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# **GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE A LEVEL**

**SUMMER 2019**

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<b>Component</b>	<b>Page</b>
Component 1	1
Component 2	7
Component 3	16
Component 4	21

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2019

## COMPONENT 1 – LANGUAGE CONCEPTS AND ISSUES

### General Comments

Once again, many candidates responded well to both sections of the paper, showing a considerable range of knowledge and an ability to use linguistic detail effectively to support their arguments. The best answers also showed an impressive willingness to respond intelligently to unseen material and to marshal their knowledge to provide coherent and relevant answers. The transcripts of the two interviews with politicians in Section A provoked many thoughtful and analytically precise essays, with most candidates comparing the speakers' attitudes effectively. There was an even distribution of answers on Section B.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Section A: Analysis of Spoken Language

The choice of two contrasting interviews enabled nearly all candidates to engage with the different attitudes and relationships between the speakers. Pleasingly, there was a more consistent focus on the way in which the four speakers used language to communicate their views and markedly less generic discussion of genre than in the previous year. Specifically, many candidates were able to note the adversarial nature of Mair's interviewing, the way in which Johnson's non-fluency features indicate his unease and the mutual support and face work apparent in Hannity and Trump's exchange. A range of possible interpretations was allowed, especially in regard to Text B, where candidates were not expected to have any prior knowledge of American politics. For instance, several read Hannity's observations about some Republicans voting against the healthcare bill as an attempt by the interviewer to challenge Trump's authority. While not strictly accurate, candidates were credited for this interpretation if they engaged with the language, exploring features such as Hannity's use of the adjectives *frustrating* and *disappointing*. It was less easy to reward those who argued that the entire exchange was uncooperative with Hannity's questioning being as face-threatening as Mair's, since there was clear evidence within the transcript of a more harmonious relationship between the two speakers in the second text such as the face work in the discussion about ratings near the end.

As well as focusing more precisely on the individual speakers, candidates also tended to write much shorter introductions this year, suggesting that many centres had responded positively to the advice in last year's report. The advantage of a more concise overview at the start is that it allows candidates to engage more quickly in close reading of the transcripts. Where candidates did start with a page of general comments about purpose and audience, it was often difficult for them in the remaining time to make enough analytical points in their essays. Some weaker responses ended up having only one or two points on Text B, for instance, making it hard for them to reach the higher bands. Given that the restrictions of time mean that it is often difficult to write more than four or so sides, it is crucial that candidates both maximise their time commenting precisely on the language of the transcripts and develop a method that enables them to make a series of analytical points in a relatively concise manner.

However, the biggest differentiating factor remains, as in previous years, the ability of the candidate to link a clear overview of the speakers' attitudes with a detailed analysis of their language. Most candidates noted Johnson's unwillingness to address the issue of his sacking by *The Times*. Many candidates observed that he resists Mair's use of the noun phrase *a barefaced lie* by saying that he *mildly sandpapered something*. Better answers identified the adverb *mildly* and noted that it made his actions seem less important. The most confident responses often also discussed the effect of the dynamic verb *sandpapered* and the indefinite pronoun *something*, exploring how Johnson's discourse sought to exonerate himself and downplay the moral significance of his behaviour. Where candidates consistently combined an intelligent grasp of the speakers' personas with a precise identification of their use of language, they scored very highly.

While using entirely accurate terminology throughout the essay remains a challenge for many candidates, there was a pleasing sense that there were fewer examples of feature spotting. In particular, the habit of simply identify three or four word classes in a quotation without tying it to meaning was markedly less prevalent. The errors with terminology that did recur in many answers might be profitably noted, since they point to the areas which are likely to prove difficult to students across all centres. Common mistakes that were frequently made include:

- misidentifying unintentional repetition (*these are these are these are*) as false starts
- not identifying *let me ask you about a barefaced lie* as an imperative
- identifying possessive determiners (*our history*) as possessive pronouns
- misidentifying personal pronouns such as saying that *we* is second person.

It should be emphasised again, however, that candidates who used terminology frequently but made some slips generally did much better than those who used terminology more sparingly.

Another area of improvement concerned the use of theory. Generally, it was used more judiciously this year with the ideas of linguists such as Grice and Lakoff better integrated into the analysis of meaning. There were still some examples of candidates forcing in their theoretical perspectives, writing sentences such as "the exchange between Trump and Hannity is very cooperative which is really surprising since Tannen says that men are always competitive". Clearly, this is an unhelpful approach. It may be worth emphasising again that candidates definitely do not need to reference linguists in this section in order to score highly for AO2. It is their engagement with exploring attitudes, relationships and personas in these specific exchanges which unlocks the higher marks.

One tiny final point: it is good practice for candidates to use the surnames of speakers rather than their first names. An appropriate level of academic detachment is implied by using "Trump" rather than "Donald" or indeed, in contrast to much of the national media, "Johnson" rather than "Boris".

### **Characteristics of successful responses:**

- detailed focus on how the attitudes of the four speakers were revealed through their choice of language
- some comparison of how the relationship between interviewer and interviewee differed in the two transcripts, supported by close reading of the language
- sustained and accurate use of wide-ranging linguistic terminology in each paragraph
- a range of analytical points on both texts in a succinct manner.

### Areas for improvement:

- genuinely engaging with the meaning of the texts, exploring how both interviewees and interviewers use language to establish their identities
- using a wide range of accurate terminology
- writing concisely to make a series of analytical points about both transcripts and not ending up with very few points on Text B.

### Summary of key points: key considerations for centres

- Candidates score well when they combine an intelligent overview of the speakers' attitudes with precise linguistic analysis.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use terminology in every paragraph, seeking to use a range of different terms.
- Candidates should start detailed analysis quickly after a brief overview and aim for a concise approach that enables them to make a series of analytical points about both texts.

### Section B: Language Issues

As in the past two years, most candidates responded very positively to the challenge of writing essays on language issues and it remains clear that many centres are teaching a wide range of material which fully engages students in important debates. The best essays showed an impressive level of knowledge, a thoughtful awareness of the ideas of various linguists and an ability to construct a coherent case while drawing on specific examples of language use. Pleasingly, there were few examples of very short essays or of candidates simply focusing on the stimulus material. While some less successful essays, however, tended to lack detailed knowledge, the most common problem was a familiar one: a failure to answer the question consistently and directly throughout.

