

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 9093/11

Passages

## Key messages

- The best preparation is wide reading across a range of material from a range of diverse sources.
- Good answers comment on how a particular extract is structured in the way that it unfolds and develops in terms of subject, mood and tone.
- Good answers move beyond identifying essential aspects of language and style such as personification, alliteration and punctuation to discuss the effects of such features.
- Candidates who write precisely and economically, maintaining a close focus upon style and tone, are those who tend to achieve the best results.

## General Comments

The passages for this series contained a wide range of styles, settings and linguistic features. These proved to be accessible and, to different degrees, engaging for the candidates. The rubric was generally well understood and obeyed, with only a few candidates mistakenly failing to attempt the first question on the paper. Similarly, there seemed to be fewer directed writing responses which significantly exceeded the stipulated word boundary.

In the first section of the questions there were some perceptive and highly effective responses, but also some which were insufficiently focused upon examination of the writer's style and tone. Basic responses showed simple comprehension by commenting upon the events of the passage. Good answers demonstrated skills of analysis and evaluation and achieved an even coverage of the text. A significant number of answers devoted full and sometimes superfluous attention to the opening paragraphs of the text but then failed to properly examine the remainder.

Some answers in the middle range often suggested a good understanding of the passage but didn't give sufficiently precise attention to the effects of language choice. An assertion that a figure of speech "helps the reader stay interested" or "stops the passage being monotonous" can't be considered informed analysis.

Some responses worked through the passages as if with a check list which at times led to the candidate looking for linguistic features not present in the passages.

Directed writing tasks produced some very perceptive and in many cases, strongly felt responses. Many responses demonstrated a good understanding of the style and tone of the original but there was still an occasional tendency to lift whole phrases or sentences from the original. This is clearly not the object of the task and sets limits on the number of marks that can be given for original material. Directed writing tasks are assessed for their accuracy and candidates must be particularly wary of allowing themselves to wander. This section gives candidates the opportunity to show originality and invention in their writing. When this was also controlled and accurate, the results were impressive.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) There were some perceptive responses to the passage, and those understood the ambivalence of the writer's attitude towards Lagos and the Independence Day celebrations. They also generally recognised the "contradiction between an independence day and the presence of high range

products from colonising powers”. They also largely understood the sardonic nature of the author’s comments on the mixture of God and cologne amongst the Fantasy Land guests. Less good responses were not fully developed and did not give attention to the whole passage, often discussing just the first three paragraphs. The focus of these responses tended to be lost after the passage moved from the traffic jam to the setting of Fantasy Land. The major features of the opening paragraphs were often well understood, especially the feeling of “chaos and commotion” and the paradox of the Mercedes Benz stalled in Lagos traffic. Most candidates also called attention to the irony of the piles of rubbish accumulating in expensive real estate. Relatively few answers made significant language points relating to the final paragraphs, often resorting to simple comments on the content.

- (b) Most candidates responded well to the opportunity of demonstrating their knowledge of home ground. There was often a confidence and energy in the writing of this assignment that was missing in the commentary element. The best responses recognised and reproduced the slightly jaundiced stand point of the original. These responses often managed to portray the convincing mixture of poverty and conspicuous consumption which is such a feature of the original. Although there was general engagement with the task, some candidates made no real attempt to reproduce the tone of the original passage. This sometimes resulted in rather colourless accounts which tended to list events, but without any strong view point or attitude. Responses should always try to demonstrate awareness of tone and style and not merely replicate or slightly adapt the events of the original.

## Question 2

- (a) There were some effective responses to this question with candidates identifying a range of language features and their effects. However, this question was a minority choice and some struggled to develop a comprehensive response. The personification of the cell phone was a feature that was generally recognised but not always fully examined. The use of rhetorical questions was commonly identified but the effects of their use were not often identified. The division of the passage by humorous sub-headings was commented on but the progression of the mock judgment on the phone was not often examined in any detail. Relatively few answers made reference to the penultimate paragraph with its self-critical reference to the “tortuous themed review”. Those which did took it as a useful starting point for discussion on the style and tone of the passage. Stronger responses understood and commented on the mixture of game show language and technical jargon, together with the “self-aware, mocking tone of the narration”. These responses also generally appreciated that although the passage took a humorous approach, it still managed “to make a real critique of the phone’s features and capabilities”.
- (b) There was some lively and engaged writing in response to this question. Candidates seized on the opportunity of personifying the new phone, which was often done with some comic effects. They also often succeeded in echoing the stylised slang of the original with its quirky mix of jargon and game show razzmatazz. Capitalised sub-headings were effectively and sometimes wittily used and the best answers gave a sense of build-up towards the final decision. Less secure answers made only a tentative attempt to replicate the brash tone of the original. In these cases, the language features of the original were very timidly employed or not used at all; the weakest answers borrowed directly from the original. It is worth pointing out that transposing expressions directly from the original passage does not demonstrate an understanding of style and tone.

## Question 3

- (a) This passage produced some very strong responses and the best answers offered perceptive and fully engaged examinations of the writing. Secure answers understood the effectiveness of the crisp paragraphing in making the action seem pervasive and in giving a sense of the rapidity of events. These answers also often wrote well about the way in which the focus of the passage moves from the whole city to a particular family and location. The trashing of the apartment was particularly well handled in several answers. There was perceptive understanding of the contrast between the delicacy of the family’s possessions and the coarse brutality of the troops. Almost all of the secure responses gave some attention to the concluding paragraphs and the foreshadowing effect of “Snow is on the way”. Most responses found some significant language features to comment on, even though these were not fully developed. The repeated mention of the swastikas was generally noted as well as the effective use of rhetorical questions. The prevalence of auditory imagery, from the opening paragraph to the final image of low flying planes, was also generally commented on. This was a passage with a wealth of language features and to make a really

comprehensive response, the candidate had to avoid irrelevance and make points economically. Some responses were concerned with guessing the target audience for the passage; this was not necessary or helpful in examining the language effects.

- (b)** The strongest responses to this task conveyed a sense of events unfinished, with the worst yet to come. These focused upon building a sense of tension and anxiety, which some did very successfully. The sense of the swastika pervading the city was often effectively developed, sometimes with the suggestion of the spreading of a plague. The cryptic ending of the passage was another feature that was often cleverly adapted to convey the uncertainty of the family's future. Most answers sustained the use of the present tense and some used it to convey a sense of urgency and imminent disaster. Less effective answers often tried to stretch the story too far and either exceeded the word limit or produced a featureless and improbable narrative. Candidates should remember that style and tone should not be lost in an attempt to push the story on; the question's instructions stated "you do not need to bring the account to a close". There was also some confusion about who was addressing the reader; there was no reason for the narrative to pass to either Viktor or Emmy.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 9093/12  
Passages

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The passages for this series contained a wide range of styles, settings and linguistic features. These proved to be accessible and, to different degrees, engaging for the candidates. The rubric was generally well understood and obeyed, with only a few candidates mistakenly failing to attempt the first question on the paper. Similarly, there seemed to be fewer directed writing responses which significantly exceeded the stipulated word boundary.

