Examiners' Report
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IAL English Language WEN02 01

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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. It is likely that some candidates had experienced disruption to their learning due to the impact of the pandemic enforcing school closures and a move to distance learning in 2021.

Candidates performed well, engaged positively with the data and demonstrated their subject knowledge in their responses. Candidates' approach to their analysis demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of each question. Overall, the majority of the candidates scored within level 2 and 3 with a minority achieving marks in levels 4 and 5.

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.

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.

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 Nigerian English.

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. For this series, the two extracts featured were an extract from an online article discussing the admission of Nigerian words into the Oxford English Dictionary and an extract from a book.

Question 1

Candidates continued to perform well on this question demonstrating confident and consistent use of terminology to illustrate their points. The majority of candidates commented on the full range of language levels showing an understanding of the question requirements and made attempts to apply some theories.

Overall, candidates performed stronger on question one than question two. There were a few top band responses and candidates engaged well with the texts. At the lower end there were some responses which were written in note form where a limited amount of marks could only be awarded for features identified as there was no wider exploration of the data. Also, a number of responses did not answer the question but produced a general linguistic analysis instead of focusing on contextual factors such as mode, function and audience relating to the speaker rather than Nigerian English. There was some good attempts at applying theories related to global English with reference to Kachru's Circle as well as Accommodation Theory and Overt/Covert prestige linking to identity. However, sometimes the use of theory was not strong and was anecdotal rather than analytical.

Candidates scoring within the higher levels covered a range of features using sophisticated terminology and explanations of non-standard features linking to Standard English and other varieties of English. They explored the phonological variation including points regarding non-rhoticity. They provided lots of examples and made links to discourse and contextual factors. In comparison level 2 and level 3 candidates tended to lack the range of features required for the higher bands with limited theoretical application. Level 2 candidates were able to identify the phonological variations and discussed lexical features that were influenced by American Culture as well as Nigerian. Level 3 candidates moved beyond these features to explain grammatical constructions such as non-standard verb tenses and other non-standard features linking to dialects, Creole varieties, and discussing divergence from standard forms.

This candidate scored in top level 3.

The use of th-stopping in the text, where the fricative interdental sound /θ/ has been replaced with the alveolar sound /t/ and its 'thick' is pronounced as 'tik' {"... that Nigerian thick /tik/ accent..."} This is common in Nigerian English and th-stopping is a feature of other varieties of English such as the Jamaican Creole, African American Vernacular English.

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Examiner Comments

This candidate has identified the phonemes when discussing accent features which allows them to score marks in AO1. Many candidates in lower levels tend to describe what they see and make general statements such as 'they have replaced "th" with "t"' and miss the opportunity to demonstrate their phonetic knowledge.

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Examiner Tip

Make sure you use terminology when describing phonetic variation and link to other varieties that may have the same feature.

Question 2

Candidates are expected to refer to all three data sets to answer this question and the majority of candidates did refer to all three sources to provide a discussion regarding the development of Nigerian English. Overall, the candidates performed well although this question was not answered as well as question one.

As with Section A there were some weak responses which were awarded in level 1 and low level 2 whereby the candidates employed a largely descriptive approach. This involved detailing the contents of the extracts and not engaging in any analysis or highlighting any features. Many level 2 responses focused on the development of global English but with no or few links to the text and some responses only wrote about Text A. Many did answer the question but produced either a description or general analysis of each text. There were a few top band responses and many of the mid-level responses were good in that they systematically analysed and compared, linking the texts to global English. Some candidates used appropriate theory but overall this was not strong.

Scores within the upper levels focused on all the bullet points, referred to the source texts, showed knowledge of the Creole continuum and substrate/superstrate languages, and built their answer around the development of Global English with reference to the features present within Nigerian English. Top marks were detailed using terminology and could explain the influence of Nigerian English and link features of the accent and dialect between Text A's speaker and Text C's novel. There were some perceptive comments with reference to Text A and B regarding cultural identity, Nigerian influence on English and the stigmatisation of non-standard varieties linking to accommodation theory or Jean Aitchison's language change. Some candidates also showed an understanding of the events which impacted the spread of English such as immigration and colonisation.

Middle level responses tended to address all three bullet points but focused too much on one which limited their response. Some also made excellent points using their own examples of language but at times lapsed into description of the sources making their response uneven. Upper level 2 responses applied a general analysis recognising how varieties of English have spread making links to media and technology. They tended to address one or two bullet points in little detail.

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 to both questions.
- Ensure you refer to the sources in both questions and support your points with evidence from the texts.
- In Q2 consider all three texts in your discussion. Do not limit your response to one set of data or to one discussion point.
- In Q2 do not summarise and copy large sections of the data. Candidates are required to reference it and identify the transition the language makes with examples.
- Use the bullet points as a scaffold when writing your response to make sure all parts of the questions are addressed and you have the opportunity to achieve full marks.

Grade boundaries

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