



Monitor's Report
Principal Monitor Feedback
June 2019
Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In English Language (1EN0)
Paper E Spoken Language Endorsement

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Introduction

This was the third Summer series of the Spoken Language Endorsement and it continues to offer candidates the opportunity to prepare and present their views on a range of contemporary issues and personal interests. Previous reports have highlighted the genuinely stimulating, even inspiring, results when this opportunity is grasped with commitment and the help and guidance of supportive teaching staff. Many such examples were seen this series and, overall, it is clear that a large number of centres are using the Endorsement as a valuable tool for developing the ideas and confidence of their students.

The purpose of this report is to comment on the performance of candidates this series and to offer examples of good practice in the areas of:

1. Task setting
2. Preparing and Presenting talks
3. Centre assessment and standardisation
4. Administration and submission of samples.

It is realistic to recognise that the practicalities and administration of the Endorsement makes considerable demands on the time and technical resources of centres. Clear guidance on this and on the submission of samples to monitors is detailed in both the **English Language Specification** and in the **Administrative Support Guide for the Spoken Language Endorsement**, which are to be found on the Pearson Edexcel website. Failure to follow this guidance can, and does, lead to further expenditure of time and effort. It is always to be hoped that delays can be avoided and some reminders are provided in this report under section 4.

1.Task Setting

As previous reports have pointed out, candidates usually perform better when they have personal investment in the topic which they present. However, given a free choice and without the intervention of teachers, some candidates will select topics with an insufficient degree of challenge, thereby limiting their potential to achieve a Merit or Distinction grade. Presentations about a pet or a hobby or a favourite sports team or celebrity, all in evidence this series, tend towards the 'straightforward' – the key descriptor for a Pass grade. Teachers may well guide candidates to an approach which offers greater scope and potential. For example, the 'pet' option was transformed, with the aid of relevant research, into a more persuasive talk by one candidate who sought to convince her audience of the therapeutic benefits of pets in general. Similarly the virtues of a particular video game were expanded into a presentation which discussed the problem of gaming addiction, supported by relevant research.

Candidates need to 'express challenging ideas/information/feelings' if they are to access a Merit grade, or 'sophisticated ideas/information/feelings' for a Distinction. Some candidates were able to achieve these higher grades by talking about personal experience (for example a family problem suffered and overcome, or the intricacies of learning a new skill), but many more candidates are now choosing topics from current affairs and debates. We live in interesting

times, with wide access to all kinds of information, and young people feel strongly about a range of issues. Researching these issues has worthwhile educational value and can open the eyes of young people to all kinds of new ideas. When candidates, therefore, express their views in a presentation, especially if they are attempting to persuade their listeners to accept or adopt those views, challenge and sophistication are much more easily achieved. If those views are genuinely engaging and stimulating, the questions which follow the presentation are also more likely to lead to detailed and perceptive responses.

One monitor found that some successful candidates explored **'topics that they found personally engaging and which were relevant to their life - for example on knife crime or homophobia. Some were very moving and passionately delivered. A popular topic across the Merit or Distinction grade ranges was that of mental health issues for young people. Other topics included the pitfalls of social media, challenges faced by one parent families, the importance of education, the empowerment of women through education.'**

Another monitor observed **'There was confidence and familiarity in exploring more obvious topics such as social media and bullying but there were some more abstract areas such as loneliness, the purpose of life, depression and dependency.'**

Other potentially contentious topics seen included 'Human trafficking' and many issues around the area of global environment, conservation and climate change.

It was noticeable that candidates spoke with much less enthusiasm and success when their topic was seemingly chosen for them by their teacher. Candidates who presented on some aspect of a Literature set text rarely did so with commitment and zeal. The sample from one centre involved every candidate giving their views on who was responsible for the death of Eva Smith – a worthy topic, perhaps, but not one best suited to achieving a Merit or Distinction in the Endorsement.

2. Preparing and presenting talks

Once a topic has been adopted by the candidate, through negotiation with and the approval of their teacher, a period of preparation would seem to be advisable. Many candidates demonstrated that they had carried out research and most showed evidence that they had organised their thoughts. It is clear, from the evidence provided by centres, that some candidates are given the opportunity to rehearse their presentation.

There is also evidence to suggest that some centres allow audiences to know in advance what an individual candidate is going to speak about. The audience, usually the candidate's peers, is then given the opportunity to prepare suitable questions for the candidate at the end of the presentation. This is very good practice. If candidates are asked thoughtful and demanding questions, they are far more likely to think about their answers and respond 'perceptively' – a requirement for the Distinction grade.

The question and answer session of the presentation is a crucial component. It was encouraging to see that very few centres or candidates had omitted the questions entirely – where this occurs, the candidate cannot be awarded a grade – and more centres are placing greater emphasis on preparing for this aspect of the Endorsement. Members of the audience are being taught to avoid closed, limiting questions in favour of open and enabling ones.

Preparation can be taken to extremes, however, especially when a candidate writes out the whole text of their presentation and then proceeds to read it. Reading from a 'script' or even detailed notes is extraordinarily limiting and was cited by monitors as the practice most likely to prevent a candidate from achieving a higher grade or even any grade at all. One of the Pass criteria is 'makes an attempt to meet the needs of the audience'. If a candidate is reading and makes no attempt to even acknowledge that the audience is present, then this criterion cannot be met.

Similarly, 'meeting the needs of the audience' and 'achieving the purpose of his or her presentation' are Merit criteria which cannot be achieved if the candidate makes no effort to engage or interest the audience due to over-reliance on scripts or detailed notes.

