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# **Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback**

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel IAL  
In English Language (WEN04)  
Unit 4: Investigating Language

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to provide centres with an overview of the performance of the June 2018 paper.

This paper offers a choice of four topic areas focusing on global language, child language, language and power and language and technology. The pre-release material was available to centres via the Pearson website in January 2018, enabling candidates time to research their chosen sub topic in preparation for the exam on 8<sup>th</sup> June.

The sub-topics for the June series were:

1. Jamaican English
2. nursery rhymes
3. political speeches
4. instant messaging.

The paper addresses four of the Assessment Objectives:

- 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.
- AO3 Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning.
- AO4 Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods.

It is recommended that 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 source material for Section A, before beginning their written response. This will allow them to gain an understanding of the focus of the task and with regards Section B, the perspective for discussion.

It appeared that all candidates were able to manage their time effectively across the paper ensuring that they answered both questions fully. Section A (questions 1 – 4) is marked out of 20 and Section B (questions 5 – 8) is marked out of 30. The time spent and length of response for Section B should be longer than Section A as reflected in a higher number of marks and the requirement to include research completed by the candidate within their response. All candidates answered the corresponding questions for Sections A and B this series.

The most popular choice was Question 2 and its corresponding question in Section B, Question 6 - Child language (nursery rhymes). The remaining questions were as follows:

Second popular - Q3/7. Language and power (political speeches)

Third popular - Q4/8. Language and technology (instant messaging) – 19 entries

Least popular - Q1/5. Global language (Jamaican English)

A range of responses were seen across the four topics and a few warranted marks within a level 5. The paper appeared to have performed well with no queries raised by centres.

## **Section A.**

### **Question 1.**

For Question 1, candidates were asked to analyse a transcript of a 17-year-old woman of African-Jamaican ethnicity, who was born in Kingston Jamaica. Candidates were required to focus on the language frameworks, the context behind the transcript and to introduce relevant theories and concepts to explore the language of Jamaican speakers of English.

Candidates achieving marks in the higher levels of the mark scheme used the language framework to analyse the transcript and the way the speaker demonstrated features of Jamaican English together with *'examples of patois: mi ne naa guu'*. The use of data was clear and accurate and there were very few lapses in clarity and transitioning between points made. The majority of points were supported by close exemplification and the discussion ranged throughout the data. With regards to the analysis of Jamaican English, most of the responses seen at this level explored the morphological nature of the speaker's language as a result of historical influences on Jamaican English, the speaker's sociocultural influences and the lexical choices and phonological features that identified her as a young Jamaican woman.

At the lower end of the mark range for Question 1, candidates generally resorted to a descriptive approach when exploring what the data provided and any examples selected were unassimilated and at times paraphrased: *'in the transcript she uses Creole to show she can speak it'* or the response was heavily focused on the historical background of Jamaican English and how it originated. Terminology was infrequently or incorrectly applied to the data and when used was purely for feature-spotting purposes. Many responses lacked reference to context and how it linked to the construction of meaning within the transcript.

### **Question 2.**

For Question 2, candidates were asked to analyse three nursery rhymes: Hickory dickory dock, If you're happy and you know it and Old MacDonald had a farm and to discuss to what extent the language form and structure supported child language development.

The more able candidates showed succinct and controlled methods of integrating their knowledge of the historical development of nursery rhymes and the contextual and social factors associated with singing and reciting nursery rhymes. Some responses were still a little heavy on theory at the expense of language analysis, however it was obvious that centres had prepared their students well this year as there was a noticeable attempt to analyse language. All three nursery rhymes were equally discussed and examples were on the whole discriminating.

Responses at the lower end of the mark range tended to retell the story within each nursery rhyme and a history of their origins, whilst making general observations about how nursery rhymes can support learning: *'helps children interact with other people'*. There was a lack of links made to the language framework and minimal use of terminology to explore the data. Many responses just provided a general explanation of different language concepts and theories rather than using them to evaluate the data.

### **Question 3**

For Question 3, candidates were asked to analyse the rhetoric used in an edited speech by Ban Ki-moon, the eighth Secretary General of the United Nations, at the closing session of the 13<sup>th</sup> Force Commanders and Heads of Military Components Conference in 2015.

Question 3 responses at the higher level included a balanced discussion into how Ban Ki-moon engaged with his audience and presented his particular point of view. Many candidates used the theories of Fairclough and synthetic personalisation to explore the extract and this was generally applied effectively: *'the repeated use of the personal pronoun 'we' synthetically personalises Ban Ki-moon's speech...'*. Specific focus was made to key word classes and linguistic features within the data.

Less successful responses gave a general overview of political speeches and the ways politicians use rhetoric to engage and persuade their audience. Many responses provided a general overview of the extract: *'He is speaking at the UN'*. There was minimal use of terminology and when it was used it was not always supported with exemplification from the data. Any contextual exploration was also fairly descriptive or general: *'the use of the pronoun 'we' makes everyone feel included'*.

