

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCE English Language 6EN02

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Introduction

This is the third year in which work has been submitted for this unit and it is clear that most centres are preparing and supporting candidates well. The overwhelming majority of work submitted was completely in line with the requirements of the specification. The numbers of candidates opting for the Journalism Interview, the Written Narrative and the Dramatic Monologue was fairly equal with The Scripted Presentation was less popular. However, candidates who did attempt this task often did so very successfully. Where centres had taught the full range of tasks and allowed candidates to enter different combinations, their candidates had the widest possible choice of ways to demonstrate their writing skills. Where centres had limited the selection of tasks to the Written Narrative and the Dramatic Monologue, candidates sometimes found it harder to show 'expertise and creativity in the use of English in a range of different contexts'. This was particularly evident when candidates chose to use a first person narrator and a chronological structure for the narrative and did not use stage directions in the monologue so that the two tasks were not sufficiently distinguishable in terms of genre.

The majority of centres had applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently and had provided detailed and focused annotation to support marks given. This annotation, when closely linked to the assessment objectives, was extremely helpful to the moderation process.

Word Counts

The word count for this unit is 2000 – 2500 maximum for the two tasks and 500 words for each commentary. The whole folder, including the commentaries, should therefore not exceed 3500 words. A small number of centres this year had allowed candidates to submit folders which were considerably above this limit. Centres are reminded that the specification states that it is the centre's responsibility to inform their candidates that there is no tolerance on the prescribed word limit and that teacher assessors and moderators are instructed to 'discontinue marking once the prescribed word limit is reached' (Specification page 17).

Task One: The Journalism Interview

Once again this task produced some excellent writing from candidates. Candidates had been well prepared for the task by studying examples of the genre; they were aware of the need to vary ways in which speech was represented and to present the subject of the interview from a particular perspective. Candidates appeared to have been fully engaged with this task and there were some interviews of an exceptional standard. Whether the interviewee was a friend or family member, or someone not part of the candidate's immediate circle, did not make any difference to the quality of the work. Only rarely did candidates rely too heavily on transcribing questions and answers verbatim.

To achieve marks in the upper mark bands, candidates must first demonstrate the ability to use a mixture of direct and indirect speech, quotation and summary to convey the interviewee's response to the interview in an entertaining and enlightening way. The candidate must also use telling details and observations to give a sense of the subject as a person. These often included details about the interviewee's surroundings, their appearance, their manner of speaking and their actions. Successful candidates often established a clear perspective on the subject in the first paragraph which they were able to develop throughout the interview giving a sense of focus and direction. In the example below, the candidate skilfully sets the scene and gives a context before introducing the subject of the interview.

Journalism Interview: Example 1

The fashion industry...the glamorous feel of the perfect outfit when you wear it ...be it the beautiful cocktail dress you bought four months in advance or the sweetly tailored suit you have just been carefully measured out for, the love of fashion is rife in each and every one of us. Alas fashion is a bittersweet passion, it sometimes barrels through our minds and becomes an obsession. Yet to become a fashion designer you must throw yourself into this turmoil of heels and lipstick and at the tender age of nineteen, J____H____'s in the thick of it all with the company Alexander Khan.

Taking a different starting point the next candidate uses a brief personal anecdote to give the interview an investigative framework: an 'angle'.

Journalism Interview: Example 2

Puzzled by the world of game shooting C____C____ interviews veteran shooter D____C____ to discuss the sport, the shooters, and why townies don't get it.

It all started during a friendly chat, specifically when I was told my opinion didn't count. I was at school and the girl I was talking to loved pink, the 'Twilight' book series and could reload a hunting rifle and fire it at an unsuspecting pheasant within seconds. We were talking about game shooting in fact. I mentioned that I didn't like the idea of killing birds, or any animal for that matter.

'Oh really?' she exclaimed 'but you're from London though, right? Doesn't count then! You just don't get it.'

What's to get? I thought. There can't be much else to killing animals, right? Despite this I wasn't sure. After all, with two thousand UK breeding farms releasing approximately 35 – 40 million pheasants and 6.5 million partridges annually there's clearly a large market. Maybe there was something I didn't 'get'. So I sat down with D_____ C_____, a company director from Lincolnshire and a regular shooter. Introduced to shooting as a young man he has routinely attended shoots for over thirty years and knows a vast amount concerning the market – its ins and outs.

