

Examiners' Report
January 2013

GCE English Language 6EN01 01

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Introduction

The paper has two sections, which invites candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of linguistic concepts across all ability ranges. Section A is progressive. It allows candidates to test the range of their skills by building on concepts and language features over four questions. Section B offers an opportunity for extended analysis and discussion in a longer single comparative question.

The January 2013 series has proven to be a very successful paper for many candidates across the ability range.

This series, many candidates managed their time effectively and were very well prepared for the demands of each question, whereas some struggled. These candidates engaged particularly well with section A, giving thoughtful and informed responses and started well on section B and suddenly stopped short. It seemed that these candidates had not managed their time well enough to meet the demands of the exam. This could well be due to the lack of opportunity to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills plus the exam technique in one term. Centres should feel encouraged by this factor, as it was evident that the candidates are clearly engaging well with this specification.

Centres should be aware that the amount of space provided in the booklet is more than ample for an effective answer. Responses should be extensive enough to show understanding of the assessment objectives. However, candidates are not advantaged by over-writing and should aim to contain their answers within the booklet if possible.

The purpose of this report is to give an insight into the ways in which this examination has been assessed. A general outline of the patterns emerging for each question has been shown within this report.

Before starting to write, candidates should not only read all the texts, but also read through the five questions. They should have a clear understanding of how the questions differ before tackling the question.

Question 1: candidates must focus only on the underlined material. There are no marks for observing what is outside the highlighted area. Also the example must be from the source booklet and not be an example drawn from the candidates existing knowledge or understanding.

Question 2: candidates should consider the over-arching contextual factors of text messages (or whatever the genre the series focuses on). The recommended factors are field, function, tenor and mode. However, we are very open to alternative systems e.g. audience and purpose, as a way of embracing the multitude of approaches to teaching and learning.

Question 3: the focus for this question moves to particular sub-groups for more detailed comment. Candidates need to focus on the language features used within the texts and support this with critical discussion.

Question 4: this question is synoptic of section A. Candidates should note the content of their investigations for the previous questions and switch their attention to the sub-group, which has not been tackled.

Question 5: candidates should note that AO2 marks for discussion of presentation of self through language issues and AO3 marks for their exploration of the presentation of self through the contextual factors and key constituents. Candidates should aim to balance of the exploratio

Question 1

This question aims to test the candidate's knowledge and understanding of linguistic terminology.

There are 15 marks drawn from AO1.

AO1: Select and apply a range of linguistic methods to communicate relevant knowledge using appropriate terminology and coherent and accurate written expression. Bold font is used to illustrate the language feature that the candidates are required to comment on.

For this series the suggested responses were as follows:

- (a) deixis / pronoun / context bound / object/ third person singular
- (b) conjunction / co-ordinating conjunction
- (c) abbreviation / adjacency pair /discourse marker
- (d) imperative / non-standard spelling / informality/ adjacency pair
- (e) elliptical elements / informal lexis / minor sentence/ first part of a triplet

Some candidates found this question tricky. Despite it being obvious that candidates had been exposed to a wide range of grammatical and conceptual language features, they often struggled to identify them correctly. It was common to see pronouns identified as prepositions and determiners, and conjunctions as pronouns. The response context bound was not always used discriminately and its over-use seemed to be attributed to features where the meaning was vague. A common response was also vague language and minimal response. These concepts do not count as terminology and attracted no marks.

Also, there were many scripts where a whole quote was copied leaving the examining team to identify the feature. Candidates must identify the language feature to be examined and underline it to make it clear. If a quote is featured with an incorrect underlining, the examiner can't accept another correct feature present in the chosen example.

1 Pronoun
2 Object
(iii) "take tomorrow off if you need it"
text 1



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

Here the candidate scored 1 mark for pronoun and 1 mark for object. The underlined 'it' scored no marks as this feature had already featured in the question.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Had the candidate opted for you (which is clearly in the example) this would have attracted a mark. Candidates must choose fresh examples from the data to gain marks.

Other problems were where candidates commented on partial elements of the underlined example. It is essential that candidates comment on the underlined feature as a whole to gain marks.

Here is an overview of the responses to each question:

(a) This was a very successful question. Many candidates scored full marks here. Popular responses were, pronoun, context bound and third person singular. Many marks were lost due candidates quoting other examples with 'it' in.

(b) Mostly candidates identified the conjunction correctly but there were also lots of pronouns and determiners quoted too.

(c) This was again a high scoring question. Mostly candidates identified the abbreviation. However, minor sentence was also a popular response, with 'Hi' as the example. Polysyllables were often also quoted, which did not attract any marks.

(d) Many candidates identified the phonemic spelling and informality of this construct. Most scripts incorrectly identified this feature as slang. Problems occurred, as candidates naturally expected this to be a focus throughout section A and mirrored this mistake throughout the paper.

(e) This was a difficult question for many candidates. Successful answers often quoted minor sentence but failed to identify another one correctly.

