Examiner's Report
Pricinpal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel IAL

In English Language (WEN03)

Unit 3: Crafting Language (Writing)

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Introduction

The source booklet consisted of four texts relating to The Academy Awards taken from a range of sources, and most candidates seemed to engage with the task of producing a short feature article for a website about The Oscars. Section A prompted a wide variety of valid approaches to the task and a number of enjoyable pieces of writing that demonstrated creativity and understanding of the genre. There were very few responses that did not manage to produce a convincing article at all, even if those at the lower levels lacked the subtle reworking of the material and more nuanced understanding of audience, purpose and context found at the higher levels.

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 article 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.

Many candidates still find Section B more of a challenge than Section A, although it appeared that most are now timing their responses more carefully to allow enough time for the thirty mark commentary.

Overall, candidates produced work which was engaging and, in some cases, perceptive, showing how well centres had prepared them for the exam and demonstrating the ability of those candidates to write both creatively and analytically.

Section A

At all levels, candidates showed the ability to write with engagement and flair, but where they showed a more subtle understanding of audience, purpose and context, achievement was much higher. This is an area where centres can continue to work on their candidates' understanding, as this will aid achievement for this task and for the commentary. Where candidates 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. At the lower levels, there was little change in register and tone in the new text from those of the source material, which tended to result in less realistic articles where the style of writing changed several times throughout, as in the various source texts.

The majority of candidates had elected to write for a general teenage or young adult audience which, as noted in previous sessions, can produce convincing but self-limiting results in terms of content and sophistication. Candidates are advised to consider other specific aspects of the audience for which they are writing. For example, in this task the most successful responses showed consideration of whether the readers were keen movie fans or a less expert audience. 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 and specific target audiences.

Similarly, some candidates were able to target a specific publication or website with convincing results, and those who selected a clear purpose for their writing were more successful. The source materials presented many appropriate options for the main focus of the article, such as a factual informative piece on the history of the Oscars or an opinion article on the lack of diversity in the industry. Where candidates had a clear focus for their writing their register, tone and style were much more convincing and the selection of material from the source more appropriate.

Careful selection of material from the source texts and assimilation into a well-structured original piece of writing 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 four source texts, trying to include all of the original information in the original order.

In this respect, significant direct "lifting" from the source texts, even with some attempt to reframe or paraphrase the material, is not a productive approach to this question. Inevitably, the writing can lack originality and flair and the responses can be quite long, as candidates struggle to be selective with the information, instead reworking each text in turn. This can also have an effect on the level of achievement in the commentary as the candidates inevitably run out of time.

Many candidates included a range of appropriate anecdotes and information from their own experiences and knowledge of the film industry; many were particularly interested in Slumdog Millionaire and Moonlight and commented on these films and their stars to good effect. In some cases this was at the expense of using the full range of content available from the source texts. The source material gave the option for a range of different approaches to the task and there were some excellent responses that had a clear topic focus and judicious selection of that material, for example a focus on modern issues of representation within the film industry in the light of its history. However, purely discursive pieces based almost entirely on the candidate's own view were self-limiting and did not fully address the task.

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. For some candidates, writing over-long responses for Section A limited the time available to produce a meaningful response for Section B.

Most candidates were able to make some comments on audience, purpose and context and link these to register and tone, even if the links to specific effects and choices are not always fully realised. However, this is an area where candidates at all levels could achieve better results in their commentaries, by establishing a much more specific sense

of genre, audience and purpose when writing their creative piece for Section A (as detailed in the report on the previous section). This would enable candidates to make more discriminating links between context and the shaping of meaning, and they would find a wider range of issues to discuss in their commentaries.

At the lower levels, exemplification was limited and candidates tended to make generalised comments without specific reference to their writing. The best commentaries contained consistent use of evidence in the form of examples from their article 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. "Feature spotting" occurred more frequently in lower level responses, particularly where linguistic understanding was limited to the labelling of word classes with little further explanation of how these words created meaning. 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.

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, with candidates making use of the details within the source materials as well as using their own knowledge of favourite movies or the film industries in the US and around the world. Many candidates had clearly enjoyed the topic and showed confidence when writing an article for a website. Where candidates managed their time well and had a clear sense of audience, purpose and context, 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 a specific 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

- Take the time to decide on a specific audience, purpose and context before you start writing and try to adopt an appropriate register, tone and language techniques.
- Be selective with the material you use from the source texts, 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.

- 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 response and make sure you leave enough time for Section B.

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.
- Link technical features to audience, purpose and context; explain why the language used was appropriate and be as specific as you can.