Examiners' Report
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GCE English Language 9EN0 02

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Introduction

This was the second sitting of A level Paper 2: Child Language in which students analyse spoken or written data. Although it assesses the same AOs (AO1, 2 and 3) as the AS paper, there are differences in the level descriptors to reflect its status as a full A level paper.

This paper focussed on written language with the data exemplifying a variety of texts produced at home and school by a single child. The question asked students to analyse and comment on how his development of literacy enabled him to use language for a range of purposes with the expectation that candidates would combine observations on the child's literacy development with a context-based analysis approach.

Typically, answers in the lower levels illustrated a lack of confidence with language features at the levels of syntax, morphology and orthography/phonology. There was a strong tendency to describe/narrate rather than explain and theories were often applied uncritically. At these lower levels, some students struggled to adapt frameworks which resulted in long discussions on features that were not wholly relevant to the question.

As would be expected, higher level responses showed more critical application of theories and issues and were able to cover a wider range of relevant language features from a variety of levels. As well as discussing evidence of written language development, students performing at mid to high levels had a clear focus on context and were able to transfer knowledge from other areas of the course to facilitate this.

It was clear that centres had worked hard preparing students for Component 2 and that the students were eager to display the learning they had developed over the past two years. Many students showed clear linguistic knowledge and there were very few who did not identify at least some issues in the data provided.

Question 1

Although many students seemed to approach the data with confidence, they should be reminded of the necessity to fit their responses to the specific demands of the question and to consider and explain any relevant contextual factors. This year's written language analysis required candidates to link the child's development of literacy to his ability to use and adapt language for a range of purposes but many students did not develop the contextual aspects. Instead, many at lower levels wrote only on the features of literacy that Thomas demonstrated and there was little sense of what Thomas was trying to achieve or how he used his skills to communicate meaning. Responses which just identified a list of features/skills that the child had or had yet to develop and discussed theories without clear and explicit links to the context were unlikely to achieve higher levels. Although not always consistently applied, where students did focus on the question, there was an increasing sense of understanding about the different genres and forms Thomas had been asked to produce with some of the highest students effectively identifying the impact of the different audiences and the external influences of teaching and reading material.

Typically, lower level answers illustrated a lack of confidence with the application of language features, and often identified only a very narrow range of issues. Although they typically included a description of the spelling, the primary focus was often on graphological features such as linearity, the use of pictures, and the formation of letters. While these were valid areas of focus, candidates at lower levels allowed them to dominate their responses. Candidates at the higher levels covered issues such as graphology but controlled the analysis by covering all relevant features of this area in a paragraph while making clear links to how Thomas' audience would respond to the graphology as well as the influence and purpose of the teacher's comments.

Generally speaking, responses in the lower levels were aware of some common issues/theories underpinning literacy (mainly Kroll and Barclay) but tended to either discuss these at length without clear links to the data or simply labelled the stage and the features with little accompanying analysis/explanation. Additionally at this level, students often confused speech and writing development and did not seem to be aware that the child's spoken language would be quite advanced at this age. Such responses often made comments identifying Thomas as being in the telegraphic stage and a number made references to early vocabulary development such as using an example of a noun from the data to support the idea that children learn nouns first. Students performing at the mid levels upward were more careful in their selections and often adapted theories from other parts of the course (such as narrative structure theories) or referenced a wider range of theorists who helped them address context as well as literacy development such as Rothery, Nutbrown and Britton. A handful even considered the educational goals that a child of Thomas' age would be expected to achieve in school by referencing the Key Stage 1 literacy targets.

Although evident to some extent at all levels, there was much uncertainty regarding the analysis of sound/spelling links in responses placed in the lower levels. It is interesting to note that the analysis of written language often requires at least as much consideration of the influence of phonology as spoken language and students need to be keenly aware of the links (or lack of them) between sound and spelling. In written language, discussing implied phonology can be more challenging than in a spoken text as no examples in the IPA are provided. Surprisingly, few students explicitly mentioned how children are taught to spell and only those at the higher levels tended to acknowledge areas such as where Thomas could spell successfully and patterns of use in his spellings.

Despite the inclusion of an IPA reference sheet, the use of the IPA was not widespread. Many students tried to rely upon phonetic spelling which did not allow them to demonstrate the accuracy or understanding associated with higher level responses and made comments feel descriptive rather than analytical. For instance, many students discussed the child's spelling of 'paws' but

discussed the use of the 'or' sound instead of using the IPA symbol / ɔ /. Lack of familiarity and/or confidence with the sounds of English and how these may be represented in writing led many candidates to inaccurate results. Common examples of this included claims that the child's use of <z> to indicate a noun plural in 'porz' and 'clorz' showed non standard pronunciation when in fact the child's use of the <z> was indicative of the standard pronunciation /z/. In higher levels, these issues were not as marked but were still present to a lesser extent.

