Examiners' Report
June 2016

GCE English Language 8EN0 02

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide centres with an overview of the performance of this paper. This is particularly important as this is the first sitting of the new specification for GCE AS English Language.

This paper covered key aspects of the specification with a focus on children's language acquisition, assessing written language development in Q1 and spoken language development in Q2. The paper assesses four of the five Assessment Objectives; AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO5. The introduction of AO5 in the AS Child Language paper requires candidates to engage an audience and shape their linguistic response to meet the identified function and format, as noted in the question.

There are few limitations regarding the potential formats, functions and audiences for this question. Candidates should be afforded opportunities to practice shaping their language analysis to meet a wide range of formats, audiences and functions to prepare themselves effectively for meeting the requirements of AO5 "Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways".

A majority of candidates were able to manage their time effectively across the paper ensuring they answered both questions fully. However, some candidates spent notably longer on Q1 and found themselves short of time on Q2 to produce an effective and accurate analysis. Q1 is marked out of 20 and Q2 is marked out of 30. The time spent and length of response for Q2 should be longer than Q1 as reflected in a higher number of marks available.

In Q1, candidates were asked to analyse Samantha's written language and shape their response into a textbook format. The scaffolding under the question prompts candidates to use an appropriate writing style and register which will engage their audience. Candidates are also asked to focus on language frameworks and levels as appropriate in addition to introducing relevant theories and research. Reponses are assessed under AO2, "Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use", and AO5, "Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways". While the focus of assessment is on AO2 and AO5, candidates are required to underpin their application of issues and concepts with close analysis of language features. Without such analysis, application of knowledge and understanding runs the risk of being applied indiscriminately, which will affect the number of marks that can therefore be awarded.

In Q2, candidates were required to analyse George's spoken language development and were given a transcript of a conversation between George and his parents, which was recorded in the family home. Candidates were asked to consider the influences on George's spoken development which included his pre-school experiences, family interactions and the context in which the conversation had taken place. This question was assessed under 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" and AO3, "Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning". Written development will always be assessed in Q1 and spoken language development in Q2.

It was clear that centres had worked hard to prepare their candidates effectively for this paper and candidates were keen to demonstrate their knowledge. Many candidates illustrated that they had acquired some knowledge of how children acquire and develop their spoken and written language, and indeed how they influenced each other. There were few candidates that did not identify at least some issues in the data provided.

Question 1

This question presented candidates with a short piece of written data produced by Samantha at school. They were asked to create an extract from a textbook aimed at A Level English Language candidates, explaining the key features of her literacy.

The responses showed engagement with the data and those that were most successful adopted a more straightforward layout and were able to adopt a suitable register and style to engage their audience. Successful responses analysed and explained a range of language features from relevant frameworks and they applied issues and concepts pertinently to demonstrate consistent and at times, discriminating understanding. Many candidates covered a range of language frameworks including graphology, lexis and discourse enabling them to explain what Samantha was able to do at this stage of her literacy development. A few candidates were able to go beyond this to discuss what Samantha struggled to do and how she overcame such difficulties.

Lower level responses tended to do a number of things; namely adopt an overly colloquial style and register which was not suitable for the textbook format, write in a basic essay form with little to no evidence of shaping the response in a creative way or use conventions from genres other than the textbook genre such as talks etc. Such responses tended to show a broad and general understanding of issues and concepts relevant to written acquisition, often 'bolting on' the theory i.e. 'this supports behaviourism' with little explanation as to how. Lower level answers tended to revolve around linearity, directionality and spelling, often labelling such features as 'errors' or 'incorrect' rather than 'non-standard'. They tended to make observations about the non-standard forms and missed opportunities to explain why they were non-standard. Popular theorists at this level included Kroll, Barclay and Katherine Garvey; these were often applied in a deficit manner or inaccurately. The answers often mentioned Garvey's ideas around word class acquisition as a means of validating the theory as opposed to considering the age at which children would have acquired nouns etc. This therefore meant that many references to this theory were irrelevant given the age of the child.

Higher level responses adopted a more formal and suitable tone to engage their audience and craft their response to meet the textbook format. Such answers tended to show consistent understanding of issues and concepts, moving beyond references to Kroll and Barclay to discuss the influence of context, the role of 'the more knowledgeable other' and environmental print. These were applied confidently and considered routinely to examine how they affected Samantha's literacy development. The responses offered plausible and detailed analysis of what Samantha was able to do in addition to the difficulties faced and they underpinned application of theory with language features from frameworks including orthography and syntax.

This extract comes from a response which was placed at the top of level 3. It showed evidence of clear understanding of concepts and issues and the writing was logically structured with a clear sense of direction. There were some lapses in clarity and it lacked range to be placed into level 4.

Preparing for the Exam

Now that you've reached the end of this textbook its time to talk about the serious stuff: your exam.

On this page we will revise the writing section of your a level exam. In order to best prepare for this question, practicise is key. Lets have a look at Samantha's story (aged 6) and see what we remember about analysing child language texts.

A key element to revise for child writing is spelling errors or 'othography' (if you really want to impress the examiners! In Samantha's writing,

From the whole team who wrote this textbook, we wish you the best of luck for your exam and please remember to practise practise, practise!

This extract comes from a response that was placed near the top of level 4. The candidate adopts an appropriate style and register for the task, utilising relevant genre conventions to engage their audience and craft their response.

Referring to extract B on page 12, this chapter will focus ~~we will be focusing~~ on literacy development of Samantha, aged 6. The text shows ∧ Samantha's hand written a piece of work, which she produced in school. ~~As~~ //As children learn to write, they spell words how they say them, which is named the 'sounding out' technique. As you may already know, this is known as making the link between phoneme (the sound) and grapheme (the letter). Samantha shows evidence of this in her literacy development when she writes 'tedy' and 'dropt.' As you can see, Samantha is missing the double /d/ sound in 'teddy,' most likely because ∧ when the word is said, we do not pronounce both of

these consonants. Samantha also shows her phonological knowledge of 'sounding out' when she substitutes the '-ed suffix at the end of 'dropped' for a /t/. When this word is spoken, the end of the word sounds like a /t/ and the -ed is often unstressed; hence why she has spelt it this way. According to linguistic theorist Kroll, Samantha would be in the consolidation stage of literacy because her spelling development is based on the phonological way that words are spelt, therefore she is writing how she speaks.

By looking at the extract of Samantha's writing, we can also make judgements about the graphology of her literacy. The writing shows how Samantha has good mechanical control (holding the pen/pencil stirdily), which is to be expected of a child her age. As

literacy development at this stage shows how she can effectively write in a the ~~stra~~ right direction and along a straight line. This too is to be expected from her, because she is given guidlines on her page to follow. So how about her letter formation? We can easily infer what Samantha is writing; she has grasped the idea of letter direction and spacing, although this is not always accurate to separate words from one another. The graphology of the writing also reveals how Samantha has not fully understood the concept of tails and risers; for example, she puts her /p/ all above the line, and her /j/ consonant on the line with no tail below (reference on the second line from the bottom).

The candidate identifies a number of relevant language features from a variety of frameworks including graphology, lexis, discourse and syntax. There is clear focus on AO5 with numerous ways of addressing the audience. This is consistent and sustained throughout the response. The candidate shows awareness of context and how this has influenced Samantha's ability to produce a story. There is clear focus on language frameworks with relevant and appropriate application of issues and concepts such as 'sounding out' method, more knowledgeable other and Kroll's stages of development. While the candidate discusses the reasoning behind Samantha's spelling of 'dropped' well, it would have improved marks had they included accurate representation of the IPA to acknowledge the spoken form and its influence on her writing.

A more detailed exploration of Kroll's ideas would have improved the response here as this would have allowed the candidate to discriminate between the stages and the ways in which Samantha deviates from them as well as adheres to the stages.

Level 4: 15 marks

If you wish to discuss phonetic spelling and the reliance on phonology, it is useful to accurately represent the spoken version so you can compare the phoneme/ grapheme correspondence.

Use more accurate terminology when referring to the method of teaching children to spell i.e. phonics and segmenting. You can demonstrate a consistent understanding of concepts and issues with a brief definition of these and improve the technical accuracy of your response.

Question 2

This question presented candidates with a transcript of a conversation between George, aged 4 years and 1 month and his parents. Candidates were asked to analyse the influences on George's spoken development.

On the whole, this question was more successful than Q1 and candidates demonstrated thorough preparation for this response. They were able to apply their knowledge in a more assured way to move higher up the language levels. Candidates' responses showed a strong level of engagement with the data which enabled them to examine context and language use closely.

There was a tendency towards description and feature spotting in lower level responses, with some candidates struggling to move beyond an observational approach in their answers. References to issues and concepts were made but they were often undeveloped and loosely applied, with few responses showing simple regurgitation of popular theories.

Contextual factors were significant in enabling candidates to understand how George's spoken language had progressed but there was often a lack of reference to these in the lower levels. Some candidates expected to see development and progress within the transcript and commented on the lack of this in their responses and some went as far as identifying progression from the holophrastic stage through to the post-telegraphic stage.

Virtuous errors and scaffolding were routinely mentioned at this level but lacked the depth of discussion and integration of appropriate exemplification to reach higher levels. This was also seen in the use of the IPA. Candidates are provided with a copy of an English Phonemic Reference sheet in the source booklet but responses at the lower levels did not make good use of this. Some candidates identified phonological variation and assumed that it was non-standard which was not the case in all instances. They did not however, move beyond this to explain reasons for non-standard variation.

