



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In English Language & Literature (8EL0_01)
Paper 01: Voices in Speech and Writing

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Publications Code 8EL0_01_1906_ER

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Introduction

This unit comprises the first of two examined components of AS Language and Literature and has an explicit focus on the concept of 'voice'. It assesses understanding of how spoken voices are formed and how written voices are created in non-literary and digital texts as well as how texts are formed for specific audiences, purposes and genres.

Section A required candidates to transform a speech from the anthology into a news article and Section B required a comparative analysis of an unseen extract from a memoir and a travelogue from the anthology.

For Section A, there were many centres that had prepared their candidates thoroughly for tasks involving articles and they were clearly practised in writing journalism; such candidates, who had also reviewed the source text thoroughly, excelled in this task and produced highly convincing and engaging newspaper reports or editorials. Successful responses demonstrated understanding of the conventions of print journalism, with a confidently crafted voice for a news reporter.

Less successful candidates often failed to follow the guidance provided by the question. For example, some attempted to write in the persona of one of the soldiers and, while these responses were often entertaining, achievement was inevitably restricted due to confusion over genre and audience; the responses were more like diary entries than newspaper reports. At the lower levels, there was also significant over-reliance on the source text and a tendency to analyse the source material rather than transform it into the required genre.

In Section B, the majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of the task, demonstrating the care with which centres had prepared them. Very few candidates approached the two texts as separate entities and most had clearly practised a comparative approach, although the level of nuance and subtlety of the connections explored did vary greatly. There were many effective responses for this question where candidates were clearly confident in their discussions of the themes in Lawrence's writing and their links to the unseen text.

Successful responses resulted from careful selection of the most pertinent areas for comparison dependent on the nature of the unseen text and its links to the anthology text, such as the attitudes and values of the writers or the connected theme and context. Less successful responses relied on prescribed areas of focus to consider, such as level of formality or broad labelling of audience, purpose and context. This approach was unhelpful as it was clear that candidates were searching for specific features to comment on rather than exploring the Lawrence's travelogue in the light of Friedman's description of her own journey, leading to insecure connections between the texts based purely on techniques. Candidates should be encouraged to draw links based on theme or context and then use language to exemplify these links. Similarly, they should be reminded of the value of making contrasts and comparisons as many responses were solely focused on finding similarities.

Overall, candidates produced work which was often engaging and insightful, showing how well centres had prepared them for the exam and the ability of the candidates to write creatively and analytically. Where centres should continue to focus this preparation is in exploring a wider range of genres and text types, identifying the different methods and techniques used by writers and speakers to shape meaning. Familiarity with a fuller range of forms and devices would better

prepare candidates for the writing task as well as developing confidence with unseen texts, enabling them to make more subtle and perceptive points about meaning, rather than relying on a prescribed approach.

Section A - Question 1

The "Creation of Voice" task presented candidates with Colonel Tim Collins's eve-of-battle speech, made prior to British troops entering Iraq in 2003, and asked that it be transformed into text for a news article reporting on the content of the speech and commenting on the reactions of those who listened to it.

It was expected that candidates would exhibit the following skills:

- Understand contextual factors and genre conventions.
- Consider how the text is received, with confident crafting of the text.
- Control their own writing style by employing a clear structure and avoiding lapses in clarity.
- Produce a text that engages by using carefully chosen language features.

Many candidates were convincing and creative in how they approached this task. Some of the best responses showed a perceptive understanding of how journalists keep their readers engaged, conveying the information in the source text in a dramatic, personal or thought-provoking way. For example, many candidates were able to use appropriate language to connect with the emotions of the audience whilst using discourse conventions of newspaper articles and conveying the relevant factual information from the source text. There were some highly successful responses where candidates evoked a genuine sense of being a journalist who had witnessed an historic event, conveying the precise atmosphere and mood through their language.

At the lower levels, candidates struggled more with adopting a form, style and register appropriate for a broadsheet newspaper. Some candidates produced texts that were mainly analytical, exploring the technical features of Collins's speech, in the style of a section B response, demonstrating limited understanding of audience and purpose and failing to engage the reader. Another limiting approach was to argue the ideas behind the speech itself; although candidates may have had strong views about the topic, the task required more neutral reporting and a wider ranging selection of material from the source material.

Candidates were asked to position their responses in a specific timeframe and place, imagining they had witnessed the speech to the soldiers first-hand in 2003. This speech would not have been widely broadcast to the general public. However, there were a number of responses that discussed the longer-term historical impact of the speech, or the imagined reaction to hearing it live from the British public. This kind of content was unconvincing for the context of the speech and the given task, even though some candidates wrote engaging and confident articles.

Whilst it was encouraging that very few responses included extensive "lifting" of the source material, at all levels there were candidates who could have improved their responses by including more information about the content of the speech itself, as this was a key aspect of the given task. Often, candidates were more confident and engaging when writing original material than they were when adapting the source material. For some candidates, this led to an imbalance in the response and articles based more on the writer's opinion and ideas than on the speech itself.

Question 1 tasks provide the opportunity for the creative use of a range of literary and linguistic devices, such as those candidates have explored when reading or listening to other writers' work. Candidates who attempt to imitate these interesting and imaginative writing techniques in their own work can be rewarded highly for AO5.