#### Q.2 Language and Situation

This proved a popular question with many candidates capably exploring a range of different contexts in which speakers' language varied to reflect different audiences. Nearly all essays made some sound use of the prompt material, distinguishing the different registers and purposes of the three utterances; the best ones did this with a forensic focus on the language used, noting, for example, the comforting effect of the first person plural pronoun *we* and the present participle *helping* in the doctor's discussion with the patient. Those who used gender theory here were generally less insightful, especially where they simply assumed that the doctor was male.

The most impressive responses drew on a range of examples, often precisely identifying the characteristic linguistic features used by different speakers in particular situations (such as courtrooms or classrooms) or examining how the same speaker used language differently (such as variations of language use in the workplace). Those who referenced Giles' Accommodation Theory often did well as long as they were able to exemplify the acts of convergence or divergence in specific contexts. The central argument, that code switching is a crucial element of successful spoken communication, was often well made.

Where candidates were less successful, their problem was nearly always a result of either not reading or not answering the question. In several cases, it appeared that the essay was pre-planned with every single candidate from the centre using the same four examples.

While it was possible to write a relevant and cogent essay with this approach, the problem often was that candidates struggled to relate the material to the question.

In the worst examples, they wrote at length about written advertisements or newspaper reports, when the question explicitly asked about speakers. More commonly, they wrote about the power balance of the speakers with little explicit reference to the question of audience. While the examples might well have been implicitly relevant to the argument, it is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that they tie their material explicitly to the question.

Clearly, those centres who taught a reasonably wide range of extracts from which individual candidates selected appropriate examples, gave their students the best chance of success. In many cases, essays also drew effectively on language used in the candidates' own lives. This is a laudable approach and produced some excellent analysis, showing an ability to apply ideas effectively. To score highly, however, the analysis needs some sophistication of thought as well as linguistic precision. Simply noting that different language is used in a job interview than in informal conversation with friends without a more nuanced and focused exploration of the language is, although a valid point, not especially insightful. At their best, however, answers to this question were original, well-argued and supported by intelligent close reading of specific examples of language use.

### **Q.3 Child Language Acquisition**

The focus on the first two years of a child's acquisition of language enabled many candidates to answer precisely and to show a real engagement with this fascinating area of study. For some others, however, the question proved slightly more problematic.

As always, candidates chose to use the prompt material in different ways. Where the material is an extract from a linguist's writing as opposed to a transcript, there is sometimes less to be said about it. However, in this case, some candidates skilfully used the four features mentioned (phonology, lexis, morphology and syntax) to frame their discussion about the development in the first two years. Others, equally intelligently, settled on the verb "battling" to discuss the extent to which the acquisition of language was a straightforward process of genetic development or a struggle to engage with their environment. Brief reference to the importance of sound (phonology) and meaning (semantics) was also perfectly acceptable as a springboard to a discussion of the child's development.

The best answers wrote thoughtfully on the various stages, starting with the research on children's experience of language pre-birth (such as Mehler's work). Clear accounts of the pre-speech stages were often linked to a discussion of the significance of features such as phonemic expansion and contraction with some candidates exploring Patricia Kuhl's research in an intelligent manner. Subsequent analysis of both the holophrastic and two word stages allowed for a precise account of how lexical, grammatical and phonological elements developed. Other issues could easily be explored within the constraints of the question so that discussion of Child Directed Speech or the differing attitudes to the process displayed by nativist, behaviourist, cognitive or interactionist approaches were often effectively tied to the first twenty four months.

Where candidates commented briefly on the telegraphic stage, noting the importance of the changes that occurred at the start of the third year, credit was given.

However, where candidates wrote long sections on children's linguistic development between the ages of 30 months and aged 7, it was harder to see the relevance to the question. In some cases, it seemed as if candidates were planning to write an essay on CLA without any reference to the question after the opening paragraph. For example, commenting on Berko and Brown's fis phenomenon was potentially relevant when discussing phonological development but a lengthy paragraph on it without referencing the fact that it concerned older children was more problematic.

Similarly, using Genie as a case study might have helped illuminate the debate about the importance of the first two years but too often it was used without any reference to the question whatsoever.

In short, it is important for students not only to have a good range of knowledge (and there was plenty of evidence of this in the vast majority of candidates' work) but also to be able to select material from a broader body of information and ideas in order to shape an answer. At their best, responses here were insightful, extremely well-informed and cogently argued, using a range of material and examples in support. It is unquestionably a topic that engages many students. However, there is possibly a need to encourage them to select evidence more judiciously and develop more coherent responses that directly address the question.

#### **Q.4 Standard and Non-Standard**

Once again, many candidates approached this question with an excellent grasp of the central issues and an ability to explore the debate around the status of non-standard forms in a thoughtful manner. In many cases, the arguments were centred on the views of specific writers, with the opposing positions of Lindsay Johns and Michael Rosen or Rob Drummond framing intelligent discussion about attitudes towards lexical and grammatical variation in education. Such explorations were always most persuasive when accompanied by really specific examples of non-standard forms with linguistic terminology used to identify the precise nature of the variation.

Again, latitude was allowed in the use of the prompt material. Interestingly, relatively few candidates understood the descriptivist basis of Thomas and Wareing's position, implied by the use of the word "dialect" and the statement that SE "achieved its prominence historically, not on linguistic grounds". Most considered the position to be an unreservedly prescriptivist one, stressing the status of SE in a variety of situations. While a misreading of the material, this did not impede candidates as long as they went on to explore the debate around SE and NSE precisely.

