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Examiners' Report January 2010

GCE English 6EL01

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Unit 1: Exploring Voices in Speech and Writing

This unit comprises the examined component of AS Language and Literature. With its explicit focus on aspects of **voice** it assesses understanding of how spoken voices are used and written voices are created in transcripts of authentic conversation and in literary, non-literary and multi-modal texts drawn from the 20th and 21st centuries.

SECTION A (questions 1a and 1b) involves the exploration of 3 unseen extracts and students are required to identify features of spoken language and examine how writers and speakers shape and craft the extracts provided.

SECTION B assesses understanding of how the spoken word is represented in literary texts and is based upon the text they have studied. An extract from their studied text is presented as a starting point for analysis and they are then to make links to the broader novel/novella/collection.

SECTION A

Question 1

Question 1 required candidates to explore three unseen extracts provided in the source booklet - a transcript of authentic conversation (**used in conjunction with question 1a**), an extract from Offside, a football blog posted to an internet website and an extract from a print-based travel article (**used in conjunction with question 1b**)

Question 1 ai asked candidates to **identify** three spoken word features from Extract A (a transcript of an authentic conversation between an elderly woman and her daughter) and then to **provide an example of each feature** from the extract. Marks were awarded only when the feature **matched** the example given.

Question 1 aii asked candidates to comment on the function of two of their selected features **within the extract**

1a i was marked out of a maximum 6 marks at AO1 and although the majority did well it actually afforded a greater range of marks than we anticipated. Some candidates failed to employ accurate terminology in the naming of features; others repeated the same feature and in this way restricted the potential for reward; some failed to match the feature named with an appropriate example from the extract.

1a ii had a maximum score of 4 marks (again at AO1). Responses here also covered the full range:

A filler is used to allow the person time to think and correct themselves if they have made an error.

Repetition is often used to emphasise something that is said. It can also show that the participant is not paying full attention.



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Examiner Comments

Here the candidate offers an accurate definition the feature. However this definition is generic and the lack of specific links to the extract and the function of the feature restricts to a mark of 1 for this component.

Had the response have extended to make this link, as in the extract below, the mark awarded could have been doubled:

The ~~constant~~ ^{overlapping} of the mother ~~and~~ and daughter "doesn't work // I'll have it" shows the stress and frustration between them both as they struggle to fit the hearing aid. The micro-pauses 'it doesn't (.) the aid' suggests they are both unsure of that they're doing.



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Examiner Comments

Comments link the incidence of spontaneous speech directly to the extract and demonstrate understanding of its function within the exchange itself.

Question 1b

This second component of Q1 links to two unseen extracts provided in the Source Booklet. Text B was an extract from a **blog** and text C was an extract from a **travel article**. The question asked candidates to examine how the writers:

- Shape or craft the texts to meet the expectations of their respective audience/purpose/context
- Employ aspects of spoken language in their texts.

Responses are assessed against AO2 with its specific focus on how structure, form and language shape meaning, and AO3 with its specific focus on the contextual factors which impact on the production and reception of texts. Each AO is marked out of 20, giving an overall maximum mark of 40 for this question.

Overall, candidates responded well to this question in that it gave them the opportunity to discuss a range of linguistic and contextual features. There were fewer of the “rubric” type problems with this question this time round. In other words, most candidates had grasped that they needed to write in equal detail about BOTH texts and that they needed to tackle both bullet points. If they did miss something out, the most common problem was not analysing the “spoken language aspects” in sufficient detail rather than missing a text out entirely. Text B proved to be generally more accessible than Text C which provided a key discriminator for this question.

Higher band answers presented an integrated discussion of both texts, demonstrating a confident command of terminology and a good appreciation of purpose and audience. They were also able to explore the more subtle aspects of language and effect, for example the mix of register in the travel article and the reasons for this.

In responding to **Extract B** most demonstrated awareness of the conventions - linguistic and contextual - of internet blogs and of the two extracts it was the blog that was generally more accessible. The majority were able to correctly (the best, cogently) define the audience for Text B. A few decided that only teenagers use the internet and only men were interested in football, however! There was a good range of comments on the weblog format and its conventions. Candidates recognized the relationship between the blogger and his readers and offer developed comments on the interactivity of the medium. Most were able to identify some linguistic features arising from this relationship (abbreviations, recognisable football clichés etc). Features of spoken language were also quite readily spotted – however the quality of contextualized comment covered a wide range.

