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Examiners' Report January 2009

GCE

GCE English Language 6EN01

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There was a small entry (45 candidates) for the January series of the first examination for Unit 1. Although it was evident that many candidates needed more time to become familiar with the requirements of the course, the responses demonstrated a wide range of achievement. Most candidates managed their time well and were able to address each of the 5 questions.

Question 1

Assesses AO1: the ability to apply appropriate linguistic terminology.

The five examples are chosen to cover a range of the key constituents of language: grammar, lexis (including) semantics, morphology.

Comments at the level of discourse and pragmatics are not practical with such brief extracts. Knowledge of phonology may be tested on extracts of spoken language.

Graphology may also be included, but candidates should be aware that the use of bold font and underlining is a device to draw their attention to the specific word or phrase they should comment on. As it is not a representation of the original text, comments on the use of these graphological features is not relevant. It is important, however, that candidates focus on the phrase indicated, not some other aspect of the example.

There was a range of achievement. The mark scheme indicates a range of acceptable responses to the first part of each question. A mark is awarded for the second part, if the example supplied matches one of the candidates' comments. When providing another example from the texts, candidates who highlighted a specific word or phrase made it clear which aspect of the sentence they were referring to, but they were given the benefit of the doubt, if their example was potentially appropriate.



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Examiner Comments

(a)(i) Many candidates could apply the terms '*imperative*' and '*negative*' to this verb phrase structure. NB. The terms '*order*' or '*command*' to describe functions were accepted as alternatives to the more technical term '*imperative*' to describe grammatical structure. As well as noting the absence of a subject pronoun in imperatives, some candidates noted the use of '*elision*' in the auxiliary verb.

(ii) It was not clear what this example illustrates. It is not an imperative and although there is no pronoun, none could be used in this structure, so the candidates did not achieve a mark.

(a) Extract: **DON'T EVEN THINK** ABOUT SMOKING IN THIS AREA [No. 7].

(i)

(2)

1 *Absence of pronoun*

2 *Imperative*

(ii)

(1)

'Carrying lighted cigars ...' (No. 6)

(b) Extract: **VIOLATION** WILL RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION [No. 1].

(i)

(2)

1 *Area Compound word*

2 *Absence of article or subject*



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Examiner Comments

(b)(i) Other candidates used the term '*derivation*' or '*nominalisation*' correctly to refer to the morphology of this word. The use of the term '*noun*' as well as '*nominalisation*' did not achieve a second mark, as it repeated the same point, but noting that the word was formed from a '*verb*' was acceptable. It is accurate to note that there is no '*article*' used for this '*subject*', but others claimed, inaccurately, that the subject was missing.

(ii) The candidate was awarded a mark for intuitive understanding by providing a similar example, even though it was not a '*compound*' word, nor clear that the article is missing.



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Examiner Comments

(c)(i) The term 'adverb' or 'suffix' was needed here. Many candidates made general comments about positive connotations that were not rewarded.
 (ii) In the spirit of positive marking, the candidate's intuitive understanding was rewarded in the example given of another adverb. Those who repeated the same word or phrase as the given example did not gain credit.

(ii) (1)

Regard 'Regulations' (No. 2)

(c) Extract: **POSITIVELY** NO SMOKING ALLOWED [No. 5].

(i) (2)

1 *Agreeing to context*

2 *Absence of det & noun adjective*

(ii) (1)

'Strictly prohibited' (No. 6)

(d) Extract: NO SMOKING ALLOWED IN **THIS** BUILDING [No. 6].

(i) (2)

1 *Propose Pronoun Pointer to noun*

2 *Complete Absence of R pronoun*

(ii) (1)

'It is against the law to smoke on these premises.' (No. 4.)

(e) Extract: SMOKING **IS NOT PERMITTED** [No. 8].

(i) (2)

1 *Negative response*

2 *Auxiliary verb absence*

(ii) (1)

'No smoking allowed' (No. 5)

(Total for Question 1 = 15 marks)

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Examiner Comments

(d)(i) Many candidates correctly used the term 'deixis' for the function of this word. This candidate gained a mark for referring to the following 'noun'. Although 'this' functions as a 'determiner' in this structure, so many candidates used the term 'pronoun', it was accepted, as the word 'this' can sometimes function in this way.

(ii) The candidate clearly indicated – by underlining – that the word 'these' provides a similar example of a deictic term.

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Examiner Comments

(e)(i) Although very few candidates were able to identify this structure as the 'passive voice', it is a highly significant feature when analysing levels of formality or language and power in texts. This candidate was awarded a mark for identifying the 'negative'. Candidates are advised, however, not to repeat the same term over these 5 examples. Some claimed each one as an example of 'context-bound' language, for example. As this observation is arguably true of most language use, they could not be credited more than once for the use of this term.

(ii) The 'auxiliary verb' ('is') is present in this example, but the candidate was awarded a mark for providing their own example of a negative passive structure omitting the auxiliary.

Mark: 9 / 15

Question 2

Assesses AO2: the influence of contextual factors on the language of the texts.

Candidates need to shift their focus in the second question onto the wider context - or situation - in which these texts were produced and received. A few misunderstood the term 'context' as referring to textual features.

In order to describe context, candidates need to show their awareness of significant factors, using appropriate terminology, such as **purposes** or **functions**; **genre** or **mode**; **audience** or **tenor**; **subject** or **field**. Some candidates also considered the impact of the **location** in which these signs are displayed and the wider **social context** of government and laws. Candidates who commented on a range of factors and were able to see some complexity, for example in the purposes or relationship between writer and readers, achieved higher bands.

To move onto explanation or analysis of the influence of context, candidates need to refer to some links with language choices. These were often appropriately brief references to features, such as imperatives; direct address; familiar, eye-catching logos; semantic field of the law.

- 2 Explain the contextual factors that influence the use of language in No Smoking notices.

(AO2 = 5, AO3 = 5)

In your response you must refer to the data provided on pages 2-5 of the Source Booklet.

The mode of these is a written notice, the field is on smoking and the function is to inform, the audience which is smokers, not to smoke. The tenor is to ~~the~~ explain or inform the audience that they are prohibited in the areas.

The lexis; smoking, cigarettes, ~~what~~ informs people of what the sign is about and what it is there for. However the lexis; no, violation, law, prohibited, breach, penalty, policy, is used to show the reader why they are ~~not~~ unable to smoke and the reasons for this.

The semantic field with smoking is smoke, lighted, cigars, pipes, cigarettes. These are used as examples of

what the writer is informing the audience not to, do.

There is not much grammar in the texts, as they are short and simply there to inform.

ellipsis is used in many of the notices for example, 'no smoking' is used, with the verb 'allowed' missing. Also 'Carrying lighted Cigars, pipes or Cigarettes Strictly Prohibited' is used where the noun 'is' is missing.



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Examiner Comments

Paragraph One

(highlighting the words 'mode', 'field', 'function', 'tenor'): In this response, the candidate gives a brief description of each factor. Further marks would have been gained for a more detailed awareness of each factor. The candidate needs to show greater understanding of concept of tenor.



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Examiner Comments

Paragraph Two

('lexis'): The candidate identifies some relevant aspects of lexical choice and continues to comment at this level regarding the semantic field of smoking.



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Examiner Comments

Paragraph Four

('There is not much grammar...'): Candidates who are able to comment at the level of grammar or discourse achieve higher bands. This candidate makes a fair point about the use of ellipsis, but needed to show how this linked to contextual factors: for example, the need for brevity and conciseness in displayed signs.

Mark: 4 / 10

Question 3

Assessed AO2 and AO3 equally: linking some understanding of concepts and issues with awareness of the impact of contextual factors on language use.

Many candidates identified Text 14 (displayed in a hotel in Dubai) but were rewarded for the quality of their argument, rather than for the correct choice of text.

AO2: Candidates mentioned relevant concepts such as *regional variation*, *dialect* or *sociolect*, degrees of *formality* and *politeness* to explain their choice of text. A tentative application of these concepts distinguished the higher mark bands.