It should be emphasised that various approaches could be taken to this question. For some candidates, the exploration of attitudes to non-standard forms was underpinned by examination of classic sociolinguistic research by Labov or Trudgill or Milroy et al. For others, the focus was on specific case studies of dialects such as MLE or Hiberno-English. Equally, it was possible to analyse the emergence of prestige forms and the stigmatisation of non-standard forms in historical terms, commenting on the process of standardisation and giving precise examples of changes to SE over time. All of these approaches were completely valid. What was crucial was that the argument was founded on precise examples rather than general statements about attitudes to NSE. Furthermore, as in the other Section B questions, the ability to use material to shape a relevant answer to the question, whatever approach was taken, was central to achieving a high mark.

One area where many candidates did tend to lack precision a little is in the distinction between accent and dialect. While some linguists use dialect as a more general term, it is possibly more helpful to use it in relation specifically to lexical and grammatical variation. Either way, the phrase “non-standard forms” can also be legitimately applied to phonological variation so that exploring attitudes to accent was certainly valid here. It is important, however, for candidates not to conflate RP and SE or to discuss them as if they are precisely the same thing. Those who did distinguish them often had a clearer focus for their writing. Certainly, the ability to engage in the issues in a thoughtful manner, constructing a clearly developing argument from paragraph to paragraph was a marked feature of many of the best answers.

### **Characteristics of successful responses:**

- a consistent focus on the specific question with relevant examples of language use
- a sense that material is being chosen from a wider range of knowledge in order to tailor the response to the demands of the question (rather than fitting the question to the material)
- a clear paragraphing structure with relevant topic sentences, allowing for a logically developing argument.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- having a clear answer to the set question rather than reproducing a generic essay on the topic
- selecting appropriate material that is relevant to the question
- highlighting the sense of a developing (and relevant) argument through clearly structured paragraphs.

### **Summary of key points: key considerations for centres**

- Candidates need to answer the question consistently throughout the essay and select material to support their argument.
- Candidates need to practise planning different essays on the same topic, developing the ability to shape the material in different ways in response to different questions.

### **Conclusion**

The component remains an exciting one both to set and to mark as many candidates reveal hugely impressive analytical skills and a genuine engagement with the debates about language use. This year, there was a clear sense that essays were more focused on meaning in Section A with more precise discussion of speakers’ use of language. In Section B, however, a number of candidates continue to struggle to shape their knowledge to answer the set question. Those that do so successfully often produce original, insightful and well-informed responses that are a pleasure to read and mark.



**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**  
**GCE A LEVEL**  
**Summer 2019**  
**COMPONENT 2 – LANGUAGE CHANGE OVER TIME**

**General Comments**

Candidates once again appeared to enjoy writing about the genres (novel extracts and online comment threads) and most had sufficient and appropriate subject knowledge to tackle the questions. Almost all candidates managed their time effectively, responding appropriately to each task. All texts seemed to engage candidates and, in comparison to last year, there was some good close engagement with the meaning of the texts and the set questions. There were, however, still a significant number of candidates writing extensively about language change in general terms for Question 2, at the expense of close engagement with meaning. Again, while this displayed some good historical knowledge, it hindered analysis and evaluation of the texts, which was clearly prompted in the question. Some responses to Section B drifted away from the question too: there was some general discussion of attitudes to language change and the wider contextual concepts of social media in general, rather than the sharp focus on comment thread posts that the question required. Candidates did slightly less well overall in comparison to 2018, perhaps due to the challenge presented by the fiction extract genre for Question 2, but was adjudged to be entirely suitable as a choice for this component: ‘narratives’ is referred to in the corresponding section of the *A Level English Language Teacher Handbook* on the Eduqas website and, indeed, fiction extracts came up on the legacy specification unit LG4 as recently as 2014.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A: Language Change Over Time**

Four equally weighted assessment objectives are covered in Section A 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 (20 marks)**

Candidates needed to demonstrate explicit conceptual knowledge of the fiction genre (narrative perspective, characterisation, dialogue, imagery) and the important subject matter of the texts (choosing a bride/wedding, Text A; meeting a close relative in an unfamiliar place, Text B; everyday experiences seen from a new viewpoint, Text C). Unlike last year, however, speculation on target audience was less helpful here, other than in regard to changing literacy levels over time related to issues such as social class, gender and education. General comments about language change as a concept were not relevant here unless specifically related to genre features such as the lack of speech marks in Text A and, indeed, caused some problems of interpretation when imposed upon the dialogue of Jack’s father-in-law in Text A and Joe Gargery in Text B, where non-standard spelling was used to shape accent rather than being a historical orthographical feature. Discussion of issues (e.g. social status in all three texts, gender in Text A, identity in Text C) was productive when linked directly to the content of the texts. Appropriate and concise supporting quotation was required to support all points.

### AO3 (20 marks)

Candidates needed to engage with the fiction extracts, exploring details and interpreting meaning. Addressing context was central to the question and focused use of the rubric as an interpretive tool facilitated good responses. While it was clear that some candidates were already familiar with some of the texts, *Great Expectations* in particular, this was no advantage as the contextual information in the rubric provided all that candidates required to understand and engage with the extracts fully. Evaluation of the ways in which the texts would have engaged and entertained readers of the time was very helpful here.

Unfortunately, however, the word 'relatable' as used to describe the manner in which a text seems to resonate with its audience seems to be increasingly popular – probably not helped by its growing usage in other mainstream discourse. It would be far more helpful to encourage candidates to explore precisely what that resonance is, in relation to the specific shared cultural conditions between text production and reception, rather than reductively using 'relatable' as the beginning and end of the point when considering how context shapes meaning.

### AO4 (20 marks)

Candidates needed to develop links between texts beyond simply using connectives to range across them. While comparing by feature could be productive, genuine insight was only reached through comparing by meaning. The use of linguistic terminology was also assessed under this AO. Candidates needed to analyse the extracts using a range of terms to support all points and more effective responses covered a range of terms across the language levels.

#### Q.1 Short questions

The approach to the short questions continues to develop as candidates and centres become more familiar with what is required here in terms of precise labelling and concise description of the language change feature relevant to each question. While most candidates are covering the questions succinctly (as mentioned in previous years, this can be comfortably managed in less than a page) it is still the case that candidates should be reminded of this regularly as some are still writing far more than is necessary. There was, once again, sound knowledge of language change, while the identification of word form does seem to be improving. It should also be noted that only 1(a) should be answered in note form – the remainder in full sentences.

