

Examiners' Report

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE English
Literature and Language (6EL01)

Paper 1 Exploring Voices in Speech
and Writing

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This unit comprises the examined component of AS Language and Literature. With its explicit focus on aspects of voice, it assesses understanding of how spoken voices are used and written voices are created in transcripts of authentic conversation and in literary, non-literary and multi-modal texts drawn from the 20 and 21 centuries.

SECTION A involves the exploration of 3 unseen extracts and students are required to identify features of spoken language and examine how writers and speakers shape and craft the extracts provided.

SECTION B assesses understanding of how the spoken word is represented in literary texts and is based upon the text students have studied. An extract from their studied text is presented as a starting point for analysis and they are then to make links to the broader novel/novella/collection.

Question 1 (a)

Q1(a)(i) asked candidates to identify three spoken word features from Text A (a transcript of an authentic conversation between a teacher and a student) and then to provide an example of each feature from the extract. Marks were awarded only when the feature matched the example given.

The question was marked out of a maximum 6 marks at AO1 and, although the majority did well, it still generated responses across the mark range available. Some candidates failed to employ accurate terminology in the naming of features; others repeated the same feature and in this way restricted the potential for reward; some failed to match the feature named with an appropriate example from the extract.

Q1(a)(ii) asked candidates to comment on the function of two of their selected features within the extract.

The question had a maximum score of 4 marks (again at AO1). Responses here also covered the full range.

As with previous series, there is a high level of comfort when it comes to candidates engaging with this question. That said, a significant number of responses still lose marks by making generalised comments on the spoken language features identified, and/or making no comment on how these functioned in the extract. Some misapplication and miscomprehension of terms such as 'back channelling' and 'deixis' was apparent too. Some confusion still exists in weaker candidates over basis terms such as ellipsis/elision. The vast majority of candidates were able to identify and comment usefully on spoken word features.

Question 1(b)

This second component of Q1 is linked to two unseen extracts provided in the Source Booklet. Text B was an edited extract from a blog about football and Text C was an edited extract from the Daily Mail's 'You' magazine.

The question asked candidates to examine how the writers: Shape or craft the texts to meet the expectations of their respective audience/purpose/context and employ aspects of spoken language in their texts. Responses were assessed against AO2 with its specific focus on how structure, form and language shape meaning, and AO3 with its specific focus on the contextual factors which impact on the production and reception of texts. Each AO is marked out of 20, giving an overall maximum mark of 40 for this question.

At AO2, successful responses explored a range of language features in both extracts. Exemplification was consistent and appropriate and the responses offered considered comment on the link between form and function. Terminology was fairly wide ranging and applied accurately. Less successful responses picked upon some general language features although coverage of the extracts was sometimes uneven. In lower band answers exemplification was inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate. Levels of specific analysis and links between form and function were limited and/or undeveloped. At AO3 successful responses offered developed comment on the context of both extracts with consideration of the factors that influenced the production and reception of each. Investigation of the blog considered the conventions associated with this form of communication and linked this to the ongoing relationship between the author and their readers. Investigation of the Street-Porter text considered generic convention, the concept of authorial intent/crafting, the nature of the target audience and their relationship with the teens against which they were compared.

The source texts seemed very accessible this series. However, the second text still acted as a discriminator between lower to mid band responses, and those reaching the higher levels. Most students engaged very effectively with the Cardiff City text, and were adept at discussing aspects of register and tone and link comments on language to context, audience and purpose. Most were able to offer comment on spoken language features. For the Street-Porter piece, there were some excellent examples of real engagement with the tone, register and contextual elements in reference to the language structures, and of course comparisons/contrasts drawn between the generations here. The characteristic tone of the writer challenged some weaker candidates.

Overall, candidates responded well to this question in that it gave them the opportunity to discuss a range of linguistic and contextual features. Most candidates grasped that they needed to write in equal detail about BOTH texts and that they needed to tackle both bullet points. If they did miss something out, the most common problem was not analysing the "spoken language aspects" in sufficient detail rather than missing a text out entirely. Overall, candidates demonstrated reasonable word and text level analysis but were less secure on sentence level analysis. Features of spoken language were quite readily spotted – however the quality of contextualised comment covered a wide range. Some candidates who attempted to compare Texts B and C really restricted themselves, seeking to find links and differences between them which were mechanical at best and, more often than not, tenuous. Centres are reminded that there is no requirement for comparative analysis for this component of the qualification.

