



Pearson

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel IAL
In English Language (WEN01)
Unit 1: Language: Context and Identity

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This unit introduces students to how language is used in data from a range of sources. Students explore how the contexts of production and reception affect language choices in spoken and written texts. Students also explore how language reflects and constructs the identity or identities of the user and varies depending on the contexts of production and reception. Students apply appropriate methods of language analysis to a range of written, spoken or multimodal data taken from 20th and 21st century sources using the key language frameworks and levels. They also demonstrate their understanding through the creation of a new text for a specified audience, purpose and context.

Unit 1 is assessed by examination of 1 hour 45 minutes. Candidates answer two questions: one question from Section A and one question from Section B. The paper is marked out of a total of 50 marks with 35 allocated to Section A and 15 to Section B.

Section A: Context and Identity

Question 1

Candidates answer one question on two unseen extracts selected from 20th and 21st-century sources. They are required to produce an extended comparative response showing how the presentation of identity is shaped by language and contextual factors in both unseen texts.

The task is assessed across AO1, 2, 3 and 4:

- AO1: Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.
- AO2: Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use.
- AO3: Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning.
- AO4: Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods.

In the January 2017 examination Text A was an article which presented newly elected IAAF president Sebastian Coe's response to allegations of corruption and doping in athletics. The article develops the professional identity of Coe as a man of integrity determined to restore the reputation of his sport. His role as president, the actions of athletes and his response to the alleged corruption of his predecessor inform style, voice and identity.

Text B was the transcript of an interview broadcast on American television between interviewer Piers Morgan and disgraced American athlete Marion Jones. Morgan presents a clear professional identity applying the conventions of a broadcast interview to encourage Jones to reflect on her career and her involvement with the performance enhancing drugs that led to her conviction and the loss of the gold medals she had won. Jones presents herself a victim whose natural talent was abused at an early age by the advice and control of her coaches and advisors.

The question asked candidates to analyse and compare how the language of both texts conveys personal identity. Three bullet points offered additional prompts and guidance directly linked to the Assessment Objectives (and the mark scheme) for this component and reminding candidates of the specific areas of study they should apply to the task:

- relevant language frameworks and levels
- concepts and issues such as social, cultural and gender factors
- contextual factors such as mode, field, function and audience.

Centres are advised that the format and focus of the question will be consistent across the lifetime of the specification. Actual wording may, inevitably, change depending in the nature and content of the two unseen texts presented. However, the focus of assessment is clearly stated in the question stem with its prompt to consider and compare how personal identity is constructed and presented in the source materials. The bullet points remind candidates of the areas of study they should apply to this comparative exploration and are linked directly to the Assessment Objectives applied by examiners to their responses. The mark scheme contains indicative content and may well provide centres with a useful resource when preparing their students for this examination.

In January 2017 responses to Section A covered a full range of achievement. Most candidates offered consideration of the genre and context of both texts and were able to draw links between them based on their central focus on the issue of doping. They were also able to offer comparative consideration of the differing audience and context of each text and shape these – with varying success – through the differing perspectives and circumstances of Coe, Jones and, less frequently, Morgan. Only the very best offered considered/detailed exploration of the way in which the personal identities of the participants were constructed and presented and those that framed their analysis through this central focus were rewarded.

The source texts proved to be accessible to most candidates and the majority offered a balanced consideration of both and the theme of doping and corruption that linked them. It was pleasing to see that many centres had made use of the support afforded by the Examiner Report and the indicative content in the mark scheme produced after the June 2016 series and this enabled many to meet more of the specific requirements of the Assessment Objectives. Some used these documents as a framework for their responses which ensured coverage and structure in the mid bands of achievement but which sometimes led to repetition at the lower levels and in some cases restricted responses at the mid to upper levels.

Many were able to describe method and effect but at the mid-lower levels of achievement struggled to apply specific language terms to their consideration of how – and why – these effects were produced. A more systematic approach, whereby comments are supported by evidence drawn directly from the source materials would have provided candidates with the opportunity to explore the language from which this evidence was comprised (applying concepts, terms and frameworks) and would have enabled them to reach the requirement for higher bands of achievement provided in the mark scheme.

Some offered generalised comments on context whilst those that developed commented not only on the background context of the texts, but also on key aspects of production and reception of each (including key generic conventions) were rewarded accordingly. A significant minority did not address AO4 and the requirement to comment on the links between the two texts and this made an upward movement through the bands difficult.