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

Most candidates did well in this first question, identifying all three word classes correctly and describing the *u/v* interchange, the appended *-e* and doubling of final consonant appropriately.

- (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 (e.g. a lack of standardisation) for each example.

Most candidates identified the word classes correctly and could be rewarded for describing the pattern of variation for *shee/she* through reference to inconsistency, appended –e, for naming a key linguistic work (e.g. Samuel Johnson’s 1755 dictionary) or the lack of standardisation. For *nobles*, candidates could also be rewarded through reference to semantic change (archaism in context/obsolete words having fallen out of use, its use to refer to those of aristocratic birth, rather than a unit of currency). 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.

- (c) This question tests the candidate’s knowledge of word classes 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. In comparison to last year, candidates were more able to identify the form of the examples: description of *writ* as a verb and *kind* as either adverb or adjective were accepted. The second mark required candidates to show understanding of the archaic grammatical features, for example, through reference to both *writ* and *kind* as an archaic form or, as was popular with many candidates, the PDE form ‘written’ and ‘kindly’ or reference to the ‘ly’ adverb inflection.
- (d) This question tests the candidate’s ability to identify and describe EME grammatical structures and punctuation features. There are 3 marks for identifying distinctive EME usage and 3 marks for selecting and describing an appropriate example. Responses needed 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 6 marks because their points were based on orthography.

Many candidates cited random capitalisation identifying the capitalisation of common nouns (e.g. *Modestie*) and adjectives (e.g. *Excellent*). It is important that a word class term is used to explain the variation from PDE. Some candidates recognised the omission of possessive apostrophes (e.g. *mens daughters*, *womans Modestie*). Reference to possession was necessary to receive reward. Some also recognised the lack of speech punctuation for direct speech and the quoting clause (*quoth Jacke of Newberie*) in parenthesis.

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. “Notwithstanding, he bent ... with much treasure.”). To be awarded the second mark, there had to be evidence of clauses (even if they were not highlighted in some way): for instance, “...whom he had tried ...; and knowing her..., thought it better ..., than some other with...”. Claims that a comma before a coordinating conjunction was specifically EME practice were not rewarded as this is not entirely the case, while broad points about the “excessive” use or “misuse” of semi-colons are not credit worthy.

Candidates should be reminded that they cannot repeat examples from part (c) in part (d) and that examples must be taken from the extract provided for Part (d), rather than elsewhere in the text. It was this question, in particular, to which some candidates wrote long, unfocused, and sometimes irrelevant responses.

### **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 and phrase structure
- awareness of exactly what is required to pick up the marks for each question in the most concise manner
- precise descriptions of EME language change features.

## **Q.2 Essay**

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

Candidates needed to consider three fictional novel extracts written at different times to engage and entertain their audience of literate readers who enjoy reading for pleasure. Many candidates were able to identify the moral messages that their authors included, such as the benefits of hard work and honesty (Text A) compared to the pitfalls of unearned wealth and snobbery (Text B); multiculturalism, and the everyday joys of life that we too often take for granted (Text C). It was good to see that many candidates engaged with meaning and often responded with independence and enthusiasm to the texts. The strongest connections were those based on the meanings and issues the texts presented: for instance, when considering the social position of all characters through voice (differences in the direct speech of the father's accent in Text A compared to Jack's more elevated use of 'bestow'; Joe's rural, working class accent in Text B compared to Pip and Herbert's SE; Harri's blend of LME and Ghanain), was far more effective than comparisons by genre feature (e.g. "all three texts include the genre convention of dialogue"). In the same way, finding ways of linking the texts as products of the world in which they were produced was a far more productive way of addressing all AOs simultaneously – surely the holy grail of all linguistic analysis – rather than lists of features that the texts contained (adjectives, lists, pronouns, declaratives, narrative perspective, proper nouns etc.). Other productive connections included characters experiencing change (e.g. the fairly neutral observation of Jack and his new wife now moving in circles that included 'lords, knights, and gentlemen' in sharp contrast to Joe's painful discomfort in Pip's new environment, in turn contrasting to Harri's naïve wonder at the possibilities of London life), the creep of secularism through the use of religious references, and family relationships.

Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the fiction genre and effectively explored its conventions (for example, how narrative perspective shapes the reader's relationship with character, the use of dialogue to characterise) – clearly the preparation for Component 3's creative writing helped here – and cultural references familiar to each text's contemporary readership as a means of shaping period resonance (the booming woollen cloth trade of Text A; the Victorian obsession with social class in Text B; everyday references to Haribo, launderettes, flats and the tube in Text C).

It was pleasing to see frequent topic sentence references made to the key words of the question: “engage and entertain” that maintained, for most candidates, a sharp focus on the question.

While many candidates were able to identify through the texts a sense of the evolution of the novel genre over time, from the formal distance of Text A (some discerning candidates picked up on the fronted adverb ‘now’ at the start of the extract that created a ‘fairytale-like’ tone), through the more humorous but nevertheless high formality of Text B to the less formal post-modern efforts of Kelman in Text C to capture the authentic voice of a child. Some candidates rather overstated this trajectory, however, by claiming that all EME novels were written in third person, while all ME/ LME-PDE novels were/are written in first person, thereby taking the sample as representative of the whole. Another rather unhelpful approach seen was to broadly compare the older texts – and Text A in particular – with twenty-first century life experiences; all comparisons should be made between the texts themselves for this question.

