

GCE A Level Examiners' Report

English Language
A Level
Summer 2025

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Introduction

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

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

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

Further support

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

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

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
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Executive Summary

Component 1: Language concepts and issues

Candidates were able to access the full range of marks available. The culture of embedding connections for AO4 in Section A was evident. For Section B, there was less evidence than in previous years that candidates had been drilled in advance with ready-made responses. If the question is focused on the spoken mode, candidates cannot be credited for points made if their examples do not represent the mode specified. Candidates must distil their analysis and focus it on the respective question, rather than shoe-horning knowledge that is not relevant to their argument under Standard English, power or politeness respectively.

Generally, performance was consistent with previous series as responses exemplified the full range of marks. In Section A, there was a pleasing use of relevant core linguistic terms as well as spoken terms when candidates examined the interactions between reality programme contestants, as well as a clear focus on genre conventions and impact on audiences. In Section B, there was again some variety of scenarios for AO3, with an increasing number of candidates bringing their own observations to bear on their discussions, as well as using scenarios they had clearly studied in class.

Component 2: Language change over time

Candidates responded well to this paper. The quality of response to the short tariff questions 1(a) – 1(d) continues to improve year on year, although there did appear to be something of an increase in observational, non-linguistic comments about punctuation for 1(d). For Question 2, the strongest responses adopt a comparative approach in order to not only address AO4, but to deepen the quality of analysis of meaning for AO3 in the construction of a cogent argument that in turn brings in AO2 via the purposeful discussion of concepts and issues. A few candidates are still discussing language changes in spelling, punctuation and grammar in the essay.

For Question 3, the strongest responses were those that thoughtfully grouped the texts by attitude, identity etc. and applied both C21st and linguistic terminology, showing a clear understanding of the medium and discussing the meaning within the context of the writers' textual strategies. Responses that failed to take a holistic view of the corpus were self-penalising due to unnecessary repetition.

Performance was consistent with previous series, with candidates achieving marks across the full range. Question 2 saw an increased engagement with the older texts and some thoughtful comparison. For Section B, candidates were much more focused on the medium indicated in the question than in previous years.

Component 3: Creative and critical language

Candidates appeared well prepared to make apt choices between the two optional questions, with very few false starts or rubric infringements. Candidates responded with creativity, flair and skill to the set tasks to both routes through the paper, which seemed to be equally accessible to candidates.

There was evidence that candidates had considered carefully the specifics of the tasks, with few having approached the exam with pre-prepared ideas. The stimulus material was clearly understood by the majority of candidates. It was used appropriately as a reference or jumping off point.

Nearly all managed their time effectively to allow for the commentary. These continue to be thoughtful about language choices made; there is still work to be done in ensuring candidates are concise and purposeful in their selection of evidence from their own writing for the commentary.

Component 4: Language and identity

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

Centres' marking was generally accurate.

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Component 1: Language concepts and issues

Overview of the Component

This unit contains two sections: Section A Analysis of Spoken Language, and Section B Language Issues. Section A assesses AO1 (methods of analysis, use of terminology, and coherent expression and discussion); AO2 (critical understanding of concepts and issues); and AO4 (connections). Section B assesses AO1 (methods of analysis, use of terminology, and coherent expression and discussion); AO2 (critical understanding of concepts and issues); and AO3 (analysis of the contexts of production and reception of 21st century English).

In Section A, candidates were asked to analyse the participants' use of spoken language in two examples of arguments between contestants in reality television programmes. In Text A, American model Kendra Wilkinson has a disagreement with retired Conservative Party member of parliament Edwina Currie. Television presenter Melanie Sykes is also involved in this exchange, attempting to mediate between Wilkinson and Currie. In Text B, *Love Island* competitors Jordan Hames and Anna Vakili, who had previously been a couple, argue after Jordan has shown a romantic interest in another contestant. Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate how the spoken language of each of these texts exemplifies adversarial interactions in reality television programmes. The question tested the candidates' ability to analyse language using appropriate terminology to evaluate how the contextual factors (e.g. the age and identities of the speakers, as well as their ultimate goal in participating in such programmes) have shaped meaning, and to explore meaningful connections across the texts (e.g. the dynamics between contestants, and the interactions between contestants).

