fully deserved the high marks they were awarded. There were, again, a few issues in some responses that could have been avoided by a closer reading of the task: a small number of candidates wrote stories that could never be described as either light-hearted or indeed comic, including material such as domestic abuse and mental illness, while a very small number misconstrued 'comic' as pertaining to graphic novels/magazines (it should be said that although none actually illustrated their responses, there were a number of super-hero characters making an appearance). Some candidates clearly also need a little reminder on how to lay out dialogue correctly. What constitutes a story – particularly in our post-modern, technical age – foregrounded a few interesting issues around narrative form: some responses were rather closer to playscripts than traditional narratives and while this was just about acceptable, it was also rather limiting in terms of affording candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their skills of creating description and imagery. One candidate created a transcript, complete with prosodic symbols, which clearly took the task too far out of context. One final cautionary note: writing for a much younger audience is a delicate skill to manage successfully and, unless candidates are specifically instructed to do this in the task, it is probably best avoided as it can be limiting to success.

Characteristics of successful responses

- A realistic expectation of what is achievable within the suggested word count.
- Close adherence to the parameters of the task.
- Precise, economical written expression.
- A clear sense of the candidate's own voice emerging.
- Clear, focussed knowledge of genre.

Areas for improvement

- Candidates must read the task carefully in order to ensure that all content is relevant.
- Technical accuracy is assessed; many responses clearly were not proof-read thoroughly.
- More effective paragraphing; some candidates did not paragraph at all – this was particularly noticeable in 1b).
- A number of candidates did not reach the recommended 350 words; by writing under 300 words they limited their achievement, while by writing much more they lost focus and clarity and could well have diverted time away from other parts of the unit, thereby potentially missing out on marks across the whole paper.
- Over-reliance on formulaic expression or cliché.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Further practice on the close interpretation of writing tasks is recommended.
- Candidates are encouraged to avoid formulaic/pre-prepared writing pieces – particularly for writing fiction as this often leads to a response that is rather imposed upon the task, rather than one which forms naturally from it.
- The importance of proof-reading skills to ensure technical accuracy and fluency should be reinforced.
- Candidates should be encouraged to develop the 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.
- There is advice on practising writing effectively for an audience in the CPD material on the WJEC website.

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

For **AO2**, candidates are assessed on their interpretation of the task (for example, genre and purpose) and their understanding of concepts and issues relevant to their language use. While, unlike 1a) or 2a), this is less about theories and more about mode, tenor, field, suitability of language choices for audience, etc., some candidates were able to successfully utilise reference to synthetic personalisation as a key feature in 1b). Candidates are also assessed under this AO on their use of accurate terminology and well-selected examples to highlight the use of specific features/techniques in their own writing.

The analysis of contextual factors, discussion of the construction of meaning and evaluation of their own writing are the assessed areas under **AO3**.

Questions 1c and 2c

The strongest responses focused on succinct close contextual analysis of specific features of their own writing piece, quoting precisely and economically, applying a wide range of terminology that demonstrated a clear awareness of the links between language features and effects created. Candidates who focused on the strengths of their writing within the context of its reception, rather than highlighting areas of weakness (which should have been addressed during the proof-reading process, anyway) were able to access the higher bands available for this task. Many commentaries resorted to lists of feature-spotting rather than productive analysis of meanings shaped by writing choices. A substantial number of candidates used sentence type/mood terminology inaccurately; this was particularly noticeable in regard to the use of the term 'rhetorical question', which was also applied to tag questions and hypophora. A good number of commentaries were very long and rather unfocused, suggesting both a lack of planning and possibly giving too much time to this task, worth 20 marks, instead of question a), worth 40.

Characteristics of successful responses

- A wide range of points from across the language levels.
- A clear focus on the strengths of the writing piece, supported by well-selected evidence.
- Insightful analysis of meanings created and effects achieved.
- Well-contextualised discussion that demonstrates how specific audiences are addressed, purposes are achieved or genre conventions are applied.

Areas for improvement

- Avoid feature spotting – all points should be developed to demonstrate effect achieved.

