GCE A Level Examiners' Report

English Language

A Level

Summer 2026

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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.***

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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/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
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Executive Summary

Component 1: Language Concepts and Issues

This unit contains two sections: Section A, Analysis of Spoken Language; and Section B, Language Issues. In Section A, candidates were asked to analyse the participants' use of spoken language in two examples of pre-fight press conferences in boxing. 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.

Overall performance was broadly in line with that seen in previous series, with responses spanning the full range of available marks. In Section A, it was encouraging to see candidates applying relevant core linguistic terminology, alongside appropriate terms associated with spoken language, when analysing interactions between rival boxers, while also maintaining a clear focus on genre conventions and their effects on audiences. In Section B, candidates once again drew on a varied range of scenarios for AO3, and an increasing number incorporated their own observations alongside examples evidently explored in the classroom.

Component 2: Language Change Over Time

For Section A, candidates were asked to analyse the written language of three examples of extracts from autobiographies from different periods. In Section B, candidates were asked to analyse the written/multi-modal language of promotional email subject line and preview texts sent to a single account in December using a set of data containing eight examples.

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) seems to have levelled out to a consistent standard with some candidates demonstrating precisely presented and confident knowledge. For Question 2, it was particularly pleasing to see candidates largely providing a balanced level of engagement with all three texts The most successful responses ranged comparatively across the texts, applying a wide range of accurate linguistic terminology to frequent, concise, well-chosen examples. For Question 3, the most successful responses often scored well on AO1's 'coherent written expression' strand and had a clear focus on the double-weighted AO3's requirement to explore meaning in focus.

Component 3: Creative and Critical Use of Language

Most candidates opted for question 1, where the sound theme gave freedom to write a wide range of creative interpretations when paired with the blog task. Although not as popular, question 2 offered a dramatic monologue paired with an article promoting teaching as a career choice.

Many successful candidates were proficient in the form they were writing in while unsuccessful responses were often the result of misreading the stimulus or ignoring it altogether.

The approach to writing commentaries still needs some work as some candidates wrote very long and sometimes repetitive responses. Successful commentaries had immediate engagement and exploration of examples with linguistic terminology used as a springboard to explore the meaning and effect of language choices in relation to context.

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Component 4: Language and Identity

Candidates performed well in response to all the sub-aspects of study, exploring a full range of different 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 submissions.

It was very pleasing to see that centres were generally accurate in their assessment of candidate work.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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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).

In Section A, candidates were asked to analyse the participants' use of spoken language in two examples of pre-fight press conferences in boxing, which create publicity for upcoming bouts. In Text A, the UK's Savannah Marshall (Women's World Middleweight Boxing Champion) confronts her American opponent, Clarissa Shields (two-time Olympic Champion). In Text B, British rival boxers Connor Benn and Chris Eubank Junior confront one another. Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate how the spoken language of each of these texts exemplifies adversarial interactions in pre-match boxing press conferences. The question tested the candidates' ability to analyse language using appropriate terminology to evaluate how the contextual factors (e.g. the identities and experiences of the speakers, as well as their ultimate goal in participating in promotional events) have shaped meaning, and to explore meaningful connections across the texts (e.g. the dynamics between boxers, and the interactions between them).

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 exploring concerns around "correct usage" and rules of "proper English". Here, candidates had to analyse and evaluate the ways in which Standard and Non-Standard English forms are viewed. Question 3 was an extract from an interaction between a motorist and the police officer who has stopped him for speeding. Here, candidates had to focus their analysis and evaluation on the ways in which language is used in exchanges where one participant has more power than the other(s). Finally, Question 4 was an extract from illustrating how verb past participles are handled by toddlers, abstracting "a cognitive equivalent of a rule of grammar". Here, candidates had to use the extract as a starting point in analysing and evaluating the ways in which children acquire language up to the age of 24 months.

Although the paper was demanding in places, candidates were generally able to engage with the full range of marks, with a small number achieving the maximum available. It was encouraging to see that, in many centres, candidates were routinely making relevant connections for AO4 in Section A. In Section B, there was also less evidence of candidates relying on pre-prepared responses that failed to address the precise demands of the task. Fewer candidates appeared simply to reproduce everything they had learned about a broad topic without shaping their knowledge to the question set. Furthermore, although there is inevitably some overlap between the concepts explored in Section B—for example, between Standard and Non-Standard English and power, or between politeness and power—candidates need to refine their analysis so that it remains firmly focused on the particular issue being assessed. Knowledge should not be forced into an answer under headings such

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as Standard English, power or politeness when it does not contribute directly to the argument being made.