In Section B, candidates were asked to apply appropriate methods of language analysis and terminology, demonstrate understanding of relevant concepts and issues, consider contextual factors and language features associated with the construction of meaning, and provide supporting examples when tackling one of three options. Question 2 was an extract comparing the grammar of speech to the grammar of written language. Here, candidates had to analyse and evaluate the ways in which Non-Standard English is used by speakers, and how this is viewed. Question 3 was an extract from a 1938 Winston Churchill speech, arguing against signing a treaty with Nazi Germany. Here, candidates had to focus their analysis and evaluation on the ways in which language is used by speakers to convince others of their points of view. Finally, Question 4 was an extract from a conversation between mother and child. Here, candidates had to use the extract as a starting point in analysing and evaluating the ways in which interactions with adults affects children's capacity to acquire language.

On the whole, candidates were able to access the full range of marks available, including some who were able to achieve full marks. It was pleasing to see that the culture of embedding connections for AO4 in Section A was evident in the work produced by candidates in many centres. Furthermore, for Section B there was less evidence that students had been drilled in advance with ready-made responses which simply did not meet the full requirements of the specific task they had been given, and which were used by the student to set down everything they had been taught about a particular topic. A couple of points are worth noting about candidate responses. Firstly, candidates should be reminded that if the question is focused on the spoken mode (e.g. question 2, 3 and 4), they cannot be credited for points made if their examples do not represent the mode specified in the question. In addition, though there is a natural overlap between many concepts and issues pertaining to language use in this section (e.g. between Standard and Non-Standard English and power, or between politeness and power), candidates must distil their analysis and focus it on the respective question, rather than shoehorning knowledge that is not relevant to their argument under Standard English, power or politeness respectively.

Generally, performance was consistent with previous series as responses exemplified the full range of marks. In Section A, there was a pleasing use of relevant core linguistic terms as well as spoken terms when candidates examined the interactions between reality programme contestants, as well as a clear focus on genre conventions and impact on audiences. In Section B, there was again some variety of scenarios for AO3, with an increasing number of candidates bringing their own observations to bear on their discussions, as well as using scenarios they had clearly studied in class. As last year, centres are reminded that it would be useful for candidates to be enabled to bring their own examples, in addition to teacher-supplied ones.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- In Section A, candidates on the whole demonstrated a solid grasp of the key language constituents, with many establishing sensible and even purposeful connections in the dynamics between the speakers in the two conversations.
- Connections were strongly considered on the whole, with candidates teasing out connections in the ways speakers used language to convey power, for example Edwina Currie's political expertise and age versus Kendra Wilkinson's strength of conviction, and Anna Vikili's claim of the moral high ground as the 'wronged' party.
- In more successful responses, discussion was anchored by use of relevant speaker strategy, such as turn taking or the use of interrogatives or declaratives. Selection of textual evidence was often precise and purposeful. A balanced selection of linguistic features typical of spoken language and more general linguistic features was demonstrated. Clear links were established between language features and the dynamics of the specific conversations.
- In less successful responses, candidates simply made general points about the conversations, ignoring specific speakers' strategies. Unlike last year, there was little misreading of the texts. As usual, centres should discourage students from focusing on only a narrow range of textual evidence and avoiding feature spotting.

Section B

- Candidates appeared to apportion their time well, allocating enough time to tackle Section B. Generally, there was a solid understanding of concepts, issues and theories relevant to the three situations presented.
- Encouragingly, in Section B, more candidates anchored their discussion within specific examples of scenarios exemplifying issues from the texts. For example, in Question 3, candidates were able to draw on a broad range of spoken situations, such as political interviews or conversations between teachers and students, or between parents and children, where speakers use their powerful identities and attendant language devices to convince others of their points of view. In addition, a number of candidates related attitudes to Standard English to historical and current cultural trends, such as the rising popularity of Multicultural London English (MLE).
- Successful analysis teased out specific aspects of factors affecting the construction of meaning, for example, attitudes to overt and covert prestige in spoken situations in Question 2.
- In unsuccessful responses, candidates produced vague discussions that were not anchored in any scenario, leading to generic and generalised responses. This year as last year, less successful responses focused on the incorrect mode, that is, discussing written power interactions for Question 4, which was focused on the spoken mode. Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to be individual and creative in their deployment of personally chosen scenarios based on their own observations of language use in the world around them.

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Component 2: Language change over time

Overview of the Component

Section A of this component consists of two questions: 1(a) – 1(d) (short tariff questions), and 2 (extended essay response), and Section B, English in the Twenty-First Century, Question 3 (extended essay response). Section A Questions 1(a) – 1(d) is assessed under AO1 (methods, terminology). Section A Question 2 is assessed under AO2 (critical understanding of concepts and issues, textual support), AO3 (analysis of contextual factors, discussion of meaning, and evaluation of effectiveness of communication), and AO4 (connections between texts, overview, and linguistic knowledge). Section B Question 3 is assessed under AO1 (methods, terms, quality of expression), AO2 (critical understanding of concepts and issues, textual support), and AO3 (analysis of contextual factors, discussion of meaning, and evaluation of effectiveness of communication). It is important to note that this Assessment Objective (AO3) is double weighted for this essay.