The exploration of the travel article, **Extract C**, was less successful on the whole, and, as such, proved to be a useful discriminator. Some less successful candidates got themselves tied up in the geography of the article rather than the language. Many struggled with the audience, reverting to stereotypes linked with ‘broadsheets’ - old people over 30’, ‘posh people’, ‘holidaymakers’ are typical of these. At mid-lower bands of achievement the irony and grammatical complexity of Calder’s piece were often commented on vaguely, with students frequently sensing it was different from the blog but not able to say exactly why. The mix of registers also confused some candidates, but perhaps the biggest problem was in judging the tone of the piece. The combination of playfulness, exaggeration and sarcasm made many candidates unsure of the real purpose of the article with some taking it far too literally. Some recognised the element of ‘humour’ but struggled to find the words to be more precise. It was here that understanding the context of the piece let them down. A few thought it was advertising Thomas Cook’s timetable! Most could pick out the more complex lexis in places but many missed the range of spoken language features.

At **AO2**, successful responses explored a range of language features in **both** extracts. Exemplification was consistent and appropriate and the responses offered considered comment on the link between form and function. Terminology was fairly wide ranging and applied with accuracy. Less successful responses picked up on some general language features although coverage of the extracts was sometimes uneven. In lower band answers exemplification was inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate. Levels of specific analysis and links between form and function were limited and/or undeveloped.

At **AO3** successful responses offered developed comment on the context of both extracts with consideration of the factors that influenced the production and reception of each. Investigation of the blog considered the conventions associated with this form of communication and linked this to the relationship between the blogger and his readers – and the unifying factor of Arsenal FC. Investigation of the travel article considered its multiple function and linked this to convention and audience.

The following excerpts are drawn from a response that falls into the mid-lower range of achievement.

At **AO2** it picks up on some general language features in both extracts, although exemplification is patchy and links between form and function limited/undeveloped.

Example 1

the writer uses aspects of spoken language on this text such as colloquial language: 'doesn't exactly have me fired up', 'a few rumors to dance around', 'grabbing silverware'.



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Examiner Comments

There is a general awareness of the characteristics of the spoken language features employed in the text and how this gives the blogger a 'voice' but this is not fully developed and comments lack precision, falling as they do under the generalisation that is 'colloquial language'.

Example 2

the paragraphs are summaries of what has happened which will ^{give} help the audience ~~with~~ the information they need for the match the following day. 'when Arsenal doesn't have a fixture over the weekend. Tomorrow's match...'


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Examiner Comments

There is recognition of the structure of the blog, and of how this links to audience and purpose. These comments lack precision and development, however.

Example 3

Caldar uses light humour, 'everyone over two is classed as an adult.', which keeps the reader intrigued and also it flows nicely onto his next point about carrying passengers on the roofs of the trains. ~~the~~


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Examiner Comments

There is general recognition of the humour in Text C but the candidate struggles to articulate its effect.

Example 4

~~The~~ Some words and phrases he uses suggest him being high class: 'rarely demonstrate excitement', 'dramatic developments on the rails in South America.'


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Examiner Comments

The candidate appears to be seeking evidence to support their assumptions about the nature of 'broadsheets' here. The evidence is tenuous and undeveloped and typifies the struggle many candidates had with this text in particular.

The following excerpts are drawn from a response that sits at the mid range of achievement which offers reasonably competent, if essentially straightforward, investigation. As is typical of many responses in this range, there is greater confidence – and competence- with the handling of Text B:

Example 5

The writer uses discourse markers such as "Moving away from the rumor department" and "fortunately", to be direct the audience's thoughts attention from one topic to another and to persuade the reader - the rumors there are to speculate over may not be so "fortunate" for everybody.


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Examiner Comments

There is identification and exemplification of structural/spoken features in the blog. The contextualisation of these features is accurate, if tending towards the generalised.

Example 6

The writer begins the post by informing the audience of what to expect from the blog, with an ~~incomplete~~ sentence stating that "[there is] Not a lot to talk about today". The ^{ellipsis and the} ~~omission~~ ^{and register} of the verb to be (there is) creates an instant informal tone, for the text, which suggests that the ^{relationship} ~~relationship~~ ^{or friendly} between the writer and the audience is quite close - perhaps the writer is ~~targeting~~ ^{targeting} regular readers, and therefore does not need to be formal.