Although most students were able to identify examples such as 'shootid" and to link this to Thomas' spoken language, comments on syntax and morphology in the lower levels were often limited to observations on development and there was often little attempt to adiscuss how the child's syntax and morphology allowed him to achieve his purpose. When comments on significant structures were made, some students lacked the terminology to describe them. Those performing in the mid levels and above were able to offer a greater range of features and had more confidence with terms. As such they were able to identify and explain the use of features such as intensifiers and adjectives (e.g. very big crab), developing sentence complexity and adverbials (e.g. once upon a time) and link these to the audience needs and narrative conventions.

This level 4 response has been included because it illustrates a student who is careful to consider context throughout their response.

Thomas is writing different passages A - D from the age of 5 and 4 months to 6 and 8 months. He therefore is within the KS1 (Key Stage One) learning bracket.

One aspect to Thomas' writing that shows clear development and expected ability for his age group his his understanding of different genres. Text A showcases his knowledge knowledge of the genre of poetry and something that clearly shows his understanding of this specific genre is the fact that he has rhymed. This is seen when he rhymes 'clorz' with 'porz'. The way these nouns, although spelt in a non-standard manner, highlight this basic aspect of poetry - it can rhyme. Even though he has spelt the nouns with '-orz' morpheme inflect ending

he has done this consistently with both, which showcases his attests his knowledge of the phonetic rhyme in poems. Thomas also than shows his understanding of other genres, one specifically in narrative writing. He understands what is often expected as a genre of this type with the semantic field of text C showcasing the typical fairytale seen in the nouns of 'green' 'gjnt' (giant) and ~~night~~ 'witu' (night). There is also some evidence of Labov's narrative structure where he includes the ab well-known introduction in text D: 'ones a pon a time' (once upon a time). In text C this structure is also seen through the abstract of the 'green' and the complicating action of the giant, ending the story with them that the character 'lived huy be ever after' (happily ever after). ~~That showcase~~ There is also the factual account in text B of his trip to the aquarium and, once again, he showcases his knowledge of genre through the factual declarative of 'I went to the aqua eum' (I went to the aquarium) and the use of the first person pronoun 'I' to show the personal account. These all showcase

The students's first comment shows that they are responding to the question as they identify a feature that links to the genre of poetry. The two examples that are selected are valid illustrations of the student's point and at this stage they choose not to describe the non-Standard spelling (they do cover this later) but note its presence and the fact that it is consistent. The overview of context continues with comments on the semantic field of text C in which accurate terminology is used to describe the key words associated with Thomas' story. Understanding of core concepts associated with narrative writing are illustrated by references to 'Labov', 'narrative structure' and 'complicating action'. The examples are clear but the student could have improved this part of the response by supporting these observations with additional linguistic terminology to describe the examples and by speculating on how Thomas has acquired these skills. The focus on context continues into the next point which relates to Text B. The genre is identified (factual account) and two language features (declarative and pronoun) are identified to support this. At this stage, it would have benefitted this response to contrast the pronoun use with the other pieces of data to facilitate a comment on Thomas' ability to adopt different perspectives. The written expression is clear and controlled which makes the student's response highly accessible. This student has adopted an integrated response to their analysis (discussing similar features from the different texts in the same section). Although this was not a requirement on this paper, students who adopted this type of approach often produced a more effective analysis than those who wrote on the texts separately.

You should always consider aspects of context when analysing child language as this is a specific assessment objective. The precise considerations will be dependent on the data, but for written data you should consider the language features that the child has used that link to function and audience. This could include how they have adapted their syntax for the purpose and how the child has (or hasn't) used an appropriate semantic field. You should also consider whether the environment in which the child is writing has an effect on their language use.

This brief extract from the same candidate as above shows how brief references to context can be related to other language features.