For Section A, candidates were asked to analyse the written language of three examples of extracts from conduct literature as types of advisory texts from different periods. Text A, an extract from *The Lyttille Childrenes Lytil boke: A Guide to Maners for Boys* (1500) from which the short tariff questions 1(a) – 1(d) were taken, provided advice to lower-status boys to prepare them for the appropriate social behaviour required in their working life. Text B *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind. Addressed to A Lady* (1773) advised an audience of higher status girls on their conduct in society. Text C, taken from *Emily Post's The Guide to Good Manners for Kids* (2004), gave advice to children regarding their online conduct. Questions 1(a) – 1(d) tested candidates' knowledge of terminology and EME features and concepts. Question 2 tested candidates' ability to analyse and evaluate the content and meaning of the texts in context (the influence of the time of production and reception), making meaningful links between them informed by language study (the accurate application of linguistic terminology), and to apply knowledge of relevant concepts (genre, intended audience, purpose) and issues (social class, gender, religious identity) in a critical discussion of the writers' language choices and the effects created.

In Section B (Question 3), candidates were asked to analyse the written/multi-modal language of Instagram posts using a set of data of eight examples, the first being the original post of a caption to a video about a theme park ride, the others responses to the shared video. The question tested candidates' ability to analyse language using accurate, well-chosen terminology (both C21st and linguistic) and an appropriate style, to evaluate the construction of meaning in context (the medium, the posters' identity), and to use knowledge of relevant concepts (audience, purpose, genre) and issues (informalisation, attitudes, poster identity) in a critical discussion of the writers' language choices and the effects created.

Candidates responded well to this paper, with some accessing Band 5 on both essay questions. In general, the quality of response to the short tariff questions 1(a) – 1(d) continues to improve year on year, although there did appear to be something of an increase in observational, non-linguistic comments about punctuation for 1(d), which is a shame when there was such a wealth of rewardable material to select from. For Question 2, it was pleasing to see much more confident engagement with the EME text than in some previous years, although candidates should be reminded that all texts should receive equal attention when aiming for the higher marks. As always, the strongest responses to this question are those that adopt a comparative approach in order to not only address AO4, but to deepen the quality of analysis of meaning for AO3 in the construction of a cogent argument that in turn brings in AO2 via the purposeful discussion of concepts and issues. A few candidates are still discussing language changes in spelling, punctuation and grammar in the essay; as referenced in previous years, they should be reminded that this is not required as it is dealt with in 1(a) – 1(d). Other minor points to note for Question 2: erroneous use of ‘utterance’ for sentence in the written mode; using ‘juxtapose(s)’ incorrectly as a synonym for ‘contrasts’: Text A only juxtaposes Text B in the sense that it is on the next page in the question paper!

For Question 3, as always, the strongest responses were those that thoughtfully grouped the texts (AO1 – methods) by attitude, identity etc. (AO2 – issues) and applied both C21st and linguistic terminology (AO1 – terms), showing a clear understanding of the medium (AO2 – concepts) and discussing the meaning within the context of the writers’ textual strategies (AO3 – meaning in context). Responses that ran through the texts in order were self-penalising due to unnecessary repetition and failing to take a holistic view of the corpus: a quality seen in the strongest essays. Also, some candidates misrecognised the context of production information of the poster’s identity, such as (THEME PARK HATER) as their username, and proceeded to analyse it linguistically. Careful reading of the text informed by knowledge of C21st medium conventions should have prevented this, with examples of genuine usernames (e.g. @phantasialand) present in the corpus.

Performance was consistent with previous series, with candidates achieving marks across the full range. Question 2 saw a definite and pleasing increase of engagement with the older texts and some thoughtful AO4 comparison, although some candidates did become overly engaged with wider contexts such as the Age of Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, or the 1870 Education Act. While it is exciting to see such knowledgeable work, they should be reminded that they are writing an English essay and, as such, engagement with the texts themselves needs to be at the heart of the response. For Section B, it seemed to be the case that candidates were much more focused on the medium indicated in the question than in previous years, which was great to see, with less lengthy rumination on prescriptivist/descriptivist attitudes to informalisation.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Questions 1(a) – 1(d)

Candidates certainly seem to be well prepared for the required approach to these short tariff questions now. Please remind them to always check word class in context of usage for 1(a) and 1(b): a large number wrongly identified 'drunk' as a verb, rather than a noun. For the 1(c) form question, in order to increase the challenge of the questions as they go, the tense is required for the verb ('meetest' – present tense), while the person is required for the pronoun ('thou – second person). As referenced above, there was plenty of material to discuss besides punctuation not exclusive to EME for 1(d), although valid observations on punctuation such as the colon with following initial capital to separate main clauses ('...: Make: And play not...'). Also, please be reminded that any discussion of subordination and sentence types must be accompanied by precise quotation and specific reference to clause types.