In the first section of the questions there were some perceptive and highly effective responses, but also some which were insufficiently focused upon examination of the writer's style and tone. Basic responses showed simple comprehension by commenting upon the events of the passage. Good answers demonstrated skills of analysis and evaluation and achieved an even coverage of the text. A significant number of answers devoted full and sometimes superfluous attention to the opening paragraphs of the text but then failed to properly examine the remainder.

Some answers in the middle range often suggested a good understanding of the passage but didn't give sufficiently precise attention to the effects of language choice. An assertion that a figure of speech "helps the reader stay interested" or "stops the passage being monotonous" can't be considered informed analysis.

Some responses worked through the passages as if with a check list which at times led to the candidate looking for linguistic features not present in the passages.

Directed writing tasks produced some very perceptive and in many cases, strongly felt responses. Many responses demonstrated a good understanding of the style and tone of the original but there was still an occasional tendency to lift whole phrases or sentences from the original. This is clearly not the object of the task and sets limits on the number of marks that can be given for original material. Directed writing tasks are assessed for their accuracy and candidates must be particularly wary of allowing tenses to wander. This section gives candidates the opportunity to show originality and invention in their writing. When this was also controlled and accurate, the results were impressive.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) Responses to this question showed a good general understanding of the passage and the task. Most candidates made some justified general comments on the passage but the best responses focused on the methods the writer used to demonstrate the variety of people's reactions to the climate. These answers found the contrasts of tone and colour within the writing and there were some well-developed accounts of the passage. Most competent responses were aware of the repetition of "in the rainy season" and also of the near personification of the encroaching water. Almost all responses recognised the author's use of onomatopoeic features but these were not

always clearly related to their effects. Similarly, most responses mentioned the contrast in colours created by the arrival of the writer's nephew, without always recognising the change of tone it initiates. Most candidates mentioned the omnipresence of the watery language and a few perceptive responses understood the paradox of "every surface a wick for moisture". There was some good definition of the writer's style and tone, variously described as fatalistic, resigned and paranoid. Less developed answers often dwelt too long on the first paragraph and made few significant points in the second part of the passage.

- (b) This task produced a generally competent response with some perceptive and fluent answers. There was a wide variety of extreme weather conditions and some candidates opted to describe oppressive rainfall in different locations. The strongest responses reflected the original style and tone by using extreme conditions and, crucially, different reactions to the conditions. There was often a strong sense of place and context and accurate replication of the fatalistic style of the original. Almost all candidates used the repetition of a particular season and most attempted to introduce onomatopoeic features, though with varying success. Many candidates tended to parallel the phrasing of the original but the strongest answers introduced fresh and surprising images of their own. Less successful accounts offered descriptions of seasonal weather rather than extreme conditions and the results tended to be rather bland and innocuous.

## Question 2

- (a) The most effective responses to this question understood that this was a review of a biography and not necessarily the whole-hearted opinion of the writer. These responses avoided either supporting Cowell or echoing the central tone of the passage. Most candidates commented on the relentless nature of the criticism, the use of heavy sarcasm and the harsh tone of the review. Some found it difficult to extend their responses beyond these points and this often resulted in commenting upon content or arguing with the reviewer. Several answers pointed out the resemblance of the passage to a police charge sheet, in which the reviewer never allows any mitigating circumstances. There was also understanding of how each successive paragraph gradually removed any sense of humanity from the X Factor creator. The culminating image of Cowell as a Roman emperor was not always commented on, and this suggests that not all candidates are concentrating enough upon examining the whole passage. This is confirmed by the relatively few responses that mentioned the final paragraph and the image of Cowell destroying his houses as he allegedly destroys his contestants.
- (b) This task was clearly enjoyed by most candidates and there were many spirited and amusing responses. Not all of these offered a particularly robust defence of Cowell, some of them conceding the truth of the accusations and a few suggested it did not go far enough. The best answers tended to utilise the letter form to their advantage as well as the correspondent's inside knowledge of the subject. Many seized on the sarcastic and aggressive tone of the original and these often made for purposeful and enjoyable reading. A less successful approach was adopted by the candidates who simply itemised the accusations of the passage and then gave a point by point rebuttal. However this task was largely well understood and competently performed.

## Question 3

- (a) This was a popular choice and there was evident engagement in almost all of the responses. In some cases, the sympathy felt by candidates for both characters tended to obscure clear analysis of the effects of the language choice. The strongest answers understood the mixed emotions of the writer towards her native land together with her attitude towards her flight companion. These responses also sustained their attention on language examples throughout the passage, noting particularly the impact of the final paragraph. The developing and changing attitude of the writer towards the young woman was the key to the passage, and this was understood in the best responses. Less secure answers tended to lose focus after the first three paragraphs. Language features, such as the personification of the ocean were generally remarked upon, as was the opening description of the Liberian girl. Beyond this point, some answers tended to comment on content and simply listed the concluding events of the passage.
- (b) This task produced some well-crafted and genuinely empathetic responses. Sentimentality was not always avoided but the best answers showed an excellent understanding of the relationship between the two women and of the events which had brought it about. Some of the best convincing continuations developed the sense of uncertainty in the women about their return and left the reader to decide if it was a happy ending. Others allowed the girl to quietly disappear from

the story and concentrated upon the writer's return to her family. There was a generally quite successful adoption of the tone and style of the writer. There were some improbable continuations and these tended towards sentimentality and some very unlikely scenes at the airport. Some candidates got carried away and considerably exceeded the stated word limit; this is always going to be self-penalising.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 9093/13  
Passages

## Key message

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## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) This passage had a wide range of highly effective language features and some powerful imagery depicting the monsoon season in India. There was a good engagement with this passage and the task was largely understood. Most candidates found aspects of the passage to remark upon, but fully developed responses were less common.

Strong responses generally understood the writer's skill in creating the intimidating appearance of the city and of the accumulation of oceanic imagery in the opening paragraph. Most answers also

recognised the change in tone when the writer entered the taxi, but they did not always appreciate its use as a contrast to the surrounding dramas. There was a general recognition of the maritime imagery that accompanies the taxi through the monsoon; the pathos and humour of the journey was only occasionally mentioned. In addition to being dramatic and sad, this was an amusing passage, but few candidates had the confidence to examine this aspect of the writing. The catastrophic finale of the taxi ride made a very effective and affecting conclusion but many answers made no reference to it. It seems worth repeating that the end of a passage is as likely to have interesting language features as the beginning.

- (b) Responses to this question were generally engaged and lively and the task was well understood. The most successful answers did not scrimp on the severity of the weather. This allowed candidates to produce some dramatic and turbulent accounts with a full range of extreme weather. A surprising number of responses wrote about mildly unpleasant weather, rather than severe conditions; unsurprisingly the results were often rather bland. Most candidates chose to follow the pattern of the original passage, often leaving the reader uncertain about the fate of the narrator. Features of the style were often quite well handled; compressed snatches of dialogue were popular and used to some effect.