- Avoid lengthy contextual overviews which largely replicate the task details from the paper as this wastes time that could be better applied to productive analysis.
- All points should be supported with well-managed evidence from the candidate's own writing, rather than long quotations that may contain the feature that is being discussed.
- Candidates should apply precise linguistic terminology to support all points.

Summary of key points: considerations for centres

- Candidates should be encouraged to include points from all language levels wherever possible.
- Having a clear sense of the points that will be included in the commentary while undertaking the writing task is a good way for candidates to ensure their commentary and writing piece complement one another.
- Use of well-managed, specific quotation is crucial for success in commentary writing.
- A clear focus on the strengths of a piece within the context of its reception is to be encouraged.

Conclusion

Candidates had clearly been prepared for this unit and demonstrated some sound knowledge, both of linguistic features and appropriate concepts and issues. There were some genuinely entertaining writing pieces that were a pleasure to read. For future reference, it is vitally important that all candidates are encouraged to read all questions/tasks very clearly in order to ensure that responses are clearly focused and relevant to what has been asked.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
General Certificate of Education (New)
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UNIT 3 - LANGUAGE OVER TIME

General Comments

Candidates engaged with the letters finding plenty to discuss in terms of the relationships, the status of the participants, and the conventions of letters. Most managed to use their linguistic knowledge to unpick the texts, with appropriate discussion of the contextual factors. Timing was much better this year, with candidates allocating appropriate time to meet the demands of each question. Close reading was not always evident, however, with many responses lacking attention to the details of the texts – it should be clear from reading a response that the candidate is addressing the specific letters on the paper. In addition, there were still a number of cases where candidates wrote extensively about language change with little sense of meaning. While they demonstrated a good range of historical knowledge, the discussion was not focused on answering the question: the approach became discursive rather than analytical and evaluative. This clearly had a significant effect on the marks that could be awarded: there tended to be little purposeful use of textual support (AO2); meaning was not explored and contextual references were not related to the texts (AO3); limited connections were established and the use of linguistic terminology was often very narrow (AO4). There were also many short responses for Question 2, and the lack of range and depth inevitably affected the overall mark.

Language Over Time

Four equally weighted assessment objectives are covered with AO1 linked to the short questions and AO2, AO3 and AO4 linked to the extended response. In Question 2, marks are awarded for each separate assessment objective.

AO2

Candidates needed to demonstrate their knowledge of the letter genre explicitly, with a clear focus on each writer's relationship with the intended reader(s), and appropriate and concise textual support to underpin points made. Language change as a broad concept was not relevant unless points were explored in the context of the texts and linked to meaning e.g. the compounding of determiners and adjectives (*anew, alettell*) or the non-standard spelling of the vowel /ɪ/ as /e/ (*pecked, wecked, contenevs*) could be described as representative of the idiosyncratic spelling of a writer in a private, family context where emotions are running high. Discussion of issues (e.g. attitudes to events, social status, gender) was valid where it was linked directly to the content of the texts.

AO3

Candidates needed to engage with the letters, exploring details and interpreting meaning. Addressing context was central to the question e.g. events shaping the content of the letters (the separation; the death; the plea for help); a sense of the times in which the letters were written (religious references or their absence; money; methods of communication).

AO4

Candidates needed to develop links between the texts which amounted to more than the occasional use of basic connectives e.g. “However”, “also”, “similarly”, “Furthermore”. The use of linguistic terminology was also assessed under AO4. Candidates needed to analyse the letters using appropriate terminology to support the points made. More effective responses moved beyond the labelling of word classes and used a wider range of language levels.

Question 1 (short questions)

The approach to the short questions was more systematic this year, with many candidates recognising the importance of precise labelling and concise description of each language change feature. Last year’s advice that responses to Q1(a) to (d) could be tackled in less than a page had clearly been noted, and most were of an appropriate length. It is worth reminding candidates of this regularly, however, since there were a significant number who still wrote more than was necessary. There was evidence of sound knowledge of language change, but identifying word classes continues to be a challenge for many candidates.

Part (a)

This question tests knowledge of word classes and archaic spelling patterns. There are 2 marks for identifying the form, and 2 marks for an appropriate explanation of the linguistic variation in each case.