Overall performance was broadly in line with that seen in previous series, with responses spanning the full range of available marks. In Section A, it was encouraging to see candidates applying relevant core linguistic terminology, alongside appropriate terms associated with spoken language, when analysing interactions between rival boxers, while also maintaining a clear focus on genre conventions and their effects on audiences. In Section B, candidates once again drew on a varied range of scenarios for AO3, and an increasing number incorporated their own observations alongside examples evidently explored in the classroom. As in the previous series, centres are reminded of the value of encouraging candidates to develop and use their own examples in addition to those provided by teachers.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

In Section A, most candidates showed a secure understanding of the principal language levels and were often able to draw relevant, and at times perceptive, links between the ways the speakers interacted across the two conversations.

Connections were strongly considered on the whole, with candidates teasing out connections in the ways speakers used language to convey power, e.g. Chris Eubank Junior's confidence based on experience versus Connor Benn's confidence of youth.

In more successful responses, discussion was anchored by use of relevant speaker strategy, such as turn taking or the use of prosody or direct address. Candidates often chose textual evidence with care, drawing effectively on both features associated with spoken discourse and broader linguistic patterns, and linking these convincingly to the relationships and interactional dynamics within the conversations.

In less successful responses, candidates simply made general points about the conversations, ignoring specific speakers' strategies. As with last year, there was pleasingly little misreading of the texts. As usual, centres should discourage candidates from focusing on only a narrow range of textual evidence and avoiding feature spotting.

Section B

Candidates appeared to apportion their time well, spending 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 power-driven situations, e.g. political interviews or conversations between teachers and students, or between parents and children, where speakers use their powerful identities and attendant language devices to assert dominance. In addition, a number of candidates related attitudes to Standard English to historical and current cultural trends, such as the rising covert prestige of Multicultural London English (MLE).

On the whole, successful analysis teased out specific aspects of factors affecting the construction of meaning, e.g. attitudes to overt and covert prestige of Standard and Non-Standard forms in Question 2.

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In unsuccessful responses, candidates produced vague discussions that were not anchored in any scenario, leading to generic and generalised responses. 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, Language Change Over Time, 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 2 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 autobiographies from different periods. Text A, an extract from *William Lilly's History of his Life and Times* (1681 - from which the short tariff questions 1(a) – 1(d) were taken), presented details from his life in London as a servant during the plague year of 1625. Text B, extracted from *The Female Shipwright* (1773), described the female writer running away from home to start a life at sea disguised as a boy. Text C, taken from *Gloves Off: The Autobiography* ostensibly written by famous boxer and media celebrity Tyson Fury (2022) where the extract chosen explores the emotions of the immediate build up to an important boxing match. 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 (i.e. the influence of the time of production and reception), making meaningful links between them informed by language study (i.e. the accurate application of linguistic terminology), and to apply knowledge of relevant concepts (i.e. genre, intended audience, purpose) and issues (i.e. 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 promotional email subject line and preview texts sent to a single account in December using a set of data of eight examples. 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 (i.e. the medium, the posters' identity, the time of year at which they were sent), and to use knowledge of relevant concepts (i.e. audience, purpose, genre) and issues (i.e. informalisation, attitudes, sender/recipient 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) seems to have levelled out to a consistent standard with some candidates demonstrating precisely presented and confident knowledge. For Question 2, it was particularly pleasing to see candidates largely providing a balanced level of engagement with all three texts, with some nuanced and intelligent discussion of EME Text A, which in earlier series of the qualification

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received less attention. 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. There were perhaps more candidates 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) and is probably only worth mentioning when the language change feature distinctly shapes meaning, such as thematic capitalisation, or the semantic change of key repeated words, such as 'master'. There was an unwelcome resurgence of the unhelpful words 'relatable/relatability', particularly in reference to Text C: I would agree that significant efforts have been made in its linguistic construction to build a bond between 'writer' and 'reader', presumably based upon a pre-existing interest on behalf of 'reader', but to dismiss this with the single word 'relatable' seems like a huge missed opportunity to explore how meanings are shaped and audiences are manipulated. For Question 3, as always, the strongest responses were those that thoughtfully grouped the texts (AO1 – methods) by attitude, identity, levels of formality (AO2 – issues) and applied both C21st and linguistic terminology (AO1 – terms), showing a clear understanding of the medium (AO2 – concepts), 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.

