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Examiners' Report

June 2009

GCE English Language 6EN01

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General Comments

Marking this first series of the new specification was a positive experience. It was clear that most candidates had acquired a body of knowledge about language and many demonstrated effective skills in applying this knowledge to demonstrate thoughtful understanding of the texts.

It was interesting to note that there was often a varied pattern of achievement across the five tasks.

This was occasionally due to time-management problems, so candidates should be aware of the importance of this exam technique. The first four tasks each require a succinct, focused response to a particular aspect, eg. key constituents; contextual factors or identity and idiolect. The final task brings all these aspects together and requires an extended comparison and analysis.

For some candidates, there was variation in achievement across the three Assessment Objectives. Some were stronger at AO2: their conceptual understanding of construction of meanings, including application of some linguistic approaches. (It was clear that centres were, sensibly, selecting from the extensive range of theories and concepts that could be useful for AS study.) Other candidates gained marks at AO1 for their clear expression and precise use of appropriate terminology. As AO3 is worth 50% of the marks for this unit, it is important for all candidates to support their points by explicit analysis of the influence of contextual factors on language use, demonstrating ability to cover a range of key constituents.

Question 1

AO1 (15 marks)

This task tests knowledge of terminology for key constituents. The mark scheme may suggest a simple matter of right / wrong answers, but candidates were credited for a range of responses that were unexpected, but valid. There was a range of achievement, from full marks to zero, with many candidates achieving over half marks.

Marks were not awarded, however, if candidates did not focus on the feature highlighted by underlining. Some offered a description for some other aspect of the extract. This generally led to repetition of terms such as 'declarative' or 'elision'.

Candidates were not rewarded more than once for a repeated term: 'context bound' and 'informal', for example, could arguably apply to any of the examples. Conversely, candidates should clearly signal their use of more than one linguistic term, rather than placing a complex description (1st person plural pronoun used in a non-standard way to refer to a single person) on a single line.

It was decided not to credit the terms 'monosyllabic' and 'polysyllabic', as every word in the language falls into one of those categories and it was not a significant aspect of the language use highlighted in this exam.

Candidates are advised not to linger over these short responses; if the term is not quickly apparent, they may return to this question at a later stage. Indeed, some may prefer to begin by considering the contextual factors of the data provided.

Question 2

AO3 (10 marks)

This question will always focus on the contextual factors influencing the type of data chosen. A few candidates were not clear that the term 'context' refers to the situation. Most used a framework to describe the significant aspects, either: subject, purpose, audience, genre or mode, function, field, tenor.

> The mode is spoken, the field is answer-phone messages, the function is to inform people about what's going on and what they need to do and the tenor is people who listen to their answer-phone messages. People tend to stutter a lot more and use filler and pauses, such as 'er' and 'erm' because when you record a message you don't have time to plan it out, you just say it. Business messages are more

Better responses were able to meet the descriptors for the top band: cover a range of aspects, selecting the more relevant and explaining the impact by brief reference to language features.

The mode of these sources is spoken, but it has been recorded. Therefore, hesitations, hedges and fillers and many other spoken language features are present. There is a strong correlation between tenor and formality in the messages, as family (group C.) and friends tend to use informal sign offs ("ta ta") and a lot of deixis ("hello this is me") whereas business or unfamiliar callers leave more formal messages ("if you have any queries please call careers on..."). The addressing also changes because of tenor, like in message 5 ("hello Mr Garside"), where it is very formal, and creates distance.

Because they are leaving messages, many try to build a rapport to influence and persuade someone to call back. But, (present in message 1 ~~~~~~) unfamiliar callers such as companies. use declaratives to inform the reciever, rather than request a phone call back. Because some people try and build rapport, a relaxed use of language

is used, and clichés can be found ("your neck of the woods). More formal messages left on the machine, to inform, are usually scripted, or based ~~extractice~~ losely on a script (" Message 1). Many politeness factors are used ("thankyou") and, again, this is to build the relationship.

This response provided a thoughtful account of the impact of tenor (formality, unfamiliar callers, distance), with some awareness of mode (spoken, but it has been recorded) and of the purpose or function (build rapport to influence and persuade). Supporting reference to language use covered a range of features (deixis, declaratives, clichés).