A second aspect to Thomas' writing that allows him to use written language for a range of purposes is via the orthography and graphology. Thomas looks to be in the consolidation stage as he is using phonetic spelling such as the intensifier 'verie' (very) and the past tense verb 'livd' (lived). This, therefore, hinders his ability to use language as when reading the non-standard spelling, it could become confusing. This is especially the case as in the example of 'verie' as he does not

spell it consistently in text B, changing the spelling to 'v teree'. This affects his ability to communicate thoughts and ideas which is part of the goals in the KS1 learning objectives. He also lacks complete motor fluency of his writing, with some descenders not quite passing below the line, seen in text A with the 'g' in the noun of 'tiger'. There also lacks joined-up writing and there are places where he has forgotten capitals and then primly corrected himself seen on t in text A where the lowercase 't' has been erased. This could be via the influence of the teacher (MKO), but it also could be that he has spotted his own mistake and that the ~~positive too if~~ teacher has not stepped in too far to his learning. If this were the case, this shows an ability to understand that, for audience purpose, capitals are often necessary, highlighting sentence beginnings and such. However, this awareness of audience is not fully developed as he often omits full-stops throughout the writing, making it hard in places to comprehend. This is seen in text C, for example, on line 12 before the conjunction 'But'.

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The student clearly indicates the features they are going to discuss and there is a suitably brief reference to the consolidation stage, although it would have benefitted the candidate to expand on 'phonetic spelling' by referencing the phonics teaching method. Accurate terminology is introduced to describe the examples 'veree' and 'livd' and the writer demonstrates a link to context when they speculate that this may cause some reader confusion. This section could have been improved if the candidate had considered why Thomas spells as he does, included the IPA to make explicit the phoneme grapheme links and looked for patterns of use (for example, Thomas represents /i/ as <ee> in 'beech' and 'veree'). There is further interesting references to underpinning issues with the mention Key stage 1 but again the reference is not fully explored.

The student then goes on to discuss graphology and again demonstrates further simple but effective comments on context that show a student who is bearing the question in mind throughout . The student offers two possible reasons for the corrections in the data - the influence of the teacher and self correction. Again, there was scope for expansion here as the student could have linked aspects of behaviourism to the teacher corrections. At the end of this section, the writer considers the effect of the lack of capital letters and full stops on the reader and again offers two contrasting viewpoints by stating that on one hand Thomas' corrections show he is aware of their importance for the audience but that it is not fully developed as he is inconsistent. Throughout this section, the student maintains a generally sophisticated structure and their written expression is clear and fluent.

The following extract is from a low level 3 response and acts as an interesting contrast to the extracts above.

Being five years old, Thomas would expect to be in ~~Krolls~~ the preparation stage of Kroll's Writing Development theory. It is expected that a child would be in this stage between the ages one and six. ~~It is cons~~ It is evident that he is in this stage because of his lack of understanding on spelling principles and where they should be used. Thomas spelt the ~~word~~ lexis 'uses' ~~and~~ as 'yooz'. By using the 'oo' in the word he is showing that he understands that there is a principle ~~that~~ that should be used, but he hasn't quite grasped when to use it. This is normal ~~for child at his age~~ for a child at that age and stage of their language and writing development. Despite not understanding the principles he is still able to use language to tell a story. ~~Ther~~ According to Rothery's Categories of Evaluating Writing, Thomas' poem would fall into the narrative category. This is shown in the repetition of the conjunction 'and' which indicates that he is describing story. However, the use of the conjunction could indicate that Thomas

is in the consolidation phase of Kroll's theory, because that is the stage where the use of conjunctions increases. This would disprove ~~N~~Noam Chomsky's nativist theory ~~which~~ which suggest that children have an inbuilt capacity to acquire language and all do so at the same pace. The consolidation phase is meant for children ~~between~~ aged seven and eight, so Thomas would be proving Chomsky's theory wrong. By using conjunctions Thomas is showing that level of literacy can allow his to ~~Text B was also written by Thomas at th school when he was just one month older~~ use the written language for a number of purposes.

The student begins by referencing Kroll – a very popular theorist among A level students but not always the most useful for explaining why and how children develop literacy. Here, the supportive references are quite vague but the student does attempt to expand on the issue of spelling using the example 'jooz'. Unfortunately, the analysis of this feature is unclear and vague. The student does not expand upon the stated notion of Thomas understanding that there is a 'principle' or indeed what this 'principle' is. As well as explaining this concept in more depth, this section of the response would have benefited from the IPA and a careful reading of the data would have revealed that Thomas uses a similar spelling strategy for 'you'. There is a brief reference to context when the student notes that Thomas can still use language to tell a story but it is general and they do not explain what language features are involved in telling this story successfully.

