



Pearson

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel IAL
In English Literature (WEN01)
Unit 1: Language: Context & 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 duration. 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.

In January 2018 there was a significant improvement in the way in which candidates handled Question 1. The focus of the question was the construction and presentation of personal identity and it was pleasing to see that a significant number of candidates used this focus to frame their analysis which was generally much more systematic and thorough. Unfortunately, this improvement was not matched in all cases with responses to Question 2 and centres are advised that the marks available for this question can account for the difference between two or even three grades for this component. Specific advice is provided in the appropriate section of this report.

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 2018 examination both texts were linked by the issue of gangs and gang violence. Text A was an edited extract of a speech delivered by Senator Dianne Feinstein to the US Senate in October 2006. Text B was an edited extract from an interview conducted by Patricia Duffaud with Jason Figaro, former member of a London gang, which was published in *Litro* magazine in 2013.

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 candidate 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 markscheme contains indicative content and may well provide centres with a useful resource when preparing their students for this examination.**

Text A develops the identity of Feinstein the politician as she reflects upon the issue of gang crime in the US and promotes a bill to the Senate which she believes will implement reforms to address the problems caused by these crimes. Her stance on the issue is clear as she pushes for legal and social reform. She loses no opportunity to present and promote herself as a politician willing – and able- to push through these reforms. The reference she makes to the killing of a three-year-old girl develops a personal and emotive context to her quest for harsher sanctions against gang members.

Text B develops the identity of both Duffaud as interviewer and Figaro as interviewee. The professional persona of Duffaud is developed through the way in which she controls the interview and through the comments she intersperses in the published account of the interview. Figaro, now 41 years old, presents his personal story and reflects on a difficult youth and the gangs with which he became involved. He makes no attempt to deflect responsibility for his actions; instead he voices his determination to use his experience as a warning to the young men he now mentors.

In January 2018 responses to Section A covered a full range of achievement and there were some very successful and analytical answers at the top levels. 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 gangs and gang crime. 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 Feinstein and Figaro.

The source texts proved to be accessible to most candidates and the majority offered a balanced consideration of both and the theme that linked them. Most candidates could differentiate context extremely well and most responses across the range could point to multiple purposes that underpinned each.

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 2017 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 speech itself and linked this with some insight to the context in which it was delivered. They also commented on how its structure fulfilled both its informative and persuasive function and also enabled the incorporation of Feinstein's voice (and multiple agenda). They explored Feinstein's political 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 detect, and comment on, her essentially hard-line stance through the focus and the content of the speech.

Responses that were placed in the highest bands of achievement supported comment and assertion with evidence directly drawn from the speech 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 speech and issues upon which it was based. These often adopted a very descriptive approach to its content. A few misread the prompts in the question and produced a discursive essay of the issue of gangs. Others became side-tracked by the issue of Feinstein's gender, applying theories that did not fully relate to her role as politician. 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 Feinstein as politician, also negatively impacted on the potential for reward.

Successful responses to Text B looked at the dynamic of the interview and were able to comment on how it had been adapted for publication. They demonstrated understanding of the conventions of interviews and were able to differentiate between the roles – and the voices- of interviewer and interviewee. They were able to comment of the personal identity constructed and presented by Figaro and reflect how the background and the society that shaped his life both as a young man and as a mature man keen to use his experience for good. The best were able to comment on the secondary function of self-promotion in this respect. Many successful responses also explored the identity of Duffaud through the questions she asked and the comments she used to shape the text post-interview.

As with Text A, less successful responses offered generalised comment on the context of the account presented by Figaro and adopted a very descriptive approach to its content. Some simply paraphrased his 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 Figaro (and Duffaud) also negatively impacted on the potential for reward.

AO4 requires candidates to explore connections and contrasts between the source texts. It is a central point of assessment and those responses that do not explore connections between the source materials place themselves at a considerable disadvantage. 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 and informative function of each. Most picked up on the fact that both texts were clearly linked by the issue of gangs but were differentiated by scale and perspective. Better answers explored the fact that both convey personal responses to this issue and drew comparisons based on the personal standing of both of Feinstein and Figaro and the resultant contrast in perspective and the voice of each.

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 January 2018 candidates were asked to write the text for a school/college magazine article that highlighted the possible consequences of joining a gang. 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.

Overall, responses to Question 2 failed to match the improvement apparent in those to Question 1. Some candidates that scored highly in Section A did not apply the same attention to detail to Section B and failed to achieve a final grade that matched their potential as a result. It is understandable that less time be spent on Question 2 given the differential in the marks available but centres are advised that candidates must demonstrate understanding of genre and convention and re-cast the source texts to meet the specific requirements of audience and purpose in order to reach the higher levels of achievement. Candidates are advised to spend time working through the question to be sure of its specific requirements.

That said, most responses showed a some understanding of the nature of magazine articles and the genre conventions that shape them. Most candidates could form a useful relationship with a 'reader' that evidenced the school/college context.

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 2018 question stem was carefully worded to provide candidates with a clear indication of expectation.

The first part of the question sets out clear prompts in terms of genre, context audience and purpose. Candidates need to address these prompts in order to score well in this question.

Write the text for an article to be published in a school or college magazine which highlights the possible consequences of joining a gang.

Candidates need to address these prompts in order to score well in this question.

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 article. 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 article which targeted and its youth/student audience effectively.

Successful responses demonstrated clear awareness of audience and function, conceding clearly to the context and the persuasive/informative function of the article. There were some very fluently written and convincing new texts which adopted a style and format wholly suited to the task, but these were in the minority this series. The best adapted the source material fluidly – drawing upon the rhetorical 'voice' of Feinstein or the experiences of Figaro creatively to produce viable articles which highlighted the consequences of being in a gang to their student audience.

Less successful responses were often restricted by flawed written expression – these proved essentially self-penalising. Some paid scant regard to the magazine/article form. Others struggled to sustain a consistent tone/register. A significant minority lacked the detail/development to move into the mid-levels of achievement. 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.