The verb *doe* was recognised as a verb by most candidates, but many described it as an auxiliary verb. While this did not affect the mark, it would be good to encourage candidates to be linguistically precise. In this instance, it is an infinitive form, *to doe*. The identification of the adjective *carefull* caused some problems since there seems to be a general confusion between adjectives and adverbs.

Description of the appended -e was secure and most recognised the doubling of the final consonant where PDE uses a single.

Part (b)

This question tests the candidate’s knowledge of word classes, language variation over time and language change concepts. There are 2 marks for identifying the form, and 2 marks for two distinct points relating to language change. Candidates cannot be rewarded for repeating the same point for each example.

Identifying word classes was slightly more difficult for candidates in this question. A reference to ‘pronoun’ was sufficient to gain the mark for *my selfe*, with some candidates able to describe it more precisely as a reflexive pronoun. Any reference to a noun was accepted for *stufte*, whether labelled as concrete, common, abstract, or collective.

The other two marks could be awarded for describing the pattern of variation (e.g. appended -e, non-compounded words, single consonant for PDE double), for referencing language concepts such as semantic change (broadening of ‘stuff’), for naming a key linguistic work (e.g. Samuel Johnson’s 1755 dictionary, Robert Lowth’s 1762 grammar book, or another significant work), or for commenting on the lack of standardisation. In citing key language works, there must be a reference to the name of the author and the publication date. Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and made their points clearly.

Part (c)

This question tests the candidate’s knowledge of word classes, phrase structure and archaic grammatical features. There are 2 marks for identifying form, and 2 marks for an appropriate

explanation of the linguistic variation in each case. Where the examples represent commonly occurring features of EME, candidates should be precise in their linguistic description. Candidates found this question more difficult. To gain the form marks, they needed to describe *hath* as a **present tense verb** and *doubt not* as a **negative verb** (phrase). The second mark required them to show understanding of the archaic grammatical features e.g. a reference to regional inflections (-s northern; -eth southern), to the fact that the -eth inflection is obsolete, or to the PDE form 'has'; a reference to word order, the absence of the dummy auxiliary, or to the PDE 'do not doubt'. Although the position of the negator and lexical verb is inverted, many candidates described this as the 'inversion of subject and verb', which is not accurate.

Part (d)

This question tests the candidate's ability to identify and describe EME grammatical structures and punctuation features. There are 4 marks for identifying distinctive EME usage and 4 marks for selecting and describing an appropriate example. Responses need to be analytical rather than observational with clear evidence of language study. Candidates should be reminded that references to EME spelling are not relevant in part (d). Some candidates lost a significant proportion of the marks because their points were based on orthography.

Many candidates cited random capitalisation identifying the thematic capitalisation of the adjective *Innosent*, or the inconsistency of capitalising proper nouns (e.g. *master mildmays* vs *my Lord*). It is important that a word class term is used to explain the variation from PDE. Reference to the compounding of determiners and adjectives (*anew*, *alletell*) was another commonly identified EME feature, and a few discerning readers recognised the omission of the possessive apostrophe (*master mildmays coming*).

References to the high levels of subordination or to multi-clausal sentences were valid as features typical of EME. The example cited, however, had to do more than mark the beginning and end of a particular section of the text (e.g. "I well hoped ... and groumes"). To be awarded the second mark, there had to be evidence of clauses (even if they were not highlighted in some way): for instance, "thys was ... before you sent me away; at which tyme you pecked ...".

Many candidates referenced comma splicing as a typical EME feature. Commas are used frequently to mark out the many subordinate clauses, but this is not an example of comma splicing (this occurs between two main clauses). Equally, claims that the Oxford comma is a distinctive feature of EME since we "no longer use it" were too broad. Where the point was accompanied by evidence of linguistic understanding, marks were awarded (e.g. "During the EME period the use of the comma before the coordinating conjunction 'and' would not have been considered non-standard or controversial, unlike in PDE."). Broad points about the "excessive" use or "misuse" of semi-colons were not credit worthy. In EME texts, the punctuation is very precise, designed to guide the reader through the complex clauses.

Candidates should be reminded that they cannot repeat examples from part (c) in part (d) e.g. references to obsolete verb forms.

Characteristics of successful responses:

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

Areas for improvement:

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

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.

