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Examiners' Report January 2010

GCE English 6EN01

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General Comment

The entry for January included some AS students taking the exam for the first time and some re-sit candidates. There was evidence that candidates are coping well with allocation of sufficient time for each question, with most attempting a response to each of the five questions. It was interesting to note that achievement was often not consistent across the five questions, with some candidates scoring in the top band for one question and in the bottom band for another. For this exam, it is clearly important to demonstrate a range of skills. Q4 proved to be the most challenging, with the most scope for improvement in future series.

Question 1

This test of linguistic terminology produced the full range of achievement from zero to full marks. The intention to elicit the term 'passive voice' was again thwarted! Candidates found other aspects of 'Can all sinks and loo's be cleaned' to comment on. Candidates were marked positively, however, rewarding any observation showing linguistic knowledge, whether of form and structure or function.

(a) Extract: (No. A1) you **can just** leave it there

(i)

(2)

1 Modal auxiliary verb "can"

2 Indirect.

(ii)

(1)

could you.

(b) Extract: (No. A4) **Normal clean please.**

(i)

(2)

1 Context bound.

2

(c) Extract: (No. B6) **DO NOT HAVE A BATH.**

(i)

(2)

1 Imperative

2 Direct Command.

(ii)

(1)

Give pamela.

(d) Extract: (No. B7) **Can all sinks and loo's be cleaned**

(i)

(2)

1 Ellipsis of determiner "the"

2 ~~Contraction of and~~

(ii)

(1)

Can everyone put rubbish in bins on site.

(e) Extract: (No. C4) said you would go **thru** it in class

(i)

(2)

1 Colloquial

2 Elision

(ii)

Ta.



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Examiner Comments

Provided the example could be interpreted as referring to one of the points made, a mark was awarded, even if the candidate did not make it explicit. While the terminology 'interrogative' and 'imperative' is more precise for description of form, candidates achieved marks for the terms 'question' or 'command / order' to refer to functions. It is possible to gain two marks for commenting on both form and function.



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Examiner Tip

Remember to comment on the underlined words, not some other aspect of the extract. There was understandable confusion between the terms 'ellipsis' and 'elision', but this lost candidates marks.

Question 2

This question will remain constant and there was evidence that many candidates knew how to approach it. Most understood the term 'context' to refer to the situational factors, as opposed to the language features in the text. Many applied a useful framework for discussion of the aspects that had an impact on the language use of the mode under discussion. As Q3 always asks candidates to focus on one group in more detail, they should consider the mode of handwritten notes in general terms for this part of the exam. Good exam practice would be to read all the questions before beginning to write their answers.

The contextual factors that influence the use of language in handwritten notes are things like the mode of the text. As it is handwritten and often rushed, you might see some reduction in the spelling, so the meaning is still clear but the spelling becomes non-standard - for example "into" (Group C, 1) or "thru" (Group C, 4). The purpose of these texts is simply to convey a message to another person in as few words as possible in some cases ("DO NOT DRAW CURTAINS" Group B, 3). ~~so they~~ They are all context bound and are only intended for one audience, the person the note is addressed to, and out of this situation they don't make as much sense as they have an intended audience of one.



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Examiner Comments

This brief response covered enough points to achieve a mid-band mark. There is a valid point about three contextual factors: mode, purpose and audience, with a comment about the influence on language use.



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Examiner Tip

Try to cover a range of significant contextual factors and explore some complexity in at least one. The purpose, for example, is rarely 'simply to convey a message'. The top mark band was awarded to those aware that handwritten notes may fulfil various functions: providing information, giving instructions and being sociable in the examples given.

Question 3

This question focuses on one sub-group of texts, requiring some closer textual analysis than Q2. The wording of the question varies slightly, so candidates should note which aspects to focus on. Any reasonable comment about the purpose and relationship between writer and readers was credited. Some candidates suggested (erroneously) that the relationship was between mother and children, for example; those supporting this claim with evidence gained marks. Some candidates became distracted by the issue of the physical location - where the notes were left and discussed evidence for a care home scenario.

The marks for AO2 reward awareness of concepts such as formality, explored precisely by some candidates in terms of power, politeness, distance, though it is not necessary in a short response to discuss particular theories.

The language use in Group B reveals that the notes have a specific purpose: to give commands, shown through many verb phrases, and such as 'Do not draw curtains', and imperatives. Sentence moods such as imperatives, declaratives and as well as mitigated imperatives. These commands are in a lexical field of the home, with nouns such as 'Attic', 'binbag' and 'dusters', and of people's names. The semantic field shows an air of authority, that the writer feels they have authority over the intended audience, seen by the message of Donald - do not have a bath! Perhaps the writer does not have a good relationship with the audience or is head of the home and therefore cares for the recipients of the messages. It seems very likely that the writers do not just want to order commands, they want to show that they want to show their power over the recipients of the notes. This can be seen through the language of the notes: whilst they do have colloquialisms such as shortening of words like 'etc.', it is otherwise formal ^{with its} standard English and non-personal used.

language. The graphology of the notes confirm the authority, with capitalisation used frequently which makes the commands seem even more urgent and important. The language use reveals that the purpose of the notes is to give commands over the reader, showing ~~no~~ so little social interaction, and that the tone involves no social aspects either, it simply has an air of authority and showing power to others.

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Examiner Comments

This response achieves a high top band, arguably leaving nothing to be added or extended.

Question 4

This question asks candidates to apply skills of forensic linguistics, noticing unusual features of the language use and drawing conclusions about the unstated (or 'mystery') aspects of its context. In this case, candidates were asked to consider the writer, intended audience, purpose and location. Many linked informal features with the youth of the writer; reference to longer life and weight loss with an older female audience; positive catchy phrasing with a persuasive purpose. Surprisingly few picked up on the clue about foreign currency.

Top band for AO3 and AO2 marks were awarded to those very few candidates aware of the various anomalies in the text. Even if the font does not look like handwriting, the insertion of extra words above the line is an indication of the mode. Although using language associated with advertising, the reference to 'sammy' implies shared knowledge and thus a restricted audience.

The language use reveals that the text may be socially orientated, for example its purpose may be a joke from one friend to another with shared understanding of deixis ~~for example~~ such as 'jelly footed as sammy!'



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Examiner Comments

This very brief response achieved a top band mark for AO2, but needed more textual analysis for a higher mark at AO3.



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Examiner Tip

Candidates should treat the mystery text in this question as data containing evidence. The notion of idiolect is a useful starting point and many candidates noted distinctive language use such as the phrase 'sheer bliss', combined with the informal emoticon and a baffling reference to 'sammy' without an initial capital letter. They should seize upon such features as clues and investigate further, rather than note them and pass on without comment.

Question 5

The texts shared a work context, but differed in purposes and rapport between participants as well as in mode. Most candidates approach this question appropriately with a focus on presentation of self, using textual analysis in support of these primary points, rather than an exercise in itself. Although there were four speakers and writers involved in these texts, candidates correctly dealt with the two writers of Text A as similar: young friends in a fairly close, humorous relationship. In contrast, the speakers in Text B were operating on a more distant, polite, professional way and were probably older. It was not necessary to analyse each individual in detail, but many made interesting observations about the relative status of, for example, the garage owner and customer.

AO1 marks are awarded for clarity and precision of expression, including the use of appropriate terminology. This aspect was generally pleasing with few candidates falling into the bottom band.

