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Examiners' Report January 2011

GCE English Language 6EN01 01

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Introduction

Candidates sitting this January series were clearly familiar with the demands of the paper and generally allocated their time effectively across the five questions. There was a pleasing attempt to demonstrate knowledge of concepts and theories about English language studied over the AS course. It was surprising, however, to read a significant number of responses equating formality of language use with the 'old', and colloquial forms with the 'uneducated'. More successful responses showed confidence in candidates' own accumulated understanding of their cultural context and the varied ways people use language to communicate meanings.

Question 1

Question 1 gives candidates a straightforward opportunity to display their understanding of the key constituents of language and associated terminology. The extracts chosen are not random, however, but focus on some stylistically significant features of the genre under scrutiny, so candidates can reflect on the use of these features in later questions. It should be possible for candidates to achieve full marks on this section, yet this was surprisingly rare. There are no 'trick' questions or obscure features indicated (by bold font and underlined). They cover a range of levels of language, often including phonology; graphology; morphology; word class; sentence structure; and also offer opportunities to comment on semantics, discourse or pragmatics.

Although the markscheme lists expected responses, examiners credit any valid comment. To achieve full marks in this series, candidates were expected to use these terms with understanding:

- a) proper nouns; plural;
- b) interrogative; capitalisation for emphasis;
- c) imperative; colloquial;
- d) adverb; intensifier / pre-modifier;
- e) pronoun; 1st person plural / deictic / suggesting collective identity.

Candidates should be reminded that they cannot gain marks for repeating a point across several examples, eg. 'deixis' / 'context bound'. Terms such as 'monosyllabic' / 'polysyllabic' are applicable to every example of language use, so would only gain credit if this was a particularly significant feature. The example given should not be a straight repetition of the underlined feature., eg. 'we' is another example of the pronoun 'we'.

(i) Describe the underlined language feature using **two** linguistic terms.

(ii) Identify another example of the underlined feature from the data provided in the Source Booklet.

(a) Extract: **Kaltbach Caves** near Lucerne [Group A No. 3].

(i)

(2)

1 deixis

2 Noun

(ii)

(1)

middle in ENGLAND

(Group A - NO. 1

(b) Extract: **WHAT IS PATATAS BRAVAS FLAVOUR?** [Group C No. 2]

(i)

(2)

1 Rhetorical question

2 Emphatic stress on question - Capital letters

(ii)

(1)

Have you been Tyrrelling recently?

(Group C No. 3)

(c) Extract: Then **pop in** to Fruit Towers [Group B No. 2].

(i)

(2)

1 vague language

2 Wedge

(ii)

(1)

'a splash of our neighbouring

country's favourite sauce...' (Group C No. 3)

(d) Extract: **deliciously** luxurious yoghurt [Group A No. 2].

(i)

(2)

1 Adjective

2

(ii)

(1)

'Succulent sun dried tomatoes'

(e) Extract: To finish we add the Chipotle chilli [Group C No. 1].

(i)

(2)

1 Tenor

2

(ii)

(1)

we hope you enjoy them...

(Total for Question 1 = 15 marks)



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Examiner Comments

This example shows a candidate who scores just under half marks, able to identify some word classes (noun) and sentence functions (question), but making the common confusion between an adjective and an adverb. Section e) was marked leniently, crediting the observation that the use of 'we' shapes the tenor.



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Examiner Tip

Candidates should have a secure grasp of the key grammatical terminology, certainly including types of pronouns, interrogative and imperative.

Question 2

Question 2 was often a high-scoring section of the exam paper. Candidates need to have an understanding of the factors that influence language use. Most - but not all - understood the notion of 'context' or situation, as opposed to the 'text' or use of language. Many employed a framework of concepts to analyse the significant factors of the situation, commonly the terms: mode, field, function, tenor. This resulted in fair analysis of the language of product packaging. Candidates should think in general terms across the three groups of texts. Stronger responses did not work through a checklist, but focussed on the most significant aspect first, in this case the persuasive function. Looking back to question 1, candidates might note the use of positive adjectives and adverbs and direct address in personal pronouns, interrogatives and imperatives used to achieve this function. The written mode and the field of food were secondary to this, but could be supported by reference to graphological features and semantic fields. The variety of audiences provided scope for more subtle comment, with many noting a distinction between the texts in Group A and those in Group B.

2 Explain the contextual factors that influence the use of language in product packaging.

(AO3 = 10)

In your response, you must refer to the data provided on pages 2-8 of the Source Booklet.