Performance was consistent with previous series, with candidates achieving marks across the full range. Question 2 again saw a definite and pleasing increase of engagement with the older texts and some purposeful AO4 comparison, particularly via issues in context which, when supported by accurately applied terminology, and concise and well-selected evidence, allowed candidates to evidence assured synoptic fluency of addressing all relevant AOs at once. For Section B, once again, there was less lengthy discussion of descriptivist/prescriptivist debates regarding informalisation and more close engagement with the texts and their contexts: exactly what is required for a successful response. For instance, candidates who connected the text producer's identity to the level of formality and relative degrees of overtly persuasive language were far more successful than those speculating on how a prescriptivist might react to the texts.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Questions 1(a) – 1(d)

As in previous series, most candidates seem familiar with the requirements of these short tariff questions. The most frequent error for 1(a) was the misidentification of 'his as a pronoun, rather than a determiner, again proving the importance of checking the word in context in the text itself. 1(b) 'Lincolns-inn-fields' required to be labelled as 'proper noun' as a means to differentiate from noun 'year/year', while, 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 ('quote I' – past tense). Please be reminded that, for 1(d), any discussion of subordination and sentence types must be accompanied by precise quotation and specific reference to clause types.

Question 2

This year's Question 2 texts provided candidates with a wealth of material to explore, and many selected productively to analyse shifting concepts (genre: the evolution of the autobiography, audience: changing relationships between text producer and receiver, purpose: from informing to entertaining), and issues in context (gender, status, identity, religion, informalisation). Candidates often identified productive comparisons in subject

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matter between texts (c.f. ‘master’ above, the plague in Text A and ‘pandemic misery’ in Text C). Many started with a thoughtful comparative overview which set out the agenda for the response and textual support was frequently well-selected and concise and underpinned with sound linguistic knowledge. Most candidates made a strong attempt to provide each text with equal attention and to structure their response logically with clear paragraphs set up by a relevant topic sentence.

The most successful responses ranged comparatively across the texts, applying a wide range of accurate linguistic terminology to frequent, concise, well-chosen examples. Precise analysis of meaning in context was channelled through thoughtful engagement with concepts and issues while keeping the texts themselves at the heart of discussion. A clear sense of argument, set up by a developed comparative overview, was sustained across the response, and comparisons between texts added to the depth of analysis of each text individually. The strongest responses provided a clear sense of sensitive understanding of all three texts.

Less successful responses were often general rather than specific in discussion, with ideas either not fully supported by textual evidence or featuring lengthy quotations which undermined the application of linguistic knowledge. There was sometimes a tendency to offload pre-learned contextual material which was not securely linked to the texts, or to make sweeping generalisations about issues (e.g. lack of religious reference in Text B was coincidental, rather than indicative of growing secularisation in 1773). There were still some responses broadly discussing the language change details which are dealt with in Questions 1a-d, and some lacking sustained linguistic focus. There was some sense of unconvincing understanding that seemed to stem from a lack of close reading of the texts. Overviews were sometimes thin with copying/paraphrasing from the context rubric, while comparisons were basic or lacked development into productive analysis.

Question 3

As referenced in last year’s report, short responses to this question are becoming less frequent, suggesting better time management. There were several contextual approaches available to candidates, who often productively explored the medium of email subject lines and preview texts as developing a set of genre conventions in its own right, the identity of the text producer and their relationship with the receiver, and the December time frame. Many candidates demonstrated a sophisticated conceptual knowledge of C21st Language, applying a range of terminology both CMC-specific and general, and engaged purposefully with issues such as informalisation. It was pleasing to note that, even in the less successful responses, the temptation to work through the texts instead of grouping them seems to have declined this year, as has the provision of candidates’ own examples that either add little or are from other C21st media.