On the whole, candidates demonstrated sound understanding of the texts and this came through some lively engagement with the characters and their experiences. There was much indignation at the inherent sexism of the world of Text A, where Jack’s wife is not only not dignified with a name but also treated as little more than a chattel in a business transaction between husband and father-in-law. Text B was perhaps the least well-handled, with some candidates missing the first person pronoun references and mistaking it for a third person narrative like Text A, while Joe’s idiomatic elliptical dialogue “Your servant, Sir” was misinterpreted by some into thinking that Herbert was Pip’s servant, rather than friend: this could have been avoided by more careful reading of the rubric. Nevertheless, there was some good engagement with – and sympathy for – Joe’s predicament, handled most effectively through the symbolism of the extended metaphor of Joe’s ‘bird’s-nest’ hat and ‘ghost-seeing effect’. Candidates also really warmed to Harri in Text C, many effectively picking up on the use of second person direct address to strengthen that connection between character and reader. There were also some really rather moving ruminations on Harri’s excitement at and enthusiasm for those things in life we are often guilty of taking for granted, really demonstrating literature’s enduring power to force us all to have a good look at ourselves on occasion.

In terms of approach, as previously stated, engagement with the meaning of the texts was key to a successful response. Examiners were looking to gain a clear sense of what the texts were about from reading the response: if the details of the content are not referenced, candidates could be writing about any narrative. For example, while it is undoubtedly true that, in fiction, adjectives are used to provide description of characters and setting, and figurative language is a genre convention, merely pointing this out was not enough to reach the higher bands. Candidates needed to comment on how these typical features were used to shape meaning across the whole of the texts and exactly what it was about each example that created engagement and entertainment for the reader. Likewise, lengthy introductory overviews that speculated on what the candidate expected to find in the texts were not particularly productive, neither was verbatim regurgitation of the contextual information. The strongest responses were those that got stuck straight into the texts, providing evaluative overview as part of the analysis itself.

It is also worth quoting last year’s report wholesale here, as a similar issue was identified in a substantial 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.” As an example of how period features could be productively be employed in the essay, the thematic capitalisation of the adjective in the noun phrase ‘an Excellent huswife’ and the abstract noun ‘Modestie’ in Text A both have a semantic resonance in identifying the importance of those qualities to the reputation of a woman in the EME period, while the capitalisation of ‘the Church’ in Text B demonstrates the hushed reverence in which this institution was still held by many during the ME/LME period.

It is also worth reminding candidates that their achievement will be improved by using all the language levels through the application of a wide range of terminology – linguistic knowledge should always be at the heart of unseen analysis.

In general, though, this question was a pleasure to mark – the considered and enthusiastic responses seen have left this Principal Examiner very much looking forward to a reading-filled summer!

### **Characteristics of successful responses:**

- well-shaped essay responses that clearly address the question
- engagement with details of the texts, rather than broad discussion of genre conventions, supported by well-chosen, concise textual references
- discussion of contextual features linked specifically to meaning
- the use of issues as a means to explore connections between texts
- the use of wide-ranging and relevant terminology to underpin points made.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- close reading of the texts and the rubric to support understanding
- specific, close engagement with meanings
- a clear focus on the question throughout the response
- the use of a wider range of terms across the language levels
- technical accuracy and fluency of expression.

### **Summary of key points: key considerations for centres**

- Responses should address a range of points
- Explicit reference to content should form the basis for engagement with meaning
- Close reading of texts and rubric contexts should inform planning of responses.

## **Section B: English in the Twenty-First Century**

Three assessment objectives are covered in Section B: AO1, AO2 and AO3. The marks for these are not equally weighted. Since AO3 is worth double, it is important that candidates spend sufficient time exploring context and the construction of meaning (AO3). In Question 3, marks were awarded for each separate assessment objective.

### **AO1 (10 marks)**

Candidates needed to demonstrate their ability to use a range of appropriate linguistic terminology to underpin analysis of online comment threads. This enabled candidates to develop a critical approach. The fluency and technical accuracy of the writing was also assessed here.

## **AO2 (10 marks)**

Candidates needed to demonstrate their knowledge of the genre and medium explicitly. Discussion of relevant issues (e.g. attitudes, self-presentation) and concepts (e.g. medium, informalisation, sociolect, presupposition, face, anonymity, interaction) was valid when linked directly to the genre and content of the data. The marshalling of apt and concise textual support was also of great importance.

## **AO3 (20 marks)**

Candidates needed to engage with the data, exploring details and interpreting meaning. It was important that the data was analysed, but other examples of online comment threads could be discussed. Because of the mark weighting, addressing contextual factors (producer, purpose, relationships with other users) needed to form the basis of discussion. As stated for Question 2, that pseudo-analytical word 'relatable' made several appearances in discussion here, and the same feedback applies to its usage.

### **Q.3 Essay**

This question tests the candidate's ability to analyse language using accurate terminology and an appropriate style, to evaluate the construction of meaning in context, and to apply knowledge of relevant concepts and issues in order to explore the writers' language choices.

Candidates responded enthusiastically to the data, demonstrating a good understanding of the medium (the BBC website) and genre (comment threads). There was no evidence seen from responses to suggest that the topic (football) proved to disadvantage any candidate demographics in any way: they are not, after all, being assessed on their knowledge of this. Background information was generally well integrated, although there was some discussion of social media, text messaging, online reviews etc. that caused a loss of focus. Similarly, reference to named and unnamed critics (e.g. Humphreys, Crystal, Will Self) as representatives of prescriptivist and descriptivist positions, as well as the candidate's own opinion on the matter, did not help candidates to answer the question as this was very obviously pre-learnt material, recounted rather than applied specifically within the parameters of the question. Likewise, wider examples provided by candidates often lost focus on genre when drawn from other digital sources, again suggesting pre-prepared responses that are not answering the question. The question draws attention to the specific genre in the italicised contextual information above the question box and in the question itself. As stated in last year's report, candidates would be well advised to highlight the genre to ensure that their focus does not drift.

There was some effective grouping of the texts, usually according to the identity/perspective of their producer, with most candidates using the contextual information provided in brackets as a productive means of organising their approach, with many also engaging in productive discussion of usernames as a typical genre feature. This helped them to address the linguistic features typical of particular producers (fans, Texts 1, 3, 6; critics, Texts 2 and 4; expert, Text 5). These groupings allowed candidates to identify the consistent use of emotive language throughout, through the use of positively and negatively connoted lexis according to producer perspective, in addition to the use of shared knowledge references used to either seek tribal commonality or, indeed, to bait supporters of the opposing team.

