Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2020

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

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WEN01 Examiner Report

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 an examination, with a duration 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.

<u>Section A: Context and Identity</u>
<u>Question 1</u>

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 2020 examination, Text A was an edited extract from an article published in the online version of *The Indian Express*, an English-language Indian newspaper. The article explored the
issue of homelessness in Mumbai, a densely populated city on India's west coast. Text B comprised edited extracts from a collection of personal stories of homeless people living on the streets of London. They were based on interviews conducted by Kit Buchan in 2016 and were published in the online version of *The Guardian* newspaper.

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 on 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.

With regards to the concept of personal identity, in Text A Nair is presented as a concerned and compassionate individual, determined to raise awareness of the plight of Mumbai's street dwellers and the growing pressures caused by the 'gentrification' of the city. She also offered critical and informed comment on the response of the Mumbai authorities to the developing crisis. The article referenced the experience of some of Mumbai's homeless, primarily Jamli Pawar, whose identity was shaped by her experiences on the streets and by the injuries she sustained there. Also quoted directly is Abhishek Bharadwaj, an activist who works with the homeless, who presented as an informed individual, highly critical of the Mumbai municipal corporation and its policies.

Text B developed the identity of Kit Buchan, as interviewer and journalist, through his introduction to the stories, based on interviews, which comprised his article. Buchan presented as sensitive to the difficulties faced by those living on the streets of London and to the varied circumstances that brought them there. The personal account of Mark developed the identity of this long-term homeless man as he struggled with the difficulties particular to London and exacerbated by his ill health. Jane, the second interviewee, was relatively new to the streets. Her experience as a homeless woman developed a sense of her vulnerability as did her attachment to her pet. The fact that she still has hoped of a career in catering developed an identity very different to that of Mark.

The texts were clearly linked by the issue of the homelessness. Given the differing contexts of each, there was much opportunity for candidates to explore the links and contrasts between them. 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, with a significant minority struggling with this concept. Those that framed their analysis through this central focus were rewarded.

In January 2020 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 the homeless. 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 in Mumbai and in London.

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 well and most responses across the range could point to more complex aspects of each such as the multiple functions of both texts or the contrast between the experiences of the homeless people presented and how these influenced their personal perspectives on homelessness. There were also some very competent explorations of the cultural and societal attitudes towards homelessness.

Once again, 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 2019 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, less frequent, cases, restricted responses at the mid to upper levels. In these instances candidates sometimes looked for direct points of comparison across frameworks that were not really evident in the texts themselves, and the subsequent analysis was, somewhat strained/forced as a result.

Successful responses to Text A looked the conventions of the article and how its structure fulfilled both its informative and persuasive function and enabled the development and presentation of Nair's voice through her reflections and observations and the way in which she, as author, shaped the presentation of others referenced in her article. The best fully investigated the presentation of Jamli Pawar as representative of the homeless in Mumbai and of the attitudes of the authorities and wider society towards the homeless. These also evidenced the criticism offered by Nair as she developed comment on the social inequality in Mumbai, placing complex descriptions of the affluent lifestyles of the rich in opposition to those in poverty and thus offering criticism of government initiatives/policies – this criticism directly targeting Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation.

Responses that were placed in the highest bands of achievement supported comment and assertion with evidence directly drawn from the text which was used to explore the specific language choices made, applying terminology in good range at word, sentence and whole - text level. These linked comment to the concept of 'voice'/persona as constructed /presented by Nair and how relationships with her readers were shaped and developed. They showed awareness of Nair as writer through consideration of her presentation of Pawar (in particular) to elicit sympathy and offer comment on the attitudes in Indian society. It is this link between form and function/effect that signals a successful response.

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 way to tackle this question.

Some offered generalised comments 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 levels difficult.

Less successful were those responses that offered generalised comments 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 homelessness, citing the experiences of Pawar here in particular. 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 Nair as author or of Pawar as representative also restricted potential to reward.

Successful responses to Text B took cues from Buchan's framing of the article and his incorporation on the voices of the homeless, based on interviews with those living on the streets of London.
These explored the sympathetic stance of Buchan's introduction to the homeless and linked it to the underlying persuasive function of the text. They explored the personal accounts of Jane and Mark and the differing insights they afforded into the reality of life on London's streets and, as such, recognised them as representative of the varied circumstances that can lead to homelessness.

The best responses were able to comment on Buchan's exploration of the complex and varied reasons that led his interviewees to a life on the streets and recognised how and why he used Jane and Mark to challenge the stereotype. They were able to explore the broader societal context and critique embedded in the article regarding the escalation of the homeless crisis in London and nationally and Buchan's negative take on official systems and provision. The personal accounts suggest that the response of the public is, at best, indifferent. All this was accompanied in the very best with systematic exemplification and analysis at word, sentence and whole-text level.

As with Text A, less successful responses offered generalised comments on the context of the article 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 the personal identity of Buchan (and the others presented in his article) and how this was constructed and presented also negatively impacted on the success of the response.

AO4 requires candidates to explore connections and contrasts between the source texts. Comparative work was usually helpful in lifting responses into Level 4 enabling candidates to demonstrate a more discriminating approach to the data. However, many lacked the confidence to deal with the texts in an integrated comparative approach and dealt with them in separate sections.