Section B - Question 2

The "Comparing Voices" section required a comparative response focussing on how writers and speakers shape language to create a sense of voice. The candidates were required to explore connections between two texts linked by themes including travel, independence and loneliness; the first an extract from D. H. Lawrence's 1921 travelogue taken from the anthology, the second a previously unseen extract from a recent memoir about the travels of an American writer. It was expected that the candidates would exhibit the following skills:

- Organise the structure of their response and write in an appropriate register and style.
- Apply appropriate concepts, methods and terminology.
- Support the exploration with a range of relevant examples.
- Display knowledge and understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts and of the writer's craft.
- Show knowledge of contextual factors and the ability to link this knowledge to how texts are produced and received.
- Explore connections across texts.

On the whole, this task was completed with confidence by candidates and they had clearly been prepared to adopt a comparative approach; centres appear to be developing the ways in which they teach students to explore two texts at once. Most responses considered a range of similarities within the two texts but candidates, on the whole, were reluctant to consider differences or contrasts, so this is an area on which most centres can continue to work.

At the higher levels, candidates approached the unseen text with confidence and were able to discuss both sources as whole texts, understanding what the writers and speakers were trying to achieve for their respective audiences, purposes and contexts and linking this explicitly to the linguistic and literary techniques employed in each text. Some students had an impressive academic register and knowledge of terminology and were able to use this to evaluate meaning across both texts with contexts of production and reception in mind.

Most centres had prepared candidates well for the Lawrence piece, including understanding of the context in which it was produced. However, many candidates stated that travel was being "romanticised" in the extract from *Sea and Sardinia*, without demonstrating a secure understanding of what that means, or indeed making any relevant connections with Friedman's memoir. Where candidates did make these kinds of thematic links between the texts, including sound comparisons in terms of when they were produced and the potential similarities and differences between the respective producers and audiences, responses were often much more insightful. However, some candidates were not so well prepared and struggled to find meaningful links between the two texts beyond the obvious topic of travel.

At the lower levels, candidates were often reliant on working through a prescribed list of features and had adopted formulas for comparison, especially within lengthy introductions, producing generic responses that lacked genuine insight. The use of a formulaic list or a mnemonic for aspects of context or literary and linguistic methods were often indicators of candidates who were not prepared to fully engage with the question or the context of the texts in great depth. Similarly, long introductions with broad, formulaic descriptions of audience, purpose and context tend to lack any engagement with the writing of the authors, and therefore may fail to meet the assessment objectives entirely. Candidates could be better prepared by developing confidence with unseen texts generally rather than learning a prescribed approach that considers a few set features.

Even though the 2011 memoir was clearly an engaging and accessible text for many, other candidates were far more confident on the anthology text than on the unseen, leading to imbalanced responses. Centres should continue to explore a wide range of unseen texts with candidates to increase their confidence in approaching new material in the exam. Many candidates would benefit from more careful planning of their comparative response, and this approach could be reinforced by centres through regular practice of annotating unseen texts and creating plans for a comparative analysis.

The range and relevance of concepts, methods and terminology explored were often a discriminator between the lower and higher levels. Higher level responses linked features to meaning and context, exploring the writer's choices and their effect in detail with relevant exemplification. Responses in the higher levels showed more careful selection of evidence and tended to explore these quotations in more depth, even where the comparisons made were perhaps a little obvious.

“Feature spotting” occurred more frequently in lower level responses, particularly where linguistic understanding was limited to the labelling of word classes with little further explanation of how these words created meaning. Similarly, candidates dedicated much of their response to minor features such as punctuation or low frequency lexis, neither of which provided a rich source of meaningful analysis or opportunities to link meaning and context.

Candidates should allow themselves enough time before starting to write their response, enabling careful reading of the texts for understanding and the production of a detailed comparative plan. Basing responses on exploration of key themes linking the texts proved to be a successful approach to the task, producing more comparative and integrated responses and a more holistic view of the texts.

Paper Summary

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

- Read the question carefully and follow its specific demands. This is particularly important for Question 1 but also for Question 2 where the description of the task can vary.
- Plan responses for Question 1 with a clear understanding of genre, audience, purpose and context. Focus on creating an appropriate voice, register and tone based on the task.
- Use a range of information from the source material for Question 1. Remember that this can be combined with additional points or anecdotes as appropriate and it is not necessary to follow the same structure as the original text.

- Try to make your writing as interesting and creative as you can for Question 1; you could try using some of the methods and techniques you have analysed in other people's work in your own creative writing.
- Develop a flexible "toolkit" of frameworks that can be applied to a variety of texts for Question 2, along with a range of literary and linguistic terminology, rather than relying on prescriptive mnemonics or lists of features, as this can lead to "feature spotting".
- Consider contrasts or differences as well as similarities in the approaches of the writers of the texts for Question 2.
- Always plan your comparative response and choose your evidence from the texts with care, making sure you have picked the most relevant example for every point.
- For Question 2, explore a range of other "unseen" texts to increase confidence when analysing and making perceptive connections with the anthology texts, particularly for audience and purpose.