### Question 2

- (a) This proved a very popular choice and produced some thoroughly engaged writing. The cultural references triggered strong responses and this enabled many candidates to confidently demonstrate how tone and humour were created. The majority of answers understood that there was a considerable variety of language features employed within the passage. The personification of the X Factor was widely noted as was the use of the inclusive pronoun “we” to involve the reader in the list of complaints. Elements of the style, such as the use of hyperbole and rhetorical devices, were also generally included. The mixture of colloquialisms with quite demanding vocabulary was also widely noted. The strongest responses seemed thoroughly conversant with devices and mannerisms of the passage and produced some trenchant comments on both the passage and reality shows. Most answers to this question made a thorough analysis of the passage, the final paragraph receiving almost as much attention as the opening.
- (b) This task produced some clearly committed and strongly felt responses. The opportunity to complain about a once loved programme or film series was seized on with real enthusiasm. As with 2(a), the confidence candidates felt with the cultural references produced some assured and fluent work. The most secure responses mastered the sardonic and rather bullying tone of the original and adapted it well to their material. These responses also located the very eclectic style of the passage with its mixture of slang and rhetorical flourish. Less successful answers failed to master the style of the original or allowed themselves to get bogged down in the details of the programme under review. However, almost all responses achieved a level of competence and engagement with this task.

### Question 3

- (a) This was the least popular of the two optional passages though it offered many language features which might have been commented on. Some candidates found it difficult to sustain engagement with the brother’s journey but there were also some perceptive and well developed responses. Strong answers often seized on the writer’s “need” to undertake the journey and also recognised the quest for a sense of identity which the passage suggests. They also grasped the difference between the two brothers and the sense of awkwardness and incapacity in the author’s tone when talking about his brother. Strong answers also noted linguistic features such as the repeated negatives when the writer sees the wreckage of the family home. There was also an understanding of the sense of complicity with the reader, which the writer created by use of direct address and the present tense. Less assured responses generally picked up some sense of the importance of the quest to the writer but sometimes got lost in the fluctuations of the narrative. Some answers referred to the one sentence final paragraph but they were not fully developed.
- (b) There were some developed and confident answers to this task but not all the candidates understood that the diary entry came from the brother’s perspective. Those responses which developed the temperamental differences of the brothers tended to work best. These responses also generally established a recognisable, more confident style and tone than that of the original. There was also some effective use of the short sentencing that the writer employs to give this passage a sense of immediacy. Weaker responses tended to re-work the events of the passage



from a slightly different view point. The passage gave quite a lot of clues to suggest the character of the writer but they were not really exploited.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 9093/21

Writing

## Key Messages

The questions differentiated a range of candidates successfully, with answers ranging from the very mature and thoughtful to those marred by significant lapses in technical accuracy. At the high end, there were a good number of highly imaginative and engaging narrative/descriptive responses in Section A; and sophisticated and strongly purposeful argumentative/discursive compositions in Section B. These fluent and mature responses, as ever, were a delight to read and very impressive, considering the time constraints under which they were produced. At the lower end of the range, answers tended to rely on undirected, drifting or undeveloped plots, with lapses in technical areas and expression. The usual areas of concern emerged: tenses commonly confused; the incorrect use of punctuation in dialogue, especially with speech marks; evidence of 'prepared' answers that did not quite fit the examination questions. On the whole, there were not many rubric infringements and time management seemed satisfactory.

## General Comments

The majority of candidates made real efforts to meet the prescribed task. A number needed to address the question focus and consider the nature of the guidelines of the task in Section A, e.g. prescribed instructions such as 'futuristic and mysterious environment', 'colours and sounds'; or a prescribed form/structure: a descriptive piece of writing or an 'opening' to a short story.

The candidates' sense of audience, form and purpose in Section B was convincing on the whole: candidates were prepared well in terms of appropriate register, form and tone for such tasks as a debate or a magazine or web article. One area for improvement is to use two different tones in speeches opposing each other, and not keep to the same sort of 'voice' for the two.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

*The Theme Park* was a less popular question but a good one in that there are possible discriminators between 'specific' approaches and the generalised appreciation of a day out. Stronger responses created a strong flavour of child-like excitement and wonder; often incorporating smells along with 'sights and sounds', thus helping to create an imaginative scene. Descriptive contrasts could also be shown through emotions of participants. Weaker responses struggled to maintain the descriptive nature of the task and drifted to narrative or away from the question stem of colours and sounds. Some weaker responses started with preparing for the day when the responses needed to begin *in medias res*, to get to the focus quickly.

#### **Question 2**

*The Witness* saw some very good answers with a sharp focus on a 'historical incident'. Stronger responses offered clear signposting as to specific nature of the incident. These were fluent narratives showing interaction between different characters who were responding to incident; or tightly controlled parallel narratives between character's experience and 'real or imaginary' social/political narrative. Some candidates explored events from distant history, for example, the conquistador's arrival in America from the perspective of a young child. More able candidates grasped the concept of the minor character's perspective. Weaker responses indulged in self-centred suffering narratives, usually about 9/11 or presidential assassinations. Less successful candidates struggled with the concept of a story opening and wanted to retell the whole historical event.

### Question 3

'A set of keys, a passport, a credit card...' was a very popular question. There was lots of scope for a narrative. Character and setting prompts were well used by candidates. Kidnap narratives were popular here, as were detective investigation stories which were well told and which obviously fed from their knowledge of film and TV. Some displayed a very good ear for dialogue too, though punctuation and direct speech could have been better. Some strongly structured narratives added suspense/mystery to 'character/setting', with the three items linking fluently to different sections of narratives. Less successful responses were commonly self-centred narrator-only plotlines involving a woebegone character left stranded by a lover/friend or parents, with no connections between the given opening and the narrative.

### Section B

#### Question 4

'My Favourite Walk' was popular but was often not about an identifiable walk in many cases. Few really grasped the demands of the question stem – for visitors and less well-known places or the favourite walk. Candidates seemed to focus on a business/economic lexis and content and this frequently usurped the promotional element of the question. Responses tended to be structured around cameos of popular sites. Perhaps candidates were too focused on generalised 'travel magazine' article, giving generalised descriptions of city, or surrounding areas (impossible to walk), writing in advert/blurb mode – all very excited argue/persuade travel *brochure* attempts. There were however some pleasing ideas: less well-known restaurants, and hidden beaches. Some candidates responded with persuasive material for a popular hotel or describing somewhere they used to play as a child (the pond behind the church). Where candidates did more fully understand the task, there was a pleasing amount of descriptive and persuasive writing.

#### Question 5

This was not a popular choice. In general the scripts on the question, *Are Standards Rising or Falling?* were not particularly strong. Candidates responded to this question in a somewhat formulaic way: technological distractions, unmotivated candidates and teachers, difficult examinations. Technical issues seemed to detract from what might otherwise have been stronger responses. Stronger response explored moral and philosophical ideas.

#### Question 6

On the whole candidates responded comprehensively to the question on *Keeping Up to Date*, although they tended to be formulaic – time, cost, features/sites, disadvantages. Weaker answers failed to write for an older audience even when the content and expression were secure. Candidates tended to be more fluent in this response than Section A but language features were less apparent and rarely moved beyond rhetorical questions and listing. Stronger responses did however employ some effective imagery and voices that were sensitive to an older audience.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 9093/22

Writing

## Key Messages

The questions differentiated a range of candidates successfully, with answers ranging from the very mature and thoughtful to those marred by significant lapses in technical accuracy. At the high end, there were a good number of highly imaginative and engaging narrative/descriptive responses in Section A, and mature and strongly purposeful argumentative/discursive compositions in Section B. These fluent and mature responses, as ever, were a delight to read and very impressive, considering the time constraints in which they were produced. At the lower end of the range, answers tended to rely on undirected, drifting or undeveloped plots, with lapses in technical areas and expression. The usual areas of concern emerged: tenses commonly confused, the incorrect use of punctuation in dialogue (especially with speech marks), and evidence of 'prepared' answers that did not quite fit the examination question. On the whole, there were not many rubric infringements and time management seemed satisfactory.

## General Comments

The majority of candidates made real efforts to meet the prescribed task. A number needed to address the question focus and consider the nature of the guidelines of the task in Section A, e.g. prescribed instructions such as 'futuristic and mysterious environment', 'colours and sounds', or a prescribed form/structure: a descriptive piece of writing or an 'opening' to a short story.

The candidates' sense of audience, form and purpose in Section B was convincing on the whole. Candidates were prepared well in terms of appropriate register, form and tone for such tasks as a script for a podcast, debate or a magazine article. One area for improvement is to use two different tones in speeches opposing each other, and not keep to the same sort of 'voice' for the two.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

*Robot World* was a very popular choice, which allowed candidates to show a great deal of creativity and imagination. There was a wide range in the quality of responses. The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate their writing skills, showing flair in their choice of vocabulary and use of figurative language techniques, but unfortunately quite a number were rather pedestrian. Some missed the 'opening to a story' aspect of the question, resulting in rather unvaried descriptive pieces, which hit the 'futuristic/mysterious' aspect of the rubric, but which were most unconvincing as openings for a story and often lacked any clear narrative control. Although a number of candidates were able to construct a sense of a futuristic environment, many were not so successful in creating a sense of mystery. A large number of clichés were used and many responses involving robots taking over the world after being created by a 'mad' scientist. Many responses had the scenario that humans were prisoners to the robots. Time travel featured quite a lot. Almost all responses had flying cars and servant robots to create a futuristic scene. More imaginative responses involved fascinating dystopian societies and a mysterious environment whereby the protagonist was working 'underground' to provide a solution to the robot takeover. Most candidates were able to write for the purpose. There was, in the most part, a good balance between description and dialogue.

#### **Question 2**

'*The buildings seemed to waken as daylight dawned...*' was quite a popular question, though many candidates struggled to maintain the descriptive nature of the task and drifted to narrative or away from the question stem of colours and sounds. However stronger answers did attend to the prompt, leading to some pleasing descriptive imagery. Weaker responses also struggled to structure this task with description, leaping

from one element to another, whilst stronger answers structured the writing around a journey or from particular viewpoint: a balcony, tree or in one case the perspective of a homeless man. The better responses brought in some personal voice and experience. Stronger responses involved often day-long musings, giving a strong arc of structure; or constructed imaginative re-creations of city life with a variety of vignettes of movement and/or scenarios involving contrasts in 'colours and sounds'; or created engaging descriptions of personified or metaphoric parallel existences. Weak responses were mostly lists of described objects with colours and sounds labelled without any exploration of effects, and where there was very little connection between the given opening and the rest of the response; or an excuse to indulge in narrative waking-up procedures leading to unconnected stories, often with only the narrator as character. Quite a number of candidates did not pick up the prompt that this was the start of the day, starting their writing from sunset. Many very quickly moved to the setting of the seaside and some ignored the given setting completely.

### Question 3

Not many candidates attempted this question, *the opening to a short story in which some of the people and events from a well-known book or film are seen from the perspective of one of the less significant characters or film*. Candidates struggled with the concept of a story opening and wanted to retell the whole story. There were a surprising number of fairy tales and popular films. More able responses showed a firm grasp of the concept of a minor character's perspective, for example Mr Charrington in *1984*. They effectively structured in terms of selecting some scenes which showed the relationship of the less significant to the major character; clear signposting as to why the particular storyline was important, thus maintaining a strong sense of voice of characters. Less successful answers were less observational, and a number were clichéd narratives that could fit almost any film; or were simple linear narratives without much insight into the character's point-of-view. It was sometimes hard to know which film/book was being targeted and it would have been useful if candidates had added a footnote to explain their choice.

### Section B

#### Question 4

On the whole candidates responded comprehensively to the question on *Keeping in Touch*, although they tended to be formulaic – time, cost, features/sites, disadvantages. Less assured responses failed to write for an older audience even when the content and expression was secure. Centres should have this right by now. The audience can be identified by their children, or grandchildren or their professions, which would instantly and neatly identify the audience. Some assumed that older means ancient. There was some third person address to 'old people' who were assumed not to understand social media anyway; or a generalised guide to the wonders of Facebook/Twitter and so on to a fairly general audience; or simple listings of devices without recourse to targeting readership; or adverts for products rather than subtle mix of explain/persuade. There was also some drifting away from social networking to search engines like Google. Language features were less apparent and rarely moved beyond rhetorical questions and listing, with the less successful answers. The 'practical' element of the question was not well covered although it was a gift of a question – candidates know a lot about the topic and are able to navigate their way around technical aspects. Stronger responses did however employ some effective imagery and voices that were sensitive to an older audience, or managed clear exposition without patronising the readership; gave well-structured advice with clear headings or discourse markers; or offered well-shaped ideas with a thoughtful introduction/conclusion indicating re-assurance.

#### Question 5

*Secret Places* was the least popular question and when it was answered, there were mixed results. Few really grasped the demands of the question stem – for locals/new visitors and less well-known places. Responses tended to be structured around cameos of popular sites, a guide on their home cities rather than less well-known locations, digressions into narrative ramblings about personal relationships to places without considering audience's 'interest and enjoyment'; advert or blurb mode merely. These candidates touched on popular ideas such as trips to the beach and particular restaurants rather than the unusual. There were however some pleasing ideas: less known restaurants, and hidden beaches. Where candidates did more fully understand the task, there was a pleasing amount of descriptive and persuasive writing. It was a chance for better candidates to distinguish themselves by discriminating between 'local' and 'new visitors', by using realistic podcast language and conventions and presenting a judicious selection of places with fluent connecting reasons.

## Question 6

*The Rights Workers Should Have* was quite a popular question with some interesting and lively issues raised. Almost all candidates were able to show two points of view and show them in the form of a speech. But quite a few responses tended to talk about 'rights' without specifying what rights they wanted to achieve. The fact that the question asked first for the director's speech meant that most tackled that first. Those who started with the worker's speech were often more convincing, because that then gave scope for the director to explain why some of the workers' demands were unrealistic, though stronger responses involved the individual opinion of second speaker, not solely based on reply to first speaker. Social, political, economic or moral dimensions were integrated, using rhetorical devices to show 'opposing viewpoints and attitudes'. Less successful answers merely listed points in the same order for both speakers; clichéd putting-bread-on-the-table working-class types reacting to posh patronising bosses (though subtle elements of this dynamic were useful).

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 9093/23

Writing

## Key Messages

The questions differentiated a range of candidates successfully, with answers ranging from the very mature and thoughtful to those marred by significant lapses in technical accuracy. At the high end, there were a good number of highly imaginative and engaging narrative/descriptive responses in Section A; and sophisticated and strongly purposeful argumentative/discursive compositions in Section B. These fluent and mature responses, as ever, were a delight to read and very impressive, considering the time constraints under which they were produced. At the lower end of the range, answers tended to rely on undirected, drifting or undeveloped plots, with lapses in technical areas and expression. The usual areas of concern emerged: tenses commonly confused; the incorrect use of punctuation in dialogue, especially with speech marks; evidence of 'prepared' answers that did not quite fit the examination questions. On the whole, there were not many rubric infringements and time management seemed satisfactory.

## General Comments

The majority of candidates made real efforts to meet the prescribed task. A number needed to address the question focus and consider the nature of the guidelines of the task in Section A, e.g. prescribed instructions such as 'futuristic and mysterious environment', 'colours and sounds'; or a prescribed form/structure: a descriptive piece of writing or an 'opening' to a short story.

The candidates' sense of audience, form and purpose in Section B was convincing on the whole: candidates were prepared well in terms of appropriate register, form and tone for such tasks as script for a voiceover, debate or website article. One area for improvement is to use two different tones in speeches opposing each other, and not keep to the same sort of 'voice' for the two.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

*The Witness* was not a very popular choice, but there were a few strong responses to this question. Character and motivation were well observed in the more successful answers, some of which involved car accidents or murders. Some less successful candidates found the character and motivation part of the rubric a bit difficult to weave in. The 'opening to a story' rubric was often a problem for candidates. Less successful responses appeared to be 'borrowed' from films, or were only very loosely based on the idea of a witness.

#### **Question 2**

*A short story ending with 'Spring had arrived...'* was not attempted by many candidates. The problem for some candidates with this question was that they seemed to have used a pre-prepared story which did not necessarily fit convincingly with the ending. Examiners had the impression that prepared stories had this ending bolted onto the conclusion which, therefore, omitted the 'setting and mood' focus of the task. However there was scope for candidates to produce well-written stories. Stories which had a season focus were more successful. Some used the ending as a metaphorical springtime.

#### **Question 3**

*The Factory* was by far the most popular choice in Section A. This produced very good, strong work. Some excellent answers were found where candidates used their full panoply of descriptive material: sound, colour and even texture were very strongly represented, assisted by effective paragraphing, and sometimes by the structure of a journey through different parts of the factory. Very few fell into the narrative trap. Interestingly,

a couple of candidates chose to describe the workings of a bee-hive – one of them, in particular, producing a really strong piece.

## **Section B**

### **Question 4**

Most of the candidates who chose *Reasons to Invest Here* seemed to have a good awareness of business matters. This was generally very well done, although not too popular a question. Candidates may have been discouraged by the script for a voiceover. Less successful responses were lacking in development. Successful answers ranged through a number of reasons for investing – from sound political and economic policies, landscape, market opportunities, and infrastructure – and developed those reasons well. Persuasive devices were used to good effect.

### **Question 5**

*Scientific Research Should Have its Limits* was a very popular question and mostly well done. The contrasting voice was well served by the candidates. Examiners were impressed by the ability of some to present two detailed and compelling positions at the same time. However, some focussed solely on animal testing, and confined their arguments to pharmaceutical/cosmetic research; others on the space race, and yet others on the arms race – instead of opening up the array of possibilities this question offered. More successful answers ranged through a host of different areas, which made their arguments convincing.

### **Question 6**

*Safe and Sound* was by far the most popular question in Section B and generally very well done, apart from one or two less successful answers which just kept encouraging the reader to travel, overlooking the practical advice aspect of the rubric. Unfortunately, the website element was largely ignored. However, with the successful responses, pleasures and difficulties were presented in equal measure. Here candidates focussed on the audience really well and directly to their peers. Successful responses covered both the guidance and advice aspect of the question.



# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Paper 9093/03  
Text Analysis

## Key Messages

Candidates should prepare for this Component by gaining a solid knowledge of linguistics which they can apply when producing a piece of Directed Writing, commenting on the style and language of that piece of writing in relation to an accompanying text, and when comparing two texts on the same subject for their different language use and styles.

For **Question 1 Part (a)** the accompanying instructions and text provides the context and background information to guide the candidates as they produce their Directed Writing text.

For **Question 1 Part (b)** candidates need to ensure they compare both the style and the language of two texts, with an emphasis on selecting interesting aspects of language and comparing the specific effects they create.

For **Question 2** candidates need to identify specific features of each text's language and style, link these to supporting textual details to describe the effects produced and compare how the texts' (often very subtle) differences in purpose, context, and audience create different meanings.

## General Comments

Some candidates were evidently well prepared for a Component designed to test their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of linguistics and to analyse texts in a comparative fashion. The carefully structured nature of their responses suggest that they used the fifteen minutes reading time purposefully to begin to formulate their responses to the three texts presented to them (one in **Question 1**, two in **Question 2**) by annotating distinctive features of the pertinent text(s) contained in the question booklet from which to produce detailed plans that linked pertinent linguistic concepts with selected textual details. However most candidates attempted little planning work or did not create plans at all. Many of the responses to **1(b)** and **2** appear to have been primarily based on candidates "gleaning hints" from the information provided in the Questions' instructions rather than analysing the texts themselves in any purposeful way. A mere reiteration of the content of passages also produces a very limited response. Some candidates resorted to simply quoting large tracts of the relevant text(s), linked together with short passages of superficial commentary.

As this is only second Session for this Component, it is worthwhile to once again outline the nature of each compulsory Question so that Centres and candidates gain an appreciation for the nature of the tasks concerned.

**Question 1(a)** is a Directed Writing task. Candidates needed to follow the instructions carefully to produce a written response *informed by* the style and language of the accompanying text, here a transcription of a television news programme featuring knowledgeable individuals discussing a private company (Golden Spike) and its plans to offer commercial trips to the moon. The text the candidates were instructed to write was a formal letter to Golden Spike expressing concerns about the trips being proposed. In order to produce a successful piece of Directed Writing the candidates needed to identify and understand the letter's specific purpose (the expression of concerns about trips to the moon from the perspective of a member of the public) and its audience (most specifically Gerry Griffins, the Chairman of Golden Spike and a contributor to the televised discussion although addressing the company's management more generally would certainly be appropriate) informed by a recognition that the proposed trips to the moon will be very expensive and hence targeted at very wealthy individuals and governments lacking similar technology and expertise of their own. Candidates also needed to form an understanding of both the purpose of the transcription (to inform the public of Golden Spike's proposals as well as the opinions about them provided by experts in the course of the transcribed discussion) and the linguistic concepts informing it to ensure the piece of Directed Writing produced incorporated a *reworking* of both the information and linguistic features contained in the

transcription. There was considerable scope for candidates to adopt a range of strategies to persuade Mr Griffins (or the company's management) that there are a host of safety concerns that ought to be addressed before travel to the moon commences as well as the ethical dimension of such an expensive venture given there remain many problems to be resolved on Earth that require considerable financial resources. Candidates were instructed to produce a piece of Directed Writing of 120–150 words in length and were expected to write clearly, accurately, creatively and effectively for the prescribed purpose and audience.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were required to compare the style and language of the formal letter expressing concerns produced for **1(a)** with the style and language of the transcription of the informative television news programme. A good knowledge of linguistics is invaluable here, especially in relation to detailed examination of aspects of style, and candidates should have endeavoured to compare the effects of a good range of the lexemes used in composing the formal letter with those to be found in the transcription of the television news programme. Here candidates are assessed for the ability to select and analyse specific textual details, for example those concerning purpose and register (varying levels of formality), format and choices of lexis and the ability to support with close textual reference any evaluation of intention and bias.