The most 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. Better answers drew interesting comparisons- and connections - between Western and Asian society and culture in terms of family, society and attitudes towards the homeless, commenting on the contrasts and the similarities in perspective here. Some better responses commented on the fact that gender a major factor in both texts and used this as the basis of contextual comparison.
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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.

The following excerpts are taken from a response that was awarded a mark of 32 for Question 1. The mark is mid- Level 5.

It offers integrated points of comparison from the start and achieves a balance in terms of coverage of both texts. Analysis is systematic, with integrated points of comparison and developed links between form to function. Analysis is in good range. There is slightly less security with sentence level analysis and this accounts largely for its placement in the middle of the Level.

The crucial issue of identity is signalled from the start:

The identity of Shalini Nair is developed in text A as a professional act writer who tries to ~~brie~~ bring light onto the homeless people of Mumbai, and tries to show the ^regular problems faced by the homeless in order to invoke ~~sy~~ sympathy and compassion. Nair's style and voice is informed through how she gives information on the different types of events that occur in the day-to-day life of a homeless person, with ~~many~~ many people giving their opinion. The inequality in treatment is shown by how the government cares more about infrastructure rather than the lives of the folk on the road.

The identity of Kit Buchan is developed in text B as a person who deeply cares about the plight of the homeless, with their style and voice being informed through their work in gathering interviews from the homeless folk living in the UK borough of the City of Westminster.

It makes valid linguistic points, exemplified with accuracy, here applying a lexical framework to compare the text in a largely integrated way:

Both texts are clearly linked by the social issue of homelessness, although each text has a different geographical field. ;
Text A has the ^geographic field of India, focusing on Mumbai in particular, while Text B focuses on the issue in the U.K.. Text A has the semantic field of hospitals and medical care (with Pawar being injured in an accident), as well as the fields of infrastructure, power and regulation (as "cops" are mentioned), and the fields of age, shelter, and food. Text B is similar in the sense of the police and food, but also includes fields of harassment, suffering, loneliness, and gender (as Mark is a male and Jane is a female, with the latter seemingly finding it ~~worse~~ ^worse).

The individual voices (and their construction/presentation) are thoughtfully investigated and discriminated. Here the language of Mark (Text A) is analysed closely to evidence his attitudes.
Terms are applied with accuracy and there are discriminating links between form and function:

Syntactic parallelism is present in Text B, as Mark repeats ~~its~~ "closed" to show his frustration ~~on the prev~~ as the problems faced by the homeless are salient. The use of 'they' in "they won't listen" not only acts as an anaphoric reference, but also once again echoes his frustration.

There is a systematic comparison of the cultural/societal issues and contexts that shape the content of the text – method and effect are afforded discriminating analytical comment:

Both texts also include the cultural issue of police as # violence and police brutality is signified to be on the rise globally, in both India and the U.K. Text A also uses the adversative conjunction "but" on the 4th sentence of the discourse, connoting how everything we see may not exactly be as it seems. The is social issues of drink/driving and lack of healthcare are present in both texts, while text A also mentions childbirth (as in the case of Jamni Pawar), insinuating the Indian culture of child marriage and child birth, with the possibility of rape being in question. On the other hand, text B includes the socio sociocultural issues of being mugged (as in the case of Jane), as well as the prevalence of homelessness in the U.K., which is backed up by statistics. Both texts also include the injustice in inequality, and alluding to the differe priorities of governments and the presence of corruption, as shown by the difference in infrastructure and lack of shelters for the homeless.

The following extracts are taken from a script that was awarded a mark of 20 which places at the top of Level 3. There is valid interpretation of both texts and some valid points of comparison and contrast. There is system in the investigation but some comments lack depth or development. There is an occasional tendency to describe rather that analyse which keeps the response in Level 3, albeit at the top of the Level with a mark of 20.

There is clear understanding of both texts, but this is not always accompanied by analytical consideration of technique. Here both texts are links and differentiated on a lexical level but lack of specific exemplification restricts opportunities for analysis. There is clear and relevant awareness of the underlying political point here – but again, this is essentially described:

Both text A and text B have the primary field of homelessness but in different parts of the world. Text A deals with homeless people in Mumbai along with other fields such as Brihan Mumbai Municipal corporation (BMC), traff housing policy and NGOs. The text potrays the terrible conditions homeless people live in and the governments ignorance towards the homeless people.

It offers valid, even insightful consideration of the function that link the texts –
but this is essentially summary:

Text A and Text B have
the primary function of informing
the public as they are extracts from
online newspapers Whilst Text A also
has an underlying function, to criticize
the government. Text B also highlights
the growth in homelessness. It has
an underlying function to increase
the donations and volunteers at shelters
and hostels. Both texts remind us of
the harsh reality and gain the
reader's empathy.

The response as a whole is inconsistent in terms of exemplification. When it is offered it often lacks specific analytical detail. Here specific lexical terms are lacking. There is some worthy focus on identity linked to the professional status of Nair, however:

Shalini has used a lot of emotive languag like puny, tattered, good and arduous. This creates a greater effect on the readers as it evokes their emotions. This goes in hand with Robin Lakoff's who suggests that woman are more likely to use emotive language.

