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In English Language (WEN03)

Unit 3: Language: Crafting Language
(Writing)

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Introduction

The source booklet consisted of three texts relating to digital technology and its use by young people taken from a range of sources, and most candidates clearly engaged with the task of producing a short speech promoting the use of digital technologies, including esports, in schools. Section A prompted a variety of valid approaches to the task and a number of skilled pieces of writing that used the material creatively and demonstrated insight into speechwriting. There were very few responses that did not manage to produce a convincing speech at all, although at all levels some candidates showed less skill when selecting and editing material from the source texts.

The second task required the candidates to produce an analytical commentary on the text produced in Section A. This commentary should explore the intended audience, purpose and context of the speech and how this influenced the candidates' choice of register, tone and language techniques, as well as discussing structure, organisation and how the original sources were adapted to create a new text. For many candidates, comments on audience, purpose and context proved to be more insightful than analysis of language techniques.

Candidates continue to find Section B more of a challenge than Section A, with many spending too long on the shorter creative task for Section A and not allowing enough time for the thirty mark commentary.

Overall, candidates produced work which was engaging and often highly convincing as a speech. Similarly, many commentaries at all levels included carefully considered ideas about audience, purpose and context and comments on these ideas that showed some insight. Centres continue to prepare candidates for the exam in a way that enables them to demonstrate their ability to write both creatively and analytically, although there is potential to develop candidates' knowledge of a wider range of methods and techniques for the commentary.

Section A

At all levels, candidates showed the ability to write with engagement and flair, often alongside a subtle understanding of how spoken language can be received and the potential audiences for their speeches. However, where candidates made better use of the source materials, achievement was much higher. Centres should continue to work on their candidates' ability to select key information from the source texts and use that information to create an original new text. Some candidates used very little material from the sources, resulting in speeches that were often entertaining and well expressed, but relying almost entirely on material from the candidates' own knowledge of gaming, technology or young people.

Equally, significant direct "lifting" from the source texts, even with some attempt to reframe or paraphrase the material, is not a productive approach to this question. Inevitably, the writing can lack originality and flair and the responses can be quite long, as candidates struggle to be selective with the information. Even at the higher levels, where candidates were often able to adopt a fluent and lively voice when

writing sections entirely from their own imagination or experience, many included lengthy passages that were lifted from the source with only minor amendments. At the lower levels, this kind of reliance on the language of the source texts was quite significant, particularly for the openings of Text A and Text B, where candidates often copied entire phrases by the journalist or quotations from direct speech in their responses.

More successful responses managed to combine their additional creative ideas with facts, events and people mentioned in the source texts. Candidates created a variety of highly convincing personae to deliver their speeches with corresponding relevant audiences, from representatives of school gaming clubs to psychologists, and school principals to supportive parents of gamers. At all levels, candidates were able to identify appropriate speakers and audiences and adapt their register and tone appropriately.

Similarly, many candidates showed a subtle understanding of audience, purpose and context, which was very encouraging. There appeared to be a high level of comfort and familiarity with speeches and the principles of writing for a listening audience. As well as aiming at a variety of appropriate audiences, there were some subtle variations in purpose. Candidates had been asked to promote digital technologies and some chose to do this through requesting funding or support for gaming clubs or classes at school, for example. Others pleaded for greater understanding of the benefits of technology from parents or teachers. This led to an impressive range of relevant styles and register and often helped candidates to focus their writing effectively. Some less successful responses failed to focus on that promotional purpose, relying too heavily on much of the more negative research into screen time found in Text A.

Where candidates had identified a specific audience, purpose and context for their speech and then adapted their language in an appropriate way, they were able to transform the material in the source texts convincingly throughout. However, where there was over-reliance on candidates' own ideas and knowledge, this resulted in less realistic speeches where the topics discussed and evidence used to support the arguments were not always appropriate for the given task.

At all levels, there were few candidates who seemed confident or skillful in using the rhetorical techniques often found in successful speeches. Rhetorical devices were mainly limited to simple rhetorical questions and the occasional use of direct address to the audience, so this is an area where centres could help candidates to develop their knowledge.

