Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel IAL

In English Language (WEN03)

Unit 2: Crafting Language (writing)

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Introduction

The source booklet consisted of three texts concerning mobile phones, taken from a range of sources, and many candidates engaged with the task of using them to produce an article exploring the technological and social developments of mobile telephone communications. Question 1 prompted a variety of valid approaches to the task and some enjoyable pieces of writing that demonstrated creativity and understanding of audience, purpose and context. However, for some responses fluency and accuracy of expression limited achievement, although their content was quite engaging.

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 webpage 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.

On the whole, candidates found Section B more of a challenge but it did appear that the majority had timed their responses appropriately, allowing enough time to aim for the higher marks available in Section B. For many candidates, achievement was considerably higher for the writing task than the accompanying commentary, although there were some who managed to boost their mark with a well-judged and accurate commentary despite a less successful creative piece.

Overall, candidates produced work which was engaging and lively, showing how well centres had prepared them for the exam and demonstrating the ability of many students to write both creatively and analytically.

Section A

At all levels, candidates showed the ability to write with engagement, flair and humour, but where they showed a more subtle understanding of audience, purpose and context, achievement was much higher. Where students had identified a more specific audience, purpose and context for their article and then adapted their language in an appropriate way, they were able to transform the material in the source texts convincingly. However, the majority of responses were aimed at a teenage or young adult audience, with credible but often self-limiting results in terms of content and sophistication. This is an area where centres may be able to work with candidates to develop more of a range in register, tone and style so they have the confidence to attempt writing for more challenging target audiences.

In the same way, some more detailed study of specific genre conventions would help candidates to include appropriate structure and features appropriate to the given task, particularly for journalism. Few candidates produced new texts with the distinctive structure or features of an article, and in many cases their texts seemed more like a blog or web page.

Careful selection of material from the source texts and assimilation into a well-structured original piece of writing also resulted in more successful responses. The best responses subtly combined well-chosen information and details from the source texts with original, creative writing. These candidates clearly planned their responses

and had considered their structure and organisation carefully as a key element of the new text. Less successful candidates were more likely to follow the same order and structure of the source texts, trying to include all of the original information in the original order.

Many candidates were able to include a wide range of appropriate anecdotes and information from their own experience and knowledge of technology, which helped to create engaging and entertaining pieces. Unfortunately, at times this was at the expense of using the full range of relevant content available from the source texts, with many candidates including only information from Texts A and B with little consideration of the future developments explored in Text C. This could mean that they were left with quite limited content on which to base their own writing, other than personal opinion.

Section B

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. Writing over-long responses for Section A can limit the time available to produce a meaningful response for Section B.

Most candidates were able to make comments on audience, purpose and context and link these to register and tone, even if the links to specific effects and choices were not always fully realised. At the lower levels, exemplification was more limited and responses included more generalised comments without specific reference to the writing in Section A. The best commentaries contained consistent use of evidence in the form of examples from the article and the source texts to illustrate every point and made consistent links between context, audience and purpose and the choices they made within their own writing.

Candidates at the higher levels were also able to describe the evidence they provided using relevant terminology. 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 can continue to develop their candidates' knowledge.

Less successful responses tended to place significant focus on description of content and where different information was extracted from the source texts, with little attempt to link these ideas clearly to context or techniques. There were some candidates who did not seem to a have a basic comprehension of the commentary form and wrote about the source material instead.

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 they were able to use their own knowledge of mobile technology and the effect of technological developments on society, family and culture. Where time was managed well, 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 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 audience, purpose and context will enable 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

- Decide on a specific audience, purpose and context for your writing and try to adopt an appropriate register, tone and language techniques
- Make sure that your chosen audience is appropriate for the given task and will give you the opportunity to demonstrate the full range of your writing skills
- Read widely and study a variety of writing genres, so that you can use different conventions, features and forms with confidence
- Be selective with the material you use from the source texts, choosing a range of information from across the texts and combining it with your own original writing
- Plan your response, paying close attention to structure and organisation; you do not have to follow the same structure as the source material.

Section B

- 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 responses and make sure you leave enough time for Section B
- Develop a flexible "toolkit" of frameworks that can be applied to a variety of texts and techniques, along with a range of linguistic terminology, rather than relying on prescriptive mnemonics or lists of features, as this can lead to "feature spotting"
- Always supports your points with examples from your writing or from the source texts, as appropriate
- Link discussion of language features to audience, purpose and context; explain why the language used was appropriate.