Candidates needed to consider three personal letters written at different times, focusing on who was writing, what was said and how. It was good to see that many candidates engaged with meaning, addressing the events at the heart of the letters. They connected the texts in interesting ways exploring the writers' requests for something (forgiveness; news; financial help), their desire for communication (opening a dialogue after a separation; requesting a letter; apologies for a late letter and the promise of another), their strained relationships (separation; physical and emotional distance after a family quarrel; the implication of previous disagreements about life style), or by the unspoken subtext (the manipulative wife trying to reclaim her social position; the selfish father more concerned with his own situation than that of his bereaved daughter; the unreliable son who flatters his parents to get what he needs). These kinds of links gave candidates the opportunity to explore the texts meaningfully. Topic sentences based on linguistic features, however, made it more difficult for candidates to engage. Identifying the use of specific word classes (e.g. proper nouns, abstract nouns), 'sentencing' or 'graphology' was less productive – this kind of comment needs to be embedded in the discussion rather than used as the focus of a paragraph.

Most candidates had a good understanding of personal writing and were able to explore what each letter revealed of the writer and their purposes. However, not all candidates addressed the letter form directly. The question focuses on genre and candidates who fail to engage with this element of the question are missing opportunities to broaden the scope of their writing. Those who did discuss form engaged appropriately with changes over time, and the relative status of writer and participant. There were useful references to opening (salutation) and closing (subscription) tokens, with a sound understanding of the attitude these communicated and the relationship each writer wished to establish (subservient; formal and distant; apologetic). References to traditional conventions (address and date) were sensible with a clear comparative approach.

Given that the third text was dated 1937, references to informalisation were often overstated. There was a clear change in tone, but the use of contractions, the repeated ampersand (which was often wrongly described as an "invention of the twentieth century used for speed") and the repetition of the first-person pronoun *I* did not provide sufficient evidence for the claims being made. Generalisations about the "informal" use of first and second person pronouns meant that the relative formality of Texts A and B was sometimes overlooked. In these contexts, it would be better to recognise the pronouns as indicators of personal writing. Some candidates made very effective points about the T-V distinction where Elizabeth Shrewsbury's choice of *you* rather than 'thou' suggests the distance between herself and her husband, and her (perhaps manipulative) deference. This awareness of how the choice of pronouns in the sixteenth century could reflect the level of politeness, familiarity, or social distance formed the basis for some interesting comments.

Discussion of the ways context shaped each example was constructive and often allowed candidates to create useful links between the texts. In Text A, references to gender and the position of women in the sixteenth century were sensible, often accompanied by a recognition of the importance of religion – Elizabeth's use of religious language was seen to

add authority to her claims of innocence and to her belief in the sanctity of marriage. Social status was linked to the formality of terms of address in Texts A and B, with William Godwin's apparent obsession with rank recognised by some candidates as an indication of his "selfishness". Dependence on letters for the communication of news in Texts A and B were contrasted with the reference to the telephone in Text C – and in some cases, the recognition that Dylan Thomas could not afford to use it. Some candidates effectively discussed period references to money (e.g. *thre hondryth pounds a yeare; three pound/a few shillings*) with the suggestion that implicit and explicit requests for money are typical of personal communications (e.g. Elizabeth Shrewsbury's reference to having less than £300 a year to live on; Godwin's reference to himself as a *beggar*, to Mary's reduced social status and to his own "adversities"; Thomas's direct statement "I'm terribly terribly without money").

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

It is worth reminding candidates that they need to use a range of appropriate terminology to support their discussion of the texts – linguistic knowledge is an integral part of unseen analysis.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- well-shaped essay responses that clearly address the question focus
- an explicit focus on genre
- engagement with details of the texts
- discussion of contextual features linked directly to content and meaning
- 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 focusing of the essay content in the light of the question
- technical accuracy and fluency of expression.

Summary of key points: key considerations for centres

- responses should address a range of points
- explicit references to the content should form the basis for engagement with meaning
- grammar teaching needs to address all the language levels.

