Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCE
In English Language (9EN0)
Paper 3: Investigating Language

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Introduction
The purpose of this report is to provide centres with an insight into the assessment process and give an overview of how candidates approached each question. This was an unusual series owing to the small number of candidates that took the exams.

In this paper, candidates were able to access the material and appeared to have a secure understanding of the demands of the paper. There seemed to be a balanced performance across Section A and Section B, demonstrating candidates' ability to examine an unseen text in detail as well as present their own investigation.

What was particularly pleasing to see in this series was an increase in independent approaches to both the unseen data and candidates' own research. In previous series, there has been evidence of candidates overly preparing a response for Section B and then being unable to adapt their approach to suit the demands of the question. Centres are encouraged to support and prepare candidates to be able to apply their data and findings to the statement offered in Section B rather than rely on a pre-rehearsed response.

Exemplar materials and accompanying commentaries of the previous series are available on the Edexcel website and give valuable insight into the marks awarded at each level and the standard required.

Candidates need to be aware of the different marks awarded to each section and should be encouraged to adapt their time accordingly. Although rare in this series, there was still some evidence of candidates writing more for Section A than Section B even though Section B is worth twice the marks.

The paper focuses on five sub-topics, all of which were released to candidates in January 2020. The topics for Global English and Regional Language Variation are always the less popular topics and, in this series, no candidates responded to these sections. The data and debate stems were similar to previous years and these topics remain some of the most consistent in terms of data and style.

As well as being divided into the five different sub-topics, the paper is also divided into two sections. For Section A, worth 15 marks, candidates need to closely analyse a piece of unseen data and critically evaluate how representative the data is of the way language is used in their chosen research field. For Section B, worth 30 marks, candidates are given a statement that they then have to discuss in light of their own research. Candidates are welcome to agree or disagree with the statement or offer a balanced view.

Language and Gender: Sub-Topic – Scripted Representations of All-Male Conversation

This was by far the most popular topic with just over half of all entries focusing on this area.
For Section A, candidates were given an extract of a script from the TV series, 'Auf Wiedersehen, Pet' and asked to discuss to what extent it was representative of scripted all-male conversations.
For Section B, candidates were asked to discuss whether or not scripted all-male conversations still reflected masculine stereotypes.

Section A
Candidates were clearly able to access the material with many candidates recognising the significance of the relationships between the characters and its influence on the way language was presented. The majority of candidates were able to discuss a range of different language levels and frameworks, engaging well with the data and making links within the text.

Higher level candidates picked up on the power relationships within the group and were able to effectively apply concepts and issues surrounding both gender and power. For example, many were able to look at the dominant behaviour of Oz within the group and also look at the roles played by other characters. At the upper levels, candidates were also aware of the significance of certain dialect features of the data and were able to explore the exchanges in detail. Candidates were able to explore grammatical aspects, such as non-standard determiners, as well as the lexical features of dialect shown. At the higher levels, candidates also considered the genre of the script and discussed the influence of genre on features such as the pun and the sexual nature of the discussion.

At Level 3, candidates tended to focus on more obvious aspects of all-male language, applying some gender research but without the depth or evaluation of the higher levels. There was evidence of a clear structure and a clear understanding of some of the typical features of scripted all-male conversation.

Lower level candidates tended to make quite sweeping and generalised comments about the way all-male conversation was represented. For example, statements that suggested men only talked about sex were made without discussion of how the topic worked in terms of the dynamic of the characters.

Section B
The majority of candidates were able to recognise that some stereotypes were still evident and for the most part, candidates were able to adapt their data to fit the demands of the question.

At the highest levels, candidates were able to explore the reasons behind some stereotypes but were also able to justify their opinion using well-selected data as evidence for their views. Candidates at this level were able to recognise that there are a range of masculine stereotypes and had clearly selected data to help illustrate and evidence these findings.

High level candidates also firmly established their data at the start of their responses to ensure that their investigation was clearly framed. This also allowed them to demonstrate that their reasoning was sound and that they had researched the area correctly. At the higher levels, candidates were able to make smooth transitions between their points, offering a range of evidence to support their chosen argument.

Mid-Level candidates were able to discuss the topic but often focused on a very narrow argument primarily around lexis and dominance. At this level, while some candidates were able to adapt their data to suit the demands of the question, this was less subtle and assured in comparison to higher level candidates.