Many candidates picked up on the markedly different tenor of Text 5 and appropriately attributed this to the producer's occupation as a teacher, both in terms of the balanced views and technicality of the use of jargon, some speculating on the importance of maintaining an appropriate tone for one employed in the public sector. Another rich vein of analysis was identified by some candidates who recognised the difference in approach of Text 4 which, rather than focusing upon the match itself, addressed some rather arch comments towards another user and the BBC itself. Where candidates worked chronologically through the data, there tended to be less structured focus to the response, which often led to unnecessary repetition and listing of features rather than productive engagement.

Responses that relied simply on identifying typical informalising features of language (non-standard spelling, punctuation, grammar and capitalisation, for example) were less successful than those which used this as a means to analyse these features in the context of Twenty-First Century English in the set genre, shaping the online identity of the producers. Where this was the case, it often led to list-like responses, demonstrating broad knowledge rather than analysis and evaluation with little engagement with meaning. Those candidates who saw this as a way into analysis (e.g. elongated, fully capitalised proper noun minor exclamatory sentence 'EEEEAAAAGGGGLLLLLEESSSS' used to demonstrate the producer's joy at their team's victory; non-standard grammar 'should never of', rather than have as representative of the spoken form as the frustrated producer types as he/she thinks) were those best placed to reach the higher bands.

As with last year's report, the identification of digital language features demonstrated sound knowledge but, once again, this needs to be married to further usage of AO1 linguistic terminology. For instance, Text 5's 'V.' was frequently correctly labelled as a clipping but significantly fewer candidates went further by identifying it as an intensifying adverb within the adjectival phrase 'V. careless'; while many labelled the contraction 'C'mon' as being specifically speech-like, fewer identified it as a fronted imperative multi-word verb. It is worth stating, once again, that 'exclamatory' sentences are any which end in an exclamation mark, not 'exclamative', which are rather more grammatically precise, starting with 'what' or 'how' – although, interestingly, there was an example of a genuine exclamative in Text 2: 'How Fickle can you get'.

Some conceptual theory applied was useful: reference to online disinhibition, the economy principle, informalisation, face theory and pseudo-relationships between producer and audience all helped to explain the meaning of the language used in the texts. As mentioned previously, lengthy discussion of pre-learned material relating to prescriptivist attitudes to online language pulled candidates away from the question.

It was an enormous pleasure to mark Question 3 and it is clear to see the enthusiasm and knowledge of candidates in responding to language that they are clearly familiar with themselves, demonstrating a high level of clarity and insight.

### **Characteristics of successful responses:**

- clear organisation and fluent, accurate expression
- an explicit focus on context and genre
- analysis of data using appropriate linguistic and conceptual terminology
- clear knowledge of medium and associated concepts.



**Areas for improvement:**

- using the contexts provided to shape analysis
- keeping a sharp focus on the medium and genre as referenced in the question
- avoiding general speculation regarding opinions on Twenty-First Century English
- using a wider range of terminology to underpin analysis.

**Summary of key points**

- Using all material made available to candidates, both in the contextual information and the texts themselves will help candidates to engage with meaning in context and help shape a more focused response.
- Applying both general and conceptual terminology will facilitate more precise responses.

**Conclusion:**

There was evidence across the bands that candidates had followed a language course. It was clear that they had been prepared for the paper and most demonstrated a range of appropriate knowledge. It was a particular pleasure to read those responses that engaged closely with the meaning of the texts, applying that knowledge directly to the question and using a wide range of terminology from across the language levels to underpin analysis. There was great enthusiasm demonstrated through some highly individual personal engagement with the texts.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2019

#### COMPONENT 3 - CREATIVE AND CRITICAL USE OF LANGUAGE

##### General Comments

Candidates appeared well prepared to make a prompt and apt choice between the two questions this year, with very few false starts or rubric infringements. Whether choosing by topic or genre, almost all candidates responded with enthusiasm and applied creativity and skill to the set tasks. Both routes through the paper seemed to be accessible to candidates of all levels of ability, with just over half choosing Question 1. Few mistook the specifics of the tasks although some still approached the exam with pre-prepared ideas, for example, those determined to introduce murder, horror or a ghost even to a domestic cooking scenario.

The stimulus material was clearly understood. It was used appropriately as a reference or jumping off point by most candidates although a few copied whole sentences thus not fully tailoring a creative response to the task. As last year, nearly all managed their time effectively to allow for the commentary. These are becoming more thoughtful about language choices made which would seem to reflect an increased focus on this in class.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

**Q.1** The stimulus material was an extract from John Lanchester's novel, *Capital*, in which a Polish builder, Zbigniew, finds £500,000 in a suitcase hidden in a wall. He has been employed by the occupants' daughter to 'do up' the London terraced house ready for sale, even before they died. The extract is focused on Zbigniew's actions and observations and is straightforward to read and understand. As a novel extract, it is in the third person and past tense.

##### Task (a)

Candidates were asked to write a dramatic monologue in which Zbigniew considers his options. 'Monologue' was glossed. The majority of candidates who chose this question had a clear sense of the genre. Their focus was on Zbigniew's dilemma, of what to do with the money he has discovered, through exploring the practical, legal, moral and/or religious implications behind each option. Most were able to create a strong, personal, spoken voice. Many also depicted his emotional response and crafted demanding family circumstances.

##### Characteristics of successful responses:

- the construction of a script for performance e.g. use of the present tense, a personal voice, apt stage directions (the absence of these was not penalised), pauses
- an awareness of audience e.g. clear articulation of situation and options, suspense
- some development of Zbigniew's character e.g. emotive expression, references to dependents evoking the audience's empathy,
- effective stylistic choices e.g. non-standard idiolect, spoken language features.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- misunderstanding of the genre e.g. third person narrative, past tense (some marks could be awarded for character development and exploration of options)
- a lack of awareness of the audience's needs e.g. little explanation of the situation or options Zbigniew is considering
- inconsistency or incoherence in expression.