Conclusion

Candidates had clearly been well prepared for the paper and demonstrated a range of appropriate knowledge. They engaged with the texts and there was a marked improvement in exam technique. The aim now should be to ensure that candidates learn to apply their knowledge rather than recount it, with a clear emphasis on using terminology to support the points they make.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2018

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 4 - SPOKEN TEXTS AND CREATIVE RE-CASTING

General Comments

Candidates seemed to be generally well prepared for this unit. Candidates often showed good understanding of the assessment objectives and general awareness of what was required of them in both questions. In Section A, the texts seemed accessible to candidates of all levels with sound understanding and analysis shown, particularly in regards to Text B. Most candidates were able to write at length covering a wide range of points in reasonable depth. In Section B, candidates were able to demonstrate sound awareness of genre, audience and purpose. The stronger responses were often original and engaging showing imagination and flair. Section B responses were often substantially shorter than responses in Section A. Whilst the length of the response is not the key consideration, it should be noted that there are equal marks for both sections and so six to eight sides for Section A and one or two sides for Section B is not recommended.

Section A: Analysing Spoken Language

In this section, candidates were asked to analyse two examples of interviews with guests on live television chat shows. Text A was an extract from *The One Show* with hosts, Alex Jones and Angelica Ball, interviewing Richard Hammond and James May about their new show, *The Grand Tour*. Text B was an extract from *This Morning* with hosts Phillip Schofield and Amanda Holden interviewing Britain's last lion tamer, Thomas Chipperfield. Most candidates were able to discuss issues in relation to: how participants interacted or dominated the conversations; how hosts tried to control and manage the conversations; levels of formality and how the participants aired their views and opinions. Many were able to discuss the heated and antagonistic exchange in Text B between Holden and Chipperfield with Schofield taking the role of mediator. Higher attaining candidates also noted the antagonistic exchanges in Text A were negative and confrontational rather than fun, humorous 'banter' as suggested by others. In some cases there was significant attention focused on one text to the detriment of the other. Stronger responses balanced the treatment of both texts.

AO1

The majority of candidates seemed well prepared for analysing a transcript. The most successful responses were able to precisely label techniques and discuss their effects in detail with relevant and frequent linking to the question. All candidates were able to use some terminology. Some candidates only used spoken terms, others used only basic word class terms and there were some who engaged in feature spotting with minimal consideration of language effect. Higher scoring candidates used a wide and sophisticated range of terminology incorporating both elements of linguistic precision and then thoroughly analysed the effects and reasons for use. Most responses showed good general written accuracy. The strongest candidates wrote in a strong academic style using a range of sophisticated vocabulary.

AO2

Most candidates were aware of features and conventions to be expected in the interview genre and could discuss topic management and agenda issues with some degree of success. Many discussed the role of host effectively in both texts. Candidates who reached band 4/5 were able to structure responses in an individualised way focusing on key areas of interest to the specific transcript rather than use of a formulaic 'one size fits all' structure. Band 2/3 responses were often very poorly structured with a random and irregular 'scatter-gun' approach to discussion.

Some candidates drew comparisons between the texts. This was often very interesting, but as there is no need assessment of AO4 here candidates need not focus on texts comparatively. Higher scoring candidates were able to focus on the guests' interactions with the hosts and discuss the, often hostile, communication between them. As mentioned before, many missed the nuances of this factor and believed Text A to be a friendly and light-hearted interview. Most understood the conflict in Text B and could discuss this with more confidence. Pleasingly, in response to last year's report recommendations, there was more discussion of theoretical approaches with some candidates discussing gender issues clearly and effectively with close textual analysis. Weaker responses sometimes included theory but without linking to textual detail. Theory should be used in a relevant and meaningful way in response to the specific transcript, not just discussed for its own sake. There was often some very unproductive and unnecessary discussion of Grice's maxims or theory forced in where it did not enhance discussion within the response. A light-touch approach is all that is required in terms of theoretical discussion and it should only be to augment the response, rather than lead it. Some were under the impression that Alex Jones was male. This caused issue for students linking comments to gender theory inaccurately. Careful reading of the question should help to avoid this kind of mistake as her gender is indicated by the pronoun use. There were some very long responses that covered many different ideas and techniques in a superficial way. It would be better to focus on fewer ideas in more depth.