AO3: Most candidates identified lexical choices such as 'malls' (v 'retail outlets'), 'apartments', '3rd phase' and the date mentioned, as evidence of a non-UK variety of English. The conclusion that this indicated an American use of English was considered valid (though possibly not, in fact, true). Some candidates preferred a process of elimination, referring to the use of sterling sign and the acronym 'NHS' as evidence of UK English. Some candidates claimed that formality of lexical choice was a distinguishing factor, but polysyllabic and Latinate lexis occurred in most of the texts in this group.

Candidates who were able to analyse at the higher levels of grammar and discourse achieved higher mark bands. They noted the longer overall length of text 14 and its more positive (semantics and connotations) and inclusive tone, as well as the use of a universally recognised logo at the end, rather than in an initial position. A few were able to identify the use of more complex sentence structures, with subordinate clauses, or a minor sentence at the beginning. However, it was not accurate to claim that the other notices used only simple sentence structures.

- 3 There are five No Smoking notices in Group B. Four of these notices were on display in the UK, and one in another English-speaking country.
Identify the notice that you think was on display in another English-speaking country. Explain your decision with reference to variation in language use. (AO2 = 5, AO3 = 5)

In your response, you must refer to Group B on page 4 of the Source Booklet.

From the variation in language use I think that number 14 in ~~the~~ Group B is the notice that was displayed in another English-speaking country. I have deduced this by studying the fact that in the UK, language use in signs and in public is usually very 'Standard English' and we are a country used to this, and not used to much colloquial language on signs etc. Number 14 contains some colloquial, idiolect, dialect and sociolect language that suggests some non-standard features that are more common in countries such as the USA. For example: 'apartments' which is not always a common word used to describe hotels in the UK, and also 'shopping malls' is not a familiar phrase used in the UK, it is more of an Americanised colloquial word. Also, the tone of the notice is very informal, relaxed and chatty, which is a feature of American language.

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Examiner Comments

Paragraph One

(highlighting the words 'Standard English'): In the above response, the candidate applies concepts of standard v non-standard, colloquial and informal language, but needs to be more tentative in claims about language variation.

('idiolect, dialect and sociolect language'): The candidate needs to provide some evidence that each of these terms and concepts mentioned are understood.

('malls'): The candidate uses a valid identification of lexis as American variety.

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Examiner Comments

Paragraph Two

('very informal, relaxed and chatty'): The candidate should avoid making a sweeping claim that this is a feature of American language and show awareness of some threads of formality in the language use.

Mark: AO2 (2 / 5) because needs more thoughtful application of concepts
AO3 (3 / 5) because needs to go beyond lexical choice in text analysis

Question 4

Also assessed both AO2 (5 marks) and AO3 (10 marks): requiring more analysis of the texts.

Candidates should assume that a group of texts shares a common characteristic. Relevant AO2 concepts and issues were the use of humour, degrees of politeness and indirectness, comparative status, types of power, convergence, as well as the more familiar concept of levels of formality. The higher mark band requires critical understanding of the concepts used, rather than reference to a large number.

As the distinguishing factor of these texts was the way they addressed the audience in more friendly or inclusive ways, candidates who focussed on this AO3 aspect of context and language were more likely to achieve the higher bands. The concept of tenor (or relationship between addresser and addressee) was very useful. Candidates noted the frequent use of declarative sentence structures, rather than imperatives; use of politeness markers; use of 2nd person pronoun; ambiguity in the colloquial term 'butt'. The longer Text 21 offered scope for more sophisticated analysis, eg. use of spoken language features.

- 4 What techniques do the writers of the notices in Group C on page 5 use to achieve their purposes?

Identify significant language features from at least two of these texts.

(AO2 = 5, AO3 = 10)

The notices in group C are quite short and simple. There ^{are} no complex ~~structure~~ sentence structures or latinate lexis in these notices. Precise and simple language is achieved by using monosyllabic words, and very short sentences. This is very useful, as the public don't tend to ~~notice~~ read these notices if they were long and boring. The use of such language achieves its purpose of informing and warning.

