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# **Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback**

Summer 2017

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 June 2017 examination Text A was an edited article written by Hillary Clinton on the day before the opening of the International Conference on Climate Change in Paris on 30th November 2015. The article was published in 'Time' magazine at a time when Clinton was seeking election as Democratic candidate for the presidency of the United States. Text B was the edited witness statement of Jyotsna Giri who documented her experience of climate change in India's Sundarbans Delta. The statement was one of a collection of accounts posted on the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) website. Giri lived on Lohachara Island which was permanently flooded in the 1980s. The disappearance of the island was reported by Indian researchers in December 2006.

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.**

The focus of the question was the construction and presentation of personal identity, and the ability of candidates to incorporate this into their analysis proved something of a discriminator this year, with a significant minority struggling with this concept. Those that framed their analysis through this central focus were rewarded.

Text A develops the identity of Clinton as she reflects upon the Paris conference. She has clear ambitions to follow on from Obama as 'global leader' in the fight against climate change, and, indeed, to succeed him as President of the United States. This ambition permeates the article and informs her voice, style and identity throughout. She makes her stance on the issue clear from the outset – citing her historical political involvement as evidence of her commitment to the cause. She loses no opportunity to place herself in opposition to the representatives of the Republican Party and as such she uses the article to present and promote herself as the Democratic candidate.

Text B develops the identity of Giri as the wife of a farmer on the island of Lohachara which was permanently flooded in the 1980s and disappeared completely in 2006. Her account offers a personal perspective on climate change and the impact it has on ordinary people. Her voice is shaped by the developing crisis on the island which culminates in its loss – along with her livelihood.

In June 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 climate change. 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 Clinton and Giri.

The source texts proved to be accessible to most candidates and the majority offered a balanced consideration of both and the theme of climate change that linked them. Most candidates could differentiate context extremely well and most responses across the range could point to Clinton's multi-purposes.

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. 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 responses used a range of impressive language terms to describe language features but did not go beyond a descriptive approach and marks had to be restricted because of failure to link to context/purposes. A list-like approach/feature spotting is not a successful approach for this question.

Some offered generalised comment on context whilst those that developed comment 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 Clinton's voice (and multiple agenda). They explored the middle sections of the article with attention to Clinton's self-promotion and the best explored the emotive language and rhetorical structures used to convey her stance on the issue and the devices used to address, challenge and persuade her audience. The best were able to comment with some insight on Clinton's dismissal of the Republican 'deniers' and link this to her ambition, ultimately, to the presidency of the USA.

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. Some misread the prompts in the question and produced a discursive essay of the issue of climate change. Those that offered limited exemplification and limited specific analysis of technique were anchored in the mid/ lower bands of achievement. Limited consideration the personal identity of Clinton as environmentalist and as politician, also negatively impacted on the potential for reward.

Successful responses to Text B looked closely at the placement of the personal account of the account on the broader platform of the WWF website and were able to differentiate the wider agenda of the organisation from the personal perspective of Giri. They demonstrated understanding of the conventions of such accounts and how they shape content, structure and the presentation of voice. Some speculated, with just cause, on the fact that the account may have been edited in some way by the parent site and linked to the agenda of WWF as a global organisation. They were able to comment of the personal identity constructed and presented by Giri and reflect how the background and the society that shaped her role as a woman and a mother, influenced her voice and perspective.

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. Some simply paraphrased Giri's story. Those that offered limited exemplification and limited specific analysis of the language used were anchored in the mid/lower bands of achievement. Limited consideration the personal identity of Giri 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 climate change but were differentiated by scale. Better answers explored the fact that both convey personal responses to this issue and drew comparisons based on the personal standing of both of Clinton and Giri and the resultant contrast in perspective. Many made interesting comments on gender, based on the content of each text and the perspective of those that produced them.

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. A significant number of candidates took a summary approach to the content of the texts which is not a useful approach to achieve marks. This proves reading ability but not 'analysis' of language features in use.

## **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 June 2017 candidates were asked to write the text for a blog on the issue of climate change which incorporated an online petition to government demanding

action be taken to address the issue. Its primary purpose was to provide information about climate change and its possible consequences - global, national or personal. The secondary purpose of persuasion was linked to the petition. Candidates were expected to draw upon the at least one of the source materials provided in Section A but reshape them to meet the requirements of the context.

Most responses showed a good understanding of the nature of blogs and the genre conventions that shape them. Most candidates could form a useful, inviting relationship with a 'reader' and the best responses managed a 'lively' tenor for this electronic mode. 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 June 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***

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 blog. This proved problematic to a significant minority of candidates but is a key requirement which must be taken into account. It is NOT necessary to incorporate every detail from the source; indeed, many that did produced lengthy and essentially pedestrian paraphrases that failed to engage. More successful were those that took only relevant information from the source materials and reworked this to a lively and interactive agenda better fitted to the prescribed electronic mode.

Successful responses demonstrated clear awareness of audience and function, conceding clearly to the context and the persuasive/informative function of the post. In this year's paper the audience was not specified but the majority adopted the voice of a young and informed persona writing for an audience of like-minded young people or students. There were some very fluently written and convincing new texts. The best adapted the source material fluidly – drawing upon the rhetorical 'voice' of Clinton or the experiences of Gini to target their audience. Many fully engaged with the blog and adopted a persona which was engaging and consistent in terms of voice and interaction with the audience. These used all their powers of persuasion to promote the online petition.

Less successful responses were often restricted by flawed written expression – these proved essentially self-penalising. Some struggled to sustain a consistent tone/register. Others did not concede to the on-line context or to the petition. A key discriminator was the incorporation of the source data; at the mid/low bands of achievement many made no concession to the source at all, others simply quoted directly from the texts, struggling to integrate the material and therefore disrupting the fluency of their response.