Lower level candidates failed to make successful links within their own data or with the demands of the question. There were some generalised comments about male stereotypes but often with limited contextual support.

Overall, the gender questions showed varying levels of engagement but all candidates appeared to have selected sensible data sources to help them explore not only an unseen text but also a controversial debate statement.

Language and Journalism: Sub-Topic – War Reportage

There was a significantly smaller number of responses to this topic. However, one response was exceptional – especially for Section A.
For Section A, candidates were given an extract of Sebastian Junger's *War.* The extract focused on Junger's time with an American unit in Afghanistan between 2007 – 2008.
For Section B, candidates were asked to discuss whether war reportage was deliberately manipulative and biased.

Section A

One response was particularly good in this section, exploring the way Junger had crafted his piece in a way that was dissimilar to other journalists. The ability to discuss elements that were atypical allowed the candidate to showcase their knowledge of typical texts as well as give the candidate the opportunity to explore a wider range of terms and concepts. There was a very perceptive

discussion of the detached tone Junger employed and the shock caused by such a desensitised approach to reporting about war.

Section B

In this section, candidates were able to explore the role of the media and the purposes of propaganda and the influence of both of war reportage.

At the highest levels, candidates were successfully able to integrate complex ideas about audience manipulation and positioning with well-selected evidence from their own research to support their ideas.

At the mid and lower levels, it was clear that candidates had only researched a very minimal quantity of data and therefore were unable to extrapolate their findings in a way that befit the nature of the question.

Overall, it was clear that the higher level responses had immersed themselves in a range of war reportage pieces, allowing candidates to showcase their ability to explore and discuss their own data.

Language and Power: Sub-Topic – Motivational Speeches

As with previous series, this was another very popular choice.
For Section A, candidates were given an extract of a speech by American speaker, Eric Thomas.
For Section B, candidates were asked to discuss the typical patterns of motivational speeches and encouraged to evaluate these in light of the context of the speaker.

Section A
The data provided was highly typical of motivational speeches and the majority of candidates were able to identify a range of common features across the text. Higher level candidates were also able to identify atypical features, e.g. the slightly insulting language deployed by Thomas, and explore potential reasons for its usage.

At the lower levels, candidates tended to focus in on one or two lexical features within the data, with little discussion about the power within the text.

By far, the most common issue with this question was that candidates did not always approach this text as a Language and Power question, instead looking at the data from an identity perspective and discussing what the text revealed about Thomas. It is important that centres ensure candidates are aware of the need to understand the broader topic as well as the specific elements of the sub-topic.

Section B

For this section, there was an interesting range of data selected – some of which was more relevant to the sub-topic than others. There were some interesting interpretations of what a motivational speech actually is and centres are encouraged to attend the Q&A session about the pre-release material to ensure they are offering appropriate guidance to students.

Candidates who had carried out a detailed investigation were able to consider the use of consistent rhetoric patterns despite the different contextual experiences of their situations. Candidates were also able to explore the typical rhetorical devices associated with the concepts of power and motivation.

Mid-level candidates were able to show a clear understanding of the potential influence that a speaker's background might have but were not always able to transfer this knowledge to the data in a suitably sophisticated style.

Lower-level candidates often failed to consider the question statement and instead simply focused on how motivational speeches created power. This was perhaps one of the areas where candidates who had pre-planned a response struggled to adapt their own research. Some students had looked at a gender focus and simply explored that without taking the broader topic of power into account.

Overall, this question was encouraging students to consider the effective methods of creating power through language that stay consistent, despite the context. Some students offered a description of their data in terms of the background of their speaker without considering the potential for this to affect the way they used language.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper candidates are offered the following advice:

- Employ effective time management in the examination to ensure that appropriate time is spent on each question in relation to the assessment objectives.
- Ensure that you have effectively researched the typical features of their chosen sub-topic so that you can identify language features that are representative.
- Use terminology throughout your response in both questions and ensure that you are offering support from your research and your data.

- It is recommended that you frame your data in Section B so that the examiner can see what you have chosen to research and why.
- Make sure you take into consideration the bigger topic as well as heavily researching the specific topic.
- Ensure you practise adapting your data to fit a range of potential Section B style debates. Make sure that you are making your data fit the debate/discussion rather than relying on a pre-planned response.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx