Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2017

Pearson Edexcel IAL
In English Language (WEN02)
Unit 2: Language in Transition

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide centres with an insight into the assessment process and give an overview of how candidates approached each question.
There was an improvement with candidate's approach demonstrating a better knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the question however, there is a lack of responses demonstrating the critical and evaluative application required for top level marks. There were still some candidates who were unprepared for the standard of the examination evident by the lack of content within responses, applying a descriptive approach or writing brief responses which did not attempt to cover all aspects of the question.

Centres should provide candidates with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the content and format of the examination paper, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of the requirements of each question before the exam.

It is recommended that candidates should read through both questions, as well as the extracts in the source booklet, before beginning their written response. This will allow them to gain an understanding of the discussion points within the paper and note connections across the texts before they begin. There was evidence that candidates did this in this series and it impacted on their response.

The paper is divided into two sections providing an opportunity for a comparative analysis in Section A and a discussion based essay in Section B. Candidates are invited to analyse three texts representative of the spoken and written modes of language. Each section contains one question worth 25 marks each. Candidates must answer both questions.

Section A: Spoken Language Today This section provides an unseen piece of spoken language from the 21st century which is a variety of English. Question 1 engages candidates in an analysis of the development of this variety in relation to Standard English. In this series the spoken language was an example of English spoken in Scotland.
Section B: Written Language of the 19th -21st Century
Candidates answer one discussion question on two written texts in the Source Booklet that look at the issue raised in Section A from a wider perspective. This series, the two extracts were examples of newspaper articles about recent developments affecting the Scottish accent and dialect. Candidates were asked to discuss how English in Scotland reflect the changes to and development of English across the world.

Section A

Most candidates made a reasonable attempt to engage fully with the task, and there were a range of responses that made use of the bullet points as a scaffold addressing the different language levels. These allowed candidates to structure their response and engage in a systematic analysis of the text. Less successful responses, tended to list examples without much exploration or an attempt to link form and function within the context of the data. Some feature spotting approaches descended into providing a bullet point approach in itself by literally listing examples of features. This approach restricted achievement to the lower levels. Some candidates also limited themselves by focusing only on phonology or lexis which meant their response was hampered by a lack of range.

No marks were awarded at level 5 as an 'evaluative response' was not achieved. Level 4 responses covered a range features including grammar, phonology, lexis, used terminology and discussed theories such as Accommodation Theory and overt/covert prestige. Candidates looked to deepen and explore connections between the data and standard forms of English, making relevant and discriminating selection of source material. Points were supported with lots of examples from the text and made links to the discourse and development of English.

Level 3 candidates tended to lack the range of features in their analysis which is required for the higher bands and may have limited discussion on theories or discourse. Some middle to higher level candidates structured their answers clearly and coherently and used a step by step approach to discussing language features. They successfully analysed the data with this overview in the process but missed some opportunities to explore further on cultural contexts where connections across Standard English and the data could have been made in more depth.

Overall, candidates are demonstrating an uncertainty of how to analyse accent leading to a descriptive approach. This can often be a weakness within a strong response as candidates are simply stating the different sound or writing the standard English version with an accompanying comment stating the standard version as correct. Describing the accent differences shows general understanding but to access higher marks candidates need to demonstrate knowledge of the production of sounds, explore links to language development, social attitudes or link to contextual factors.

Weaker candidates tended to feature spot and describe what was there particularly with phonology and lexis. Some terminology was mentioned such as word class or phonology linking one or two

features to American culture or Scotland such as 'Gonna' or 'wee'. They identified general differences, attempted some exploration such as identifying that Limmy does not adapt his accent for the audience.

Candidates awarded at level 1 and lower band 2 described and paraphrased what was there and simply stated a feature as nonstandard or incorrect/wrong. They also showed evidence of not understanding the question and engaging in analysis of discourse with no focus on language or the data.

Section B

There was a wide range of approaches to this question with some candidates focusing on one bullet point to develop the answer. Some lower to middle level scripts were characterised by the need to explain (and to some extent explore) the differences between a 'correct' use of English and that which the data presented. Often candidates presented the given examples of syntax as incorrect and then sought to provide correct alternatives. Candidates are reminded to avoid labelling non-standard forms as incorrect as it can lead to a judgemental analysis of the language.

Level 4 marks focused on all bullet points, referred to the source texts, applied theories and built their answer around the development of Global English with reference to features present in Scottish. Strong responses were detailed using terminology and could explain the influence of Scots dialects, within English, identify features of Scottish within speech and how the language varies, linking to accommodation theory and covert/overt prestige as well. Level 3 responses addressed all three bullet points but may have focused on one for discussion which limited their answer. Some candidates made excellent points using their own examples of language but digressed from the source material to an extent their relevance to the question was impacted. Candidates are reminded that they can address other examples of language features in global varieties that are similar to those in the sources but their points must link to the data.
In some cases there was a neglect of all of the texts and a focus on one or two at the expense of others.

Level 1 and low level 2 responses applied a general analysis but recognised how exposure to other varieties of English via the media affects language as evidenced in the data. They addressed one or two bullet points in little detail such as education and business as factors in the spread of English. Weaker answers were brief with a focus on non-standard varieties being wrong and explaining the spread of English in general terms.

Paper Summary

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

- Employ effective time management in the examination to ensure that appropriate time is spent on each question in relation to the assessment objectives.
- Read all three sets of data before attempting the question to gain an understanding of the discussion points across the paper.
- Apply language theories to your discussion.
- When analysing phonology consider how the sounds differ in their production and link to development.
- Use terminology throughout your response.
- Ensure you refer to the sources in both questions and support your points with evidence from the texts.
- Use the term 'non-standard' rather than 'incorrect' when referring to varieties on English.
- In Q2 consider all three texts in your discussion. Do not limit your response to one set of data or to one discussion point.
- Use the bullet points as a scaffold when writing your response to make sure all parts of the question are addressed and you have the opportunity to achieve full marks.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx