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Examiner's Report
Pricinpal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel IAL
In English Language (WEN01)
Unit 1: Language: Context and Identity

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This unit introduces students to how language is used in data from a range of sources. Students explore how the contexts of production and reception affect language choices in spoken and written texts. Students also explore how language reflects and constructs the identity or identities of the user and varies depending on the contexts of production and reception. Students apply appropriate methods of language analysis to a range of written, spoken or multimodal data taken from 20th and 21st century sources using the key language frameworks and levels. They also demonstrate their understanding through the creation of a new text for a specified audience, purpose and context.

Unit 1 is assessed by examination of 1 hour 45 minute's duration. Candidates answer two questions: one question from Section A and one question from Section B. The paper is marked out of a total of 50 marks with 35 allocated to Section A and 15 to Section B.

Section A: Context and Identity
Question 1

Candidates answer one question on two unseen extracts selected from 20th and 21st century sources. They are required to produce an extended comparative response showing how the presentation of identity is shaped by language and contextual factors in both unseen texts.

The task is assessed across AO1, 2, 3 and 4:

- AO1: Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.
- AO2: Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use.
- AO3: Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning.
- AO4: Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods.

In the June 2018 examination Text A was an extract drawn from the diary of Nafisa Khanbhai which documents her experiences as a disabled woman in Kenya. The diary presents her as an intelligent woman whose ambitions to study law are thwarted in her home country by attitudes to her gender and her disability. She turns these negatives into positives in her drive to raise awareness of, and bring about changes in, the insular and discriminatory attitudes in Kenya. It is this determination, plus her own creativity, that informs her voice and style.

Text B was an article containing the transcript of a speech delivered Alex Brooker, co-presenter of UK TV programme, 'The Last Leg' in which Brooker reflects on the man that has inspired him, Italian Paralympian, Alex Zanardi. Brooker's speech reflects on his own disability in a manner that presents him as an honest, humble and anxious individual much different to his television persona. Brooker's homage presents Zanardi as a man who has turned personal tragedy into triumph in a way that has transformed attitudes towards disability.

The question asked candidates to analyse and compare how the language of both texts conveys personal identity. Three bullet points offered additional prompts and guidance directly linked to the Assessment Objectives (and the mark scheme) for this component and reminding candidate of the specific areas of study they should apply to the task:

- relevant language frameworks and levels
- concepts and issues such as social, cultural and gender factors
- contextual factors such as mode, field, function and audience.

Centres are advised that the format and focus of the question will be consistent across the lifetime of the specification. Actual wording may, inevitably, change depending in the nature and content of the two unseen texts presented. However, the focus of assessment is clearly stated in the question stem with its prompt to consider and compare how personal identity is constructed and presented in the source materials. The bullet points remind candidates of the areas of study they should apply to this comparative exploration and are linked directly to the Assessment Objectives applied by examiners to their responses. **The markscheme contains indicative content and may well provide centres with a useful resource when preparing their students for this examination.**

The texts were clearly linked by the issue of physical disability and attitudes towards it. Given the differing contexts of each, there was much opportunity for candidates to explore the links and contrasts between them. The focus of the question was the construction and presentation of **personal identity**, and the ability of candidates to incorporate this into their analysis proved something of a discriminator, with a significant minority struggling with this concept. Those that framed their analysis through this central focus were rewarded.

In June 2018 responses to Section A covered a full range of achievement. Most candidates offered consideration of the genre and context of both texts and were able to draw links between them based on their central focus on the issue of disability. They were also able to offer comparative consideration of the differing audience and context of each text and shape these – with varying success – through the differing perspectives and circumstances of Brooker and Khanbhai.

The source texts proved to be accessible to most candidates and the majority offered a balanced consideration of both and the theme of disability that linked them. Most candidates could differentiate context well and most responses across the range could point to more complex aspects of each such as the multiple functions of the Khanbhai's text (which ranged from political comment to promotion of the play, based on her diary) or the contrast between the media persona of Brooker and his personal perspective on his disability.