The writers of the notice have used mitigated imperatives, and polite salutations in their notice. This improves the quality of the notices as it implies equal status, rather than using negative ways and imposing the command. It politely requests the smokers not to smoke or informs them that they are entering a non-smoking area. For example, 'Please no smoking'.

Most of these notices have included the ~~non~~ no-smoking sign. This ~~non~~ is easier for people to notice, as it is an internationally used sign. The use of graphology in these notices add to the attractiveness of these notices, as most people would not stop to read these notices.

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Examiner Comments

Paragraph One

(highlighting the sentence 'no complex sentence structures or Latinate lexis...'): Although the point about relative brevity and simplicity in the response above is fair, candidates should avoid making such sweeping claims: it would be extremely rare to find NO complex structures of Latinate lexis 'cooperation' and sentence beginning with subordinating conjunction 'If...'

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Examiner Comments

Paragraph Two

('mitigated imperatives and polite salutations'): In a brief response, this candidate shows awareness of the key points. An example of a mitigated imperative would gain higher marks.
(*'it implies equal status'*): The candidate shows understanding of a key concept.

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Examiner Comments

Paragraph Three

('graphology'): The candidate could have focussed on use of humour or spoken voice features to gain higher marks, but nevertheless gives fair comment regarding the use of logo.

Mark: 10 / 15

Question 5

Assessed AO1 (10 marks), AO2 (15 marks) and AO3 (25 marks).

Candidates need to understand that the focus of the task is on presentation of self, not on the differences between spoken and written language. They are advised to begin by asking themselves 'How does each person present herself?', perhaps rephrasing this key question, for example as 'How does she come across a) to me b) to her intended audience?'

They should also consider the important steer in the task to 'compare' and look for some similarities – both female, young, non-UK English, both concerned with their work. Then candidates should explore ways in which they differ – many candidates noting that one was more dynamic, powerful, committed in her work. A few candidates ignored the evidence in front of them and assumed the blog writer to be an older male. Many candidates also considered the way the other participant in the conversation presented herself, considered by some to be dismissive and by others supportive. Either comment, supported by evidence, was credited.

AO2 concepts such as idiolect, including theories about language and gender, age, region and power can be usefully applied to this discussion. Many candidates showed impressive knowledge of theories and research, but most needed a more critical understanding. Centres are advised to aim for quality of understanding, rather than quantity of theorists mentioned. These concepts were used by a number of candidates: convergence and divergence (sometimes mis-attributed to Labov, rather than Giles) instrumental and influential power (correctly attributed to Fairclough), Robin Lakoff's theories about women and language (without sufficient critical appraisal); Grice's Co-operative maxim of quantity (not effectively used to make a relevant point).

AO1 assesses candidates' expression of relevant ideas and use of appropriate terminology. Most candidates wrote in a generally clear and accurate way, but needed to employ more terminology in their analysis. This clearly links to the AO3 requirements. Candidates were rewarded for using precise terminology to discuss contextual factors. They would achieve higher mark bands for both AO3 and AO1 if they used a greater range of linguistic terms in their analysis of language.

AO3 assesses candidates' ability to analyse the influence of these and other contextual factors on language use. Candidates were aware that the mode differed: one a spoken conversation and the other a written / electronic blog. Although the differences are often emphasised, better responses noted some interesting similarities and overlaps. Both texts were interactive to some degree, though only the conversation involved immediate feedback. Some candidates noted the direct address in the opening welcome of the blog. Although the blog actually had a wider audience, some candidates commented on some personal touches, suggesting a one-to-one communication.

Some features common in spontaneous spoken language were also found in the written blog (paralinguistic features such as the 'gulp'). Candidates were more confident in identifying uniquely spoken features (pauses, overlaps) than in commenting on uniquely written / electronic features, such as the layout of a webpage, allowing use of sidebars and hyperlinks (underlined words). Stronger responses did not claim a formal v informal distinction, noticing that the blog used a mixture of formal and informal language. These features were linked to contextual factors such as purposes and audience or tenor. The blog offered candidates more chance to explore complexity regarding purpose and audience. The writer needed to present herself as accessible to a youthful audience, whilst maintaining some authority.