The mention of neglegiance by ~~Shal~~ Nair shows that she is socially aware and that she is not afraid to bring it to the public's attentio These attributes contribute to her position as a writer for The Indian Express.

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.

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their own expertise and creativity in the use of English. They are encouraged to incorporate personal and local references. 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.

In January 2020, candidates were asked to produce the text of a speech to be delivered at a youth conference. The question stem was carefully worded to provide candidates with a clear indication of expectation of context, function and audience. 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 report. 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 responses were those that took only relevant information from the source materials and reworked this to a lively and engaging agenda better fitted to the prescribed context of delivery.

There was continued improvement in Section B responses this series with many achieving marks from Level 4 and Level 5. This is very pleasing as the 15 marks available for this component can make a huge difference to the final grade awarded.

Successful responses effectively applied the conventions of a public speech and showed awareness of the youth audience and the nature of the conference and the overriding persuasive function of the speech. These produced clear, well-structured responses and demonstrated an understanding of writing for an audience, experimenting with register. Many, in the mid-range of achievement could adopt a tone or 'voice' which was convincing even if the technical accuracy in written English was lacking.

Less successful responses struggled with the precise purpose of the task or with maintaining the generic form and appeared to lack the vocabulary and control of syntax to fulfil the requirements of the task.

Timing once again appeared to be something of an issue with some short or incomplete responses although performance improved considerably this series. Centres are advised that although the paper is weighted across the two tasks (with 35 marks allocated for Q1) the 15 marks available for Q2 can be the difference between several final grades. Candidates are urged to set aside sufficient time to understand the specific requirements of the task in terms of genre, context, audience and purpose and to produce a meaningful and, hopefully, engaging response. They are also reminded that they MUST draw on the material from at least one of the source texts – there were some very engaging responses that failed to do this and were essentially self-penalising.

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 – for example, drawing upon the rhetorical 'voice' of Nair/Buchan or the experiences of Pawar, Mark or Jane to target their audience.

Less successful responses were often restricted by flawed written expression – these proved essentially self-penalising. Some struggled to sustain a consistent tone/register given the nature of the task and the tone and content of the source materials.
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.

The following extracts are taken from a script which was awarded a mark of 15 which places it at the top of Level 5 with full marks. It is consistently on task and although there are occasional (very minor) slips in expression it is well structured and expressed. This response fulfils the rhetorical function creatively and appropriately.

There is clear awareness of generic convention and the rhetorical function. Language fully concedes to the given audience:

Homelessness, "when the sky is the roof."
Good evening ~~guys~~ fellow students, ~~and~~ teachers, ~~and~~
and friends.
How easy is it, for us to turn the tap on ~~to~~ in the bathroom
and have clean, fresh water run into our hands? How
easy is it, for us to jump ~~onto our~~ onto our comfortable
bed after a harsh day of school? Actually, how lucky
are we to even ~~have a~~ HAVE a home?

There is some subtle integration of the source materials:

Imagine losing your home, so that the rich could be
richer, making the poor poorer.
~~poorer,~~ Imagine sleeping on ~~cat~~ wooden benches
living like that
because your mat got wet at night. Can you imagine?
I can't, and ~~I don't want anyone to~~ no one should.
    (pause).

And a call to unity which addresses the prompt for a campaign:

We are the student body. We are the voice of the
young generation. And we have ALL ~~together~~ the
capability to do something about ~~this~~ this. For these
people. For a better future. For our society.

Source material is assimilated with consisted care:

Did
~~Do you know that to even get some sort of accommodance~~
we ask the government to provide for the homeless
and to atleast care for their input when demolishing
their ~~s~~ homes in the name of "gentrification." we
ask hospitals to provide effective health care for
the ill and injured (and handicapped) people. ~~the~~
we ask for job security for people.
~~the~~ we must change the way that our society has
formed an unfair life, where ~~somes some people~~
women and children are expected to beg and stare.

The following extracts are drawn from a response which was awarded a mark of
5, which places it in Level 2. The response is brief and undeveloped although
there is general understanding of the source material, and the task that relates
to it.

It starts well, with evident understanding of audience and context, but this
relative success is not sustained:

Hello and welcome my dear friends & my fellow
students. My name is Mohammed Afwan, of grade 12,
as such making me your senior, but ~~Be~~ I am here
s one of the students and not as a school pupil leader
to invite you to an ongoing campaign which very
much supports the homeless people.

There is awareness of context and agenda but assimilation of source is thin – and as here- awkward:

Why do you ask? well they are one of the most critical problems of our community. The homeless population is rising at an tremendrous rat. and many or all of them dont recieve any support from the goverment, even when they are informed by one of the homeless person himself, according to the interview hosted by 'kit Buchan' I ror viewed the other day.

There are some awkward shits in register and tone:

I implore you all to think on this campaign and give it your all & that concludes my speech (as such I am short on time in this exam hall)
I am Mohammed Afwan your SPL signing off).