Question 2

On the whole, candidates demonstrated sound linguistic knowledge (rewarded under AO4) to underpin analysis. The strongest responses were those that did this regularly and sought to demonstrate range. Many candidates provided a strong comparative overview that went well beyond paraphrase of the context rubric from the paper and set up the key ideas of the argument to follow.

A productive comparative approach to the essay led to more thoughtful analysis of meaning in context, with a concepts and issues-led approach proving both popular and fruitful, with candidates considering the differing social class and gender of the three texts' intended audiences, alongside consideration of shifting levels of formality and the seemingly correspondent relationship between the decline of the influence of Christianity with the rise of technology.

The most successful responses were those that formulated a clear argument and quoted frequently and concisely from the text, selecting material which facilitated the accurate application of a wide range of linguistic knowledge, while exploring concepts and issues as a means to develop analysis of textual features, rather than as an aside to this. Comparisons of strong responses led to development of discussion of meaning in all texts, rather than simply serving a structural purpose. Overall, they showed a confident understanding of the texts.

Less successful responses tended to stray from close focus of the texts themselves, and into more general digressions of broad concepts, issues or context. They also tended to apply less linguistic knowledge and, when providing evidence, it was sometimes in over-long quotations. There was often a sense of less clarity in the expression of understanding, resulting in fairly generalised discussion from which the different texts could not be easily identified.

Question 3

It was pleasing to see that candidates mostly seemed to have managed their time in the exam effectively, with only a few thin responses to this question, which is usually indicative of running out of time. There was clear knowledge of concepts such as features of the platform (affordances, restrictions etc.), purposes, and C21st language, applied productively to issues such as informalisation, online disinhibition and anonymity, alongside thoughtful consideration of how writer identity shaped language choices: for example, the otherwise highly formal PARENT of Text 7's nominal attempts to converge to the C21st register through their use of the double exclamation mark and (mis?)use of the skull emoji.

Successful responses were those that focused on the double-weighted AO3 requirements of engagement with meaning in context, using terms, concepts, and discussion of issues to underpin this discussion. They were concise in providing well-chosen evidence and wide-ranging terminology and made intelligent groupings of the texts that facilitated productive analysis. They engaged with most, if not all, of the texts from the corpus in a productively linguistic approach with confident academic expression.

Less successful approaches either worked through the texts rather than grouping them effectively, or only wrote about a few of them. There tended to be a limited linguistic approach with most of the terminology being more conceptually linked to C21st language or the jargon of the medium itself (e.g. hashtags, likes etc.). In these responses, the tendency was to describe, rather than analyse, and there was only limited engagement with the context of production, while discussion of issues was broad.

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Component 3: Creative and critical language

Overview of the Component

Component 3 offers candidates a choice of two questions, 1 and 2, each with two creative tasks (a and b) and a commentary task (c) on one of the creative pieces the candidate has produced.

Each question comes with a stimulus text that candidates have to use to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the specific creative writing task. The stimulus text for Question 1 was an article taken from The Guardian.com entitled 'Learning the ropes: why Germany is building risk in its playgrounds', where the journalist Philip Oltermann described the thinking behind designing playgrounds with deliberate challenges. The stimulus for Question 2 was two short extracts taken from the novel *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith. In the first extract, the protagonist sings at school and in the second she is unexpectedly invited to sing at a nightclub where she realises her talent for music.

Question 1a asked candidates to write an article for a school magazine weighing up the pros and cons of attempting to remove risk from teenagers' lives. Candidates could use the stimulus for ideas but were also free to invent and add details about the pros and cons of risk in teenagers' lives when writing for a school magazine. Question 1b asked candidates to write an extract from a short story set in a playground. Again, candidates could use specific details from the stimulus for ideas, but they could use the playground setting as a springboard for a variety of genres.

Question 2a asked candidates to write a news report for a local paper about an act of courage or skill. Here, candidates could use ideas from the stimulus, but equally candidates were free to come up with their own examples and settings for an act of courage or skill. Question 2b asked candidates to write a blog about a personal achievement. The blog should have included details of the circumstances, study or practice that led to their success.