Textual analysis of the transcript showed the ability to use concepts from conversation analysis. The higher mark bands require candidates to go beyond identification of common features such as pauses, overlapping speech, repetition, colloquial lexis or non-standard grammar. They might use their pragmatic skills to comment on the effect such features have on meanings conveyed.

SECTION B: PRESENTING SELF

Read the two Texts A and B on pages 6–7 of the Source Booklet and answer the following question.

- 5 Analyse and compare the ways in which each speaker / writer of Texts A and B presents herself.

(AO1 = 10, AO2 = 15, AO3 = 25)

In your response you should include reference to any relevant theories and research.

Text 'A' is a transcript of a conversation between two women – a woman and her mother-in-law. The woman is discussing with her mother-in-law about her recent dismissal from her job. As this is presented as a friendly conversation, the use of language is very informal – since it's assumed that there will be no permanent record of this. The language use of person (A) seems to use more features of standard English than person (K). Although her role in the conversation she rarely speaks during the conversation, person (K) seems to assume that she's taking the supportive role. However, it seems like person (A) is uninterested in the conversation, as she merely participates – except when she's obliged to. Furthermore, she seems to be interrupting in much of the conversation, hence disobeying Grice's cooperative Maxims theory. Person (K) presents herself as an emotional woman, often as impractical and unassertive. She is seeking emotional relief through social bonds. She's in a very vulnerable position, as she is trying to overcome the grief of losing her job. As she tries to explain her position and the unfairness and perhaps prejudice of her employer – because she's a woman.



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Examiner Comments

Paragraph One

(highlighting 'seems to assume'): The candidate in the response above identifies features of turntaking and comments on implied meanings. ('interrupting in much of the conversation'): Misunderstands the role of backchannel / minimal responses from the listener, usually to signal encouragement.

('disobeying Grice's'): The candidate needs a more thoughtful understanding of these theories about ways meanings may be implied.

('presents herself as'): Candidates are advised to use this phrase in order to ensure focus on the main task. The comments that follow show a thoughtful understanding of underlying meanings.

She is very unassertive in her language use. Her language use is, however, very polite. Hence, confirming Lakoff's theory that women's language is more polite. For example, when she's asked about the sort of tea she wants, she does not impose her wants of a part.

Her language use is very colloquial and non-standard, as it disobeys Lakoff's theory on women speaking standard forms of language, – unlike text B.

Text B starts off with an introductory about the writer – in both Welsh and English. The mode used here is written. However, it is also electronic. So there may be features of both ~~speech~~ spoken and written modes, as it is a crossover or fusion. There are some features of graphology use in the text. For example, she has included her photo in the blog, and has used some side boxes to convey her interests and ideas. The use of graphology is probably to make the blog more lively and interesting attractive – probably to gain more hits. Although this is an internet blog, ~~it~~ her text does not feature any use of 'internet-lingo' or non-standard spelling – probably because she is a public figure. Her language use is very powerful, as she seems to be frustrated from the Tories campaign to call for an inquiry in to the inquiry. Her use of language disobeys Lakoff's theories on women's language being powerless. Her sentences include a mixture of imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives. Furthermore, her use of interrogatives are to



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Examiner Comments

Paragraph One (continued...)

(highlighting 'unlike text B'): Candidates are advised to include comparative terms throughout to ensure they meet the requirement to COMPARE.



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Examiner Comments

Paragraph Two

('both spoken and written modes'): The candidate makes a valid point about the overlap in styles, but needs to provide a few pertinent examples.

('more lively and attractive'): Although this is a valid point about purposes, the candidate could also consider the target audience.

('because she is a public figure'): This is a thoughtful comment about the unusual lack of 'internet-lingo'. The candidate could go further to provide precise examples of the

GCE2008 English Language 6EN01 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	100	78	68	58	49	40

Notes

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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