### **Task (b)**

Candidates were asked to write a newspaper report detailing how a family make a valuable find on holiday and its significance. While many wrote plausible, well-constructed, journalistic accounts explaining the circumstances of the find and citing apt quotations from experts to ascertain its value, some candidates seemed less sure of the genre, lapsing into irrelevant narrative details of the holiday or an inappropriately informal tenor.

The task was more independent of the theme of the stimulus material and there was no shortage of imagination in candidates' responses. Holiday destinations varied from Cornish beaches and Scottish inns to Egyptian pyramids and deserted Caribbean islands. Finds included priceless pirate treasure, Da Vinci paintings, unknown fossils, UFOs and kidnapped children.

### **Characteristics of successful responses:**

- features of a newspaper report e.g. factual approach, clear structure
- description of the context of the find e.g. modified noun phrases, fronted adverbials
- guidance of audience response e.g. engaging human interest with family, quotation of experts' assessments
- effective stylistic choices e.g. questions, comparison, evaluation, quotation.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- misunderstanding of the genre e.g. unstructured narrative, implausible content
- limited awareness of the audience's needs e.g. delayed or missing details of what, where, when etc.
- inconsistent or incoherent expression.

### **Summary of key points**

- Surprisingly, candidates seemed more familiar with the genre conventions of a dramatic monologue than a newspaper report. This was evident in the preference of 1a over 1b for analysis in 1c. It would be useful to remind candidates to familiarise themselves and gain confidence with different styles of journalism.
- A successful piece 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.

**Q.2** For this question, the stimulus materials, from an online travel article 'Best foods for summer', listed dishes from eight different countries, with their names and a brief, simple description including ingredients.

These included a soup, main dishes and three desserts. Most would be unfamiliar combinations of flavours to the British public.

### **Task (a)**

The task was to write a webpage for a restaurant to launch a new summer menu featuring international dishes. The aim was to tempt customers to try something new. Most candidates produced lively and engaging pieces. Many used the dishes from the stimulus materials but, while a few quoted these verbatim, the majority were able to reimagine them for the context with rich, enticing descriptions. Some were able to craft images of travel and summer weather, and give apt details such as contact, links to reviews and prices. A few engaged cultural references, for example, 'Around the world in 80 dishes'.

#### **Characteristics of successful responses:**

- an appropriate form for a text for a website e.g. clear logical structure, links
- a balance of information and promotion e.g. personal explanation of unfamiliar dishes either drawn from stimulus material or imagined
- creative and sensory description to persuade and engage audience
- a personal voice to advise, guide and tempt the browser.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- misunderstanding of the task e.g. a general advertisement for a restaurant
- over-reliance on the stimulus materials e.g. extended quotation
- a lack of structure and limited information.

### **Task (b)**

Candidates were asked to write an extract from a short story in which two students decide to experiment with recipes from a cookbook when it is their turn to cook for their housemates. Most responded with comic, well-constructed tales of mayhem and relationship breakdown through the meal preparation. Many chose to use a dish from the stimulus material. Convincing dialogue showed characters' interactions and detailed the situation although this was seldom accurately punctuated. A few were extreme and unconvincing with developments such as intentional poisoning or death from an accidental inferno. More than one chose to create a Harry Potter style brew of magic ingredients with mixed success.

#### **Characteristics of successful responses:**

- tailoring stylistic choices to genre e.g. spoken interaction, narrative control for an extract from a short story, consistent viewpoint
- descriptive language e.g. sensory lexis connected to food, imagery
- guidance of audience response e.g. character development, tension, humour
- appropriate, accurate and coherent written expression.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- misunderstanding of the genre e.g. undeveloped, plot-driven narrative
- limited awareness of the audience's needs e.g. undifferentiated characters, extreme events losing credibility, over-elaborate imagery
- inconsistent viewpoint and weak tense control.

### Summary of key points

- The stimulus text was used effectively as material for both tasks by the majority of candidates. A few, however, inappropriately quoted lengthy sections verbatim.
- Many candidates showed skill in the use of persuasive features for 2a but these needed to be carefully focused to achieve the aims prescribed in the task.
- While most candidates chose to write appropriately for an extract from a short story, perhaps by introducing characters and the situation or by focusing on a cooking crisis, others attempted to cover a whole story in 350 words. This inevitably resulted in an undeveloped event-driven piece that tells rather than reveals.
- Embedded dialogue was used effectively to create characters and show interaction for 2(b) but few candidates were able to punctuate this accurately.

### Q.1 & Q.2 (c) Candidates chose one of their two creative pieces for comment.

Several examiners commented that many of these analyses were more detailed and focused than in previous years, reflecting the effective work of teachers in class. The strongest candidates were able to own and investigate the language choices they had made purposefully. Using precise terminology, they could select and identify the features which shaped their writing. They gave brief, apt examples and linked effects with other techniques used in topic paragraphs e.g. the use of rhetorical questions with second person address to persuade, or elision and idiomatic usage to create a credible spoken voice.

Writers of the best commentaries were able to range through the levels of language, for example by detailing unusual syntactical features, pragmatic cultural references and implied meaning, the effects of plosives in an exclamation, or how their lexical choices affected tone. Evaluation is embedded in thorough analysis and does not need to be considered separately.

As noted in previous years, less successful candidates tended to limit discussion to identification of word classes with little meaningful discussion. Others used quotations semantically, to make a point rather than illustrate it. There was inaccuracy in the identification of quite basic features, for example, adverbs, adjectives and even nouns were regularly confused. The term 'exclamative' is rarely used correctly; it is usually more appropriate to describe a sentence as declarative with an exclamatory tenor.

Several candidates made a list of features they intended to use in (a) and (b) before beginning their creative pieces and this list was then used to inform the commentary. This practice tended to distort the crafting of the piece and result in a formulaic feature spotting exercise with little conviction behind discussion of how each technique suited the genre or engaged the audience.