In **Question 2** candidates were required to compare the language and style of two Texts relating to Nemanja Vidic, a former player with the English football club Manchester United. Text A contained extracts from a biography of Vidic while Text B was a player profile of Vidic forming part of the Manchester United official website. Again, a sound knowledge of linguistics is required as candidates are assessed for: comparative appreciation of the texts' forms and conventions and awareness of their effects; an understanding of how purpose, context and audience shape meaning; and, an appreciation of voice and linguistic techniques.

In order to satisfy the requirements of **Question 2** it is important that candidates employ some form of comparative approach. A very few candidates adopted a primarily topical approach – these tended to be the candidates who demonstrated through their responses comprehensive linguistic knowledge. A topical approach guarantees continuous comparison and so a concluding section could then be used to emphasise the essential differences between the Texts and the relative strengths of each. The majority of candidates evaluated each Text in turn. In order to ensure comparisons are eventually made under this second approach, aspects of the first Text analysed on its own terms must be later selected and evaluated alongside those of the second Text as it is analysed on its own merits in the second part of the response. It should be recognised that the second approach leads to a degree of duplication of effort and candidates must work carefully to guard against rushed and superficial comparative analysis and conclusions that can be very short and do not offer any new insight.

Few rubric infringements were noted – most instances involved candidates producing responses to **1(a)** only. It was apparent that many candidates devoted too much time and effort in composing their Directed Writing pieces for **1(a)** and then produced brief responses to **1(b)** and **2**. Centres and candidates need to appreciate that **Question 1(a)** accounts for only one-fifth of the total marks available and that the analytical and comparative nature of the tasks for **1(b)** and **2** require adequate time for thorough assessment of the texts and the writing of detailed responses. Candidates are therefore strongly advised to complete **Questions 1** and **2** within one-hour time allocations, having begun to carefully assess all the Texts (three in total) in the initial fifteen minutes of the examination (the total length of the examination being two hours and fifteen minutes).

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Question 1**

#### **Part (a) Directed Writing**

The pieces of Directed Writing candidates produced featured generally solid engagement with both the concept of space travel to the moon in the past and in the future in the context of the venture Golden Spike is proposing and the speakers' contributions to the transcribed discussion. There was some evidence of a lack of familiarity with the format of a formal letter although the majority of candidates' letters featured a date, a salutation line and some form of signing off (appropriately as the instructions state 'Write your response...', not simply an 'opening' of a response). Only a minority of candidates addressed their letters to Mr Griffins (appropriately as he is identified in the transcription's Key as the Chairman of Golden Spike and served as the company's spokesperson during the transcribed discussion). Fewer candidates still addressed their letters to the management of Golden Spike (another appropriate approach) but the majority of candidates used 'To Whom It May Concern' as a salutation, a far too general one given the circumstances. Nevertheless, in the bodies of their letters the vast majority of candidates realised the necessity of adopting a

formal tone and this was at least registered in openings clearly and accurately stating the purpose for the correspondence. Most candidates adopted the persona of a concerned member of the public who had viewed the television news programme although a few evidently knowledgeable candidates adopted the persona of an ex-NASA technician or astronaut (or similar experienced, aerospace professional) to express specific concerns about Golden Spike's 'commercial human lunar transportation system' (l. 14).

Most of the arguments employed by candidates revolved around the expense of the proposed expeditions and the issue of ensuring the safety of civilian astronauts on such a hazardous venture. Many candidates made appropriate references to information in the transcription, that previously only national space programmes featuring fully-trained, professional astronauts have attempted or are currently planning successful manned missions to the moon, to cast doubt on the technical viability of a private, commercial attempt with 'paying passengers' on board (l. 12). As a rhetorical strategy in opposition to Golden Spike's commercial ambitions many candidates also drew attention to the many people on earth who are under-privileged, sick and starving and therefore more deserving of receiving donations from wealthy individuals who might otherwise spend 'around four hundred million pounds apiece' (l. 6) flying to the moon with Golden Spike. Other reasoned accounts of alternative uses for money spent on commercial space travel – often disparagingly referred to as 'vacations' or 'a rich man's jolly' – involved disaster relief and international medical emergencies such as the current Ebola outbreak.

Excellent responses included purposeful, focused and concise re-working of the original discussion, with their arguments being well marshalled in a consistently formal tone. The majority of the candidates' letters were politely persuasive in the formulation of their arguments although quite a few were full of righteous indignation that did not achieve and sustain the required tone suggested by the instructions 'you dislike the *idea* of a private company offering trips to the moon.... express your *concerns* about the trips'. Weaker responses often lacked fluency and accuracy and a simplistic approach of complaining about the cost of the expedition without re-working the transcription's references to potential technical and safety issues or attempting to posit a considered counter-argument. In weaker responses there was usually little audience awareness exhibited as well as an uneven sense of purpose.

### Question 1

#### **Part (b) Compare the style and language of your response with the style and language of the original news item**

This question challenged candidates who did not attempt to analyse language and style or to directly compare different approaches in the two texts available to them, the transcription and the letter produced by each candidate in response to 1(a). This often led to candidates simply paraphrasing the contents of the transcription and the letter; in a few instances candidates resorted to simply copying out the transcription as their response to 1(b). There was often a failure to recognise or analyse the nature of the transcription with little evidence of understanding the methodology required. There were thus a considerable number of candidates who wrote about punctuation with reference to the transcription. The purpose and hence the conventions of a transcription consisting of utterances with regular pauses and turn-taking with other speakers were not appreciated by these candidates. Many candidates thus attempted to compare the punctuation and grammar of the formal letter to the transcription, often at considerable length. Simply using the comparative words 'written' and 'spoken' in the opening sentence of their responses ought to have ensured these candidates were immediately on the correct analytical track.

A considerable number of candidates did not adopt an integrated approach to their answer and sought to deal with each passage separately. Whilst it is possible to compare in this way it is usually easier and far more efficient and fluent if an integrated approach is used. Textual references were often made without drawing conclusions concerning their functions and lexical properties. Thus identification of a metaphor in each text could be clearly made but no or very little analysis of its contextual or comparative effectiveness ensued. Such candidates usually produced short responses.

Other candidates demonstrated much knowledge and understanding about the conventions of television news items and the general purpose of bringing together a balance of opinions in an informative and entertaining manner for an audience primarily consisting of the adult general public. These candidates clearly appreciated that the participants in the discussion were experts and intelligent speakers who were acutely aware of how to manipulate language. Much linguistic analysis was offered of succinct, often embedded, quotations and further detailed analysis of the effects of thus clearly identified lexemes and wordplay was at least satisfactorily attempted. Such responses made reference to and evaluated at least some of the following aspects of the transcription: an effective use of voiceover segments to guide highly cooperative speakers with turn-taking negotiated successfully without any overlaps that suggested the discussion was

likely scripted and perhaps rehearsed (at least by some of the speakers); some instances of more spontaneous spoken language including a repair ('of moon (.) of the moon') and repetition ('of, of, of') incorporating in each case a conscious pause or hesitation to formulate the correct language intended; the regular use of low frequency language employed by the 'expert' speakers (usually of a space jargon variety – 'astronaut', 'one (.) zero (.) and launch off', 'moon landing') although business jargon features, too ('affordable', 'cost', 'commercialisation'); the instances of informality ('on its books') and idiom ('long shot', 'actually fly'), punning ('astronomical amount of sponsorship') and colloquialism ('stuff') and inclusive language ('that step for all of us', 'our vision').

In the most discriminating responses candidates usually immediately identified linguistic devices and enjoyed deconstructing both the transcription's phraseology and technical jargon and discussing the how, why and wherefore of such influential and persuasive language, in light of the often emotive language and frequent use of second person pronouns found in letters seeking to persuade Golden Spike to at least reconsider its space commercial flight ambitions. Here there was highly informed selection of textual references to illustrate the impact of the use of language and the influence of language in illustrating opinion and bias. Many of these candidates identified literary devices in the transcription, such as personification (Golden Spike, a company, described as the 'latest player'), alliteration ('manned mission') and rhyme ('space race', 'paying passengers'), in addition to those noted above. Integrated approaches were almost invariably used with candidates clearly identifying the impact of lexical choice exercised by speakers in the transcription and then successfully arguing their understanding of their own carefully chosen vocabulary in their correspondence. These responses appear to have been deliberately planned and organised to ensure an equal, or very nearly so, comparative emphasis of 50:50 or 60:40 on the transcription and letter.

## Question 2

### Compare the language and style of Text A and Text B

As for **1(b)**, candidates who did not allocate sufficient time to attempt to analyse Text A and Text B's language and style in a comparative fashion demonstrated only limited appreciation of the techniques employed and awareness of the effects created. Many such candidates simply paraphrased the Texts in turn and offered a summary of their contents, usually demonstrating a surer grasp of the meanings produced by Text B (perhaps due to its provenance as a more familiar website text primarily designed to inform as a player profile, in contrast to Text A's additional function to entertain as a biographical text). Some candidates concentrated on punctuation, paragraph length and producing lists of the linguistic devices they could identify without the support of concise quotation and precise comments indicating appreciation of the effects of the crafted writing present. There was demonstrated some ability to recognise the use of language describing Vidic – especially 'the rock' metaphors in both Texts – and to ascribe to them associated ideas that he was thereby strong, durable and dependable. Most struggled to explain the differences in purpose and audience between the two Texts and the significance of the differences in their forms and the ways conventions were employed.

Candidates producing more substantive responses readily understood the difference in purpose between biographical and profile texts, usually by demonstrating some understanding of how the language of Text B consistently portrays Vidic's personal achievements as being subservient to the needs of Manchester United. There was, correspondingly, reasonable assumptions made that the audience for Text A is effectively a subset of that for Text B (fans of Vidic would chiefly be Man United fans and hence most readers of both Texts football fans) and some understanding of the implications of the Texts' different forms of publication: the audience for Text A would need to actively seek out the biography of Vidic while Text B is more easily accessed as the result of a web browser search. Whilst there was again an often surer engagement with Text B, focusing on textual details indicative of its mixed form style of journalese writing and factual, historical overview, many candidates enthusiastically explored the idiomatic phrases describing the player across both Texts and noted some subtleties and nuances of meaning in often efficient comparative writing. Such candidates' responses usually featured at least some of the following clear points of comparison: Text A is solely concerned with Vidic's career at the time he joined Man U whereas Text B describes his entire career until his departure from the club; a shared field of technical jargon (chiefly football) and the prevalence of quantifiable information (the latter chiefly employed to explain Vidic's physical stature in Text A whilst in Text B it primarily references career milestones and statistics); a shared field of hyperbolic language in the Texts' opening paragraphs describing Vidic as a player ('a warrior, a true footballing hard man', etc. in Text A, 'relentless', 'formidable', 'powerhouse', etc. in Text B) that is leavened by ameliorating lexis in Text A ('likes peace and quiet', 'a gentle giant'); and, the prevalence of clichés in both Texts to gloss notable events in Vidic's career at Man U with marked differences in tone and nuance (such as Text A's 'no gentle settling in period...needed [him] to fit in quickly' and B's contradictory 'took some time to shine but after finding his feet...').

The most discerning responses provided clear, strong evidence of candidates' highly informed understanding of the subtlety of some of the effects of linguistic techniques and semantic fields. Those more demanding aspects of language – modifying adjectives and adverbs – were also more readily identified and their impact in both Texts usually perceptively assessed. There was a marked tendency to investigate Text A more intently, its mixed register and more fragmented syntax often analysed to good effect. Again in reference to clichés, a number of candidates noted a fleeting reliance on nautical lexis in Text A ('Vidic was the man to steady his [Ferguson's] sinking ship' once he was 'on board') that extended the range of meanings of the martial allusions present in both Texts ('warrior', 'most-feared'). Candidates also dealt in some detail with the many references to Sir Alex Ferguson in Text A and his 'planned revival' of the club through the acquisition of Vidic, sensitive to clear references to his profound sense of good fortune indicated by 'like the man who had won the lottery.... He almost 'purred' and his clear admiration for Vidic's footballing abilities ('a quick, aggressive centre-half.... A natural athlete') whereas in Text B Ferguson (and his perspective on Vidic) is entirely absent. The use of graphology in the beginning of Text B (bold text) to emphasise Vidic's primary function within the team ('the epitome of what a Manchester United captain should aspire to') was often commented on in connection with the many synonyms for awards and yet more sporting clichés – 'silverware haul', 'helping retain that top-flight crown' – to bolster that Text's main message that Vidic was valuable because he helped Man U become a very successful club. A few candidates noted an instance of amelioration of Text B's hyperbolic language through Vidic's statement 'I hope I can do my bit [for the club]' and found it to correspond to the greater sense of Vidic's humility more prevalent throughout Text A. Finally candidates recognised how the Texts contain direct quotations from Vidic and their different effects: in Text A the introductory insight into Vidic's placid private demeanour from 'a friend' is balanced by the conclusion in which Vidic is highly self-effacing and complimentary about both the club and its supporters, whereas in Text B he is quoted in summary to much more perfunctory effect, describing his time at the club as 'eight wonderful years'. Generally, both Texts emerged in these astute responses as far more complex than may be initially apparent from recognition of the prevalence of common generic conventions alone.