The function of product packaging is to sell as much of the product it is advertising as possible. Different methods are used such as employing formal lexis on text 3 'They select only the best cheese' in order to reflect the efficiency of the company. This formal lexis and ^{poly}monosyllabic lexis 'maturing' puts text 3 formal (Joos 5 levels of formality). The field of the product packaging is describing the benefits of the product that they are advertising in order to sell the most products possible. Text 4, Group B for example is about selling the product of 'nutballs' therefore it describes the benefits of picking the product such

as 'hand-prepared' and 'veg with an edge' this is also an abbreviation 'edge' in order to make the advertisement short and punchy. The tenor of text 2 group B for example is very close as the speaker attempts to employ positive face 'because you want to try it out for size' (Levinson and Brown) in order to make the audience feel more

comfortable about buying the product. The mode of product packaging is always permanent and context-independent as it specifies which product it is selling very clearly, for example Group C, Text 1 'Tortillas'. Product packaging is also a ~~spontaneous~~ ^{pre-planned} written print as much thought and effort has to go into it in order to sell the most of the product it is advertising.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate covers significant aspects of context and makes some reference to the impact on language use. The response met the descriptors for top band. It is not necessary to refer to specific linguistic theories and concepts, as AO2 is not assessed in Question 2.



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Examiner Tip

For full marks, candidates should be precise about the language use they choose to quote or refer to. 'They select only the best cheese' was followed by a paraphrase of the quotation, rather than the term 'superlative'. This candidate might have reflected on the use of 1st person pronouns, interrogatives and imperatives highlighted in Question 1, for example, or the frequent use of specific proper nouns for place names.

Question 3

Question 3 always focusses on one group of texts, or comparison between two groups. Candidates should read all the questions before beginning to write, as some began to address the point of question 3 in their response to the more general question 2. Whereas question 2 asks for analysis of the common factors of the genre, question 3 begins to explore some variation within the genre. In this case, it was the use of particularly direct and colloquial techniques in advertising. Candidates can assume that there is a rationale for the groupings, therefore they should look for common factors, rather than make isolated comments on individual texts. Most noted a more informal style in these two texts, with stronger responses able to analyse this in pertinent detail and comment on its effect. It is not only children who enjoy informality! AO2 is assessed for this question, so candidates should be able to discuss the uses of informality, humour and direct address, possibly referring to more specific linguistic concepts, eg. face theory or Joos' levels of formality.

- 3 Read the **two** texts in Group B. What language strategies do the writers use to present the products?

(AO2 = 5, AO3 = 5)

In your response, you must refer to Group B on pages 3–4 of the Source Booklet.

In texts 1 and 2, both products use an informal approach to presentation, using humour and summarised information, but differing in a few areas.

Text 1 is very short, with a large amount of empty space. It relies heavily on graphics and images to prevent it from appearing empty. Text 2, on the other hand, uses a large body of text in place of what could take up only a few lines, with a fairly disorganised layout. Text 1 uses this layout to be simplistic and easily understandable, to attract attention and maintain interest.

Text 2, however, uses its body of text to be humorous, and summarises the majority of the text in its "3 healthy reasons to drink this smoothie"

The form of humour in text 1 is separated into three groups. The images of biker nuts are a play on the masculine overtones of biker gangs and the connotations of "nuts". It is therefore conceivable that the product is aimed at a male demographic. Also used are phrases relating to nutritional information, such as "complete mystery", which implies that the product can easily replace a small meal. In addition is a reference to the film "Apocalypse Now", which supports the idea that the product is aimed towards men, who are typically seen as being more interested by war movies than women, although this is not

necessarily true.

Text 2 uses a rambling monologue about a rug as its humour. This is used as it is more enjoyable to read than its summation, being the statement that the product gives the user many benefits. This The humour is mainly used to appeal to potential buyers, which, while nonspecific, is ^{partially} assumedly aimed at the younger market, which may be seen in some words such as "fascely", as the ending "-ly" on modifiers and adjectives has been in ^{widest} use since the mid-90's in the epoches young adults, although this was partly due to popularisation by some television programmes.

Both parts summarise their most important info. Information, The majority of which is nutritional information, including 5-a-day statistics and general characteristics, such as "mixed nuts" and "6 varieties of fruit". This is highly important, as many shoppers simply scan through a label or package, and can be greatly influenced by an easy-to-read section that draws the eye.



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Examiner Comments

This response immediately focusses on the characteristics shared by the texts: informality, humour and summarised information. This good general observation is then developed clearly: first by a thoughtful analysis and comparison of graphology. The candidate moves on to the level of lexis, making some fascinating points about semantics in the first advert. Finally there is a precise grammatical point about the non-standard use of suffix '-ly'.



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Examiner Tip

As there are 5 marks for AO2, candidates should make sure they use appropriate linguistic concepts. This may be reference to a specific theory, such as 'convergence' or 'face'. However, credit is given for wider conceptual points, in this case the semantic concepts of 'connotation' and 'allusion' and the comment about the popularisation of forms such as 'tasselly' among young adults. The response meets the descriptors for top band marks at both AO2 and AO3.