The suggested length for the creative writing tasks total 600 words, and for this series was 300 words for both a and b tasks in Questions 1 and 2. Word counts are always a suggestion, and candidates will not be penalised for writing slightly more or less. However, where a response is significantly more or less than what is suggested, candidates' responses will be self-penalising as their responses are unlikely to meet the task's requirements.

Each creative task is assessed on AO5 only, with a maximum number of 30 marks per creative task available. AO5 assesses candidates' ability to write engagingly for a range of different audiences, purposes and genres, covering both fiction and non-fiction genres. This means that candidates are expected to write with accurate spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and grammar.

The commentary task is only assessed on AO3, with a maximum of 20 marks available here. AO3 assesses candidates' ability to discuss how they have used language and shaped a response to suit contextual factors, including audience, purpose and genre. Successful commentaries saw candidates comment on the effect of their linguistic and stylistic choices, and how these contributed to the construction of meaning. There is an expectation that candidates apply accurate and appropriate linguistic terminology in their commentaries and cite relevant examples in support.

Candidates must complete the a and b creative tasks for their chosen question, so 1a and 1b, or 2a and 2b. Combining 1a with 2b or 2a with 1b is a rubric infringement and will result in the candidate's creative response not linked to the commentary being awarded 0 marks.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Candidates appeared well prepared to make apt choices between the two questions this year, with very few false starts or rubric infringements. Candidates responded with creativity, flair and skill to the set tasks to both routes through the paper, which seemed to be equally accessible to candidates of all levels of ability, with Question 1 seeming to be the slightly more popular option.

There was evidence that candidates had considered carefully the specifics of the tasks, with few having approached the exam with pre-prepared ideas. The stimulus material was clearly understood by the majority of candidates. It was used appropriately as a reference or jumping off point by most candidates, and encouragingly very few candidates copied whole sentences. Nearly all managed their time effectively to allow for the commentary. These continue to be thoughtful about language choices made; there is still work to be done in ensuring candidates are concise and purposeful in their selection of evidence from their own writing for the commentary.

Question 1

Task a

Candidates approached the article for a school magazine with confidence, with most responses showing an understanding of the article form with an appropriate headline and structure. Candidates were free to write in the first or third person, and in a formal or informal style depending on the focus chosen for the article. Many candidates were able to utilise a mix of registers, moving from an informal voice to engage with audience to a more formal and serious tone, particularly when writing about risks. Some candidates successfully drew on ideas from the stimulus, particularly when making judicious use of expert opinion about managing risk. Candidates often deployed a mix of subheadings and would often clearly divide their articles into sections presenting convincing and thoughtful arguments rooted in topics like mobile phones, drinking and socialising.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Adopting convincing and engaging voices that appealed to an audience that could be made up of students, parents or both.
- Using a range of rhetorical devices to present convincing and well-structured arguments.
- Appropriate use of magazine article features like headline, subheadings, bylines, links to topics of interest, use of expert opinion through direct or reported quotation and making reference to specific details about a school setting showing a thoughtful understanding of purpose and audience.

- Apt selection of details from the stimulus material to develop character, voice and events for the article.
- Direct engagement with audience with pronoun address and the mixing of formal and informal registers for effect.

Areas for improvement:

- Some less successful candidates clearly had not read the question carefully and wrote only about the pros or cons of risk instead of both
- Over-reliance on the stimulus, for example, only considering risk from a playground perspective instead of broadening their argument.
- Tendency to be narrative instead of developing a clear argument using an advisory tone.
- Over-reliance on short, undeveloped bullet points that lacked detail and context.
- The unnecessary inclusion of graphological features like images.

Task b

Candidates clearly enjoyed the creative freedom of writing an extract from a short story and a range of genres were adopted including horror, gothic, fantasy, dystopia and relationships. The playground was often used as a frame to explore interior thoughts and feelings as well as being used as a place to set action and dialogue. Many candidates focused on creating atmosphere to establish place and character, clearly adhering to the question of writing an extract from a short story – something they were then able to explore in their supporting commentary.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Engaging openings where a distinct atmosphere was created through the description of place and character.
- Developing a strong personal voice and style where creative language choices were distinct, engaging and unusual showing both flair and ambition.
- Adhering closely to the short story form where the extract suggested what could happen in the future instead of trying to write a complete story.
- Using a tight, clear and well-paced narrative structure.