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Examiner Comments

There is relative security with the contextual factors that influence the production and the reception of the blog. Terms are applied with accuracy and comments are relevant.

There is less confidence with the travel article:

The following comments follow directly from those above:

Example 7

other countries to read on. The first sentence ^{reflects} ~~suggests~~ the prosodic feature of ~~love~~ a humorous or fun tone, thus persuading the reader to read on again. This feature is useful as the audience may be new to reading this type of article since they may simply be reading it to get an idea of where to travel to for their next holiday, and ~~may~~ ^{they} like ~~some~~ the welcoming tone of the opening sentence makes the reader feel more intimate with the article and its writer.


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Examiner Comments

Comments on 'tone' are vague – links to function and their reversion to the generalised 'fall back' that is 'persuading the reader to read on' is evidence of the insecurity with this text.

The following excerpts are drawn from a response that sits at the top range of achievement and which offers a well balanced, accurate and discriminating investigation and analysis of both extracts.

Example 8

^{The} ~~interest~~ this blog wishes to appear ~~knowledgeable~~ informed and the comment, 'although it is Goals.com reporting it,' shows dry humour and implicitly implies that 'Offside' is a superior, more reliable blog. This may also be evidence of a rivalry or topic of humour which may run consistently throughout these blogs. Again, this may appeal to regular readers and make them feel part of a group of enlightened football fans.


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Examiner Comments

Comments on contextual factors are perceptive and pick up on the less obvious aspects of production/reception

Example 9

"No-frills" ^{is colloquial and therefore more 'spoken,' yet it is appropriate as readers of a travel article are assumed to recognise that the evaluative adverb 'no-frills' means cheap, economy travel.}


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Examiner Comments

The exploration of the travel article achieves the confidence that matches the consideration of the blog. Here there is a synthesis that incorporates tone, audience and analysis.

SECTION B (Q 2-8)

Questions in this section cover the range of literary texts studied for the examination. Students were presented with an extract selected from their set text and were asked to explore aspects of voice it contained. They were then directed to comment beyond the extract to the wider novel, novella or collection (according to the text studied).

A successful response to the literary set text should offer detailed investigation of the given extract and extend beyond it into the broader novel/novella/collection. There should be relatively sustained focus on the central issues of the task (this varies, obviously, across questions and set texts) and selection of evidence should afford appropriate links to the extract and to the task.

At their best, responses were fluent, clear and technically accurate. Exploration of the extract was thorough and systematic and links to the broader text were well defined and appropriate. Exemplification was consistent and judiciously selected and examples were investigated using literary and linguistic approaches that were relevant to the task. Terminology was accurate and analysis extended to word, sentence and whole text level.

At **AO2** there was a degree of confidence in consideration of structure, form and language. Links between the extract and the wider text were well defined and exemplified accurately. Responses demonstrated confidence with the specifics of analysis and used this to explore links to how meaning is shaped by structure, form and language.

Less successful responses offered limited analysis of the given extract and were unlikely to extend **fully** beyond it into the broader novel/novella/collection. There were also a significant number that offered limited investigation of the extract which, after a few limited remarks, launched into the wider work often resulting in unfocused generalities. A detailed exploration of the extract provides a clear and focused platform from which to approach broader considerations and candidates who clearly understood this almost always did better. Focus on the central issues of the task (this varied, obviously, across questions and set texts) tended to be inconsistent and many digressed into generalised comment (for example the perceived Feminism of Carter, the post-slavery context of Walker or the much investigated theme of paralysis in Joyce). Selection of evidence was inconsistent and at times supported general assertions rather than those that linked directly to the extract and to the task.

Exploration of the extract in these less successful responses was straightforward and comments on the wider text were generalised and/or descriptive. Exemplification tended to be inconsistent and not wholly appropriate. Investigation of examples was limited in terms of analysis and there was a tendency to describe. Terminology was offered in a very limited range and there was considerable incidence of error. There tended to be an imbalance of analysis at word, sentence and whole-text level with the majority focussing their analysis on lexical choice.

