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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel IAL
In English Language (WEN02)
Unit 2: Language in Transition

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide centres with an insight into the assessment process and give an overview of how candidates approached each question. In this series candidates performed well and are demonstrating confidence with the criteria of the exam. The quality of responses continues to improve with scores awarded across all levels including the top of level 5. As with previous series candidates are still performing more successfully on section A, demonstrating stronger knowledge and understanding of the requirements of this question. There was an improvement in Section B with candidates focusing more on the data rather than producing general historical essays showing they are developing their approaches to question two but are still less secure on this section.

There were some candidates who were unprepared for the standard of the examination evident by the lack of content within responses or applying a descriptive approach. It is recommended 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 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 extracts in the source booklet, before beginning their written response. This will allow them to gain an understanding of the discussion points within the paper and note connections across the texts before they begin.

The paper is divided into two sections providing an opportunity for a comparative analysis in Section A and a discussion based essay in Section B. Candidates are invited to analyse three texts representative of the spoken and written modes of language. Each section contains one question worth 25 marks each. Candidates must answer both questions.

Section A: Spoken Language Today This section provides an unseen piece of spoken language from the 21st century which is a variety of English. Question 1 engages candidates in an analysis of the development of this variety in relation to Standard English. In this series the spoken language was an example of Guyanese English Creole.

Section B: Written Language of the 19th -21st Century Candidates answer one discussion question on two written texts in the Source Booklet that look at the issue raised in Section A from a wider perspective. This series, the two extracts featured were comments on a Facebook page written by users of Guyanese English and an article from the Chronicle Christmas Annual, 1966, marking the year of Guyana's independence from Britain. Candidates were asked to discuss how Guyanese English Creole reflects the development of English across the world.

Section A

Candidates approach to this question continues to improve, demonstrated by a confident and consistent use of terminology to illustrate and explain their points. The majority of candidates are meeting the AO descriptors in terms of terminology and written expression fully utilising the opportunities to identify phonetic, lexical and grammatical features within Guyanese English Creole. Most candidates made a reasonable attempt to engage fully with the task, and made use of the bullet points as a scaffold addressing the different language levels. This approach allowed candidates to structure their response and engage in a systematic analysis of the text and has been successful across all the series.

Candidates are achieving in the upper levels and there were some scripts which were awarded within level 5 that were extremely impressive. Level 4 and 5 responses had covered a range features including grammatical, phonological and lexical features using sophisticated terminology such as copular, clause structure and were supported by explanations of nonstandard features linking to other varieties of English. Some students made reference to theories of language change discussing Kachru's circle, accommodation theory, prescriptivism and Aitchison's crumbling castle theory. They provided lots of examples, making relevant and discriminating selection of source material and identified the different level of language skills amongst the speakers linking to the influence of their emigration to America. Discriminators in high performing candidates' responses is the range of features discussed as well as accomplished and perceptive phonological analysis. Strong understanding was demonstrated of accent features making links to other accents which display similar phonetic variations as well as the common grammatical variations within creoles.

Level 3 candidates tended to lack the range of features in their analysis which is required for the higher bands and may have limited discussion on theories or discourse. In high level 2/low level 3 scripts analysis tends to be hampered when candidates simply identify the non-standard features and describe how they differ but fail to explore these differences in reference to contextual factors or the development of varieties of English.

Weaker candidates tended to feature spot and describe what was there accompanied by a sentence written in Standard English to demonstrate how the non-standard feature was 'incorrect'. This is a common strategy with phonology and grammar. Some candidates would mention terminology such as word class or phonology and be able to link one or two features to Guyanese or American culture such as proper nouns. They highlighted general differences and attempted some exploration such as discussing the fluency of the speakers or commenting on the omission of plurals or non-standard verbs.

Section B

Despite improvement in candidate's engagement with the data, performance was less successful on this question when compared to question one. Candidates are referring to the source material more consistently to construct a response focused on the variety of English featured within the sources which is pleasing to see. Connections were made across the data and the influence of technology in Text B discussed with reference to the spread of English globally and its use of international platforms.

The three texts demonstrated how language evolves and transitions over time with Text C detailing the history of Guyanese English Creole, Text A demonstrating the modern day spoken variety and Text B illustrating how the dialect features are presented in informal written format combined with technological influences. Some candidates used examples from each text to demonstrate these transitions and the varying influences on language development which formed an effective response.

Candidates approached this question in different ways and the most successful candidates focused on all bullet points, referred to the source material, applied theories and built their answer around the development of Global English with reference to features present in Guyanese English creole. High level responses were detailed, used terminology and could explain the influence of Caribbean lexis and syntax, discuss the impact of technology and how the language varies between spoken and written discourse. Discussion was expanded with reference to accommodation theory and covert/overt prestige regarding the use of non-standard forms used in Text B as the writers were communicating on a Facebook page about Guyanese culture. Strong candidates also showed an understanding of events which impacted the spread of English such as trade, colonisation and war and made reference to Kachru's circle and social media/technology.

Mid-level responses tended to address all three bullet points but may have focused on one which limited them, briefly mentioned theories and missed opportunities to explore the transition across the data.

Some lower level responses discussed the spread of English in general terms with little reference to Guyana showing they had knowledge of the development of English but struggled to find relevant examples within the data to demonstrate this understanding effectively.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper candidates are offered the following advice:

- Employ effective time management in the examination to ensure that appropriate time is spent on each question in relation to the assessment objectives.
- Read all three sets of data before attempting the question to gain an understanding of the discussion points across the paper.
- Continue to use terminology throughout your response in both questions.
- Ensure you refer to the sources in both questions and support your points with evidence from the texts.
- In Q2 consider all three texts in your discussion and how they demonstrate the transition of language.

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