Areas for improvement

- Relying on shocking or action-packed endings not really adhering to the expectations of writing an extract from a short story.
- Switching tenses – where a lack of narrative control could confuse the reader.
- Over-reliance on dialogue without any development of place and character.
- Using a formulaic list of descriptive writing techniques where over-elaboration often came at the expense of clarity and control.

Question 2

Task a

Many candidates used their local area as inspiration for their story showing a clear awareness of purpose and audience appropriate to a local news report. A range of responses – where a clear act of courage or skill was described – allowed candidates to focus on stories typical of the form like dramatic rescues or foiling attempted crimes. It was clear that the teaching of newspaper reports was strong with many responses adhering to newspaper form and genre conventions with appropriate headlines, clear exposition and embedded quotations from experts and eyewitnesses. A clear understanding of newspaper structure and layout was shown with many candidates going on to analyse the use of the inverted triangular structure of exposition and the telegraphic nature of headlines.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Clear structure with appropriate headline and expository opening.
- Use of facts where ages, dates, names and places were used underpin the stories creating a clear journalistic register and regional focus.
- Embedded use of quotation (both direct and reported speech) often to give the reports an emotive and realistic tone.
- A third person, past tense viewpoint.

Areas for improvement:

- Writing in an appropriate style for the genre; the more narrative style seen occasionally was more reflective of a novel than a newspaper report.
- Avoid writing in the first person present tense for newspaper reports – some responses read like a TV news reporter reporting at a scene.
- Avoid overly long quotes from eyewitnesses.

Task b

Most candidates adopted an enthusiastic and engaging first person voice where a clear, assumed personal relationship was established between writer and reader. Many responses, unsurprisingly, focused on giving advice on how to pass exams, giving a really clear focus and purpose to their blog allowing the writer to report their sense of achievement on previously surviving and passing exams. Many responses used aspects of spoken language to engage with the audience, drawing on the language skills acquired throughout their study; this was useful if they chose to write their commentary on the blog.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Convincing and engaging first person voice where immediate pronoun address of audience and reference to previous blog posts was made.
- Engaging title.
- Clear structure where a sense of struggle and solution was well managed.
- Self-aware and humorous tone used to maintain a close relationship with the reader throughout.

Areas for improvement:

- Avoid lapsing into long narrative sections where the first person voice and engagement with audience gets lost.
- Some candidates chose to write in the first person present as if they were currently engaged in their act of achievement. This approach did become more problematic when the writing was more like a script accompanying a YouTube vlog rather than a reflective blog post.

- Some candidates tried to write about too many acts of achievement somewhat hindering the purpose of the blog where the task specified to write about 'a personal achievement'.

Question 1 and 2: Task c

Candidates chose one of their two creative pieces for comment. Several examiners commented that candidates were writing very long commentaries over several pages and had been taught to follow a formulaic writing frame, where the same topic sentence was repeated at the beginning of each paragraph. Candidates would be best advised to avoid simply cycling through points that have some broad relevance and rather should focus on the specific form and genre elements of their piece of writing. The use of terminology to unlock wider contextual discussion was key to successful commentaries.

Discussion of purpose and audience needed to be more closely linked to the form chosen. Successful candidates also drew on their knowledge of the language levels from other parts of the course. For example, the use of spontaneous spoken word features in the blog or the use of synthetic personalisation to establish an assumed relationship with the reader. More successful candidates were also able to justify their language choices through a discussion of meaning and effect, linking these to the specific context and purpose. This was done in a concise and purposeful manner where how and why language choices were made were discussed and justified. This also allowed for meaningful evaluation where the candidates closely considered why they had chosen to structure their writing in a way that was reflective of their chosen form.

The commentaries on the narrative extract that were most successful really focused on the genre elements as candidates thoughtfully explored how they established character and setting. The newspaper report and article commentaries also highlighted much effective teaching of structure with the use of time adverbials. As per previous reports, problems still persist in knowing the difference between pronouns and determiners. Many candidates also use the term 'collective pronoun' where 'plural pronoun' would be more appropriate.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Ownership of the creative piece with a confident, first person investigation of language choices made for the given task.
- Exploration of apt selection of key linguistic techniques and features that construct meaning.
- Topic sentences linking language features that combine to create effects, for example, to persuade or to create humour or empathy.
- Accurate identification of specific linguistic features, apt illustration, and exploration and evaluation of their effects in context.

Areas for improvement:

- Keep any overview pithy and focused. Some commentaries included lengthy, unfocused overviews with broad/generalised discussion of purpose and audience.
- Explore the significance of features and techniques used. Feature-spotting by identifying and labelling features is unlikely to gain credit.
- Expand range of language features explored; less successful commentaries were often limited to discussing word classes.
- Focus evaluation on discussing what has been included rather than what might be included were they to write the piece again.