In the following section, the student references Rothery. Many students used Rothery productively to make links to context and shaping writing but the example used here is not particularly productive. The presence of the conjunction 'and' does not indicate a narrative and some further uncertainty is indicated when it is linked to description. The student would seem to be introducing a contrasting point with the use of 'however' but instead provides another quite general reference to Kroll. Following this the candidate attempts to be more discriminating by introducing a different theory – nativism. Although the trial and error aspect of this theory can have some worth in written language, the innateness aspect is more problematic. The final comment that 'and' allows the child to write for a range of purposes is too general. Those at higher levels were aware that conjunctions like 'and' would have been common in speech for some time but that children are encouraged to write simple sentences in the earliest literacy stages and that its use in writing allows connected concepts to be related more efficiently.

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Examiner Tip

You need to ensure that any theory that you introduce is relevant to the point you are making. Remember to briefly explain the relevancy of any language issues and concepts that you introduce in the course of your analysis. To show a more discriminating and critical application of theories and concepts, you should attempt to both support and refute theories that you have studied.

This response was placed at the bottom of level 5 for AO1 and 2 and the top of level 4 for AO3 and in this extract the student discusses some aspects of spelling. Although it shows some discriminating aspects, this section of the response is not wholly convincing as it lacks the development and has limited references to context.

In terms of spelling and orthography in text A Thomas is in the phonetic spelling stage. He spells 'uses' as 'yooz? He has tried to 'sound out the word' as it would be pronounced as /juːz/. Perhaps he has been taught to spell to phonetically by his teacher. According to Barclay's & spelling/writing stages in text A Thomas would be at the invented spelling state in which children spell phonetically with little understanding of the rules of spelling. Also interesting to note is the teacher's corrections that model the correct spelling of 'uses? Here, the teacher acts as Vygotsky's More Knowledgeable Other (MKO.)

Also, in text A Thomas repeatedly substitutes the 'z' as the plural suffix ending on his plural nouns;? 'yooz;' 'clorz', 'porz.' Again, this is an influence of phonetic spelling. However, here, Thomas has made what Vygotsky would term a 'virtuous error? Thomas has supported Chomsky's theory ~~that the~~ that children have an innate understanding of the grammatical rules of language, as he has noticed the pattern for regular plural endings 's' and has attempted to apply it.

This section starts with spelling and identifies a productive example 'yooz' which is linked to the 'sounding out' technique. Although there is a minor inaccuracy with the IPA, the student does attempt to use it to show how the word sounds. It is a shame that the candidate didn't notice the child's spelling of 'you' (yoo) in this section of the data as that would have allowed them to discuss a pattern of use. The reference to Barclay does allow the student to place Thomas in a developmental stage but in itself does not explain the child's spelling. The response could have been taken further by explaining how children are taught to spell in school. In a similar way, justifying the child's approach as phonetic is a little vague and the candidate could have examined the phoneme/grapheme correspondence perceived by the child and considered why a double <o> was used. In this section, there are no significant links to context apart from an implicit reference about the importance of the environment in which the language was produced.

The second paragraph shows some accurate terminology but again there is a lack of development in this section and much of the candidates knoweldge is implicit rather than explicit. The student notices that the spelling is consistent but does not clearly explain why this is a 'virtuous error' or what led the child to using a <z> instead of the standard <s>. The response could have been improved if the student had noted that there are different regular plural sounds but in writing only <s> is used. Additionally, there are no clear links to context here. Again, there was an opportunity to show a more critical approach by examining patterns of use, as in Text D Thomas uses an <s> to represent a /z/ sound in 'was'.

This extract from a response at the top of level 4 shows how aspects of discourse and grammar can be linked to development and context.

> To allow Thomas to use literacy for a range of purposes, he gradually acquires confidence in the distinct discourses and genre conventions of texts dependent upon their ~~street~~ function. Both texts A and B are accompanied with a drawing linked to the field of his writing. Clearly, he has a strong grasp on the idea that writing is different from drawing - it looks different, and is used for different purposes. Furthermore, he also shows recognition of the ability of texts to form a coherent whole. His drawings enrich his message, producing an enjoyable piece of work that he can become actively involved in; he is producing texts with intent. At the same time, text A shows earlier development of the chronological discourse, with his inclusion of the title "hear pen", ~~~~ an instance of genre conventions which, by text D, are confidently handled. He begins his story with the phrase "once a pon a time" before concluding his writing with "the end". Clearly, Thomas' frequent exposure to environmental literacy, both

of his own children's books and perhaps even adult reading materials such as newspapers read by his father allows him to recognise the importance of separating and providing order to the text. Indeed, his placement in Rother's narrative stage sees him able to provide information of the orientation, the event and the following resolution, a distinct form from that of the spoken mode which is often more context dependent. In this sense, Thomas' development of genre conventions allows him to use literacy to create stories and narrative texts through his recognition of the greater context-independence of the written mode in comparison to the spoken; he provides a succinct introduction and setting of the scene, influenced by his own reading of similar fairy tales, as to produce a coherent text that is able to convey the passage of events over time.