At **AO2** there was a lack of confidence in consideration of structure, form and language. Links between the extract and the wider text were weak and, at the lower bands of achievement, omitted. Responses demonstrated insecurity with the specifics of analysis and links to how meaning is shaped by structure, form and language were limited.

The following excerpts are drawn from a response that falls into the lower range of achievement. It is a response to Q2, based on *The Bloody Chamber* (Carter).

There is a general awareness of Carter's layering of voice, but a struggle to move beyond the basics of identification in this respect:

Example 1

The narrator then begins to talk directly to the reader as if an external person is adding more information. In this case the ~~rest~~ speaker is telling you about the wolf.

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Examiner Comments

The response accurately picks up on the direct address and senses the nature of narrative voice at this point in the extract. The comments offered are insecure and undeveloped, however.

Example 2

Carter uses words like "beast of prey", "red as a wound" and "infernal vermin" in order show the wolf to be creepy and something to be scared of.

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Examiner Comments

The response identifies the devices that construct the 'communal' depiction – and fear- of the wolf. It struggles to take this beyond identification, however, lacking the terminology and/or confidence to develop significant comment.

The following excerpts are drawn from a response that falls into the mid range of achievement. It is a response to Q4, based on *The Colour Purple* (Walker).

This response is significantly more successful than the example above.

There is competence in exploration of the extract:

Example 3

Walker uses minor sentences for impact and to show Celie is agitated, 'I stutter'



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Examiner Comments

There is a sense of authorial intent and crafting. Exemplification is accurate, and links to the generation of Celie's voice are sound (if not fully developed to comment on the aspects of self-evaluation/reflection they evidence).

Example 4

Celie feels a "lightening in the head" and Walker uses this metaphor to create imagery in the reader to show her distress.



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Examiner Comments

Again there is awareness of the author. The literary device is correctly identified and exemplified. There is a link between form and function, but this is essentially straightforward.

Example 5

A limiting aspect of this response is the handling of AAVE:

underestimates how cruel Albert is. 'Naw' is spelt phonetically and African American Vernacular English or AAVE is evident. Walker has done this to make the voice of Celie more realistic as a Black, working class, Georgian female. The word 'ask' is also spelled with non standard English, 'est'.



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Examiner Comments

There is an attempt to link aspects of the vernacular to the voice of Celie but this is at best generalised.

The following excerpts are drawn from a response that falls into the upper range of achievement. It is a response to Q8, based on *The Dubliners* (Joyce).

This response is significantly more successful than the example above.

There is a synthesised exploration of the extract:

Example 6

Eveline's voice comes across as melancholy and wistful as she becomes lost in her memories. Adjectives like 'pitiful', 'melancholy', 'dark', 'foolish' and 'dusky' are emotive and create a sad voice that turns more agitated to the end of the extract.



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Examiner Comments

There is a sense of authorial intent and crafting. Exemplification is accurate, and links to the generation of Eveline's voice are sound. There is also clear focus on the central issue of the task.

There is a confidence that enables points to be linked across the extract (and the wider collection), rather than a chronological/sequential analysis.

Example 7

become shorter and simple: 'Escape! she must escape!' the ^{the sentences}
 'sudden impulse of terror' reflects this change in her voice
 and signals the end of her reminiscing.


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Examiner Comments

Links between form and function are sound. The identification of shift (and trigger) is evidence of a level of sophistication that characterises a higher band response.

The choice second story, A Little Cloud, is judicious and links are developed to the first story and to the task itself.

Example 8

The exclamation 'Ignatius Gallaher on the London Press!' followed
 by the rhetorical question 'who would have thought it possible 8
 years before?' reflect the voice of Little Chandler talking to
 himself as he remembers Gallaher.


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Examiner Comments

Method and effect are handled well. Focus on the issue of memory is sustained.

Example 9

The use of hedges and vague language following the discourse marker 'In the end', like 'some shady affair' shows us that Chandler is pushing Gallacher's more sinister side away and chooses only to concentrate on the positives. The refusal to specify his

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Examiner Comments

Features are offered in a broad range and are linked to Chandler's voice and perspective with fluency and confidence.

Statistics

6EL01 Grade Boundaries

Paper no	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
6EL01/01	100	63	55	47	39	32	25

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