The most successful responses often scored well on AO1’s ‘coherent written expression’ strand and had a clear focus on the double-weighted AO3’s requirement to explore meaning in focus, moving beyond the straightforward identification of linguistic/conceptual features to really dig into the implications of the texts. They were able to identify the subtler nuances of variations of formality (e.g. the SE of Text 2’s charity appeal reflecting its seriousness in contrast to the levity of Text 1’s pet gift advert) and recognised the opportunity to evaluate (another AO3 strand) the relative effectiveness of each texts’ efforts to promote. As for Question 2, frequent and wide-ranging terminology applied to concise and well-selected concise quotation is always at the heart of the strongest responses.

Less successful responses tended towards feature spotting and labelling rather than moving discussion into productive AO3 analysis of meaning in context. There were some examples that lacked sustained linguistic focus and/or sufficient exemplification, while some – though

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fewer than previous series – embarked on lengthy speculation of how prescriptivists/descriptivist's might react to the informalisation evident in the texts, rather than engaging in productive analysis. Evaluation occasionally focused on accusations of carelessness or unprofessionalism of 'mistakes' in the texts: highly unlikely in a competitive marketplace where subject lines/preview texts are carefully curated – often by outside consultancy – to be as effective as possible.

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COMPONENT 3: CREATIVE AND CRITICAL USE OF 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 an online business magazine entitled 'A Problem That Speaks Volumes', here the negative impact of noise in the workplace was explored. The stimulus for Question 2 was an extract from a job description for an English Teacher in a sixth form college. Question 1(a) asked candidates to write a blog for a school website arguing whether quieter schools could benefit students and gave candidates the opportunity to either support or argue against the statement. Question 1(b) was to write the opening to a short story where noise plays a part giving candidates the freedom to write in a variety of styles and genres. For Question 2(a) candidates were invited to write a dramatic monologue for a person preparing for a job interview where they could use the stimulus for ideas and had the freedom to explore a wide range of creative opportunities and job roles. For Question 2(b) candidates had to write a persuasive article for a school/college newspaper to promote teaching as a potential career choice to readers.

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 1(a) and 1(b), or 2(a) and 2(b). Combining 1(a) with 2(b) or 2(a) with 1(b) is a rubric infringement and will result in the candidate's creative response not linked to the commentary being awarded 0 marks.

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Comments on individual questions/sections

The majority of candidates opted for question 1, no doubt attracted by the creative writing task offered in 1(b) where the sound theme gave freedom to write a wide range of creative interpretations when paired with the blog task of 1(a). Although not as popular, the question 2 options of the dramatic monologue paired with the article promoting teaching as a career choice, saw a range of energetic and creative responses showing the benefit of ensuring candidates are well prepared to tackle a range of creative responses.

There were few rubric infringements this year. There were some candidates who chose 1(b) and 2(a) seemingly attracted by the article and short story combination, it is therefore imperative that centres remind candidates not to simply opt for their favoured choices and they must attempt all of 1 or 2(a), (b) and (c). The stimulus material was used judiciously in both questions and candidates were adapting rather than copying out chunks of text, particularly when supporting their arguments for the blog task of 1(a). The approach to writing commentaries still needs some work where some candidates wrote very long and sometimes repetitive responses for 1(c). Here greater concision and closer focus on context would have been helpful. The dominant genres for the story opening were gothic/supernatural and dystopian, but there was a number of imaginative responses using contemporary and realistic settings. The blog task of 1(a) also gave candidates the freedom to write in formal and informal styles where many responses used a range of features to engage with readers. Many candidates agreed with the statement and made strong arguments for the strict control of sound in schools but a number of candidates also argued that sound is an essential part of productive learning. The stimulus was also used effectively to support arguments and candidates were clearly well versed in a using a range of rhetorical devices.

Question 1

Task a

Candidates approached the blog task in a variety of ways. Some responses used the conversational, informal register typical of blogs to engage with audience but were also able to state their argument effectively using a clear range of linguistic techniques. As the audience included staff and students, a more formal tone could also be adopted and many candidates put forward strong and cohesive arguments in favour of the benefits of making schools/colleges quieter. Many candidates also showed a diverse understanding of the educational context with references to OFSTED, behaviour and SEND making their messages effective and convincing. The stimulus was also used to structure and support arguments where judicious references to some of the facts and statistics were used to support the thrust of their argument.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- The deployment of a lively and energetic tone to immediately engage with audience and establish the blog form.
- The use of effective counter argument to consider both the pros and cons of noise in schools.
- Lexical choices relating to the field of education.
- A strong, personal voice supported by a creative, rather than formulaic use of rhetorical devices.

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- Effective adaptation of the facts and statistics from the business context of the stimulus to the educational context of the blog.
- The use of humour to engage with audience.

Areas for Improvement:

- Making a clear difference between a blog and a newspaper/magazine article in terms of linguistic choices.
- Adapting elements of the stimulus to the specific context rather than simply copying it out.
- Include some form of counter argument to ensure a balanced viewpoint.
- Avoiding an over serious tone where the purpose of the blog could be lost through a hectoring tone.
- Reading the question carefully making sure that the impact of sound was considered for both students and staff.

Task b

The opening to a short story involving sound allowed candidates to experiment with a wide range of styles and ideas. The most popular genre settings were inspired by the gothic/supernatural and dystopian genres where the sound element was woven into a range of successful narratives. Many successful responses used careful character and place exposition to establish a sense of mystery and intrigue typical of a story opening. Most candidates limited the use of dialogue, and it was interesting to see some candidates experimenting with paragraphing and sentence variation to create stylistic effects.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Building tension and interest for the reader through well-paced description of character and place.
- A strong personal voice using inventive stylistic choices that avoided formulaic use of descriptive devices.
- Engaging openings that were able to capture a definitive atmosphere through the establishment of genre.
- An understanding of the story being an opening to a wider narrative by suggesting unresolved elements.
- Some planning before writing - where a distinct structure and consideration of genre was worked out.

Areas for Improvement:

- Avoiding long sections of straightforward dialogue to drive narrative.
- Overuse of well-known tropes from films.
- Avoid writing complete, action filled narratives when tasked with writing the opening to a short story.
- Avoid formulaic, pre prepared passages of descriptive writing and avoid overly long, elaborate paragraphs of figurative writing.
- Some planning is always helpful to help structure a response to establish place, character and genre.

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Question 2

Task a

The dramatic monologue task resulted in a number of highly creative and well realised responses from candidates. It was often clear which candidates had been explicitly taught the monologue form as they were able to use a range of spontaneous spoken word features like fillers and non-verbal utterances. Not only did this allow them to use knowledge acquired during their study of Component 1 Section A but it also allowed them to write productively about these features in their commentaries. A number of candidates also worked in a description of context as an opening statement and then included stage directions to give further nuance to the interpretation of the monologue. Many candidates also chose to have the monologue based on an English teacher preparing for an interview, drawing inspiration from the stimulus material.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- The use of strong first person spoken voice – often employing a stream of conscious technique.
- Sustaining a convincing voice through the use of spontaneous spoken word features.
- Using stage directions/paralinguistic features and a contextual opening statement to show understanding of monologue form.
- Developing a sense of preparation for the interview in real time as typical of a monologue.
- Giving convincing contextual details about the job interview they were preparing for.
- Often using a one-way conversational technique that allowed for humour/self-deprecation or the exploration of self-doubt.

Areas for Improvement:

- Some candidates would begin writing in a first-person narrative style before finding their monologue, spontaneous style voice. It is important that they establish the form from the outset.
- Avoid repetition of ideas – some candidates would quickly run out of ideas and would then repeat something they had already said – perhaps indicating a lack of planning.
- Some candidates would shift time in their monologue and have it play out over several days – whilst this could be successful – most used time as a way of providing extra information as they struggled to develop a convincing and sustained voice.
- The need to sustain an interior and engaging voice that shows self-doubt and self-reflection – both key elements of the understanding the monologue form.

Task b

Candidates really engaged with the active recruitment aspect of task (b) with many using a range of convincing rhetorical techniques to good effect to engage with audience. The article form had clearly been well taught by centres and many candidates structured their articles effectively by blending facts with strongly stated opinions to reflect the persuasive purpose of the article. It was also pleasing to see how much candidates drew on their contextual understanding of teaching and its benefits to engage with their audience and shape their linguistic choices.

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Characteristics of successful responses:

- Articles were effective from the outset by establishing both the purpose and audience through engaging linguistic choices.
- Rhetorical devices were used carefully to avoid over reliance on a formulaic approach using set a number of techniques.
- A strong and personal voice was sustained throughout underlying the persuasive purpose.
- Convincing use of the contextual, educational lexis – drawing on and then adapting information taken from the stimulus.
- Making it explicit who the audience is by addressing them.
- Balancing the persuasive argument so to project a realistic voice.

Areas for Improvement:

- Candidates needed to provide a headline – but extending this out to include subheadings can also be helpful.
- Balancing the persuasive argument to project a realistic voice.
- Avoid using a set number of rhetorical features – this was often shown in the planning and seemed to restrict candidates in their persuasive purpose.
- Planning a variety of points in advance so the article does not become repetitive.

Question 1 and 2: Task c

Commentaries again proved to be more challenging for candidates as per previous years. Where candidates were often using a range of relevant linguistic terms, they needed to be more precise when linking them to their chosen quote for isolation. Candidates had a tendency to quote a substantial passage and then label it as a noun, verb or adjective phrase. In this instance it would be helpful to the marker if they isolated the specific phrase by underlining it. As per last year some commentaries were again very long, and whilst there is nothing wrong with extended analysis it must be purposeful. Supporting comments were sometimes left undeveloped as candidates needed to explore how and why they made their linguistic choices for their chosen form of creative writing and relate it to how context has shaped these language choices. Some candidates would also use long lists of terms in their introductions and support this with generalised discussion of genre, purpose and audience. Some immediate exemplification from their creative pieces would therefore make these openings much more effective. Feature spotting can still be a fall back position for some candidates. The simple insertion of ‘because’ in supporting analysis would really help candidates to focus on how their linguistic choices are shaped by the context of their writing. Successful candidates were able to draw on their acquired knowledge across the specification. This was particularly evident when exploring the use of spontaneous spoken word features in both the blog and dramatic monologue. When analysing their short story openings some candidates linked them to established genres by mentioning novels like *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *1984*. Whilst this can be effective, candidates must avoid long, generic passages discussing genre elements without applying it specifically to examples from their own text.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Immediate engagement through exploring examples taken from their own texts.
- Using linguistic terminology as a springboard to explore the meaning and effect of their language choices and then linking them to context.
- Mixing embedding single words for analysis with longer passages.

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- Showing a wide-ranging linguistic knowledge by linking to the techniques and effects they have achieved through their language choices
- Accurate identification of specific linguistic features, apt illustration, and exploration and evaluation of their effects in context.

Areas for improvement:

- Avoid listing terms in introductions and conclusions.
- Avoid generic discussion of purpose, audience and genre without linking them to specific examples.
- Avoid feature spotting by focusing on how meaning is conveyed and the effect needed to achieve this as a writer.
- Explore context without using formulaic sentence openers like ‘contextually I’
- Use knowledge gained from other parts of specification e.g. the use of spoken language features in a blog or dramatic monologue.
- Consistently evaluate the linguistic choices made by relating them to context.

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.
- A careful reading of the stimulus material is key so it can aid the planning and structuring of the creative responses.
- Practise writing in 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.
- Prepare for more than two of the creative writing forms.
- Make judicious use of dialogue and don’t let it drive narrative in the story pieces.
- Proofread work carefully – there are still many capital letter and possessive apostrophe errors.

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 focus on analysing and evaluating their language choices.
- Immediate quoted engagement with their creative pieces avoids generic discussion and overview.
- Remind candidates to use their linguistic knowledge from across the specification e.g. their knowledge of spoken language from Component 1.
- While identifying and illustrating each feature selected, candidates should avoid feature spotting and instead explore how meaning is reflective of genre, purpose, audience and context.
- Candidates need to be more precise when selecting phrases rather than labelling long quoted passages as noun, verb or adjective phrases.

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COMPONENT 4: LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Overview of the Component

This component allows candidates the opportunity to independently research an aspect of language and identity. 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 focuses on analytical methods and interpretation of the topic, worth 20 marks; AO1b looks at the use of linguistic terminology, worth 10 marks; AO1c assesses coherent written communication and organisation, worth 10 marks. AO2 explores concepts and issues, worth 20 marks and AO3 focuses on evaluating contextual factors affecting the construction of meaning, worth 20 marks.

The focus of the NEA is exploring the relationship between language and identity. Candidates then choose one of four sub-aspects of study as identified above.

Similarly to previous series, candidates performed well in response to all the sub-aspects of study, with candidates exploring a full range of different 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

Across this year's sample of NEA investigations, candidates were consistently motivated by topics drawn from personal interests, leading to a diverse array of inquiry areas ranging from high-profile political figures and contemporary media personalities to music artists and distinct social subcultures. This genuine engagement often translated into compelling research questions and original, authentic data sets. However, while enthusiasm for varied domains remained high, several investigations were overly ambitious in scope. The addition of multiple conceptual focuses, such as attempting to combine character identity with representations of mental illness, or examining broad datasets spanning different decades, sometimes led to a loss of analytical focus and limited the depth of exploration.

Most investigation titles made reference to identity, which proved vital in helping candidates maintain a clear line of inquiry throughout their folders. The strongest submissions featured titles that explicitly foregrounded a precise dimension of identity. By contrast, when the focus on identity was left implicit or omitted from the title entirely—focusing instead purely on media representation or political influence—candidates tended to slip into descriptive responses, struggling to consistently link their data to language patterns and identity construction within the body of the work.

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Data collection protocols showed a range of methodologies, with the majority of candidates selecting data from a manageable number of sources, such as political speeches, interviews, and online discourse. These choices generally provided sufficient depth and rich contextual frameworks to support secure performance in AO3. Conversely, an over-reliance on highly stylised data sets, such as song lyrics or a very restricted number of brief text extracts, frequently constrained the breadth of inquiry and limited candidates' opportunities for sustained linguistic analysis across multiple text types.

Consistency in marking was a notable strength this year, with tight agreement between centre and moderator marks across the cohort. The presence of helpful summative comments and marginal annotations explicitly linked to the Assessment Objectives greatly enhanced the transparency of the marking process. However, some patterns of generosity were observed across the upper range, particularly in AO1. This occurred most often where centres prioritized the overall breadth of discussion over sustained analytical depth, or where errors in candidates' application of terminology were left uncorrected.

Performance across the Assessment Objectives showed clear trends. The highest-scoring folders demonstrated sophisticated knowledge and a detailed, critical understanding of language concepts and theories, confidently applying frameworks like Accommodation theory, Fairclough's views on power, and politeness models. These perceptive analyses integrated a wide range of language levels to evaluate how meaning is constructed. Mid-to-lower range folders, however, tended to restrict their analysis heavily to word classes and basic lexical features, structuring sections tightly around isolated noun, verb, or adverb phrases. This constrained approach limited the scope of AO1a and AO1b, preventing candidates from engaging in cross-language-level exploration or deeper sentence-level and discourse-level analysis.

Procedural and structural issues were restricted to a minority of submissions. While candidates generally wrote coherently and organized their investigations logically, a few folders significantly exceeded the recommended 2,500–3,500 word limit, with isolated cases extending past 6,000 words. Such excessive length disrupted the tight organization expected for higher marks in AO1c. Additionally, minor lapses in maintaining a sustained academic register—such as the use of contracted forms or occasional slips in basic spelling, punctuation, and grammar—were sometimes overlooked during centre assessment.

Language and Self-Representation

This sub-aspect offers candidates a unique chance to analyse their own language across personal contexts, exploring how identity is performed or reflected through linguistic choices. It encourages self-awareness and invites investigation into how language varies depending on audience and communicative environments. Successful investigations this year demonstrated a secure academic style and a confident application of accommodation theory and politeness frameworks to track linguistic variations. However, centres are reminded that true self-representation requires authentic personal data produced by the candidate rather than public figures. Clear title construction remains essential to ensure that the scope remains manageable, and the linguistic direction is tightly defined.

An example of an effective title would be:

Using relevant data, analyse and evaluate how my language has evolved on social media due to changes in my self-identity.

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Language and Gender Identity

Gender remains a highly popular area of study, with candidates demonstrating genuine effort and flair across a variety of modern text types. Investigations this year explored diverse contexts, from how media outlets construct gendered identities for controversial public figures to the representation of masculine and feminine stereotypes across different eras of media, such as Disney films or modern cinema. Data sources including press articles, public speeches, and dialogue were frequently utilized to examine how gender is contested and performed.

Centres are advised to support candidates in moving beyond basic word-class descriptions or generalized assertions when analysing gender. The strongest folders looked across language levels to evaluate the complex construction of meaning. While foundational gender frameworks are useful, candidates achieve higher bands when they avoid descriptive summaries and instead embed nuanced theories that directly support the close analysis of authentic data.

An example of an effective title would be:

Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the ways in which male journalists use language to objectify and sexualise the identities and genders of prepubescent actresses in film reviews and articles.

Language and Culture

A broad and fascinating spectrum of cultural contexts was investigated this year, reflecting candidates' keen engagement with language and identity. Discourse areas were highly varied, encompassing newspaper depictions of social groups, online reporting on contemporary music groups, and the public rhetoric of prominent political leaders. The most sophisticated folders in this sub-aspect combined insightful exploration of contextual factors with an academic register and a clear understanding of language concepts, resulting in strong AO3 performance. Centres must continue to ensure that investigations remain firmly rooted in the intersection between language and identity, avoiding the temptation to slip into purely political, historical, or sociological commentary. Care should also be taken when candidates select highly stylised data, ensuring it provides sufficient depth for authentic linguistic exploration.

An example of an effective title would be:

Using relevant data, investigate and analyse how the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, and the President of the United States, Donald Trump, present their respective identities as national leaders through speeches in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Language Diversity

Diversity-focused investigations continue to offer original and inventive avenues of inquiry. In this series, candidates successfully explored regional identity through dialect and accent representation in television media, as well as occupational variations, such as how professionals use language to construct specific roles within their workplace. These studies performed well when candidates managed to tie specific linguistic features directly to identity construction. Centres should continue to champion these lines of inquiry, guiding candidates to select rich, well-contextualised data sets that allow for sustained, cross-language-level analysis rather than simple, isolated lexical counts.

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An example of an effective title would be:
Using relevant data, analyse and evaluate the language identity of teachers and discover how they present a supportive identity when they take on different demands in their occupation.

Task marking
Comments on approaches to internal marking
General trends/patterns of performance.

Advice to Centres

- Ensure every investigation title explicitly references "identity" or "identities" to act as the primary focus and anchor the candidate's line of inquiry from the outset.
- Support candidates in narrowing the scope of their tasks, avoiding overly ambitious or dual-focus titles that dilute analytical depth and lead to unfocused discussion.
- Encourage candidates to select rich, authentic, and well-contextualised data sets (such as speeches, interviews, or online discourse) that provide sufficient depth to strengthen AO3 performance.
- Advise candidates to avoid an over-reliance on highly stylised data sources, such as song lyrics or highly restricted extracts, which can limit opportunities for rigorous identity analysis.
- Revisit guidance on cross-language-level analysis, moving candidates away from structures based solely on word classes or isolated lexical categories toward sentence-level and discourse-level exploration to unlock higher AO1 bands.
- Encourage candidates to embed relevant linguistic concepts and theories meaningfully as an analytical lens to support their data findings, rather than treating them as descriptive or generalized summaries.
- Maintain a sustained, formal academic register throughout the folder, guiding candidates to proofread their work carefully to eradicate basic slips in expression, punctuation, and the use of contracted forms.
- Remind candidates to adhere strictly to the recommended 2,500–3,500 word count, ensuring that a clear summative comment regarding organization is provided under AO1c if a submission falls outside these boundaries.
- Continue the excellent practice of providing clear, detailed marginal annotations and summative comments explicitly linked to the Assessment Objectives, ensuring ticks are applied judiciously and errors in terminology are flagged accurately.
- Ensure all primary data is attached cleanly in an organized appendix, with coversheets fully completed and internal moderation processes transparently documented.

The Principal Moderator and the moderation team would like to express their sincere thanks to all candidates and teaching staff for their immense hard work in preparing and presenting the NEA coursework this year. The folders were original, varied, and an absolute pleasure to read and moderate. The team remains highly impressed by the dedication of centres, the general accuracy of assessments, and the effective internal moderation systems that made the process collaborative and straightforward.

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