Despite this question proving difficult for some candidates, we need to remind centres that it is very early in the year and grammatical application takes its' own time. The most important thing to avoid is the identification of syllables, the misuse of context dependency and non-terminological description. It doesn't impress and can often distract the candidate from pertinent areas of study. It is always refreshing to see a candidate attempt to apply a concept and error, rather than opt for a safer but more risky alternative.

Question 2

This question draws marks for AO3.

AO3: Analyse and evaluate the influence of contextual factors on the production and reception of spoken and written language, showing knowledge of the key constituents of language.

The question was answered very effectively, most candidates were awarded within band 2. Candidates considered the mode to have had the most influence but there was also much evidence of candidates applying a sound knowledge of tenor and its affect on formality. Often the different functions were identified through audience and the colleague group contrasted with the friends group. A common point linked pricing to content, as an explanation of the brevity of the genre. This young-person centred response impressed, as this had not featured in the indicative content written and considered during the paper's production. This was duly awarded.

There were a few candidates confused by the requirements of the question and did not manage to refer to the text at all. A minority used this as an opportunity to philosophise about the language of the young and the role of technology in disparaging ways. This did not gain much credit.

Contextual factors were often well evidenced through, ellipsis, phonetic spelling, and abbreviations. However, there was a concern that a minority of candidates mistook this question for an analysis of language features. Often very good responses could not be awarded their full potential, because they missed the assessment criteria. Centres should take care to point out that the references are key to supporting discussion about the contextual factors and should only be foregrounded for question 3.

In group A, the grammar & sentence structure is generally short, limited only to simple or minor, occasionally a little longer. They are also well punctuated showing that more is ~~quite~~ formal. However, the use of emoticons in text & lowers the formality and they do abbreviate 'holiday' to 'hol'.

In group B they always sign off with miss showing it's informal. There is use of a rhetorical question showing 'Me naughty' showing their joking behaviour and use of ^{language} ~~phonology~~ of 'Oooo' as if you could hear it.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate comments on the brevity of the texts and links this to simple and minor sentences. The use of emoticons and abbreviations are linked to formality. Also a rhetorical question is identified as provoking humour. This candidate scored: AO3:3.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

These language features serve beautifully to exemplify the formality of the texts. Had the candidate linked this to mode or tenor and discussed this in closer detail, it could have attracted more marks.

Question 3

Here candidates pick up an extra assessment objective and are marked for AO2 and AO3. There are 5 marks for each assessment objective.

AO2: Demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of concepts and issues related to the construction of meanings in spoken and written language, using knowledge of linguistic approaches.

AO3: Analyse and evaluate the influence of contextual factors on the production and reception of spoken and written language, showing knowledge of the key constituents of language.

There were some very good responses to this question. Most candidates fell into band 2 for AO2, as the discussion was good but lacked depth. A limited number of candidates were able to identify the key constituents with discussion of the differences between the groups. They mostly focused on the differences in formality between colleague and family groups. The main pattern was to focus on the use of interrogatives showing power in the colleague texts and the use of deixis, showing shared knowledge and a good relationship in the family texts. Many scripts identified the use of direct address and convergence to develop a rapport with the audience. Some good answers noticed the difference in audiences between each group and the impact of this on language use.

Some candidates misread the question and covered all three groups.

The greetings are more informal 'hey' and the paralinguistic feature 'sniver sniver' to convey emotion. The short, minor balanced structures with ellipsis 'parts of classness, plans with electricity, eggs ready' are more direct due to closeness and possibly shared context as with 'happy with rashi'. The use of taboo language 'bloody' being common in intertextual purposes and close tenor. There are mostly direct declaratives 'no one top now and supportive replies 'I like this too' suggesting convergence with reader by agreeing and convergence in Group A by supporting the reader when unwell 'hope you feel better' and 'take me day off'.

(Total for Question 3 = 10 marks)



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

References to minor sentences, ellipsis, and taboo, are discussed well and linked to a close tenor. This candidate scored: AO2:5 and AO3: 5.



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Examiner Tip

Analysis of the language features in context, often impresses. Here the insightful discussion pulls key areas of the assessment objectives together.

Question 4

Again there are two assessment objectives for AO2 and AO3. There are 5 marks for AO2 and 10 for AO3.

AO2: Demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of concepts and issues related to the construction of meanings in spoken and written language, using knowledge of linguistic approaches.

AO3: Analyse and evaluate the influence of contextual factors on the production and reception of spoken and written language, showing knowledge of the key constituents of language.

There was some very good discussion for AO2. Candidates were able to recognize the link between formality and close tenor. Most students scored on mid band for this question. The most popular theories touched on related to footing and power as a basis to eliminate group A. Other common theories included positive/negative face, accommodation and gender.

One of the major problems was sweeping generalisations about tenor and formality, claiming texts from older people were more formal because they lacked friends. Impressive responses analysed the pragmatics and discourse features of the messages of both groups.