Candidates should think first about the genre (answerphone messages in this case) as a whole, before making brief comments about variation. Later questions will usually focus on particular groups or individual examples that vary in distinctive ways.

Question 3

AO2 (5 marks) AO3 (5 marks)

This question will often focus on a particular sub-group of the genre. Candidates should assume that the groupings are purposeful and thus look for features that the individual examples share in common. It was time-consuming for those candidates who looked at each text in turn and there was a tendency to repeat the same point (AO2 concepts such as 'formal' or 'referential') rather than developing the idea and providing supporting evidence for credit at AO3.

There was some impressive evidence of theories such as Joos' levels of formality or negative face, but candidates should be aware that this task requires a brief response for 10 marks.

The relationship between caller and receiver in group A is impersonal and quite formal, using lexis such as 'this is a message for' which has quite a high register. Moreover, the fact that the callers introduce themselves with their full names, for example, 'it's David Marsh' and often refer to the receiver as 'mr' or 'mrs' suggests that they do not know each other.

The function is usually to inform, with the caller speaking mainly in declaratives like, 'your blind is ready', but also to persuade, 'could you give me a ring'.

There is also a lot of subject specific lexis to do with business and education, for example, 'University' 'speaker finder' and 'literature'. This shows that the calls were made on more of a business level than a friendly one.

However, despite the high register, the receiver is still being directly addressed, as there is a lot of use of second person pronouns like 'fit it for you' and

there is also evidence of the messages being
spontaneous rather than planned as there
is repetition like 'the Minsk Journey Minsk (.)
journey' and fillers such as 'errr'

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Examiner Comments

This response achieves top band marks for AO2, as it demonstrates awareness of concepts and issues (impersonal, high register, directly addressed, more of a business level than a friendly one). It also meets the descriptors for top band AO3, explaining the impact of these factors on language use at a variety of levels, including grammar (full names, subject specific lexis, second person pronouns). The candidate's use of 'however' and 'despite' show ability to express more complex ideas.

The following response demonstrates more precise use of terminology to express points and achieves full marks.

discourse + graphology
grammer
lexis, semantics, morphology

The terms of address reveal a lot about the relationship between callers and receivers; where titles and surnames are spoken, we can see that the relationship is more formal and impersonal. When both forename and surname are used, it suggests that the two people do not know each other, whereas when the caller uses their forename ('it's Sandra') it is evident that the two people have met. The closure of each message also reveals whether the function is more message-orientated or socially orientated; where it is formal and message-orientated, the messages end with 'thank you', 'I'll wait to hear from you', or 'please call...'. This also encourages a response from the receiver. Where it

is more formal, there are generally less fillers, which shows that the function is clear and more transactional.

The utterances are generally lengthy, but in message 2, the caller seems more nervous and ⟶ less confident, which needs to is shown by a lot of fillers and silences. This also shows that the speaker is, in terms of power, 'below' the receiver, because he is requesting information, so the function of the message is different, and he states that he will 'call back'. A lot of mitigated imperatives are used, which shows negative politeness ('I would be grateful if James could call phone us') and emphasises politeness and formality between the speaker and receiver.

underlies the entire message, using lexis such as 'hope', 'hopefully' 'the right person', 'hoping'. This shows that he seems desperate to talk to the listener and that she would be valuable to him. In those two messages that are more so formal, and functional, the lexical phrases are much more complex, and some latinate words can be seen, which shows a more static relationship (and uneven) between the speaker and listener.

Question 4

AO2 (5 marks) AO3 (10 marks)

This question was generally less successful, with relatively few candidates achieving top band marks. Although pressure of time has been taken into account, centres should note the following points for future.

Candidates should read the task carefully and note that it required comment on identity, as well as relationship. The following response illustrates some valid points commonly made about the relationship between participants in each message.

The relationship in 21 is a very close, personal and intimate one, the caller never states the name of themselves or of the intented receiver, which is similar to message #20 " this is me is that you" This shows that the receiver will know the caller by voice and not by where they are from or who they work for, as in Group A "from Brighton's"

Furthermore the caller in 21 supports the informal tone and close, loving tenor through the use of terms such as "dear" and "sweetheart" used to show the caring relationship as well as through politeness.