Examiner Comments:

The tone in example 2 is informal and colloquial ('what's to get?'), but entirely appropriate for this kind of journalism. It starts with an intriguing introductory paragraph again showing sophisticated awareness of journalistic conventions and quickly moves on to a surprising little personal anecdote. The alarming and entertaining list of three in the first paragraph, *'loved pink, the 'Twilight' book series and could reload a hunting rifle and fire it at an unsuspecting pheasant within seconds'* is evidence of careful crafting of language. The facts and statistics about game shooting are seamlessly and skilfully brought into the text without losing the reader's interest. The ending of the piece is masterful and shows that the candidate has real journalistic flair.

- *In the end, I guess it comes down to who you empathize with more – the guy holding the rifle, or the bird at the barrel-end.*

Journalism Interview: Examiner tips

Use a range of ways of representing speech.

Leave out anything that doesn't add to the reader's picture of the subject.

Decide on an 'angle' before beginning the piece. Successful interviews have a clear focus. It helps if the candidate, as in the example above, has a question they want answered or an issue to 'investigate' in the interview.

Use observed details about the interviewee's surroundings, their appearance, way of speaking and acting to help the reader to visualise the subject and get a sense of what it was like to talk to them.

Task One: Narrative Writing

Most candidates followed the instructions in the specification and based their narratives on an original oral version. The few candidates who omitted this preparatory stage produced much weaker pieces of work. Some candidates were able to draw on fascinating first-hand accounts of dramatic events witnessed by friends or relatives. The more able candidates were able to see the potential in these anecdotes for gripping and moving written narratives often taking unexpected approaches to the material.

Narrative Writing: Example 1

One candidate based her narrative on a story told to her by a family member about two Jewish brothers escaping from Poland during the Second World War. The boys had had their fortune told by a gypsy in an inn on their way to the border. They were told one would live and one would die. Subsequently one of the brothers returned to the ghetto and was lost while the other continued to the border and survived. The candidate decided to tell this story from the point of view of the gypsy who is herself anti-Semitic. However, she finds herself drawn to one of the brothers while feeling hostile to the other.

The taller man then stretched out his palm towards the gypsy. Her skeletal fingers inched their way up his palm and her grip tightened as she felt him balk. She gripped his fingers tighter and hissed, 'You cannot escape the future or those who tell it'. She pulled his palm closer to her. She knew exactly what she would tell this man. Revenge would be sweet. Oh yes, she would pay him back for his Jewishness, mockery, derision and disbelief in her. She gazed into his angular face, looked him in the eye and declared resolutely, 'You will not live to see the end of this year. His face dropped and his eyes and mouth opened wide. He looked shocked. Clearly he had been expecting something a little more optimistic, something similar to the shorter man's prediction.

Collecting himself he sneered at her, turned to the shorter man and declared, 'We've wasted enough time here. Let's go.'

The narrative builds to a powerful and dramatic ending as later the Roma girl falls and injures herself walking through the forest.

The next thing she knew was the harsh butt of a rifle. A German soldier on patrol in the forest was standing over her. She felt her body convulse with fear. And yet, she suddenly understood. To them, she and the Jew were the same. The enemy made no distinctions since there were none. The cruel, unfeeling German pressed his rifle deeper into her in an attempt to make her stand up. She tried but her leg buckled under her. Once again she felt herself yearning for friendship, for someone to be there for her. Only the rifle was reaching out to her now. She thought of the short, friendly, Jewish man.

Examiner Comments:

While by no means perfect this is powerful and gripping writing, very carefully crafted. The decision to adopt the point of view of the Roma girl was original and ambitious and opened up a range of interesting narrative possibilities which

the candidate goes on to explore with great skill and sensitivity. The penultimate sentence is particularly effective.

Narrative Writing: Example 2

Other candidates who did not have access to such material nevertheless were able to make use of anecdotes to create interesting and entertaining narratives. The following candidate created a charming and funny narrative about a friend's account of how she got together with her boyfriend one day at school when most of the class had gone on a trip leaving only four students in the lesson.