AO2 marks reward candidates' explicit discussion of presentation of self and their awareness of concepts and/or theories. Candidates bring an informal understanding of language use to their A Level studies, so are intuitively aware that Text A involves young friends and Text B individuals in a more formal encounter. For higher band marks, they should display linguistic study: theories of face and positive/negative politeness proved useful to candidates in their comparison between the two exchanges. Although Grice's co-operative maxims are not always relevant, candidates used the maxim of relevance to support their points about the random, changing topics of Text A, versus the single developed subject of Text B. Without explicitly mentioning the term 'discourse', it was pleasing to see many candidates commenting on the overall structure of texts. Reference to gender theories tends to be a problem. Candidates should ensure that they a) summarise the theory accurately b) apply it critically, aware, for example, that Lakoff's theories were informal hypotheses not actually backed up by any research or hard data. A critical understanding of concepts and theories is required for the top band.

In Text A, the writers of the messages present themselves as individuals trying to appear who are intelligent and funny using the mode of online messaging. The two writers attempt to compete with each other show power over each other using colloquialisms their conversation, with phrases such as 'He smells get strong grand U' and 'he aintcha friend!'. However, they seem to know each other well as they use no opening sequences or introductions and do not use phatic talk to try to bond with another, making them seem cut

ease with each other. There also seems little purpose in their conversation, which could be evidence that the conversation is being used solely for interaction or that they do not know each other too personally in that they do not talk about anything personal. This is typical of male conversation, which usually features topics to do with physical things ^{and interests} rather than feelings. It could also be said that they are ~~show~~ using 'face-work', a theory ~~stating~~ by Goffman stating that people present faces to other people

which disguise their true self and that other people support these faces in hope that their own faces will be supported. This 'face-work' can be seen in the final message of the conversation where the writer describes what ~~they are~~ ^{they are} doing in a grandiose, ~~impressive~~ ^{imaginative} manner. However, there is ~~not~~ intended to impress. However, there is evidence of lack of support for face, seen by ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~complex~~ ^{well} the complex clause 'eerrrrrrr well stmy to break it to you, but the smell gets stronger grand u!', which could be described as a face-threatening act. The recipient of this face-threatening act responds with good humor, however, so it could be ~~not~~ harmless phatic talk.

By comparison, the speakers in Text B have a very different relationship. A garage owner and a customer, it could be assumed that they would not know each other too well but there is also evidence for it. Like Text A, the conversation has little function other than social interaction but the chatic talk seems more obvious in that it appears that they are talking ~~to each other~~ because there is nothing else to do. The garage owner appears to be holding the ground whereas the customer seems to fill in the conversation, with 'backchanneling' ('oh really').

admiration ('no way' and 'wow') and fillers ('ah' and 'oh'). The garage owner seems in control of the conversation, supplying the topic, a car competition he is in, and using overlapping. The customer has aspects of female conversation, being supportive. Even if he is male, he fits in with a theory of dominance which regards gender, that he is supportive because he is subordinate to the owner, being a customer.



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Examiner Comments

A fascinating, thoughtful analysis, gaining top band marks for AO2. Each point representation of self is supported by textual reference, but the whole response lacks enough detailed analysis to gain more than a high mid-band mark for AO3. AO1 expression is exemplary, despite inevitable slips of the pen under exam conditions.

AO3 marks are awarded for detailed supporting analysis of the two texts. Most candidates divided their time appropriately between the two texts. There can be a link between performance at AO2 and AO3: if candidates have not focussed on presentation of self, but a comparison of spoken language v electronic language, their analysis of texts falls into a lower band 'identifies a few distinctive features of each text'. Candidates achieve the mid-band of marks for AO3, provided they identify 'some relevant features'. The higher bands are awarded for more detailed analysis that moves beyond lexis to grammar or discourse.

receive messages at a quicker pace. The purpose of these messages is for a means of informal communication as the two writers clearly know one another as they both refer to themselves using the first personal pronoun 'I'. The indications that this is an informal relationship can be seen in reference to Brown and Levinson's theory on positive face as the writers clearly have a close relationship as they insult one another "Smell gets stronger around you" and use phonetic spelling in order to represent their dialect "aintcha". The use of gender theory this may also indicate the writers are male as often men insult one another to show solidarity and a friendly relationship. Grammatically the sentence structure sticks to both simple and compound sentences structure. This is due to the means of communication as these are quicker to type and it is simpler to bring across meaning and emphasise upon a shorter statement. Shorter sentences also mean a quicker means of sending and receiving messages. The sentence mood varies from declaratives such as "I haven't done a thing" to exclamations to represent the emotions of the message.