Message 21 seems unplanned and spontaneous to a greater extent than 22, this is evidenced by the use of fillers "emm er er" and repetition "I'll call you I'll call you later I'll" showing that the caller did not feel the need to plan the message in a great detail, possibly due to the

relationship shared between the two, as well as the almost trivial field " doctors appointment, daily planning" and the function being simply to inform.

Also, we can infer that the speaker has been in the relationship for some time, due to the usage of "dear" and "sweetheart", also these terms are more prevelant

among the older generations than with youth, where terms like "honey" and "babe" feature more in the sociolect.

In contrast with Z1, Z2 is similar to groups A and B, the speaker states who they are and signs off politely "thanks a lot" as well as offering their contact details, which unlike in a close relationship like Z1, remain unknown by the receiver due to the tenor.

Because of the tenor and less personal relationship, the message has been planned more than Z1, so as to present a positive face, there is less hesitation and fillers as well as more complex sentences, this also links with the field (a friend's disappearance) and the function (expressing concern about this) which requires more complex and polite utterances than the trivial nature of Z1.

Although some candidates did offer comments on gender and age, and a few commented on power and status, there was no reference to region.

Candidates should be aware in future that I.P.A. transcriptions are provided to indicate relevant features of pronunciation. In this case, there were the common distinctions between Northern and Southern regional accents: the long v short vowels in 'advance' and 'last'; the pronunciation of the vowel sound in 'just'. Candidates might also have noted the glottal stop replacing /t/ in the word 'sweetheart'.

Supporting reference to textual features was generally confined to the use of fillers, and lexical choices of 'sweetheart' and 'dear'. Stronger responses were able to refer to a wider range of key constituents.

The following two responses illustrate different routes to top band marks. Both address the issue of identity, though neither refers to regional accent. Centres should note: although each candidate refers by names to linguists and their theories, this is not necessary in the short-answer responses.

Response 1

In Message 21, the speaker comes across as being a female because of the colloquialisms "dear" and "sweetheart". These colloquialisms also have the connotations of someone older than the receiver. The repetition of the elliptical construction "bye" is childlike yet also is very personal to the receiver. The formality is even lowered still by the quantifier "any" as this uses Austen and Searle's implicature to suggest this person is aware of many contact numbers. The additional information added "I'm going to the doctors" makes the receiver in a position to be aware of this and to care about them. From the analyse of the text, the caller seems to be a mother towards the receiver. On the other hand the non-standard English grammar of "are we still on" could suggest a younger friendly based conversation. Generally "still on" is uncommonly used by mothers to their children.

Message 22 signifies the young behaviour of the caller when using the back formation of Alison or Alice. Another example of young speech is the hedge technique " a bit" to make herself come across a better person for being late. This technique is typical for a female, not to mention her name is also Heather. By the clumsy lexis and grammatical sentence structure. "let me know either way … or anything" it gives the impression the caller is young. By the use of insider reference, "as you know" it makes it more personal to the receiver yet there are formal techniques such as politeness "thanks" and complex lexis "whereabouts", Analyse of message 22 suggests the caller is a teenager who is the female friend of the receiver's daughter. Due to the features mentioned and the formal yet personal context of the message reflects the respect a child does for an elder, especially the friend's mother.

Response 2

The relationship between caller and receiver in 21 is clearly close. This is clear from the intimate level of formality (Joos) used. Familiar addressing terms such as dear and "sweetheart" are used, often familiar with the convergence and bond forming language used by females (Giles & Lakoff). Also demonstrating a relationship is the content of the message as the function is to organise a trip to the "doctors" something uncommon to do in relationships other than family and close friends. Modal verbs are used to soften and hedge in "I'd like to know".

Both texts involve voiced pauses and fillers, common in spoken and spontaneous language, such as "er". However the speaker in 22 seems to have a less intimate relationship with the receiver. This is shown by more frequent non-fluency features, perhaps showing awkwardness. "And" is also used frequently as a continuer as in "whereabouts and obviously". This may be simply a sign of unplanned speech, or of nervousness, associated with an unfamiliar relationship. 22 uses more polysyllabic lexis as in "fantastic" than 21. It also involves a longer opening and closing sequence common with politeness, formality and lower status. Although the female speaker uses many elements of Lakoff's idea of female speech, the abundance of modal verbs and hedging appears to show O'Barr and Atkins theories of lower status affecting language.