'You know for a teacher, she's not bad,' said Louise, smiling. The four pupils began to answer their questions, discussing the answers as they went along.

'I'm confused!' announced Rachel.

'What's the problem? I'm a genius,' said Nathan, with a hint of arrogance in his voice.

'Question four, describe the process of osmosis,' she replied.

'Erm ... osmosis, it's when ...' he said.

'He doesn't even know,' said Louise angrily.

'You're such an idiot Nathan, why do you think you're so great?' said Rachel.

'I'll help,' said Justin quietly. It was the first time he had spoken since sitting at the table and it took everyone by surprise.

'Thanks. So describe osmosis for me,' replied Rachel.

'Osmosis is the diffusion of molecules through a semi permeable membrane from a place of higher concentration to a place of lower concentration until the concentration of both sides is equal,' he said confidently.

'Wow!' said Rachel, 'you're a genius; I've never met someone so clever.'

Justin blushed slightly at Rachel's comment.

'Aww, look at the love birds flirting,' joked Nathan.

'Sexual tension!' added Louise.

Examiner Comments:

The oral anecdote here has been turned into a very different kind of narrative to the one above. Here the narrative is carried largely by the dialogue. There are weaknesses, but on the whole, the dialogue is convincing and the characters come across well. The reader enjoys the humour of Justin's text book perfect answer in contrast to Nathan's inability to answer the question in spite of being a 'genius'. We can also sympathise with the couple being gently teased by the others. The whole narrative grows effortlessly out of a very ordinary classroom situation.

Narrative Writing: Examiner tips

Use a range of narrative strategies. For example consider experimenting with unusual or multiple points of view. Think about what tense to use and how variations might be used to lend immediacy to the piece. Avoid over reliance on adjectives but consider how changing verbs might make pieces more effective.

Include enough clues so that the reader can work out what is happening but do not feel that everything has to be 'spelt out'. Do not be afraid to make the reader work.

Task Two: The Scripted Presentation

While the numbers of centres with candidates selecting this option have increased compared to the first year of the specification (2009), it remains the least popular task. However, generally, candidates choosing this option performed very well. The most successful candidates had thought carefully about the needs of a listening audience. They incorporated strategies to capture the attention of the audience at the start and tried to support the listener throughout by, for example, using clear signposting and relevant visual aids.

The best scripted presentations combined a relaxed but authoritative tone with carefully structured organisation signalled clearly to the audience at the start and throughout the piece. Both the examples below contain opening paragraphs which do this effectively but in different ways.

Scripted Presentation: Example 1

Hi guys (slide 1) You must recognise this picture. Yes, it's a hamburger. But how many of you know the origin of this word? Well, this is what I am going to be talking to you about for the next couple of minutes –etymology (hopefully you will still be awake by the end). (Slide 2) Before I begin, I wanted to highlight my three main points. Firstly, I will try to explain what etymology is – with a bit of luck, you should all become familiar with this term. Secondly, I will be looking at the etymology of the English Language. And finally, I will be showing you examples of certain words and their etymology.

Examiner Comments:

There is a clear attempt to engage the listeners here with the use of direct address, the establishment of rapport at the beginning and the use of a rhetorical question. The structure of the talk is foregrounded so that the text which follows is easier for the audience to 'process'. The light-hearted and relatively informal tone is sustained by '*hopefully you will all be awake ...*' and by '*with a bit of luck*' but there still remains a sense that the speaker knows what he/she is talking about and can be relied on to tell the audience something relevant and interesting. It is clear that the speaker will at some point return to the question about the origin of the word 'hamburger'. Indeed the piece ends by recapping on the three points covered, then:

Before I finish I am sure you are all wondering about the etymology of the hamburger. Well, I can tell you, it is a German word. People living in Hamburg are often called Hamburgers – in the same way people living in London are called Londoners.

A slightly different tone is established by the following candidate:

Scripted Presentation: Example 2

'Because you're worth it'. I'm sure you've all heard this catchphrase, right? Well today I'm going to talk about adverts and their power. Firstly I will look at beauty adverts for men and women and how the language used differs from each other. Secondly I will move on to how adverts for different social classes compare to each other and lastly I will discuss if the same kind of advertising and language is used on magazine covers.