It was pleasing to see that many centres had made use of the support afforded by the Examiner Report and the indicative content in the markscheme produced after the June 2017 series. This enabled many to meet more of the specific requirements of the Assessment Objectives. Some used these documents as a framework for their responses which ensured coverage and structure in the mid bands of achievement but which sometimes led to repetition at the lower levels and, in some, less frequent, cases, restricted responses at the mid to upper levels.

In these instances candidates sometimes looked for direct points of comparison across frameworks that were not really evident in the texts themselves, and the subsequent analysis was, somewhat strained/forced as a result.

Many were able to describe method and effect but at the mid-lower levels of achievement struggled to apply specific language terms to their consideration of how – and why – these effects were produced. A more systematic approach, whereby comments are supported by evidence drawn directly from the source materials would have provided candidates with the opportunity to explore the language from which this evidence was comprised (applying concepts, terms and frameworks) and would have enabled them to reach the requirement for higher bands of achievement provided in the mark scheme. Some responses used a range of impressive language terms to describe language features but did not go beyond a descriptive approach and marks had to be restricted because of failure to link to context/purposes. A list-like approach/feature spotting is not a successful way to tackle this question.

Some offered generalised comment on context whilst those that developed comment not only on the background context of the texts but also on key aspects of production and reception of each (including key generic conventions) were rewarded accordingly. A significant minority did not address AO4 and the requirement to comment on the links between the two texts and this made an upward movement through the levels difficult.

Successful responses to Text A looked the conventions of the diary itself and how its structure fulfilled both its informative/persuasive/promotional function and also enabled the incorporation of Khanbhai's voice (and multiple agenda). They were able to comment on the three points of disadvantage experienced by Khanbhai coined, by her, as a 'Disabled Asian Female'. The best showed insight in recognising her agenda through comparison of her treatment in the UK to highlight the injustices of the Kenyan system or her use of the Rotaract Club reference to expose the shortcomings of Kenyan attitudes to the support of the disabled.

Responses that were placed in the highest bands of achievement supported comment and assertion with evidence directly drawn from the text which was used to explore the specific language choices made, applying terminology in good range at word, sentence and whole text level. These linked comment to the concept of 'voice'/persona as constructed by Khanbhai and how relationships with her readers were shaped and developed. Others considered the placement of the diary extract on the broader platform of the *Disabilities Quarterly* website and were able to differentiate the wider agenda of the organisation from the personal perspective of Khanbhai.

Less successful were those responses that offered generalised comment on the context of the diary and issues upon which it was based. These often adopted a very descriptive approach to its content. Some misread the prompts in the question and produced a discursive essay of the issue of disability. Those that offered limited exemplification and limited specific analysis of technique were anchored in the mid/ lower bands of achievement. Limited consideration the personal identity of Khanbhai as a disabled Asian female suffering discrimination on these three fronts, also negatively impacted on the potential for reward.

Successful responses to Text B looked closely the article and the speech it presents to contextualise Brooker's media position and the nature and impact of his disability on his professional and personal life. They noted the shifts in register and tone as Brooker reflected on Zanardi and why the man had proved to be such an inspiration to him. They also explored Brooker's perspective on the Paralympic games and the platform they afford to those with disability. They demonstrated understanding of the conventions of such speeches, delivered as they are to the broad audience afforded by their broadcast context, and how they shape content, structure and the presentation of voice. They were able to comment of the personal identity constructed and presented by Brooker which balanced his media persona with the private man and his fears for his future as a father with disability. All this was accompanied in the very best with systematic exemplification and analysis at word, sentence and whole-text level. The most successful candidates were able to compare the language of the article itself with the transcript of the speech and apply what they knew about the spoken word with some confidence.

As with Text A, less successful responses offered generalised comment on the context of the article and Brooker's speech and adopted a very descriptive approach to its content. Some simply paraphrased Brooker's story. Those that offered limited exemplification and limited specific analysis of the language used were anchored in the mid/ lower bands of achievement. Limited consideration the personal identity of Brooker also negatively impacted on the potential for reward.

