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# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2021

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level

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. This series was the first opportunity for candidates to take the exam after the June 2020 exam series was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The cohort consisted of one hundred and four entries. It is highly likely that candidates had experienced disruption to their learning due to the impact of the pandemic enforcing school closures and a move to distance learning.

Considering the circumstances, candidates performed well, engaged positively with the data and demonstrated their subject knowledge in their responses. Candidates' approach to their analysis demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of each question. However, there was evidence that their responses lacked the refinement of exam technique and in-depth analysis required for top level marks, reflecting the impact of global disruption to education during the pandemic. Overall, the majority of the candidates scored within level 2 and 3 with a minority achieving marks in level 4 and level 5.

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.

It is recommended that 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.

**Section A: Spoken Language Today** This section provides an unseen piece of spoken language from the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 English spoken in the United States of America.

**Section B: Written Language of the 19<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> 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 an extract from book and an online article discussing the language of Spanglish in America. Candidates were asked to discuss how English in the United States of America reflects the changes to and development of English across the world.

## Section A

Candidates continued to perform well on this question demonstrating confident and consistent use of terminology to illustrate their points. The majority of candidates commented on the full range of language levels showing an understanding of the question requirements and made attempts to apply theories.

Candidates produced a variety of responses ranging from detailed and wide ranging to some brief one-page answers. There were a few candidates who did not attempt the question or wrote very little rewardable material demonstrating they were unprepared for the demands of the exam. The majority of candidates attempted to analyse the features present within the data, linking to theories and identifying the connections to standard varieties of English. The most common theories and concepts applied to the data were gender, covert/overt prestige and accommodation theory. There was a lack of reference to theories of language change, such as Kachru's Circle which was not an issue, but a slight difference noted from previous series. This could be due to candidates experiencing disruption to their learning during the pandemic, therefore focusing on theories they felt more confident in discussing due to covering them in other units and

Candidates scoring within the higher levels covered a range features including grammatical, phonological and lexical features using sophisticated terminology and explanations of non-standard features linking to other varieties of English. They provided lots of examples and made links to the discourse and contextual factors.

Level 2 and 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. Level 2 were able to identify the phonological variations and discussed lexical features that were influenced by American culture as well as the Spanish lexis 'hola' and 'landya' to describe the merging of language. Level 3 candidates moved beyond these features to explain grammatical constructions such as 'aint' and other non-standard features linking to dialects, creole varieties and discussing divergence from standard forms.

Weaker candidates tended to feature spot and apply a descriptive approach focusing on the mode of language and functions of the data. These included general comments regarding the use of fillers and colloquial language linking to informality and developing a rapport with the audience. A minority of candidates did not engage in any linguistic analysis and simply described the topics the speaker was discussing, leading to a brief response which was awarded within level 1.

## **Section B**

Candidates performed at a standard similar to section A demonstrating consistency across the paper. Candidates are expected to refer to all three data sets to answer this question and this is becoming common practice across the series. Candidates are continuing to refer to all three sources in their responses to provide a discussion regarding the developments of English in America.

As with section A there were some weak responses which were awarded in Level 1 and low level 2 whereby the candidate employed a largely descriptive approach. This involved detailing the contents of the extracts and not engaging in any analysis or highlighting any features.

There were scores within the upper levels where the highest responses focused on all bullet points, referred to the source texts, applied theories and built their answer around the development of Global English with reference to features present in Spanglish. Top marks were detailed using terminology and could explain the influence of Spanish, identify features of American influence within speech and how the language varies, linking to accommodation theory and covert/overt prestige as well. Strong candidates showed an understanding of events which impacted the spread of English and merging of Spanish and English such as immigration, bilingual speakers and the media and technology incorporating Spanish terms into advertising and social media.

Middle level responses tended to address all three bullet points but focused on one which limited them. They may also make excellent points using their own examples of language but at times lapsed into some description of what was there making their response uneven. They discussed some theories but with limited application.

Upper level 2 responses applied a general analysis recognising how exposure to other varieties of English via the media and Spanish speaking communities affected language as evidenced in the data. They tended to address one or two bullet points in little detail. They quoted some examples from text but may focus on only piece of data. Some candidates engaged in a lot of summary from the data and were unable to draw their own conclusions, focusing solely on the information in the texts.

## **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.
- 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. Do not limit your response to one set of data or to one discussion point.
- In Q2 do not summarise and copy large sections of the data. Candidates are required to reference it and identify the transition of language with examples.
- Use the bullet points as a scaffold when writing your response to make sure all parts of the question are addressed and you have the opportunity to achieve full marks.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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