AO3

Most candidates were able to discuss contextual issues in some kind of meaningful way. There were some interesting comments on audiences of these two shows and how this reflected formality levels. There was often productive discussion about issues of live segments for production teams. Some candidates drew from the information given on the question about the large budget of the pay-to-view channel the Top Gear team moved to, how this was used to create comedy with their entrance, and how this may have caused some offence for the BBC hosts. Some drew effectively on the role of Amanda Holden in the Born Free Foundation and with *Wild at Heart* to strengthen their discussion of her views and emotive and passionate response towards Chipperfield in Text B. Some candidates did not focus enough attention on contextual detail and its importance in affecting the overall communication.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Wide range of grammatical and spoken terminology.
- Confident and sophisticated structure and written expression.
- Detailed discussion of effects of and reasons for language choices.
- Subtle and effective incorporation of theoretical approaches.

Areas for improvement

- Consideration of the importance of contextual factors.
- Inclusion of both word class and spoken terminology in responses.

Summary of key points

- Word classes are still important even though spoken terminology should be used.
- Contextual factors and their importance to the interactions should be discussed.
- Relevant theory needs to be carefully incorporated when and where it enhances discussion.
- Responses should be carefully structured and avoid a random or formulaic approach

Section B: Creative Recasting

This section offers candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their study a wide range of genres, and the majority of candidates showed understanding of the text type required. The task was to write a persuasive leaflet for the Born Free Foundation which would be an insert in a Sunday newspaper. This task was accessible, providing higher attaining candidates a chance to be creative and influential in their writing, whilst candidates achieving Band 2/3 were usually able to engage in the task, often incorporating a range of rhetorical features. There were some issues at all levels with timing, where candidates had devoted much more attention to Section A and, consequently, the quality and length of the Section B responses was weaker. Some responses were too focused on graphology and layout features of leaflets. The focus should always be on language with layout and graphology as an element to enhance responses where relevant.

AO2

The majority of candidates showed awareness of the appropriate genre. Stronger candidates made sensible choices in terms of structuring the leaflet. There was sometimes use of hypophora, with questions acting as subheadings, to aid the structure and content. This was usually effective. Some responses used topic subheadings to aid structure equally effectively. Less effective were attempts to divide the one page into four or six sections. Some candidates struggled to extend and develop ideas within sections, and content was often very thin. Weaker responses had not considered the importance of structure in their response. The majority of candidates showed understanding of purpose and were able to include a range of effective linguistic techniques in their responses. Most candidates were aware of the requirements of the task. Some responses lacked precision and discussed general fundraising for a wide range of wild and domestic animals. The higher scoring responses narrowed ideas more carefully on the area of adopting wild animals.

AO5

Most candidates showed awareness of the leaflet genre and employed a range of specific techniques such as direct address, tricolon, rhetorical questions and use of statistics. Many of the middle band responses were somewhat simplistic and similar in nature. This limited the scope for higher marks where the marking scheme rewards originality and flair. Higher candidates employed a range of effective and powerful rhetorical features mixed with emotive and thoughtful figurative devices to engage with confidence and individuality. More successful responses often opened by painting an emotive and thoughtful picture of the devastation caused to a particular animal and then moved forward structurally to discuss the organisation or to show how the audience could help improve the situation. Within many of the less successful responses there was a sense that each paragraph or section could have been put in any order at all.

There was wide use of anecdote and some successfully used the information from Section A to strengthen responses. Many used quotations from celebrities, such as Amanda Holden as endorsements to good effect. The better responses had a strong and sustained personal voice and had chosen a precise target audience, usually a Sunday broadsheet reader, with thoughtful vocabulary choices and linguistic devices to appeal to them directly. The quality of

written responses was somewhat basic in some cases with similar sentence types and lengths giving a quite monotonous feel. Higher scoring candidates varied sentence construction to add pace and passion to the piece.

Characteristics of successful responses

- Creative and unique ideas.
- Engaging and lively writing.
- Sentence variety.
- Sophisticated vocabulary.
- Thoughtful imagery and emotive responses to engage precisely chosen target audience.

Areas for improvement

- Structure of response. It is important to plan.
- Look at creating a line of argument and developing ideas.
- Originality of response.
- Conscious crafting of sentence types, linguistic features and vocabulary choices.