Question 4

This question always includes a 'forensic' element, asking candidates to speculate on an unknown factor, providing evidence from linguistic clues. It is worth 15 marks, with 10 marks for AO3, so it is necessary to provide more detailed analysis here than in questions 2 and 3. Candidates should certainly aim to use the two sides of A4 provided. Most candidates correctly identified the mystery text as belonging to the Jonathan Crisp brand in Text 4, but those who provided a strong argument for it belonging to Tyrells Crisps could score equally highly, if the evidence was convincing. AO2 marks were awarded for comments on levels of formality, connotations of 'Britishness', with stronger responses noting the exaggeration for humorous effect.

- 4 The texts in Group C are from packets of four different brands of potato crisps. Say which brand you think mystery text A belongs to.

TEXT A

Horseradish

A bracingly British crisp with delightfully eccentric tastes. This blue-blooded flavour is straight out of the top drawer, raffish but impeccably groomed, tastefully turned out and packed with acres of oomph.

Explain your decision by comparing the language use of Text A with **TWO** of the texts from Group C.

(AO2 = 5, AO3 = 10)

I believe that text 'A' belongs to the brand in text 4, the writing style is eccentric and the ~~subject~~ lexical field is 'higher class'. I feel this is ironic however as the use of 'crisps for snobs' ~~is~~ as a sub-heading means this is slightly tongue in cheek and I feel the basis used in both text 'A' and ~~text '4'~~ ^{on} enhance this with adjectives such as 'impeccably' and 'inspired'. Both hint at quality but do so in a very sophisticated manner. I think it doesn't belong to either texts '1' or '2', ~~this is because~~ I feel that text '2' is a very different style and uses more metaphors and marketing techniques, it is advertising the company along with the product. Text '1' is very,

Similar to text 'A' in that within its lexical field it uses a lot of subject ~~specific~~ specific lexis, however it is trying to present

an image of a culture, a place and a country and is advertising within that. Compared to this I feel text '4' is clearly ~~emphasising~~ emphasising British culture, but is doing so ~~with~~ whilst advertising the flavour of the crisp specifically.

I think the lexis formatively is equal, the idiolect of the writer seems the same, and the lexis used is in the same semantic fields as that in text 'A'.

The texts are short, contain little punctuation, and are written as though they are presenting a speech, this is also true with text '2', however it is shorter, simpler and the way it is presented is for a different audience.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate is one of very few aware of the 'tongue in cheek' tone of the brand. Supporting evidence is relevant and there are also comments eliminating another brand. A02 marks are top band, but there is not enough detail for A03.



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Examiner Tip

The candidate could achieve higher marks for A03 by concentrating in more detail on the mystery text in comparison with two texts. Reference to language use is confined to lexical choice. There could be further comments on sentence structures and / or discourse structure.

- 4 The texts in Group C are from packets of four different brands of potato crisps. Say which brand you think mystery text A belongs to.

TEXT A

Horseradish

A bracingly British crisp with delightfully eccentric tastes. This blue-blooded flavour is straight out of the top drawer, raffish but impeccably groomed, tastefully turned out and packed with acres of oomph.

Explain your decision by comparing the language use of Text A with **TWO** of the texts from Group C.

(AO2 = 5, AO3 = 10)

By analysing text A, the most likely brand to which it belongs is text 2 in group C. This is because

in the field of lexis, ~~the semantic field is~~ the word "oomph" parallels the colloquial phrase "down-to-earth" in text 4. These two examples are ~~the~~ surrounded by adjectives, for example "eccentric" and "impeccable". Additionally, the subject specific words "blue-blooded" in text A and "snobs" in text 4 coincide with the semantic field of royalty and upper classes.

Within grammar, complex sentences are used, unlike, for example, the simple sentences in text 2. The sentences in both texts A and 4 are declaratives. The other texts use some variation in this, like text 2 which uses an imperative interrogative.

Within phonology, both texts 1 and 4 use a large amount of metaphors, for example, in text 1 the phrase "blue blooded flavour" is used. However text 1 uses the alliteration "~~the blooded~~". This is similar to text 2, which states "it is... a lighthouse". Text 2 also uses alliteration, "blue-blooded" and onomatopoeia, "comph", where text 1 does not, though all other features indicate that text 1 and 4 are from the same brand.



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Examiner Comments

This candidate scores highly on A03, providing a range of analytical comments to support the comparison of texts. However there is little conceptual comment, so A02 is a lower mark.



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Examiner Tip

Candidates should target both AOs for Question 4 and attempt to write in more detail for this question, as it has more marks available.

Question 5

The majority of candidates focussed on the wording of the question and attempted to make comparisons in the ways the speakers presented themselves. A few candidates treated Section B in a similar way to Section A questions, attempting to describe the mode, function, field and tenor of each text. It was pleasing to see that few candidates used this question as a chance to compare the generic features of the two modes: spoken and electronic.

