

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE

## GCE English Language (6EN02) Paper 01

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## GCE08 English Language: 6EN02

Thanks to the hard work and attention to detail of teachers and candidates, the first run through of the GCE English Language's Unit 2, 'Exploring the Writing Process' has been very successful. All those involved with the moderation were struck with the quality of the work that was submitted and all had enjoyed reading the candidates' work. The vast majority of centres had interpreted the specification appropriately and had applied the mark scheme assiduously when awarding marks. This was made clear in a large number of cases by the careful and focused annotation that accompanied the samples. Consequently the marking for most centres was accurate and even when it was not it was generally not far from standard. As this was the first run through of a new unit this was welcome especially while there was a remarkable degree of success there were a few areas of uncertainty that emerged which it might be helpful for centres to consider when planning and implementing their programmes of study in future.

### The Tasks

On this specification the tasks are quite specific and candidates are given clear guidelines on the different stages to be carried out. Candidates who kept to the framework given in the specification generally produced a successful outcome. Most centres followed these guidelines carefully but there were some exceptions and a few areas of confusion.

The journalism interview produced some fascinating writing. The choice of interviewee varied widely from the candidate's friends and family to local and even national celebrities. Examples of excellent work included interviews with an army doctor in Afghanistan, a local man who had played bass guitar with the Beatles and a survivor of a World War 11 Japanese prisoner of war camp. The most successful interviews took on the challenge to 'present the interviewee in a particular way' and used a range of ways of representing spoken language in written form including direct and indirect speech and various forms of summary. A variety of different strategies were used to give the reader a perspective on the person being interviewed. Weaker candidates stuck very much to a verbatim record of the interviewee's speech and did not attempt to shape the reader's perspective on the material or to vary the way the interviewee's words were recorded. In those cases it was hard to reward above the first band for AO4.

The narrative writing was also done very effectively in many cases. The task outline clearly requires that candidates use an oral source as the starting point of their narrative and the majority of candidates did that. In some cases the original oral account was quite long and detailed and the challenge for the candidate had been to edit that material and to rearrange it so that it worked as an effective written narrative. In other cases the original narrative was very brief and then the challenge for the candidate was to develop the 'germ' of the story into an effective narrative for a specific audience. Some candidates used recordings as starting points. One candidate, wishing to write an autobiographical piece, 'told the story' into a recorder and used that as the base of the written narrative. It was clear that many candidates had done valuable preparatory work on effective narrative techniques. Candidates had thought about how to grab the reader's attention from the start. (There were frequent references to 'in media res', varying the sentence structure and 'showing' not 'telling' in the commentaries.) The most successful candidates knew what to leave out and what to include for maximum impact. Also the commentaries included many references to story grammars such as Labov's which showed candidates had worked on how narratives are structured. A minority of candidates ignored the recording of an oral narrative stage of the task and instead wrote a narrative piece

which was not based on an original oral source. In most cases the outcome was a much less successful piece than the ones based on oral narratives.

The dramatic monologue was the most popular of the tasks for a listening audience. In general, where candidates had clearly been introduced to examples of the genre it was done well. Candidates managed successfully to create a convincing voice and sustain it effectively throughout the monologue.

The most successful ones had clearly thought about how to engage and move a listening audience and their pieces had the feeling of something that could be performed effectively on stage or on film by a single actor. In fact in some centres candidates had been encouraged to perform their own monologues to the group and this invariably led to stronger monologues and more informed commentaries.

Weaker candidates lost sight of the idea of something that was intended for performance and wrote pieces which were closer to internal monologues in novels or voice-overs for films. In both these cases it was hard to imagine the pieces being performed. In their attempt to create the 'voice of a particular character' some candidates relied heavily on representing accent through phonetic spelling. This created problems for moderation as they were often hard to decipher, especially when the candidate had invented their own idiosyncratic methods of representing a particular regional accent. It is worth remembering that accent and dialect can easily be hinted at with a few key phrases and perhaps an occasional phonetic spelling but basically it is the actor who will add the pronunciation and all the writer needs to do is indicate what accent is required. There is no need to 'transcribe' every word phonetically. The most successful monologues were also able to vary the emotional intensity of the pieces so that even with only a thousand words to play with, candidates were still able to offer variation of pace and mood.

The scripted presentation was the task which candidates seemed to find most challenging, although there were some excellent examples. The best had thought carefully about how to engage and reach out to a listening audience and made use of a range of audio visual strategies including power point slides, film clips and in one case glove puppets. Like the monologues some centres had encouraged students to actually deliver their presentation to the class and this helped candidates to focus on what worked for a listening audience. However, there were sometimes problems when candidates chose difficult and complex linguistic concepts which they only partially understood as the content of their presentations. The challenge of writing an accessible and engaging presentation for a listening audience was made more difficult when the candidate was also struggling to master the subject matter. When candidates were comfortable with the subject matter, they were sometimes able to present quite complex ideas in lively and entertaining ways, thereby meeting the criteria for the top band of AO4 to 'use a variety of techniques for spoken presentation of *ambitious* language topic'. There were good presentations done on Language and Gender, for example the presentation of some of Grice's maxims to a young audience under the title 'The Legend that is Grice' accompanied by a photo 'story' with speech bubbles to illustrate the maxims.

A final point on the tasks is that the combinations of tasks chosen by candidates sometimes restricted the range of skills they were able to demonstrate. Some candidates chose to combine a first person narrative based on an oral source with a dramatic monologue also in the first person. This is a perfectly acceptable combination. However, with weaker candidates these two pieces could appear very similar. Stronger candidates were able to clearly differentiate between the narrative for the printed page and the monologue aimed at a listening audience. Centres need to be aware that candidates should show they can produce effective texts for a "variety of genres".

## Commentaries

In general the commentaries were done well. Candidates used the commentaries as a way to demonstrate their understanding of the writing process and to link this with what they had learnt about language in unit one of the course.

## Word Lengths

Most centres kept to within the word lengths recommended by the board. It was noted that candidates who edited and 'slimmed down' their work often produced better results. It worth reminding candidates that they do not need to reach the maximum word count to gain the best marks.





## 6EN02 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	80	68	59	50	42	34





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