It appears that 22 is a message between a worried friend, contacting a mother, whereas 21 is a message between friends.

Centres should bear in mind that AS study requires some study of phonology, which will be developed at A2 level. In transcripts of spoken language, candidates should expect to see some use of IPA symbols to represent the pronunciation of words and phrases.

Question 5

AO1 (10 marks)   AO2 15 marks AO3 (25 marks)

Most candidates left themselves enough time to deal with this question. This is clearly a crucial factor in examination techniques, as it is worth 50% of the total marks. It is also important to allocate time and effort in roughly equal proportions to Texts A and B.

Responses were often interesting and showed flashes of insight. For this longer question, a candidate's wider social awareness of language in use is as important as an ability to apply textual analysis frameworks. There was a range of comment, for example, on the use of 'eye-dialect' – spelling to represent pronunciation – in the poem. For some candidates, the words 'wid' and 'waz' were simply spelling errors, indicating the writer's lack of education. Others sensed that it was a deliberate ploy to represent a regional dialect. Better responses identified this as a feature of Black / Caribbean / Jamaican English, either because they had studied this variety, or by an informed guess from the context of the ideas in the poem and the writer's surname.

Some candidates relied on their framework for analysis of context and began by comparing some differences in mode (written v electronic), purpose, subject matter, audience, and so on. This approach tends to gloss over the main point of the question: the ways in which each writer presents him / herself. Although candidates often came around to these aspects by the end of their response, they are advised to make presentation of self their focus from the outset. AO2 assesses 'understanding … related to the construction … of meanings.'

> Benjamin Zephaniah wishes to portray an image of pride in Black culture and outrage at society's stereotype. To show this proud identity the poem, which uses a written language mode, is written in a spoken voice style, in a Black British or Jamaican dialect, and spelled phonetically. Zephaniah seeks to present himself as proud to be Black, but also he is aware of the effect this has on the readers. He seeks to appeal directly to them, the spoken language style is a bold approach, allowing the audience to truly feel and imagine Zephaniah's emotions as though he was telling them face to face.

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This candidate succinctly makes a range of pertinent points in the opening sentence. Comments about presentation of self are inevitably linked to the writer's purposes / the text's functions. The candidate then integrates comments about mode, immediately seeing some complexity (uses a written language mode ... written in a spoken voice style). Awareness of overlap between the three modes, rather than simple divisions, is a descriptor for the higher mark bands. Mode then lead on to comments about the audience and the rapport established between writer / reader or speaker / listener. The subtlety of comment in the following two paragraphs, alone, indicated the full marks this candidate actually achieved.

> Zephaniah is also seeking to present a message of political and societal change "de Black House" and "de white suits" create this politicised message in the audience's mind. To achieve this Zephaniah has had to present himself as a witty, clever political commentator, observing society, yet standing aloof.
>
> So to be effective in reaching his audience and achieving his purpose Zephaniah has used a mode that has, stereotypically, a tradition of clever, avante-garde commentary on society, the poem.

Although the quality of this response is exceptional, all candidates should aim to develop points beyond simple categories. Two texts will never be 'exactly the same' and rarely 'completely different'. Candidates should look for points of comparison and ways in which each text is unique. In order to comment on the persona created in texts, candidates will need a wide range of vocabulary. Many observed that Zephaniah was proud; some felt there was anger; others noted the humour. Those aware that it need not be a question of 'either / or' achieved higher mark bands for AO2.

Candidates need to express their ideas clearly using appropriate terminology for AO1. Comparison was generally achieved by brief linking phrases, as the focus shifted from Text A to B, or vice versa.

> In contrast to Zephaniah, Vivien Ratcliffe seeks not to distance herself from a society in which she holds that some of its beliefs are franky judgemental and racist, rather she aims to highlight her role in society and her belief in her local area's beauty and worth.
>
> So instead of the bold, separate identity established by Zephaniah and his useage of divergent sociolect, Ratcliffe follows a more conventional, Standard English approach, so as to converge with her local community.
>
> Vivien Ratcliffe seeks to present herself as a caring, reasonable (although, like Zephaniah: outraged) member of the Sheffield community. Whereas Zephaniah stood aloof, she wishes to make clear she is not alone.