Higher level responses did make good use of phonology and were able to identify patterns in George's spoken language such as the regularisation of the verb 'digged' and the irregularity of the noun 'waters'. They accurately linked this to Chomsky and nativist ideas and even used this to refute other theories including behaviourism. This ability to challenge and refute theories made the responses discriminating and moved them higher up in the levels. Many of the candidates made meaningful and pertinent comments on the role of the parents and linked this to Child Directed Speech (although a number of candidates used the out-dated alternative motherese/fatherese). There was a clear link to the data and responses at the higher levels, which showed assured and confident understanding of concepts and issues.

This extract comes from a response which was placed at the top of level 4. It did make some discriminating points but it was not sustained enough to be placed in level 5.

2 Analyse the ways in the passage that George shows his development of language and the influences on it.

You should refer to the following language frameworks and levels as appropriate:

- phonology
- morphology
- lexis
- syntax
- discourse.

(30)

In Text B, George shows his development of language, and the influences on it, through his use of language in a conversation with his parents. One way he does this is by saying 'dig up (.) digged up them'. By correcting himself and adding the '-ed' suffix to 'dig', George shows that he is able to understand and use the past tense, and, in doing so, maintains the integrity of his statement, the rest of which ~~he~~ employs past tense, such as 'buried'. This self-correction, which restores conversational flow, is supportive of Chomsky's theory of nativism and the innate L.A.D, which here enables George to regulate his own speech by using familiar rules.

Another instance in which George's linguistic

development is apparent is his treatment of his father's questioning 'where were they trapped?' as an interjection. By then ignoring him and pursuing his own conversational trajectory, George distorts the discussion's flow, and flouts politeness rules such as turn-taking in favour of relating his knowledge on fossils. Paradoxically, this earns him praise from his mother: 'that's really good'. This provides reason towards George's lapse in politeness which he maintains throughout the text. The favourable reaction from his mother is motivational, and therefore acts as positive reinforcement conditioning George to prize information retrieval over politeness, explaining his actions. This supports Skinner's theory on positive reinforcement's role in language development, and, likewise, challenges child-directed-speech, or, 'fatherese', including questioning, as defined by Bruner, as a method of supporting the development of language in children.

George additionally displays language development in his combined use of morphology and phonology. George simplifies the words 'because', 'of', and 'tomato' to 'KDZ','ə', and 'matəʊ', respectively. His replacement of 'of' with a single vowel, omission of 'tomato''s first syllable, and deletion of the ~~see~~ first syllable in 'because', transforming it into a monosyllable, are demonstrative of his ~~and~~ ~~it~~ ~~eve~~ necesity to manipulate the morphological nature of words to accomodate his capability of articulation, which, at age four, will still be developing.

This response adopted a clear and sophisticated written style which included consistent and relevant examples from the given data. The structure of the response was confident with effective transitions between language analysis and frameworks. It did not adopt a typical structure insofar as commenting logically on each language framework but instead it identified significant features from the transcript and integrated other relevant features alongside.

In the first paragraph the candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of syntax, showing awareness of patterns in George's language and supports this discussion with appropriate discussion of theory. This is followed by another strong paragraph on discourse in which the candidate confidently examines turn-taking and George's rejection of his father's corrections. Few candidates acknowledged politeness strategies in their responses so the accuracy and insightfulness in this response made it stand out. It discriminates theories and uses them to challenge and refute ideas. This level of analysis is typical of top level 4 and level 5 answers.

This response also made use of IPA, however, had the candidate discussed this in more detail to acknowledge variation from the standard they would have provided further evidence for level 5. One of the limitations of this response is the candidate's expectation to see progress within the transcript. This is not relevant here as it was a single transcript.

Level 4 - 24 marks

Use the more accurate terminology of 'Child Directed Speech' rather than the outdate terms 'motherese and fatherese'.

Spotting patterns across the data will enable you to effectively examine what the child can and cannot do. Identifying the levels of consistency will enable you to accurately place the child in the appropriate stage of development and add a further level of accuracy to your response.

Always support language feature analysis with references to context and issues and concepts.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates should ensure they effectively shape their language analysis to meet the requirements of the chosen format in Q1.

- Candidates need to adopt an appropriate style and register to engage their identified audience

- They need to understand the importance of covering language frameworks in Q1 (as well as Q2) to support and underpin their application of issues and concept relevant to language use.

- Candidates should make use of the English phonemic reference sheet provided in the source booklet to show discriminating knowledge and understanding of phonological variation to achieve higher levels in the mark scheme.

- Avoid 'feature spotting' by always relating language features to context and an issue or concept.

- It is often relevant for candidates to comment on what a child can do successfully as well as the areas the child finds difficult. In doing so, candidates should explain what the child does when faced with such areas of difficulty.

- Candidates are encouraged to explore theorists other than Kroll and Barclay when analysing written language development and avoid a deficit application.

- Candidates should manage their time effectively to ensure they answer both questions.

- Candidates should be aware of their own language use with regards to spelling and capital letters etc and to avoid the use of colloquial language in order to achieve higher marks in AO1.

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