Most candidates left enough time to attempt this question, but there was often a lack of detailed analysis, given the 25 marks for AO3. Responses were generally clearly and accurately expressed, using some relevant terminology, so marks at AO1 were often higher, proportionally, than those for the other two AOs. AO2 marks hinged on the quality of comments on presentation of self, with the higher bands awarded for those who could employ one or two relevant theories and concepts to support their points.

It was pleasing to see fewer candidates accepting theories without question. Many were tentative about those of Lakoff, for example. Grice's maxims were commonly oversimplified. Face theory (attributed to either Goffman or Brown and Levinson) was often referred to, but was widely misunderstood. The terms 'positive' and 'negative' face seem to be understood as everyday language, referring to a cheery disposition or the tendency to moan and complain.

SECTION B: PRESENTING SELF

Read the two Texts A and B on pages 9–10 of the Source Booklet and answer the following question.

- 5 Analyse and compare the ways in which each speaker/writer of Texts A and B presents herself.

(AO1 = 10, AO2 = 15, AO3 = 25)

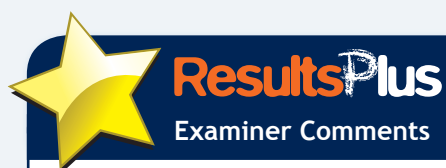
In your response, you should include reference to any relevant theories and research.

In both of these texts the speakers know one another, however the difference between them is that text A is being held in front of someone the speakers don't know. The linguist Goffman's face theory suggest that when speaking, everyone presents a deliberate 'face' or persona to their audience. As crab-123 (A) and fluffy (F) have no onlookers, it is likely that they are presenting themselves normally, although could be converging to each others way of speaking. However, the fact that W is present for the conversation of text A, and neither J nor R have never met W before will have altered

their lexis significantly. Throughout the text, J uses the ~~fill~~ word 'like' as a filler many times, which suggests she is quite young, which in turn suggests that she would normally use slang and elision when presenting herself normally. This is supported by the amount of glotal stops she uses, for example "frustratziin." This is significant because the face she presents here is a mature, polite and friendly one. Giles' "accommodation theory" says that people will converge and diverge their language between different situations, which is

exhibited in both Text A and B. J's use of ~~more~~ words such as 'malicious' and 'spiteful' exemplifies convergence - changing language use to a style of higher prestige - while in text B, F ~~ear~~ says early in the text "I am currently pissed at my father" - quite a formal tone, but then later diverges towards A's language: "and I'm like 'dude' and my dad's all..." which is a much less formal style of speech. The two speakers wish to present a face that will look good to their audience which is why J converges to the unknown parent, ~~while~~ to appear polite and friendly, while F diverges, to appear "cool" to A. In text A, R does not speak much, and most of her speech is backchannel behaviour, "mm", to show J that she's listening and agrees, however she still presents a face, which is a similar one to J: polite and friendly. A in text B

Also presents a face that she is happy and friendly, shown by the emoticons she uses: ":)" and her use of humour. The grammar used in text B is non-standard, with a few abbreviations and some incorrect spellings, probably due to typos. This again presents a friendly atmosphere, as full standardised grammar in an electronic instant messaging conversation would give a very formal and unfriendly feel.

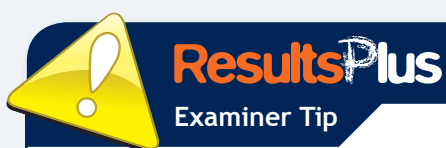


Examiner Comments

This is an example of a succinct response to question 5, making subtle points comparing the presentation of self. The focus on the task is immediate, considering a pertinent point about the context of each interaction: the degree to which it is private or public. This impact of an observer is discussed in more detail, with reference to two relevant theories: face and convergence. The concept of prestige forms of language is also included. The mark for AO2 is securely in the top band.

Support for these points refers to a variety of key constituents: phonology (glottal stops); discourse (fillers and backchannel behaviour); lexis (elevated v slang). As all points are relevant, this meets the descriptors for a high AO3 band.

Although a brief response, the expression is concise, using a range of linguistic terminology, so achieves full marks for AO1.



Examiner Tip

Candidates need to provide more detailed analysis to meet the top band descriptors for AO3. Although this response touches on discourse and lexis, there should be some analysis of grammatical features to meet the top band descriptors.

There is a relatively small entry in January. Candidates found the texts accessible, but should not be tempted into a more relaxed discussion of their effects. Where there was a lack of top band marks, this was often due to a lack of detailed, precise analysis of the texts. Candidates should ensure that they can use some key grammatical concepts. Question 1 will always provide a sample of essential terminology.

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