This section also demonstrates the candidate's understanding of concepts (divergent sociolect, Standard English, converge) for AO2.

For AO3, the emphasis is on analysis, linking aspects of context to features of language use. The focal point for comparison should not be the different modes or genres of the texts – written v electronic - but the writers' presentation of self. Candidates emphasising the former identified the use of a title for the poem, as opposed to the headers used in the email; the short lines in the poem, versus the longer paragraphs in the email.

All candidates noted the repetition of 'white' throughout the poem, but the quality of developing comment varied from: 'it should be 'black'' to more thoughtful discussion of semantics or pragmatics.

> The witty, political image of Zephaniah is presented to the audience through his useage of the repetition of collocations, playing on society's stereotypes "white comedy... whitemailed... white witch" By highlighting this, it allows the audience to empathise, see his clever comments and absorb them along with the function of the text (to inform, entertain and provoke thought)
>
> To effectively present the message he stands for, Zephaniah uses short simple sentences, except for the last line, where

the pattern of "white" repetition is broken and here Zephaniah uses a slightly longer sentence, which is also linked to "Don't worry", which varies the pattern of that short, simple sentences. He also stresses the last line through the use of "shall" which modifies and conditions the verb "to write", as it is a modal verb, this is the first time a modal is used, which helps the image of the message to be conveyed as well as supporting the audience's view that Zephaniah is a brilliant, intelligent poet.

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This candidate moves from lexis and semantics (collocations, repetition) to grammar (simple sentences, modal verb). References to function and audience are succinctly included.

It is not possible to produce anything like a 'full' analysis of the texts within one hour. Candidates were rewarded for selecting pertinent features and for demonstrating their range of understanding of levels of language use.

This candidate also provides some analysis of textual features in the email, maintaining focus on presentation of self throughout.

So, she has written in a longer, more complex sentence, as well as overall discourse structure than Zephaniah, despite writing in the electronic mode, where ellision and abbreviation are common.

She seeks the audience to empathise with her views, and to see her and her beliefs as reasonable, to achieve this she has used lexis that is subject specific and in the semantic field of station closure "accessible" and repeating the theme "inaccessible", which suggests to the audience her knowledge and intelligence regarding this issue, however she also must

present herself as irritated by the closure proposed closure, so she utilises emotive lexical items such as "alarmed" and "horror."

At the second half of the second section, she begins to stress to the audience the importance of her beliefs by exaggerating the negatives of the proposed closure, and again using the power of the list ", both band for the gates, get out his pipe, slippers and rocking chair." This shows also her seriousness and intention, as she has begun a personal attach on the Stationmaster, which continues through the use of rhetorical questions, which she sharply rebutt.

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This candidate provides a concluding paragraph. This elegant structure is not needed to achieve top band marks. Indeed, many candidates stopped mid-sentence as their time finished. They were assessed on what they had produced.

As I outlined at the start, she seeks to appear, not like Benjamin Zephaniah, aloof, but just one member in a large, like minded local community, so she swaps from the first person, into the third person collective pronoun "we", which stresses the unity, unlike Zephaniah's continued use of the defiant, single "I."

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Rather than simply summarising points already made, the candidate mentions a fresh point abut the use of pronouns in each text.

This particular candidate did not mention any linguists by name, but clearly applied linguistic concepts and approaches to the texts and showed awareness of issues such as race and power, as they relate to language use.

There is a danger of 'name-dropping', rather than usefully applying knowledge of theories. Not all concepts were fully understood and some candidates did not appreciate the tentative nature of a 'theory'. However, there was impressive evidence of study of a range of researchers and theories. Many candidates did acknowledge that it was not a simple matter to assign particular language use to either gender. It was rare (to the relief of examiners) to read that Zephaniah and Radcliffe were flouting maxims of conversation. Candidates found concepts of convergence and divergence productive, as well as notions of positive and negative face. Covert prestige was also applied to make some perceptive points.

6EN01 Grade boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	100	72	64	56	48	41

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

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