Summary of key points

Key considerations for centres teaching Component 3:

- A successful creative response will consider what the audience needs to know and use stylistic techniques and an appropriate tenor to guide the response.
- The word count is advisory and the precise counting of words undertaken by some candidates is unnecessary and distracting for them.
- Candidates should read the stimulus carefully and to take a step-by-step approach in unpicking the creative tasks, so that they are clear as to what they are required to write, for whom and why.
- Practise writing different genres and text types, with a focus on the technical aspects of writing, such as paragraphing, structuring texts (whole text discourse) and accuracy, such as tense management.
- Similarly, direct speech is used effectively at times to create a sense of character, relationship or plot development. Yet, dialogue frequently hinders the narrative development or, as a result of poor paragraphing and punctuation, dialogue sections tend to lack in clarity.
- Candidates should develop the habit of proofreading their creative pieces and commentaries.

Creative Writing: key considerations for centres

- Many successful candidates were clearly well versed in the form they were writing in – particularly report/article writing.
- Unsuccessful responses were often the result of misreading the stimulus or ignoring the stimulus altogether.

Commentary: key considerations for centres

- Encourage candidates to own the language choices they have made by using the first person in their commentary and by explaining their writing process as a response to the task.
- Remind candidates to apply the knowledge and skills used in other parts of the course e.g. the language levels and precise terminology.
- While identifying and illustrating each feature selected, candidates should tease out how these individual features aid the overall genre and purpose of the creative task or its 'big picture' effects.
- Advise candidates to use topic sentences to link exemplified points with effects.
- Practise accurate identification of linguistic features in own writing.
- Evaluation should be embedded in analysis.

EDUQAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE A level

Summer 2025

Component 4: Language and identity

Overview of the Component

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

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

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

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

It was very pleasing to see that centres' marking was generally accurate.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

Comments on individual questions/sections

General trends/patterns of performance

Across this year's NEA sample, centres demonstrated impressive levels of enthusiasm for supporting candidates' autonomy in selecting a topic of interest for their investigations. Research into a remarkably wide variety of themes around identity was evident, from the media coverage of the Colston Four to code-switching by British Asian teenagers.

Candidates reacted very positively to the general theme of identity, creating titles that frequently had a strong focus on individual, cultural, political and gendered dimensions of language use. However, the breadth of choice sometimes came at the expense of analytical depth, particularly where topics were over-extended (for example, dual-artist lyric comparisons) or where titles lacked the precision needed to sustain rigorous enquiry.

Task Setting

Most candidates successfully embedded 'identity' in their investigation titles. The most successful tasks, such as "How does Theresa May modulate prosody and lexis to negotiate her political identity in Commons speeches?", paired identity with a clearly defined aspect (culture, gender, self-representation or diversity), which in turn promoted focused analysis. By contrast, titles framed as "Identity in celebrity discourse" or "Professional identity norms" elided the analytical thrust, leading to descriptive overviews rather than targeted linguistic analyses. Centres are encouraged to draw on Eduqas task-setting guidance to ensure titles specify identity facet, data type and theoretical lens from the outset.

Data Selection and Methodology

Well-annotated corpora, including multi-modal transcripts (podcasts, interviews) and social-media threads, underpinned many of the best investigations. These candidates were able to demonstrate micro-level (lexical, phonological) and macro-level (genre, register) analyses. By contrast, studies confined to just two song lyrics by different artists – or sprawling datasets of mismatched media – often limited the quality of analysis. In a handful of submissions, source data was interspersed in the main body rather than appended, complicating moderation and obscuring methodological rigour. Candidates should be encouraged to collect manageable, coherent data sets, and to present these in appendices.

Marking and Internal Moderation

Overall, centre marks aligned closely with moderators' judgments. Where discrepancies arose, they most often related to generosity in AO1a/b for superficial feature-spotting, or severity in AO3 where contextual factors were evident. Summative coversheet comments were, in the main, precise and tied directly to Assessment Objectives. There was evidence of internal standardisation across most of the work seen. Centres are required to conduct internal standardisation ahead of submitting marks and samples so it is always helpful to the moderator to see how this has been carried out. A characteristic of the most accurate assessment was where teachers flagged all errors in terminology and expression and therefore had a visual representation of balancing successful and less successful aspects of each investigation.