Sander such as humour "Funny". It is unusual that the writers should use interrogatives question marks as the online means of communication tends to replicate speech in most instances. This may be because the users intonation and meaning need to be reiterated by a question mark. There is a prevalent use of relative pronouns "who" and the writers ^{do not} ~~use~~ direct ^{their} responses for ~~an~~ a wider audience so they refer to one another directly "you". The writers use adverbials to convey the time "day" and "the other night". The adverbials of manner and reason tend to emphasise the reasoning for their action during the course of the conversation. The conversation is context bound and indicated through the use of non standard demonstrative pronouns as the writers direct the attention of one another in the use of terminology "this", "that". Locally the writers use elision to represent their dialectal pronunciation "cept". The writers also use homophones such as 'v' as a quicker means of typing and communicating as they are at work and should not be on Myspace and their time is limited. They also use ^{devices} alliteration such as alliteration "course chaos", "poke/prod". Contractions also are used as in "havin't" as the vowels sounds have been elided as they are not needed to convey the meaning of the word. The writers ^{identities can} ~~have~~ ^{be} ~~different~~ indicated as one writer tends to use much brief sentences and over uses capital letters, whereas the other writer always sticks to lower case using a simple sentence structure.

Text B however is a less planned and constructed conversation as it is speech rather than written by any means. It is a conversation ~~to~~ between two participants ^{and} therefore the audience is limited, similarly to Text A. The purpose conversational rather than professional as the ~~use~~ ^{participants} ~~do~~ ^{must} have ~~need~~ to build up a rapport with one another. This can also be seen as the participants co-operatively overlap one another. This could suggest either a female speaker as females often overlap and support one another ^{according} ~~is~~ to gender conventions or it could indicate a struggle for power status within the conversation between the two users. There is a frequent ~~the~~ use of back channel behaviour and minimalist vocalisations in order to support the speaker's utterances "mm, yeah". Repetitions as seen in Text A are also used here, however in Text A they are used to emphasise information, within Text B this is more likely to be a false start, or to give the speaker a longer thinking time to phrase the required response. The repetition can also give the speaker clarity ^{of} ~~at~~ ~~yeah~~ ~~same~~. The conversation is of the semantic field of cars ^{which} ~~and so~~ interlinks with one of the speaker's professions. Due to the focus on cars throughout the discourse this may indicate that this is more phatic conversation between a customer rather than an actual friendship with one another. Due to both their interest in cars their conversation may have started on a formal footing (Goffman) and shifted to a more

informal one. The adverbials used throughout the discourse
are context bound as they refer to a "local" and an
event called "Run to the Hills". The speaker uses



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Examiner Comments

This candidate provides analysis of a range of key constituents of language, achieving top band for AO3, though discussion of presentation of self does not quite reach top band.



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Examiner Tip

Make sure the initial focus is on presentation of self, perhaps by opening with a paraphrase of 'The speakers / writers in text x present themselves as ...'. Try to explain and develop your points with some subtlety; not a simple world inhabited by people who are either young / old; female / male; friendly / polite; educated / uneducated; etc. Use linguistic concepts and terms, as well as informal comments, such as 'laid-back'. Remember to support such points with evidence from the text and display knowledge of precise linguistic terminology from a range of language levels. Ensure there is some explicit comparison, by signalling this clearly as you move from Text A to B, with a phrase such as 'In comparison'.

Grade Boundaries

Paper No.	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
6EN01/01	100	71	63	55	48	41	34

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

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