In future perhaps candidates could refrain from using their conclusions to simply reiterate points made previously in their responses. There is no time or need for repetition and it would be more effective to emphasize the Texts' more important similarities and differences in an evaluative manner instead.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Paper 9093/04**  
**Language Topics**

## **Key messages**

Candidates did well when they showed sound understanding of spoken language and of the conventions of transcription, together with awareness of relevant concepts and research in the fields of spoken language, Global English and language acquisition.

Good answers applied understanding of the set material to a clear focus on the precise terms of the question, with reference also to examples from independent research and study.

Good answers demonstrated sufficient command of written English to be able to communicate complex ideas clearly and succinctly.

## **General comments**

In some cases, understanding and control of English language were not sufficiently developed for candidates to answer the questions appropriately. There were some very weak answers which showed little or no understanding of what the questions required. A few simply copied out all of the passages provided, or offered a paraphrase of the material. This was sometimes followed by only the briefest of comments, leaving the impression that the instructions had not been understood. Some candidates' work was very brief, giving minimal scope for reward.

For the many candidates who were well-prepared, however, the paper was accessible and engaging, offering ample scope in all three questions for them to demonstrate understanding of a wide range of linguistic concepts, supported by sound knowledge of relevant research. There was a wide range of responses to each of the three questions, with the best showing fluency and control, applying what they had learned to the specific demands of the questions and texts.

Candidates for this paper have to choose two questions from the three required Language Topics. It may be that centres will have prepared their candidates for only two Topics, and this is a perfectly valid way to approach the examination, though of course it eliminates the possibility of question choice. Where the two selected topics are *Spoken language and social groups* and *Language acquisition by children and teenagers* – both of which can involve dealing with transcriptions of spoken language – candidates should be careful not to try to apply exactly the same approach to both questions, since the transcript material will clearly not be the same. Being flexible in responding to the material in the supporting passages is a characteristic of stronger answers.

Centres are not asked to send annotated question papers with the scripts, but some had done so. The evidence from these was that candidates were identifying significant features of language which they could later comment upon. It is always good practice for candidates to annotate the question paper as part of their planning for an answer: although there are no marks awarded simply for the act of annotation, there is a clear link between thoughtful annotation and good, developed answers.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1 – Spoken language and social groups**

The transcript provided material for candidates to explore how a social group – four students – used language to share ideas and memories. Better answers focused on the co-operative nature of the exchange and used this as a platform from which to analyse how a social group can interact in a positive way.

Some answers relied on identifying and naming (mostly correctly) features of spoken language, but did not go on to explore how these features constructed collaborative meaning. Some responses were well-informed by applying their knowledge from wider study of theories of gendered language to the transcript evidence. Others took a less helpful approach, where they began with a statement of the theory and then tried to use the transcript evidence to ‘prove’ or ‘disprove’ (for example) the “Deficit Theory” or the “Difference Theory” of gendered language.

Better answers started with the transcript evidence and then built an argument on a secure foundation, whereas weaker responses made assumptions and then tried to support them by distorting the dynamics of interaction in the transcript. Some less successful answers over-dramatised the conversational exchange, for example by trying to find instances of conflict and strong emotion which were not really there.

There was a good deal of variation in how candidates perceived the degree of collaboration between the speakers. Some answers worked hard to ‘prove’ that there was competition or even hostility amongst the interlocutors, while others found evidence of amicable co-operation. There were some answers which offered a sort of paraphrase with running commentary; this chronological approach led to responses which were descriptive rather than analytical, and which could not be rewarded at a level higher than the ‘uneven/under-developed’ standard characteristic of Band 4 performance.

Higher-Band answers made some helpful reference to linguistic theory (for example to Grice’s Maxims or Giles’s Accommodation Theory) in more developed and informed explorations of the passage. They avoided over-emphasis on theories of gendered speech (e.g. Lakoff, Tannen or Cameron) and also avoided distorting the transcript evidence to fit a prepared interpretation.

There were some imaginative readings of specific detail, such as the realisation that Cecilia was addressing an absent person when she says “*YOU werent that clever (.) and you didnt know everything*”. Less careful readers noted the uses of the second-person pronoun “*you*”, but did not appreciate that it is used to refer to different people throughout lines 12 to 18 of the transcript.

The least successful answers came from candidates who seemed unfamiliar with the concept of a transcript of spoken language and who spent most of their time explaining how the conventions of transcription worked to represent spoken language.

### **Question 2: English as a global language**

The source material provided in the question meant that candidates were given ample opportunity to discuss the implications of Global English on the country of Nepal. The best answers went beyond this specific context and discussed the wider ramifications of the use of English as a Global Language.

The notion of balance was crucial in responding to this question. Some answers relied mainly on the source material and provided responses which paraphrased the information on offer. Other answers relied almost wholly on prepared material and examples from wider study. Some candidates barely mentioned the extract which had been provided with the question; and some attempted to explore the issues presented on the basis of general knowledge, without any linguistic analysis.

More developed answers showed how wider knowledge of relevant aspects of Global English could be applied to the issues raised in the passage. Of the issues explored, the one most convincingly discussed was language death, especially when candidates were using the context of their home countries. And in this session, in contrast with June 2014, a number of answers tackled details of lexis, grammar and syntax in the extract, noticing for example how the writer introduces a conflict of attitudes in the very first sentence: “*Accept it or not, English is creeping into our daily tasks.*”

Many responses referred to ideas associated with Crystal and Kachru, but candidates should be careful not simply to repeat a list of the topics in the syllabus as a substitute for linguistic analysis.

**Question 3: Language acquisition by children and teenagers**

Many answers correctly identified Rhana's stage of language development, and also identified features of the Mother's child-directed speech which exemplified her role as parent and Language Acquisition Support System.

This was the question in which knowledge of theories/theorists was strongest. Again, as in **Question 1**, less successful responses that relied on a running commentary tended to be more descriptive than analytical. Good answers focused on specific areas of the transcript, to analyse first how/why language is being used and then applied theory to consolidate analysis. Many weaker answers started with theory and then tried to use the transcript to illustrate what the theory predicted – and this is the wrong way round.

Most candidates managed to grasp the essentially co-operative nature of the mother-child exchange, and some went on to develop this understanding in terms of language development. Developed answers used appropriate theorists of language acquisition, and managed to integrate their knowledge into an informed analysis. Some provided a discussion of the work of Piaget (or Halliday or Skinner) and understood which particular operational stage the speakers in the passage had reached. However, a number of candidates had based all of their response on Piaget (or Halliday or Skinner), describing in detail each of the operational stages (or functions of language) instead of using the theory to inform exploration of specific exchanges in the passage.

One example of an exchange between the interlocutors in which analysis might usefully have been informed by theory and wider study would have been lines 2 to 7, where five-year-old Rhana is struggling to pronounce a consonant cluster: "*i'm trying to say the GOFF course*". Her Mother corrects her – "*the GOLF course*" – and finally Rhana manages this pronunciation.