Performance Across Assessment Objectives

- AO1: High-scoring candidates used a wide range of technical terms with precision, while mid-band work often defaulted to basic word-class labels and sentence moods. Common misapplications (e.g. confusing hedging with mitigation) were not always noted in marking.
- AO2: Some top scoring investigations wove Butlerian performativity and Goffmanian face-work into incisive analysis of identity. Essays in the lower bands were often characterised by narrative summaries of theory or were too narrowly focused.
- AO3: Band 5 investigations consistently mapped linguistic features onto broader socio-political contexts - such as BLM protest coverage or gender ideology in *Fleabag*. Less successful work limited context to biographical or superficial observations, missing opportunities to interrogate power dynamics or audience positioning.

Administration

A minority of folders had some administrative oversights: candidates significantly exceeding the 2,500–3,500-word limit; missing or outdated cover sheets (particularly in centres yet to reference AI usage which is a requirement from 2026); disordered or upside-down pages. A few investigations featured overly technical ‘methodology’ chapters that tended to be repetitive rather than enhancing the investigation.

Language and Self-Representation

Investigations into self-representation have yielded some of the most original work, as candidates probed their own spoken and written exchanges in messaging apps, vlogs and classroom interactions. Successful studies paired first person data with theories of accommodation, politeness and face, revealing how speakers adapt style to assert or mitigate identity. However, a number of folders miscast celebrity and political personas - JK Rowling’s tweets or Eminem’s rap verses - as ‘self-representation’ overlooking the need for genuine personal data. Centres should ensure titles and methodologies demand the candidate’s own discourse, apply theory to lived examples, and distinguish self-analysis from mediated public voices. For example:

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

Language and Gender

Gender-focused enquiries remained by far the most popular, encompassing scripted drama, song lyricism and social media speech. High-scoring investigations used Butler’s performativity and Lakoff’s genderlect frameworks to trace hedging, tag questions and evaluative lexis in *Grease*, *Fleabag* dialogue, Riot Grrrl anthems, and influencer monologues by Amber Heard or online feminist collectives. Yet uneven descriptive passages, narrow term inventories (often restricted to word classes and sentence moods), and occasional drift into relationship themes sometimes hindered deeper insight. Candidates are advised to embed ‘identity’ in research questions, for example:

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

Language and Culture

A broad spectrum of cultural identities has been investigated this year, reflecting candidates’ enthusiasm for analysing language in societal contexts. Some learners examined parliamentary discourse - from Liz Truss’s Commons exchanges and Nigel Farage’s press briefings to John F. Kennedy’s Cold War speeches - while others turned to media artefacts such as North-East vs. London accent features, newspaper reports on female lawyers, and celebrity coverage after weight loss. Music also featured prominently, with studies of Taylor Swift’s narrative lyricism sitting alongside analyses of Dave’s rap refrains and radio interviews with Mo’Nique. In such investigations, candidates should explore the intersection of language and culture - not drift into pure political or historical commentary - and avoid over-reliance on biographical summary or unbalanced data spans. An example of an effective title to achieve this:

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

Language Diversity

This year's diversity studies illuminated intersectional identities – from code-switching in British Asian teenagers' MLE tweets and bilingual drag-community interviews to media framing of BLM protesters and Palestinian voices in international news. Band 5 work combined critical discourse analysis to unpack in-group markers, ideological stances and power relations. Conversely, some investigations suffered from overly broad titles ("influencer identities") or mismatched corpora – mixing podcasts, YouTube monologues and print headlines – leading to superficial context commentary. In constructing investigation titles, centres should guide candidates in defining identity facets, coherent datasets presented as appendices, and explicit mapping of context onto linguistic features. For example:

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

Advice to centres:

- Ensure titles explicitly pair 'identity' with a defined aspect (culture, gender, self-representation, diversity) and specify data scope and theoretical frameworks.
- Guide candidates to compile coherent, appropriately-sized data sets and present all source material in appendices.
- Flagging of misused terms and errors in expression in when assessing candidates' work, ensuring AO1 marks reflect these inaccuracies.
- Evidence internal moderation processes.
- Encourage the use of multi-modal datasets (spoken, written, digital) and varied analytical lenses – lexical, phonological, syntactic, graphological – to deepen investigation.
- Discuss examples of focused investigation titles and ensure candidates ground their investigations in explicit, manageable aims.
- Require clear separation of data from analysis by placing raw transcripts or texts in appendices, facilitating transparent moderation.
- Promote integration of advanced identity theories (e.g. Butler's performativity, Goffman's face-work) with linguistic analysis, rather than descriptive theory summaries.

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

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

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

Tel: 029 2240 4292

Email: gceenglish@eduqas.co.uk

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

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