Section B

The majority of candidates achieved a proportionally lower mark for the commentary than they did for the creative task, so centres should continue to focus on developing candidates' technical knowledge and analytical writing.

Where candidates had allowed sufficient time to produce a detailed commentary and had covered a range of features from their own writing, perceptive and accurate analytical commentaries were produced. If they prioritise planning and writing for Section B, candidates are more likely to cover a range of different methods and effects within the commentary. However, for some candidates, writing over-long responses for Section A limited the time available to produce a meaningful response for Section B.

Many candidates were able to make some insightful and considered comments on audience, purpose and context and link these to register and tone. There was often a clear sense of who the speaker was, who would be listening to their speech and why they might be interested in the topic of digital technology. Moreover, candidates were often able to discuss the significance of audience and purpose on the register, content and tone of their speech. It was encouraging to see that a number of candidates at all levels had made specific decisions about audience, purpose and context before writing their speeches, enabling them to make detailed comments about these factors in their response to Section B.

However, much of the time, comments on audience, purpose and context were not linked to specific effects or language choices. This is an area where candidates at all levels could achieve better results in their commentaries, by giving more detailed evidence and analysis of how they crafted their writing to meet the requirements of their stated audience, purpose and context. Many commentaries at the lower levels lacked any terminology, exemplification or close analysis of technique. This was particularly disappointing to see for those candidates who had produced an effective response for Section A.

Candidates at the higher levels were more able to describe the examples they provided using relevant terminology and to analyse the intended effect of their writing techniques. Similarly, the range and relevance of technical methods and terminology explored were often a discriminator between the lower and higher levels. For the commentary, candidates need a toolkit of a range of terminology and techniques to discuss and this is an area where centres should continue to develop their candidates' knowledge. Candidates should be able to apply the same kinds of analytical methods and terminology to their own writing as they do to other writers' work in WEN01, for example.

Some candidates devoted a significant proportion of their commentary to a detailed explanation of where and how they had used the material from the source texts. This type of discussion can be helpful when combined with an exploration of methods and techniques, or to explain how choosing which information to use was influenced by the audience, for example. However, it is not helpful to include a great deal of this kind of descriptive comment unless it is used to explain or analyse language choices made when reshaping the material.

Paper Summary

The candidates were able to take inspiration from the source materials, producing creative work at all levels. The task was accessible for all and many candidates had clearly enjoyed the topic and showed confidence when writing a speech. Where candidates managed their time well and had a clear sense of audience, purpose and context, detailed commentaries were produced in Section B to explore the writing process and analyse the language choices made.

Centres can continue to help their candidates by developing their skills in selecting relevant information from the source materials and then using that information in a completely original new text. For the commentary, candidates would benefit from a more comprehensive range of technical methods and terminology with which to comment on their own writing. Similarly, encouraging candidates to make consistent links with a specific audience, purpose and context enables them to make more insightful comments about the choices they have made in their writing.

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

Section A

- Take the time to decide on a specific audience, purpose and context before you start writing and try to adopt an appropriate register, tone and language techniques.
- Be selective with the material you use from the source texts, combining it with your own original writing; avoid any direct “lifting” of whole sections from the material and do not include lengthy sections based entirely on your own ideas.
- Plan your response, paying close attention to structure and organisation; you do not have to follow the same structure as the source material.
- Think about your commentary when planning your response to Section A, noting down any decisions you have made or techniques you have used that you could explore in Section B.
- Time your response and make sure you leave enough time for Section B.

Section B

- Explain why you chose the language methods and techniques you used in your response to Section A, and evaluate their effect on your new audience, purpose and genre.
- Link technical features to audience, purpose and context; explain why the language used was appropriate and be as specific as you can.
- Develop a flexible “toolkit” of frameworks that can be applied to a variety of texts and techniques, along with a range of linguistic terminology.
- Always supports your points with examples from your writing.
- Avoid lengthy explanations of where and how you chose material from the source texts; focus more on the techniques you have used in your writing and how they link to audience, purpose and context.

