



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In English Language (8EN0_01)
Paper 01: Language: Context and Identity

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Introduction

This year candidates approached the examination with enthusiasm. Candidates had clearly been well prepared and were equipped with a sound understanding of how language choices may be influenced by the context in which they are made. The paper makes considerable demands on the management of time as candidates are required to produce two full length essays each with a different focus, as well as read a variety of sometimes challenging texts, all in the space of 90 minutes. However, the majority of candidates were able to complete both essays, confidently, in the time available and most managed to give a detailed analytical response. Candidates used a range of linguistic terms accurately and showed understanding of a range of linguistic concepts. Stronger candidates used terms precisely in a way which showed the ability to discriminate between different linguistic forms and functions, while weaker responses used a more limited range of terminology showing only a broad understanding of the data. The majority of candidates were able to support their ideas with examples from the texts although some weaker candidates had a tendency to use quotations that were longer than was strictly necessary.

For both questions, candidates had been well prepared in analysing contextual factors and most were able to comment with some insight using some relevant linguistic terminology on mode, field and function. There were some candidates though who had an over simplistic idea of audience. It was sometimes assumed that the audience for a text was likely to be similar, or identical, to the author of the text. Thus, the audience for Text B was identified by some candidates as 'primary children' rather than viewers of BBC news, while a number of candidates assumed the intended readership of the piece by Baroness Warsi was 'other Asian women'.

For the most part candidates were aware of the need to focus primarily on the use of language in both sections. However, there were some weaker candidates who wasted time repeating information that had been given in the rubric. The only way to access higher marks is to focus on the analysis of language.

Section A

For this section candidates were required to analyse and compare how contextual factors influenced language choices in three texts related to the theme of extra-terrestrial intelligence. Examiners agreed that the candidates engaged well with the texts. The great majority of candidates recognised the need to make comparisons across the texts. The most successful candidates were those who dealt with each text in turn but at the same time were able to, so to speak, keep all three texts in mind, so that they were able to comment on similarities and differences between the texts and therefore show a consistent awareness of comparisons across the data. Weaker candidates dealt with each text separately and then added a paragraph of comparisons at the end which meant they that while they did show awareness of connections across data it wasn't consistent or sustained and so wasn't able to achieve the higher mark levels for AO4.

There was some insightful analysis of the texts, for example, in terms of mode. Many candidates explored the contrast between the artificial staged 'spontaneous' speech of the script in Text A and

the real unplanned conversation of Text B and were able to show how both Texts A and B were vastly different from Text C in terms of syntactical complexity and lexical choice. The best candidates were able to relate these differences to form and function. Most candidates identified the high level of informality and the complexity of the grammar in Text C. The best responses were able to link this to the professional status of the audience and the need to avoid ambiguity. However, others struggled with form and function here. It would be helpful for candidates to have some experience of analysing this sort of complex formal text in class as they are unlikely to meet many examples in their daily lives.

When comparing across texts candidates often made use of theoretical frameworks such as Accommodation Theory and Goffman's concept of 'Face' as a basis for discussing and comparing the texts.

Section B

In this section candidates are required to analyse the presentation of self/construction of identity in a single piece of data. This year the data consisted of an extract from Baroness Warsi's autobiographical work 'The Enemy Within'.

Most candidates were able to comment on the range of different identities Warsi discusses here and were able to examine the way she defines herself in relation to a number of categories and sub-groups such as race, age, gender nationality, some of which seem, at different points in her life, to have been in conflict. The strongest candidates were able to analyse with insight the way Warsi uses a range of rhetorical strategies such as anaphora to chart the changes in her sense of identity as she grew up and were able to identify the ways in which an uncompromising assertive tone is established towards the end of the extract.

Stronger candidates were also able to comment on the range of registers within the piece such as the use of informal child-oriented language such as 'nightie' and 'shop bought pjs' to add colour and realism and to establish a rapport with the reader.

Weaker candidates tended to make general comments that were broadly descriptive and relied on a limited understanding of how identity may be constructed through language. An example of a response which suffered from a limited range of linguistic terms was one in which the word 'relatable' was used six times to describe Warsi's identity.

Candidate frequently discussed Warsi's text in terms of 'convergence' and 'divergence' which was often a helpful way of approaching the data. Many candidates also referred to aspects of gender theory. Many candidates recognised that the assertive tone at the end of the piece was in stark contrast to some stereotypes of gendered language and linked this to recent critical responses to earlier theories.