Candidates can employ notes of course: referring to brief prompts on cards is helpful and, clearly, is sometimes taught as a useful skill. Some very confident candidates were able to speak for seven or eight minutes, delivering a well-organised and sophisticated presentation, with no notes at all.

For a Distinction, centres are reminded that a candidate must use 'an effective range of strategies to engage the audience'. These strategies are many and varied, as an increasing number of candidates are demonstrating, and can include the more obvious rhetorical devices such as repetition and questions to the audience. They can also include the careful modulation of tone and volume, and non-verbal communication such as gestures, eye-contact and facial expression. Some excellent examples were witnessed this series.

It was very pleasing to see that there were far fewer examples of group or pair presentations. Such a format rarely, if ever, allows each candidate the opportunity to speak for a meaningful amount of time. Neither is each candidate given an equal opportunity to answer questions in sufficient detail, or to elaborate on their ideas.

Some candidates lack the confidence to speak in front of an audience and it is perfectly acceptable if a candidate chooses to speak only to their teacher. Sometimes, an interview format is effective, particularly if the structure and the range of questions is decided in advance.

The role of the teacher in asking questions was often shown to be decisive. One monitor was clearly impressed with the teachers in a particular centre:

' The candidates had been given free choice of topic. On the whole, they seemed to be reaching their potential. What stood out was the interested, challenging and thoroughly unpatronising questions asked by the members of staff. On the occasions that a candidate did not fully understand the question, it

was simply rephrased and reposed. It was refreshing and inspiring to see candidates encouraged and enabled in this manner.'

Centres are reminded that every candidate should introduce him or herself, or be introduced, at the very start of the presentation with name and candidate number. Name and number labels should also be worn and it is very helpful if candidates announce the subject of their presentation at the beginning.

A level of formality should be observed. Candidates do not have to stand but they should face their audience, and the camera, and avoid distracting behaviour such as chewing.

Powerpoint slides can be used but monitors reported that they were rarely used in a way which enhanced a presentation and could often be a distraction. Candidates would often turn to look at slides and the quality of light sometimes made it difficult to see the candidate. In the least acceptable cases, candidates read their slides to the audience.

Candidates need not face the camera directly but can be filmed in half profile. There were instances, this series, of candidates not being heard very clearly. On one occasion, someone placed a cover over the microphone mid-way through a presentation. More commonly, audience questions could not be heard. This can be a technical and resource issue but teachers sometimes repeated the question to the microphone and this can help a great deal.

Monitors also commented on the place chosen for the presentation: sometimes a stairwell, a busy library or even a cupboard. Candidates are unlikely to achieve their best when subjected to distracting noise or activity or an unsympathetic environment.

3. Centre Assessment and Standardisation

It is pleasing to report that the vast majority of centres graded their candidates accurately. However, monitors have reported some inaccuracy and generosity in the awarding of Distinction grades in some centres.

It is to be hoped that all teachers responsible for the Endorsement are now familiar with the video standardisation sets available on the Edexcel website. There are two sets available (A and B) and it must be noted that these videos are produced by the joint examination boards. Any additional standardising material must come from the same source. Centres should carry out internal standardisation based on these standardisation clips and it is clear that teachers in many centres jointly moderate the work of their own candidates before grades are awarded and samples sent to monitors.

Monitors' reports on each centre are available online from results day and should be read in conjunction with this Principal Monitor's report. Useful advice is often given in these reports and it is to be hoped that centres respond positively in making any relevant adjustments to their assessment.

Where a centre is deemed to be significantly inaccurate in the awarding of grades, a senior monitor will make a supportive visit to that centre between October and April following results day. These visits have been very successful and positively received by the centres involved, who often welcome the opportunity to discuss the Endorsement with an experienced monitor.

4.Administration and the submission of samples

As mentioned in the introduction, clear instructions are given in the **English Language Specification** and in the **Administrative Support Guide for the Spoken Language Endorsement**.

In order to facilitate the accurate and timely monitoring of samples, it is essential that centres follow these instructions assiduously. In particular, the Head of Centre Declaration form must be included and all video recordings must be accessible to monitors, clearly labelled and of good quality. There were some instances this series of samples that could not be opened by monitors and it is very good practice for teachers to check that they can open files, and that they are of good quality, before sending to the monitor.

Increasingly, some centres are choosing to encrypt files and this practice caused severe problems this series. As the **Administrative Support Guide** points out, the password **must** be sent under separate cover to the centre's individual monitor at the same time that the samples are sent.

Samples can be recorded on DVD or on USB, although USB is preferable. This is for two reasons:

1. DVDs can be more easily damaged in transit (there were several examples of this during the June 2019 series)
2. Fewer computers have the capacity to play DVDs

Some centres include individual assessment sheets for the candidates in the sample and, though not obligatory, monitors find these extremely useful as they often show how centres reached decisions about the awarding of grades.

Conclusion

I would like to thank teachers for the expertise, professionalism, care and concern they show in making sure that the Endorsement is a valuable part of their students' education despite the challenges thrown up by pressures of time and technical resources.

I would also like to pass on the representative comments of two monitors:

'It is a very enjoyable unit to monitor, which often leaves me in awe of some of the excellent young people coming through our education system.'

'On the whole, the presentations were impressive, meeting the general criteria and demonstrating learners' formal presentational

skills. They were often enjoyable to watch, giving an insight into young people's interests and concerns across the country.'

Keith Hurst

July 2019