### **Question 4.**

For Question 4, candidates were asked to analyse the features of online instant messaging. The extract was taken from a WhatsApp chat between a brother and sister, James and Amy, and Amy's friend, Kate who are all in their early 20s.

Question 4 was more popular than last year possibly due to the nature of the topic. Responses at a higher level generally opened with a brief summary of the evolution of IM and how it is *'particularly popular with younger members of society'*. Although many responses explored the use of graphology in detail – the use of emoticons, capitalisation and boldening to reflect emotions and expressions - there was still a wide range of language and syntactical features analysed.

Responses for Question 4 within the lower level of the mark scheme tended to retell what was happening in the WhatsApp transcript and how the speakers were young people. Use of terminology was simple, at times incorrect and generally seen in the form of feature spotting without any developed analysis. *'Emoticons are used to show emotions'*. *'words are extended NOOOO! To show they are shouting'*. Contextual discussion was limited and there was virtually no mention made to concepts.

### **Section B**

Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 required the candidates to use their wider research to discuss the statements given in the question. Each question enabled the candidates to build an argument for or against the statement and to support their ideas with evidence and concepts from their wider research.

### **Question 5**

The question posed the statement: 'The languages of Jamaica reflect the country's diverse history and culture.' Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Higher level responses explored the historical and cultural changes that have occurred within Jamaica and the evolution of Jamaican English. One discriminating candidate used Jean

Aitchisons' metaphorical models to describe Aitchisons' prescriptivist views when exploring the languages spoken in Jamaica. Inferences were made to the construction of meaning and it was obvious that candidates at this level had completed wider research and investigations rather than relying solely on the data from Section A.

Less focused responses for Question 5, generally retold the history of Jamaican English and how it is seen as a *'second-class language by many Jamaicans'*. Some very general comments were also made: *'creole was a mixture of different languages spoken by the slaves on the plantation'*. There was very little evidence of own research and many candidates did not mention the data from Section A.

### **Question 6.**

The question posed the statement: 'Singing nursery rhymes with young children can boost their language development.' Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

With regards Question 6, it was obvious that many candidates had enjoyed this topic and spent time researching the history of nursery rhymes and how at times they linked with historical events. A number of candidates had also spent time in pre-schools and primary schools interviewing teachers and listening to children singing nursery rhymes within lessons. Evidence that was collected was well integrated within responses and used to establish an argument. This made for some very interesting debates.

Candidate responses at the lower end of the mark range generally retold everything they knew about child language developmental theories: *'Chomsky states... behaviourism is when'*, without any discussion or reference to data either from their own research or from Section A. Many candidates spent a lot of their response discussing the impact and use of rhyming in nursery rhymes and how *'singing nursery rhymes with adults helps social interaction'*, rather than covering the rest of the language framework.

### **Question 7.**

The question posed the statement: 'Political leaders have relied on spoken rhetoric to manipulate their audience'. Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

A number of discriminating responses were seen for Question 7, which reflected the diverse range of research that had been carried out by candidates. Examples of political speakers included: William Churchill, Hitler, Ghandi, Boris Johnson, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton and well-chosen features of their rhetoric were analysed.

Candidates at a lower level for Question 7 provided a general overview of political speeches and the type of features that are used: *'politicians use repetition to show how serious the topic is'*. There was a lack of argument or debate established and many candidates relied on examples from Section A rather than showing evidence of wider research.

### **Question 8.**

The question posed the statement: 'Speakers communicate differently via online instant messaging compared to face-to-face conversations.' Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Unfortunately, there were very few high achieving responses for Question 8 as most tended to become historical essays on the development of instant messaging and social media and relied heavily on the data from Section A rather than integrating data from own research. There was also a lack of debate or argument being established by the candidates, which would be expected at this level.

The majority of lower level responses for Question 8 lacked the application of concepts or theories and tended to be more of an essay on the history of social media, with limited discussion of language or exploration into the unique characteristics of instant messaging. Very little discussion stemmed from the statement given.

### **Paper Summary**

Based on their performance on this paper, I would like to offer the following advice to candidates:

- ensure you employ effective time management in the examination to ensure that appropriate time is spent on Section A and B in relation to the number of marks awarded
- read all the source data carefully before attempting the questions in Section A
- support each point you make with evidence from the source material in Section A and your wider research in Section B
- adopt an appropriate formal register and style when writing both essays
- make sure you cover the language framework when analysing the data in both Section A and B
- support your discussion with appropriate theories, concepts and contextual features
- avoid feature spotting by always relating back to the language features
- create a discussion/debate for Section B, giving your own opinion in response to the statement
- use theoretical discussion to explore and challenge/support your findings rather than including everything you can remember about a particular theory/theorist.