### Characteristics of successful responses:

- ownership of the creative piece with a confident, first person investigation of language choices made for the given task
- an apt selection of key linguistic techniques and features which construct meaning
- topic paragraphs linking language features which combine to create effects e.g. to persuade, to create humour or empathy
- accurate identification of selected, specific linguistic features, apt illustration and exploration and evaluation of their effects in context.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- a lengthy, unfocused overview reciting the set task
- feature-spotting by identifying and labelling features but with a failure to explore their significance e.g. 'I used the stative verb 'feel' and the abstract nouns 'hope' and 'despair' in the third paragraph.'
- a narrow range, often limited to word classes
- an inappropriate attempt to evaluate by discussing what else might be included were they to write the piece again.

### **Key points 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 ask the questions:
  - Why* did I use this?
  - How* did it contribute to the construction of meaning?
- Advise use of topic paragraphs to link exemplified points with effects.
- Practise accurate identification of linguistic features in own writing.
- Evaluation should be embedded in analysis.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**  
**GCE A LEVEL**  
**Summer 2019**  
**COMPONENT 4: LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY**

**General Comments**

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

It was pleasing to note that fewer candidates used film scripts and novels as data for their investigations, which can prove problematic as candidates fail to investigate the writers' intentions when creating identities for their constructed characters. It was apparent that a number of candidates who had used such data needed much more specific guidance, as their studies suggested that the characters themselves were making decisions regarding language and identity. It might be helpful if candidates could suggest that characters' identities are portrayed or presented in a certain way by the language choices of the writers.

A small number of candidates chose to study aspects of child language development, or texts from different periods linked by genre. Both these language areas are covered elsewhere in the specification and are not appropriate for studies examining language and identity. There were also some instances of candidates using translated texts as part of their data. Candidates should be advised that for the English Language qualification any texts used should have been originally written in English. In addition some centres seemed to be using the legacy specification, with candidates stating that their chosen language area was The Language of Power.

Some candidates, especially those studying advertising, wasted time analysing and discussing images. They need to be reminded that this type of analysis is not rewarded in English Language. There might be some comments to be made about graphology or typography but only advertising copy should be used as data.

Finally, the most successful investigations had a strong linguistic focus throughout; purposefully embedded theory, which was relevant to the area of study; a coherent, academic style; accurate references to texts and sources supplied within a bibliography; and an explicit focus on the main theme of language and identity

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Assessment Objectives**

Most centres demonstrated a good understanding of the AOs, shown by their detailed summative comments, but it was apparent this year that **AO1b** and **AO1c** are being over-rewarded at times.

In order to achieve Band 5 for **AO1b**, a candidate must use not just a range but a **wide** range of terminology throughout. To achieve Band 5 for **AO1c** there must be **sophisticated** rather than effective organisation. Many candidates using sustained and apt terminology with fluent and accurate expression are being placed incorrectly in the highest band.

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

Candidates are required to demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues to score highly for **AO2**. This requires them to apply their knowledge to develop their argument. This should be supported by textual reference, and the application of theory if relevant.

For **AO3**, candidates should explore language choices and their impact in order to make judgements based on the relevant data selected. There must be an understanding of how contextual factors shape meaning and affect linguistic choices. A candidate must demonstrate their ability to analyse and evaluate the content and meaning of their chosen data in context with reference to production and reception.

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

## The Four Language Areas

### 1. Language and Self-representation

This was the least popular choice this year but even the less successful candidates were able to discuss how context affects their language choices albeit with limited analysis. The higher scoring candidates were able to extend this by analysing how they present different identities depending upon audience and purpose. Linguistic theory was generally used sensibly with politeness strategies proving a popular option; Goffman's Face theory was referred to by many candidates. An increasing number of candidates chose a multi-modal approach looking not only at how they use written and spoken language but also their use of electronic media and social networking. It was good to see that only a tiny minority of candidates misinterpreted self-representation this year.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the way I construct my **identity** using communication strategies in both verbal and non-verbal (e-communication) interactions.*
- *Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the influence context has upon language use in the projection of my **identity** during 24 hours of written and spoken communication.*

Two examples of less focused titles:

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



## 2. Language and Gender

This was by far the most popular choice this year. There was a huge range of fascinating and engaging studies with many candidates turning to literature to provide data. These studies worked well when the candidates made clear that they were investigating the intentions of the writer rather than the characters' interaction. A sizeable minority of candidates used their own primary data. These were successful when informed by relevant theory. Throughout the cohort, there was an over reliance on Lakoff to the detriment of other gender theorists. Candidates might like to consider using O'Barr and Atkins or Beattie, both of whom question the findings of more established theorists. Candidates are still using terms such as stereotyping and representation instead of identity, which often results in generic studies.

Concentrating upon one gender linked to language choices avoids merely presenting gender differences. A minority of centres are still allowing their candidates to use Disney films as data. These studies often lack the necessary scope required for an A level investigation and are therefore self-penalising.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

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

Two examples of less focused titles:

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

## 3. Language and Culture

There was a clear sense in this area that candidates had been allowed to follow their own interests and this resulted in many fascinating and diverse studies. It was good to recognise that candidates are using their own experiences to engage with identity and language. Investigation topics included: religion, sport, gaming, literature, politics, mental illness and criminality.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

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

Two examples of less focused titles:

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

#### 4. Language and Diversity

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

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- *An investigation into differences in language use between AAVE and Standard American English and how these affect social attitudes and **identity**.*
- *Investigate and analyse the ways in which preconceptions and stereotypes about the Cockney accent and dialect accurately reflect the **identity** of its speakers.*

Two examples of less focused titles:

- *What language difficulties do people with learning difficulties face?*
- *Are the lexical choices of three Scottish-set films correctly based on the target audiences of the films?*

#### Characteristics of successful responses:

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

#### Areas of improvement:

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

#### Summary of key points: key considerations for centres

- the main theme of language and identity must be a focus for investigations
- theory must be used to inform rather than drive the investigation
- language and self-representation must be an investigation into the learner's own language choices
- investigations covering fictional genres can be successful but can be often problematic
- when mentioning linguistic research or theories encourage candidates to use contemporary work as well as older studies
- ensure that all candidates understand the requirements of the AOs
- replace terms such as stereotyping, ideology, representation and bias with identity
- remind candidates that analysing images is not rewarded in English Language
- avoid child acquisition of language and language over time as topics for investigations.

## **Conclusion**

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



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