Successful responses to Text A looked the conventions of the article itself and how its structure fulfilled both its informative function and also enabled the incorporation of Coe's response to allegations against the IAAF. They explored the middle sections of the article with attention to Coe's self-promotion and the best explored the emotive language and rhetorical structures contained in Coe's documented response to convey his stance on the issue and the devices used to address, challenge and persuade his audience.

Responses that were placed in the highest bands of achievement supported comment and assertion with evidence directly drawn from the article which was used to explore the specific language choices made, applying terminology in good range at word, sentence and whole text level.

Less successful were those responses that offered generalised comment on the context of the article and issues upon which it was based. These often adopted a very descriptive approach to its content. Those that offered limited exemplification and limited specific analysis of technique were anchored in the mid/ lower bands of achievement. Limited consideration of the personal identity of Coe also negatively impacted on the potential for reward.

Successful responses to Text B looked closely at the broadcast context of the interview. They demonstrated understanding of the conventions of interviews which shaped the dynamic of the exchange and the language used to comply with these, both in terms of the role of Morgan as interviewer the responses of Jones. They were able to comment of the personal identity constructed by both Morgan and Jones and were able to link these with some insight to the motives of each. A successful few detected shifts in register/tone/complexity and offered considered speculation on the possible contextual reasons for this. The best explored Jones' presentation of herself as a victim and 'example'.

As with Text A , less successful responses offered generalised comment on the context of the account and adopted a very descriptive approach to its content. Those that offered limited exemplification and limited specific analysis of the language used were anchored in the mid/ lower bands of achievement. Limited consideration of the personal identity of the participants also negatively impacted on the potential for reward.

AO4 requires candidates to explore connections and contrasts between the source texts. Successful responses seized the many opportunities for comparison and contrast – many adopting an integrated approach to this aspect of the task. Many explored the purpose of the texts and developed links through the persuasive function of each. Most picked up on the fact that both texts were clearly linked by the issue of doping and corruption, better answers explored the fact that both convey personal responses to this issue and drew comparisons based on the professional standing of both of Coe and Jones and the resultant

contrast in perspective. Many made interesting comments on gender, based on the content of each text and the perspective those that produced them. Attitudes towards responsibility prompted some interesting comparisons about the identities of Coe who appears to take full responsibility for the hearings and changes to legislation that are to follow, while Jones accepts her 'mistake' but attempts to deflect responsibility onto coaches and advisors.

Less successful responses outlined the links and contrasts between the two texts but failed to develop any but the more obvious or to explore the language which evidenced these. Such responses were characterised by an essentially descriptive approach.

Section B: The Creation of Voice

Section B of the examination is assessed against AO5: 'Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways' with a total of 15 marks allocated for this component. As such the task assesses both the fluency and accuracy of written expression and the ability to generate an original and (hopefully) engaging text.

In January 2017 candidates were asked to write the script for a speech delivered to athletes at the opening ceremony of the IAAF World Youth Championships. Its primary purpose was to warn them about the possible consequences of taking illegal performance-enhancing drugs. They were expected to draw upon the source materials provided in Section A but reshape them to meet the requirements of the context and an audience of young (and successful) international athletes. The primary informative function was stated explicitly in the question.

The task generated a broad range of responses but many struggled to address the question in full and candidates are advised to spend time working through the question to be sure of its requirements in terms of genre, context, audience and purpose. The format of the question will be relatively constant but wording will, inevitably, change according to the nature of the creative task set. As this is a creative response examiners will accept any approach that concedes to the prompts provided.

The January 2017 question stem was carefully worded to provide candidates with a clear indication of expectation. The second part of the question:

In addition to your own ideas you must refer to material from at least one of the texts in the Source Booklet

This highlighted a key requirement of the task, that is the need to incorporate some material from one (or both) of the source texts into the speech. This proved problematic to a significant minority of candidates but is a key requirement which must be taken into account.

Successful responses demonstrated clear awareness of audience and function, conceding clearly to the context and the persuasive/informative function of the

speech. There were some very fluently written and convincing new texts. The best adapted the source material fluidly – drawing upon the rhetorical ‘voice’ of Coe or the experiences of Jones to target their audience. Many fully engaged with the speech and the context of the opening ceremony, often involving the audience directly. Such creativity was rewarded whenever possible provided that the central issues of the tasks were addressed.

Less successful responses were often restricted by flawed written expression – these proved essentially self-penalising. Some failed to address a youth/athlete audience using language that was not fully appropriate to either. Others did not concede to the speech context. A key discriminator was the incorporation on the source data; at the mid/low bands of achievement many made no concession to the source and all, others simply quoted directly from the texts, struggling to integrate the material and therefore disrupting the fluency of their response.