Thomas' grammatical development throughout the text sees him progress from the consolidation to the beginnings of Kroll's Differentiation stage of development. In text A, his poem is largely a reflection of the spoken mode. Whilst this allows him to explore the expressive functions of poems in the phonological features seen in the rhyming of "paws", "claws" and "pours", it does produce a rather simple grammar in just one coordinating conjunction of "and" and one simple sentence. That being said, at 5 years and 4 months Thomas is still beginning to understand how to transfer thought and speech to writing, producing an understandable reflection of the spoken mode. After all, just one month later in text B Thomas explores the narrative function

through more complex ~~grammar~~ grammar. The ~~dev~~ development of slightly more complex grammar, as seen in the discourse marker "then". Indeed, Thomas is beginning to understand the ~~utility~~ the ability of writing to transmit and detail events as they happen over time. Therefore, the inclusion of this discourse marker ~~reveal~~ reveals Thomas' growing recognition of the need to connect his sections, producing a more clear transition from one ~~idea~~ sentence to another in order to ~~perform~~ form a fully coherent, linked piece of writing. After all, by text C and D he is beginning to apply subordinating conjunctions such as "But" and "so", a grammatical form which allows him to establish a cause and effect structure — he can present and situation, and then continue the narrative with the consequential events that follow. As a result, although Thomas' sentences do largely consist of short declaratives, likely to be the result of his reliance on the spoken mode in the direct transfer of utterances to paper, Thomas' gradually development of ~~often~~ conjunctions and discourse sees him use literacy as a means of telling a story over time, reflecting his development of his understanding of written texts being able to address and entertain others, regardless of context, through their ordered structure and grammaticality.

Examiner Comments

The student shows a focus on the question with the opening comment and links texts A and B through their use of pictures. The comment about writing and drawing shows understanding of the earlier stages of literacy. The writer could have added a little more detail here if they had speculated as to why his schoolwork has pictures but his narratives produced at home do not. The student then turns their attention to text D and identifies two structures that link to the notion of genre conventions and so contribute to enabling Thomas to produce effective pieces of writing. Again, this shows consistent focus on the question but could have been improved if some linguistic terminology had been used to describe these structures. The mention of environmental literacy shows this student understands that the environment is a key underpinning issue that affects literacy. The final comment in this section relates to Rothery and shows further close focus on context but it would have benefitted from a specific example. Throughout this section, the written expression is in a suitable register and style and the writing style makes the student's points accessible and clear.

In the next section the student comments on grammar. The reference to Kroll places the child at a stage of development but without a specific example from the data, it contributes little to the analysis at this stage. The comment about the poem being 'spoken mode' is interesting and shows a student who is aware that a key literacy development is understanding that written language often has a different structure from spoken. A language feature is introduced to support the idea of 'simple grammar' and this is effectively compared with a discourse marker in a different text to evidence Thomas' development. The final comments in this section show some further sophisticated understanding of the structural differences between the two pieces they are comparing but there are some errors here and 'establish cause and effect' seems to be a somewhat sweeping generalisation.

When making your observations on the data, you should remember to always include a specific example or examples from the data and include any relevant terminology to describe it

Paper Summary

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

- make sure you read the question carefully and follow its demands

- context is always referenced in the marking grids and should always be discussed

- rameworks that identify potentially relevant areas of analysis for a key topic can be useful but be sure to ensure that you are able to adapt them to suit the data and the question that you have been asked

- some brief planning before you start to write may allow you to decide what features best enable you to cover a range of language features and issues/concepts. It may also help you spot any relevant patterns of use in the data

- avoid 'feature spotting' by always relating a language feature to a language development issue and/or a contextual factor

- keep your focus firmly on the data and introduce issues associated with literacy development only when they are relevant to the discussion of a specific example within the data

- if you are going to reference a theory associated with child development, you should explain it (to demonstrate your understanding) and its relevance to the data. If possible, you should consider introducing more than one theory and can, if relevant, use the data to refute any of the theories you have studied

- develop your knowledge of relevant phonological terminology and the IPA to avoid errors in your analysis

- take care with your written expression and avoid colloquialisms in your writing

- if you have time, check your work for errors in terminology

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