Summary of key points

- Focus on planning, overall structure and development of ideas.
- Work on making responses individual and unique.
- Consider timing and length of responses to Section B.

Conclusion

Responses should be more equally divided between Section A and Section B. Candidates should spend time planning responses in both sections to improve the quality of responses. Students would benefit from practising paragraph writing to effectively incorporate terminology, contextual factors and theory into Section A responses, and work to improve more original and creatively ambitious Section B responses. Class work on a wide range of genres and text types is necessary.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2018
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 5 – LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

General Comments

Now in its second year, the new specification NEA has really taken off. There were very few problems and certainly both centres and candidates seem to have coped extremely well with the opportunities offered by the increased length of the investigation. Nearly all centres encouraged their candidates to select an aspect of language study of personal interest to them and this was apparent through the evident engagement demonstrated in the investigations themselves. As last year, the most successful investigations had a consistently strong linguistic focus, embedded theory and were written in a coherent, academic style. Most candidates included bibliographies and appendices where relevant.

There were some problematic areas this year, which need to be addressed. A number of candidates, from different centres, chose to include Disney film scripts as part of their data, with the most popular being *Brave*, *Tangled*, *Frozen* and *The Little Mermaid*. The difficulty with using this type of data is that the characters are fictional constructions yet many candidates treated them as real people, which resulted in discussions centred on characteristics rather than identity. In addition, the language used within such films rarely offer candidates the scope of discussion required for an A level investigation. Finally, most discussion was centred on gender stereotyping, whereas the focus must be on language and identity. Candidates who chose to examine fairy tales – another popular choice – often produced more successful studies as many included the work of feminist writers such as Angela Carter, as part of their data. These tended to have a much closer focus upon how women were identified by society at different periods.

Another problem across the cohort was the lack of explicit focus on the main theme of language and identity. Candidates are still using terms such as stereotyping, ideology and representation instead of identity. It was suggested last year that including the word 'identity' in the investigation title would be helpful in sustaining a focus on this central theme. To this end, examples of tightly focused titles and other less successful titles have been included in the report of each of the four language areas. It would be good practice for candidates to produce titles that clearly show how language and identity will be at the centre of their investigations.

Finally, a small number of candidates opted to produce diachronic studies of advertisements. There were some problems with these, as often candidates chose to prioritise graphology over language. Others used media based terminology such as the hypodermic needle theory rather than linguistic theory. Many such investigations were quite generic and descriptive with a tendency to discuss stereotyping and gender differences. The more tightly focused a study is, the more successful it is likely to be.

Assessment Objectives

The majority of centres this year demonstrated a very good understanding of AO1b and AO1c, with the investigations being generally well organised with an obvious linguistic focus. As was stated in last year's report, however, to score well on the double weighted AO1a, it is necessary for candidates to demonstrate that their study is clearly focused on identity and language thereby offering a secure interpretation. It is difficult for candidates to do this if they do not even mention identity when setting out their initial hypothesis. Similarly with AO3, a candidate must be able to offer both an overview of their findings and some evaluation as to how contextual factors and identity have been shown to be associated in the body of their work. Regarding AO2, many candidates were able to offer a competent critical understanding of relevant concepts and issues; however other candidates used irrelevant or dated theory. This was not always used to inform the study, sometimes merely being described. It is vitally important that candidates are taught what is required by AO1a, AO2 and AO3, as between them they are worth 75% of the marks awarded.

Four Language Areas

1. Language and self-representation

Fewer candidates opted for this aspect of study compared with last year. Their studies were, however on the whole, well-focused and analytical. The best studies demonstrated a strong grasp of issues and concepts, and candidates used relevant linguistic theory to inform their work. A number of candidates chose to examine politeness strategies and issues of formality by sensibly referring to, for example, Goffman's Face theory, Giles' Accommodation theory and Brown and Levinson's work on Positive and Negative Politeness. The best candidates offered a variety of both written and spoken data. The less successful studies tended to merely describe language choices with only limited analysis. A minority of candidates are still misinterpreting this aspect of language study by discussing the representation of others rather than themselves.