AO4 requires candidates to explore connections and contrasts between the source texts. The most successful responses seized the many opportunities for comparison and contrast – many adopting an integrated approach to this aspect of the task. Many explored the purpose of the texts and developed links through the persuasive function of each, these generally fared better than those who tried to match feature for feature. Most picked up on the fact that both texts were clearly linked by the issue of disability but were differentiated by scale and context. Better answers explored the fact that both convey personal responses to this issue and drew comparisons based on the personal standing of both of Brooker and Khanbhai and the resultant contrast in perspective. Many made interesting comments on gender and social/cultural issues based on the content of each text and the perspective those that that produced them.

Less successful responses outlined the links and contrasts between the two texts but failed to develop any but the more obvious or to explore the language which evidenced these. Such responses were characterised by an essentially descriptive approach. A significant number of candidates took a summary approach to the content of the texts which is not a useful approach to achieve marks. This proves reading ability but not ‘analysis’ of language features in use.

Section B: The Creation of Voice

Section B of the examination is assessed against AO5: ‘Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways’ with a total of 15 marks allocated for this component. As such the task assesses both the fluency and accuracy of written expression and the ability to generate an original and (hopefully) engaging text.

In June 2018 candidates were asked to produce a report aimed at the governing body of their college to persuade them to take action to change attitudes towards students with disabilities. Candidates are expected to demonstrate their own expertise and creativity in the use of English. They are encouraged to incorporate personal and local references.

Successful responses effectively applied the conventions of a written or spoken report and showed awareness of the 'professional' audience and of the local college context that shaped it. Candidates were expected to draw upon the at least one of the source materials provided in Section A but reshape them to meet the requirements of the context.

This creative writing task challenged many candidates in producing clear, well-structured responses but the task often enabled candidates to demonstrate an understanding of writing for an audience, experimenting with register. Many could adopt a tone or' voice' which was convincing even if the technical accuracy in written English was lacking.

The precise purpose of the task was not strictly evident in lower ability candidates' responses but in those that had fulfilled the purpose level 3+ was more likely to be reached. Many candidates struggled with maintaining the generic form and appeared to lack the vocabulary and control of syntax to fulfil the requirements of the task.

Timing appeared to be something of an issue with many short or missing responses. Centres are advised that although the paper is weighted across the two tasks (with 35 marks allocated for Q1) the 15 marks available for Q2 can be the difference between several final grades. Candidates are urged to set aside sufficient time to understand the specific requirements of the task in terms of genre, context, audience and purpose and to produce a meaningful and, hopefully, engaging response. They are also reminded that they MUST draw on the material from at least one of the source texts – there were some very engaging responses that failed to do this and were essentially self-penalising.

The format of the question will be relatively constant but wording will, inevitably, change according to the nature of the creative task set. As this is a creative response examiners will accept any approach that concedes to the prompts provided.

The June 2018 question stem was carefully worded to provide candidates with a clear indication of expectation. The second part of the question: ***In addition to your own ideas you must refer to material from at least one of the texts in the Source Booklet*** highlighted a key requirement of the task, that is the need to incorporate some material from one (or both) of the source texts into the report. This proved problematic to a significant minority of candidates but is a key requirement which must be taken into account. It is NOT necessary to incorporate every detail from the source; indeed, many that did produced lengthy and essentially pedestrian paraphrases that failed to engage. More successful were those that took only relevant information from the source materials and reworked this to a lively and interactive agenda better fitted to the prescribed electronic mode.

Successful responses demonstrated clear awareness of audience and function, conceding clearly to the context and the persuasive/informative function of the report. There were some very fluently written and convincing new texts. The best adapted the source material fluidly – drawing upon the rhetorical 'voice' of Brooker or the experiences of Khanbhai to target their audience.

Less successful responses were often restricted by flawed written expression – these proved essentially self-penalising. Some struggled to sustain a consistent tone/register given the nature of the task and the tone and content of the source materials. A key discriminator was the incorporation on the source data; at the mid/low bands of achievement many made no concession to the source and all, others simply quoted directly from the texts, struggling to integrate the material and therefore disrupting the fluency of their response.