Although affectionate terms "sweetie" and an abbreviation of the name to "Z" are ^{similar to those} found in Group C, they indicate that it belongs to Group B as the rest of the Lexis used is more similar to the texts in this group. For example there is non-standard orthography of "r things at yr end?" This is used in Text 17 with "lyk whatever," although this could just be an indication of a younger age group.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate identifies the use of affectionate terms and abbreviations with examples and links them to the original sources. This is then discussed through the mystery texts use of non-standard orthography, and again linked to the source. This candidate scored AO2:4 and AO3:9



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Examiner Tip

Discussion which is illustrated with examples always attract marks. When the mystery text is analysed and the structural elements are compared to the original source, this is considered to be an effective interrogation.

Question 5

Here three assessment objectives are assessed. AO1 has 10 marks, AO2 has 15 and AO3 has 25.

AO1: Select and apply a range of linguistic methods to communicate relevant knowledge using appropriate terminology and coherent accurate written expression.

AO2: Demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of concepts and issues related to the construction of meanings in spoken and written language, using knowledge of linguistic approaches.

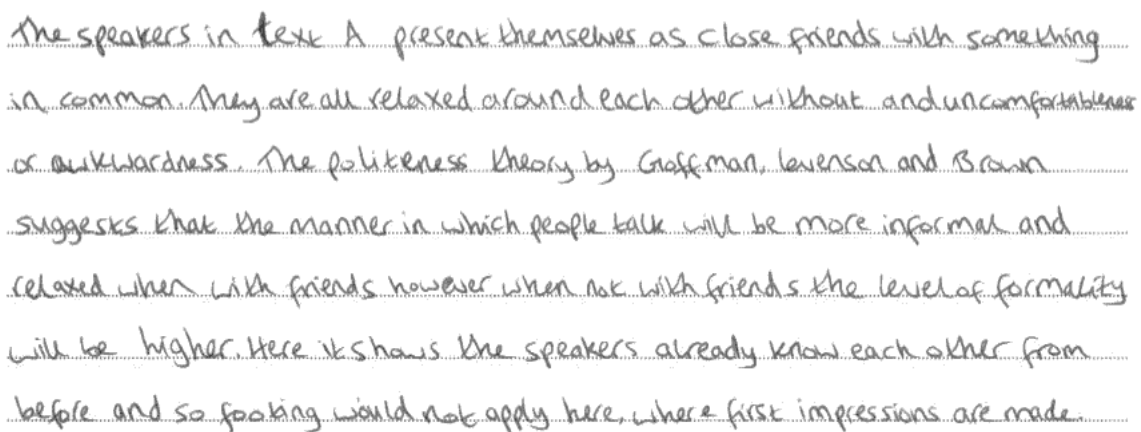
AO3: Analyse and evaluate the influence of contextual factors on the production and reception of spoken and written language, showing knowledge of the key constituents of language.

This question seemed to engage the candidates well, although there was a lack of balance in the discussion of text A and B. Most scripts identified the language of the youth leader and discussed power in authority supported with accent, dialect, humour, convergence and face.

Many candidates discussed gender inappropriately and attributed ideas about participant's role to outdated theories by Lakoff. This often distracted the student from more interesting points they often made. Similarly the same could be said about Grice's Maxims.

Most candidates were able to write well using appropriate terminology and scored mid band for AO1. For AO2 most candidates were awarded in band 4, as they illustrated their understanding of language issues. Candidates able to discuss presentation of self, including some key constituents were able to achieve band 4 and above. There were some excellent answers covering, active and passive voice, sentence types, modal auxiliary verbs, which helped to address the assessment objectives in credible ways.

There were a number of scripts this series, where essays featured as lists. Examiners often faced lists of content with no explanation of discussion. It is very difficult to assess the candidates' full potential when ideas are presented in this way. Centres should remind students of the importance of writing their responses in prose.



The speakers in text A present themselves as close friends with something in common. They are all relaxed around each other without any awkwardness or awkwardness. The politeness theory by Goffman, Levenson and Brown suggests that the manner in which people talk will be more informal and relaxed when with friends however when not with friends the level of formality will be higher. Here it shows the speakers already know each other from before and so politeness would not apply here, where first impressions are made.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

Here theory is linked to formality. However, there is no discussion of either text.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Had the candidate got straight into the texts, they might have made some links to their content. Introductions can often be a distraction. Candidates need to get straight to picking out language features and discussing the contextual factors. This candidate scored: AO1 5, AO2 4 and AO3:3.

Paper Summary

This report has tried to give an overview of how the candidates performed and illustrate the observable strengths and weaknesses of the responses produced.

There were some very pleasing scripts produced by candidates this series.

This was a very successful series, as candidates seemed to engage well with the texts.

The responses serve to illustrate evidence of some very good teaching and learning of linguistic principles and frameworks.

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