Two examples of closely focused titles

- *How do I use language in different situations and contexts to represent myself and construct the linguistic **identities** that constitute my personal linguistic repertoire?*
- *An investigation into the ways I use language in order to construct different **identities** and **idiolects** for myself, depending on context.*

Two examples of less focused titles

- *Does the medium and context of a conversation affect the register and formality I use?*
- *Does my context, audience and purpose have an impact on the way I speak in terms of grammar, lexis and formality?*

2. Language and gender

As in previous years, gender was the most popular choice for candidates. Some of the best studies used song lyrics as a way of examining gender and identity. Others made use of texts written by feminists. Investigations into language and identity focusing on drag queens and the transgender community were generally, but not always, thoughtful and well researched. The less successful candidates tended to merely examine gender differences by choosing to concentrate on stereotyping instead of identity. Other investigations were very broad and failed to have a definite focus. There was also a tendency to exclusively reference theorists from the 1970s such as Lakoff, and Zimmerman and West, whose ideas have been challenged over the intervening years, instead of including more contemporary sources.

Two examples of closely focused titles

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the ways by which female artists use their music to reclaim their female **identity**.*
- *How has the representation of women's **identity** changed over time in children's stories? What does this tell us about attitudes to women in each society?*

Two examples of less focused titles

- *What is the relationship between language and gender in transgender autobiographies?*
- *Do girls give linguistic direction more effectively than boys in a co-coaching environment?*

3. Language and culture

There was a truly diverse range of investigations within this language area. The majority of candidates had clearly been allowed to define their own areas of study and to collect their own data, which was frequently quite fascinating.

Studies included issues such as: mental health and identity; criminality and criminals' identity; how Donald Trump has used language to create his own unique identity; how newspapers manipulate language to create identities, and many other highly original approaches. There was generally a strong sense of personal engagement in these studies and they were often wide-ranging and enlightening.

Two examples of closely focused titles

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the presentation of the **identity** of Liverpool fans in the language used by *The Sun* at the time of the Hillsborough disaster and later, when the paper apologises for false statements made in the original report.*
- *How do the sermons of three Christian church services reflect the **identity** of the specific denominations?*

Two examples of less focused titles

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse how these 21st century Christian songs convey the cultural ideologies of Christianity?*
- *Do certain situations in football alter the ways in which language is used by football-fans?*

4. Language diversity

It was good to note that many more candidates chose to explore and interpret aspects of diversity this year. Some of the most successful studies involved studying song lyrics in order to show how distinctive varieties of English may be linked closely to identity. Grime was a popular choice as was Rap, with candidates able to produce academic studies investigating how an identity might be created by the lyricist's choice of language.

There were also some interesting studies exploring urban youth language and AAVE. Less successful studies tended to focus almost entirely on class stereotyping linked to language choices, frequently using television scripts. These studies invariably lacked an explicit emphasis on identity with a number of candidates failing to move beyond characterisation.

Two examples of closely focused titles

- *Using relevant data, explore and analyse how speakers conveyed a Mancunian **identity** in the aftermath of the Manchester bombing of 2017.*
- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the ways in which Grime artists use language to create diverse **identities** in the Grime music scene.*

Two examples of less focused titles

- *To what extent does the language of the law in the media reflect real life?*
- *Using relevant data, analyse and investigate the ways in which the characters in 'Only Fools and Horses' comply with cultural working-class stereotypes.*

Characteristics of successful responses included:

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

Areas for improvement:

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

Summary of key points: key considerations for centres

- the main theme of language and identity must be a focus for investigations
- theory must be used to inform
- language and self-representation must be an investigation into the learner's own language choices
- investigations covering fictional genres can be successful but are often problematic
- when mentioning linguistic research or theories try not to use dated material
- ensure that all candidates understand the requirements of AO1a, AO2 and AO3
- replace terms such as stereotyping, ideology and representation with identity.

Conclusion

Once again, my team of moderators and I would like to take this opportunity to commend centres for their professionalism and enthusiasm. We recognise the effort made by both centres and candidates in order to produce a successful submission. There were many examples of good practice this year and it is heartening to note that many of the points raised in last year's report have been acted on by centres.



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