



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
In English Language (8EN0\_02)  
Paper 02: Child Language

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## **Non-ERA report 1906 8ENO\_02**

### **General overview**

This year there were fewer than 500 entries for AS English Language Paper 2: Child Language. As the number of entries decreases, there appears to be correlation with the quality of candidate responses. It is apparent that the centres that enter their AS cohort are preparing their students for the paper, but the approach taken is becoming more descriptive than analytical. The demands of the paper remain the same each year with slight variation evident based on statistical data. This paper was deemed marginally easier than last year, however the examiners noted that the general quality of analysis was lower than in previous series.

Candidates who scored highly were able to apply their knowledge effectively and utilise the data to answer the questions set. Question 1 required candidates to generate a guide aimed at parents. The purpose of this was to explain how the child's development of written language enabled her to produce descriptive writing. Question 2 asked candidates to analyse a transcript that showed communication between a mother and her child to explore how the child used language to engage in cooperative play.

### **Question 1**

The blend of AO2 and AO5 in this question continues to produce variable responses with a majority of candidates fulfilling the demands of AO5 – to reproduce their response in a specific format for an intended audience. This year the question required candidates to write for parents, a non-specialist audience. Candidates placed in Levels 4 and 5 were able to craft their responses in an appropriate and creative manner that demonstrated their creative writing skills. They were able to shape their responses using a number of genre conventions. Examiners noted a clear and consistent structure throughout such responses with clear signposting, headings and direct address to engage their intended audience of parents. Some candidates however, seemingly ignored the specified format and opted for a simple essay style. These lacked the craft and creative skill to reproduce their response in an engaging way albeit suitable for an essay.

The AO2 requirements for this question showed variation and range in theories, issues and concepts relating to written development. In previous reports, I have highlighted the issue of simply bolting on or tagging theories to a feature without sufficient application. It was clear in this series, there has been some work on this in centres. Candidates were able to select relevant aspects of appropriate theories, issues and concepts and explore them in relation to the data provided. Candidates are choosing to apply ideas coined by theorists such as Rothery, Britton, Cruttenden in place of the more commonly applied theories proposed by Kroll and Barclay. Candidates are beginning to apply these ideas more effectively and offer explanations of language use that are underpinned by such issues and concepts.

At the top level, candidates were able to discuss the use of environmental print and its influence on the child's ability to produce descriptive writing, and offered reasons for the presence of triadic adjectives and present participle verb forms etc. Various aspects of the data were explored consistently and linked clearly to selected issues and concepts. Responses at the lower levels tended to simply describe what was in the data and did not offer much in the way of explanation. They were very general and limited in application of knowledge and range of language features identified.



## Question 2

This question was successful with many candidates demonstrating a high level of preparation. Some were able to apply their knowledge in a more assured way to move higher up the language levels, although the number of high-level responses is declining with each subsequent year.

There was a noticeable trend of candidates, particularly in the lower levels, seemingly ignoring the question and reproducing an A–Z of spoken language acquisition. This made it more challenging for examiners to apply the marking grids when trying to assign a mark for AO3 context. Examiners noted that many responses did not engage with the full text, instead choosing to analyse few specific interactions in more depth.

Candidates engaged with the phonemic transcriptions and identified patterns in the child's speech and where such patterns may have been influenced by the mother's speech. Higher-level candidates identified patterns in the children's spoken language including the absence of functional words and inflections. They accurately linked this to Chomsky and nativist ideas and even used this to refute other theories including behaviourism. Candidates' attempts to challenge concepts and issues was more noticeable this year. This made sections of candidate responses more discriminating and moved them higher in the levels. There was a clear link to the data and responses at the higher levels that showed assured and confident understanding of concepts and issues. Many candidates were able to give accurate and considered points about the context.

There was a tendency towards description and feature spotting in lower-level responses, with some students struggling to move beyond an observational approach in their answers. References to issues and concepts were made, but they were often undeveloped and loosely applied, with few responses showing simple regurgitation of popular theories.

Contextual factors were significant in enabling students to understand how the children interacted with each other but there was often a lack of reference to these in the lower levels. Such candidates also tended to insert theories and theorists without fully linking them to the text making comments such as 'This proves Piaget's theory of language'.