Text B proved to be generally more accessible than Text C which provided a key discriminator for this question. Higher band responses demonstrated awareness of the conventions - linguistic and contextual - of blogs. The majority were able to correctly (the best, cogently) define the audience. The best responses could integrate their understanding of contextual factors with focused analysis, with some using embedded quotations and linguistic terminology. More successful candidates were able to identify secondary and more subtle purposes beyond the generic 'to inform' or 'to entertain'. Most candidates were able to comment reasonably well on the context in which the blog was produced and received.

Features such as direct address, colloquial language, and discourse markers were frequently commented on appropriately. Most candidates commented on the literary devices employed though they couldn't always say what functions they served, and many thought that contractions were employed to save time. A significant number of candidates still have a hazy idea of word classes and there were frequent mistakes in identification, the most frequent being classifying a verb as an abstract noun. The better answers noticed the register shifts and used this to comment on the different audiences for the blog. In mid-lower band responses some of the argument/analysis was unconvincing. Many answers offered very general and obvious interpretation rather than specific analysis. Many made minimal links to function such as 'this feature makes it entertaining' or 'makes the reader read on'. Analysis tended to be non-specific with vague phrases such as 'incorrect grammar'. Many such responses also included bold claims about contextual factors, particularly the audience. Others tried to state the gender, educational or financial background of the audience. The strongest responses did not just include an introductory paragraph on CPR but instead linked their contextual comments to specific examples of word choice with confidence and focus.

Most candidates were able to comment on the subject specifics of the texts and make links to audience on the basis of shared understanding. Most were able to pick out the obvious literary devices employed by the writers and make sensible suggestions about why these were used. Less successful answers tended to list a few features accompanied by a small amount of general comment. Better answers were more specific about the way in which genre and context influenced the use of voice. As always, candidates would be well advised to spend some time considering the generic contexts of the pieces they are asked to write about before plunging into some form of analysis.

Section B: Questions 2-8

Questions in this section cover the range of literary texts studied for the examination. Students were presented with an extract selected from their set text and were asked to explore aspects of voice it contained. They were then directed to comment beyond the extract to the wider novel, novella or collection (according to the text studied).

There was a broad range of achievement in this section (as is usual). By far the most popular texts were the Carter and the Taylor. Several low achievers concentrated on the extract with minimal exploration of the wider text/collection. This is possibly due to the nature of the cohort which differed from previous series in this, the penultimate sitting of the paper. The significant majority were re-sitting the paper and at the lower bands many seemed to have not revisited their AS set text in preparation.

A successful response to the literary set text should offer detailed investigation of the given extract and extend beyond it into the broader novel/novella/collection. There should be relatively sustained focus on the central issues of the task (this varies, obviously, across questions and set texts) and selection of evidence should afford appropriate links to the extract and to the task.

At their best, responses were fluent, clear and technically accurate. Exploration of the extract was thorough and systematic and links to the broader text were well defined and appropriate. Exemplification was consistent and judiciously selected and examples were investigated using literary and linguistic approaches that were relevant to the task. Terminology was accurate and analysis extended to word, sentence and whole text level.

At A02 there was a degree of confidence in consideration of structure, form and language. Links between the extract and the wider text were well defined and exemplified accurately. Responses demonstrated confidence with the specifics of analysis and used this to explore links to how meaning is shaped by structure, form and language.

Less successful responses offered limited analysis of the given extract and were unlikely to extend fully beyond it into the broader novel/novella/collection. There were also a significant number that offered limited investigation of the extract which, after a few limited remarks, launched into the wider work often resulting in unfocused generalities. A detailed exploration of the extract provides a clear and focused platform from which to approach broader considerations and candidates who clearly understood this almost always did better. Focus on the central issues of the task (this varied, obviously, across questions and set texts) tended to be inconsistent and many digressed into generalised comment (for example the perceived Feminism of Carter, the post-slavery context of Walker or the much investigated theme of paralysis in Joyce). Selection of evidence was inconsistent and at times supported general assertions rather than those that linked directly to the extract and to the task.

Quite a few students ran out of time - many answers were very short, just two or three sides of the answer booklet. They start off looking like a Band 3/Band 4 answer but then just finish abruptly and have to be marked down as there just isn't the necessary range of features.

Exploration of the extract in these less successful responses was straightforward and comments on the wider text were generalised and/or descriptive. Exemplification tended to be inconsistent and not wholly

appropriate. Investigation of examples was limited in terms of analysis and there was a tendency to describe. Terminology was offered in a very limited range and there was considerable incidence of error. There tended to be an imbalance of analysis at word, sentence and whole- text level with the majority focussing their analysis on lexical choice.

At AO2 there was a lack of confidence in consideration of structure, form and language. Links between the extract and the wider text were weak and, at the lower bands of achievement, omitted. Responses demonstrated insecurity with the specifics of analysis and links to how meaning is shaped by structure, form and language were limited.

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