Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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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.

In this series some candidates performed well, engaged positively with the texts and produced some developed and analytical responses. There was an improvement with candidate's approach, particularly in section A, demonstrating a better knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the question, and confident use of terminology. There were still a few 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.

It is recommended centres 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. Exemplar materials and accompanying commentaries of the previous series are available on the Edexcel website and give valuable insight into the marks awarded at each level and the standard required.

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.

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 African American Vernacular English (AAVE) with origins of an African dialect called Gullah.

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 featured were an African folk tale in the Gullah dialect and an online article about the development and widespread use of slang words in African American English. Candidates were asked to discuss how AAVE reflect the changes to and development of English across the world.

Section A

Candidates performed well on this question demonstrating a confident and consistent use of terminology to illustrate their points. This was an improvement from previous series whereby terminology tended to be absent amongst the lower levels but is now featured amongst the majority of responses.
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. The majority of candidates commented on the full range of language levels showing an understanding of the question requirements and made attempts to apply theories. A strong knowledge of grammatical features was demonstrated along with an improvement of phonetical analysis encompassing the production of sounds.

Top level 4 and 5 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 some depth.

Weaker candidates tended to feature spot and describe what was there particularly with phonology. Some candidates expanded on this mentioning terminology such as phonemes and were able to link one or two features to American culture or such as 'Mac and Cheese' or 'Thanksgiving'. Explanations of how the language differed from Standard English and recognising Caroline's attempt to preserve her dialect linking to attitudes towards English allowed marks awarded in level 2 demonstrating general understanding. Some candidates also limited themselves by focusing only on phonology or lexis which meant their response was hampered by a lack of range.
Candidates awarded at level 1 and lower band 2 described and paraphrased what was there and identified the language as non-standard.

Section B

There continues to be a wide range of approaches to this question with varying degrees of success. Despite some strong responses, overall candidates performed less successfully on this question when compared to question one. Positives were that there was more reference to the data than in previous series, with candidates recognising the need to source examples from the texts to support their points. It is important that candidates continue to do this with the aim of identifying connections across the sources that demonstrate language evolving and transitioning. Some candidates were able to identify the phonetic representation of the Gullah accent in Text B and link it to the accent of the speaker in Text A to discuss the development of AAVE.

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. This approach also extended into elements of discussing Received Pronunciation as well as fluency for the spoken data, and in some cases suggestions of 'better' vocabulary. Candidates are reminded to avoid labelling non-standard forms as incorrect as it can lead to a judgemental analysis of the language.

Some lower level responses discussed how the texts represented discrimination and racism digressing from a focus on language and becoming an essay history of slavery.

Level 4 marks focused on all the bullet points in their discussion, referred to the source texts, applied theories and structured their answer around development of AAVE. Strong responses were detailed, used terminology, identified influences of other languages and discussed Accommodation Theory linking to AAVE diverging from Standard English to preserve cultural heritage and forming sociolects. Some responses also addressed Covert Prestige in Text C and identified the role of International English within media and used by celebrity. Level 3 responses may have addressed all three bullet points but focused more on one which limited them.

In some cases, there was a neglect of all of the texts and a focus on one or two at the expense of others.

Across both questions, candidates conveyed confidence when analysing an English with links to an African creole showing a strength in this topic. Interestingly, despite a significant increase in terminology in question one this was not reflected in question two. Candidates should use terminology where possible when illustrating their points as it meets the criteria for the assessment objective of describing construction in meaning and will show sophistication within their written expression.

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.
- Use terminology throughout your response in both questions.
- 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.