Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel IAL
English Language (WEN04)
Unit 4: Investigating Language

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide centres with an overview of the performance of the June 2019 paper. This paper offers a choice of four topic areas focusing on global language, child language, language and power and language and technology. The pre-release material was available to centres via the Pearson website in January 2019, enabling candidate's time to research their chosen sub topic in preparation for the exam on 6th June.

The sub-topics for the June series were:
1. South Korean English
2. Parent and child play
3. Women and campaigning
4. Language of blogs.

The paper addresses four of the Assessment Objectives:

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.

It is recommended that centres provide candidates with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the content and format of the examination paper, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of the requirements of each question before the exam. Exemplar materials and accompanying commentaries of the previous series are available on the Edexcel website and give valuable insight into the marks awarded at each level and the standard required.
Candidates should read through both questions, as well as the source material for Section A, before beginning their written response. This will allow them to gain an understanding of the focus of the task and with regards Section B, the perspective for discussion.

Section A (questions 1 – 4) is marked out of 20 and Section B (questions 5 – 8) is marked out of 30. The time spent and length of response for Section B should be longer than Section A as reflected in a higher number of marks and the requirement to include research completed by the candidate within their response. All candidates answered the corresponding questions for Sections A and B this series.
The most popular choice was Question 1 and its corresponding question in Section B, Question 5 – Global English (South Korean English).
The remaining questions were as follows:

Second popular - Q3/7. Language and power (women and campaigning)
Third popular – Q2/6. Child language development (parent and child play)
Least popular – Q4/8. Language and technology (Language of blogs)

Section A

Question 1.

For Question 1, candidates were asked to analyse two transcripts of two female students, who were born in South Korea and currently living in the US. Candidates were required to focus on the language frameworks, the context behind the transcripts and to introduce relevant theories and concepts to explore the language of South Korean speakers of English.

Candidates awarded in the higher levels of the mark scheme used the language framework to analyse the transcripts and the way both speakers demonstrated features of South Korean English. Top level responses had covered a range of features including grammatical, phonological and lexical features using sophisticated terminology such as copular and clause structure as well as explanations of non-standard features linking to the contextual factors and their research.

Many candidates referenced theories of language change, accommodation theory, prescriptivism and an awareness of second language development and English education within South Korea. There was an awareness of influences of American English and knowledge of specific Korean phonetic features and articulation demonstrating confidence in their analysis and allowing for relevant and discriminating selection of source material.

At the lower end of the mark range for Question 1, candidates generally resorted to a descriptive approach when exploring what the data provided and any examples selected were unassimilated and at times paraphrased. Weaker candidates tended to feature spot and describe what was there particularly with phonology and lexis. Candidates would mention some terminology such as word class or phonology and be able to link one or two features to language development. Concepts such as covert prestige or convergence were linked to the data but not fully explained or applied.

Question 2.

For Question 2, candidates were asked to analyse a transcript of a 4-year-old girl playing with her mother at home and a transcript of a 4-year-old boy playing with his father at home. Candidates were required to discuss to what extent the language and structure supported child language development when playing.

Higher level candidates produced a clear, controlled response and demonstrated their knowledge of language development with close relation to the different types of play. Candidates were systematic in their approach, commenting on a range of features across the levels and were able to link to theories of language acquisition with the different types of play such as free play and structured play. Some made

reference to gender discussing how the father was using structured, instructional play and the mother – free play and used the opportunity discuss their influence linking to development. Both transcripts were addressed and differences between the language and methods used identified.

Responses at the lower end of the mark range tended to describe the actions of the play and at times discuss theories of language acquisition that were not linked to what was happening in the data demonstrating a disconnect from the question. There was a lack of links made to the language framework and minimal use of terminology to explore the data.

Question 3.

For Question 3, candidates were asked to analyse the language used in a message published on the UN Women's website by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, addressed to followers of the website. She is a South African politician and United Nations official.

Mid- high level candidates used a range of features from the source material linking to theories of power, synthetic personalisation, gender language and rhetorical devices to discuss the style of language in campaigning. Specific focus was made to key word classes and sentence functions used to connect with the audience and empower women. The majority of candidates identified the use of statistics, to provide evidence of inequality, and pronouns, to convey unity, as effective rhetorical devices within the data.

Less successful responses gave a general overview of the message and the ways rhetoric is used to engage and persuade their audience. Weak responses provided a description of the campaign message, citing a few features such as pronouns or audience address with minimal use of terminology or theoretical application.

Question 4.

For Question 4, candidates were asked to analyse the language of three different blogs: a blog about stress and anxiety, a blog by a trainee chef and a music blog. This was the least popular choice this year with eleven entries. Candidates were awarded across the levels and commented on the differences between formality, convergence, rhetoric and were able to discuss the impact of language for a differing functions and audiences. The majority of responses demonstrated an awareness of the factual and personal, chatty style of blogs evidencing the varied greetings between each one.

Responses for Question 4 within the lower level of the mark scheme tended to describe the contents of the blog, focus solely on formality or analyse each blog in turn commenting on the same features creating repetition and limiting their analysis.

Section B

Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 required the candidates to use their wider research to discuss the statements given in the question. Each question enabled the candidates to build an argument for or against the statement and to support their ideas with evidence and concepts from their wider research.

Question 5

The question posed the statement: 'Despite its problems, the use of Konglish enables young people to communicate internationally'. Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Higher level responses explored the historical and cultural changes that have occurred within South Korea and the evolution of Konglish. Candidates were able to demonstrate understanding of the education system within South Korea and the use of teaching methods promoting a functional English with less focus on accuracy. This was supported with historical knowledge of the development of English in Korea, attitudes towards English and the rise of K-pop and use of non-standard phrases in media. This was supported by discrimination examples of Konglish and use of terminology. Weaker candidates tended to describe one or two factors such as the Korean war, the education system or rise of Korean pop music demonstrating their research but not using it to form an argument linked to the question. This is a feature throughout the weaker responses in section B whereby candidates failed to specifically tailor their research to the question.

Question 6.

The question posed the statement: 'Play focused on gender stereotypes can limit children's language development'. Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Strong candidates presented knowledge and understanding of the development of gender stereotypes with reference to language, toys and cultural beliefs with regards to femininity and masculinity. Some related to observational research they had conducted of parents playing with children or personal experience linking to theories on how type of play between parents can influence behaviour and ideologies on gender. There were some very interesting responses.

Evidence that was collected was well integrated within responses and used to establish an argument.

Candidate responses at the lower end of the mark range generally did not establish an argument relating to the question and wrote an essay on child language acquisition citing theories of language acquisition or gender.

Question 7.

The question posed the statement: 'The language used by women to campaign for their rights has had to change over time'. Candidates needed to consider relevant

language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

This was the second most popular question and candidates produced some interesting responses. The most successful responses demonstrated knowledge of the history of women's campaigns linked to theories of gender and the different waves of feminism and women's rights throughout the 20th century. This started with the language and styles utilised in the suffragette movement through to women's rights protests in the 60's and 70's leading to the #me too movement and women's marches of the 21st century. There was focus on language throughout integrated with research on gender theories and feminism which demonstrated effective research tailored to the question. Other candidates focused on women in politics and looked at the political campaigns of Hilary Clinton amongst others.

Candidates at a lower level for Question 7 provided a general overview of campaigning or language and gender moving away from the argument of the question. There were also responses which recounted the history of feminism demonstrating research but no linguistic focus.

Question 8.
The question posed the statement: 'The lack of rules and controls on blogs should contribute to readers questioning the reliability of what is written.'

Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Candidates had engaged in several research areas including the rise of the internet, the legislation involved and the issues regarding personal blogs versus organisations blogs where credible sources were not fact check or regulated. This was developed into the impact of social media, fake news and the how these have impacted recent political campaigns. One candidate conducted an investigation into the reliability of multi -author blogs versus single -author blogs with reference to tactics used to manipulate audiences within the media. It was awarded within mid-level 4.

 Unfortunately, there were some candidates who like other responses in section B lapsed into a general essay on the history of blogging and although touching upon some of the issues failed to construct this into an effective argument.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, I would like to offer the following advice to candidates:

- ensure you employ effective time management in the examination to ensure that appropriate time is spent on Section A and B in relation to the number of marks awarded

- read all the source data carefully before attempting the questions in Section A

- support each point you make with evidence from the source material in Section A and your wider research in Section B

- make sure you cover the language framework when analysing the data in both Section A and B

- support your discussion with appropriate theories, concepts and contextual features

- create a discussion/debate for Section B, tailoring your research to the question and form an argument responding to the statement

- use theoretical discussion to explore and challenge/support your findings rather than including everything you can remember about a particular theory/theorist or the main body of your research.