Examiner Comments:

Here there is attempt to engage the audience in the first couple of sentences but it is not sustained through the whole paragraph. There is some redundant language (*'from each other'*). However, there is, again, a clear outline of the structure of the talk which is to follow and this is helpful to the listener.

Both these scripts tackled relevant subjects in a way which made them accessible to the target audience and included an effective slide show to support the talk. The information was interesting and the tone well - judged. Most importantly, like most of the scripted presentations this year they both incorporate features which identify them as written to be spoken rather than read as an essay.

Weaker students tended to get bogged down in the material and failed to re-present it effectively for their target audience. Another difficulty was to become too informal to the point where jokes and asides to named members of the audience were included which made the texts look more like a transcript of something than a script. Over familiarity in some scripts also undermined the authority of the speaker. However, this was unusual.

Scripted Presentation: Examiner tips

Try it out on a live audience.

Use clear discourse markers.

Know your subject but don't overburden the listener with unnecessary information.

Include visual aids.

Task Two: Dramatic Monologue

This was a popular option again this year. The majority of candidates were able to successfully create a convincing spoken voice using a variety of techniques for exploring character through idiolect. The most successful candidates showed awareness of the dramatic nature of the genre and employed strategies to engage the attention and interest of a listening audience by thinking about how the narrative might be staged or presented using stage directions and sound and/or lighting effects. The weaker candidates did not take into account the needs of a listening audience and wrote monologues which resembled stream of consciousness passages in fiction or internal monologues accompanying action sequences. Others included more than one speaker slipping into a different dramatic form altogether. An interesting development this year was that there were a number of monologues submitted where the persona adopted was that of a 'real life' celebrity or a well known fictional character. Of these the most successful were the fictional characters. This year there were monologues by, for example, Wally (from 'Where's Wally'), Lady Macbeth, The Joker, and Superman. Amongst the 'real' characters were Jeremy Kyle and Ian Curtis.

Here is an example of effective use of stage directions in a monologue. (The stage directions are marked in bold.)

Dramatic Monologue: Examples

(Jessie is a confident sixteen year old girl. She is sitting in a chair with her back to a mirror lined with spotlights and is heavily made up. As she speaks she is taking out rollers from her hair.)

*Ever since I was little I've known I wanted to be a model. I used to wear my mother's clothes and shoes and borrow her make -up and bags when I wasn't meant to. See, my mum was a model too. I'm following in her footsteps, if you like. Not that she wanted me to ...**(mimics her mother by raising and sharpening her voice to sound bossy)** She told me to stay in school, get an education, not to chase a job that will only last you a couple of years. **(Rolls eyes)** Well it didn't last her long because she went and got pregnant almost as soon as she'd started – lost her figure. **(Confidently)** I'd do it differently though. I don't want to do it like my mum.*

*Anyway, it doesn't matter what she thinks now. **(Long pause before speaking softly)** She's dead.*

In contrast the piece below has no stage directions. It also includes dialogue.

Oh my God! The airport is closing and I still haven't found out when I am flying or where I'm flying to. This is an absolute nightmare. No-one can speak English and I am stranded here not knowing when I am going to get home. Shall I go to the information desk and ask for some help? Yes. I hope I don't have to do that sleeping on them horrible plastic chairs like that man. I won't be able to sleep because I will be past myself in case my luggage gets stolen.

'Hello, could you help me please?'

'Lamento que yo no entiendo. Voy a conseguir un traductor para ayudar a.'

How long am I going to be waiting for a translator? Hours.

The propensity for writing dramatic monologues from the point of view of fictional characters often lead to interesting results as in this one based on Lady Macbeth.

(A tall, slender woman is busying herself about her home. She is only completing mundane tasks but her expression reveals that she is deep in thought.)

Have you ever felt as if nothing's enough?

Born wealthy. Well-dressed, pampered and married to a nobleman. Servants, furniture, feasts, guests. What does it all mean? What is it without true power? What would I give to sit high above all the scum and filth below me, immune to tie and fear, to look down on them all struggling to hold on to their pitiful lives. I would give anyth ..do anything-...to have power. To hold it is to hold life itself. And it is fact.

(The woman pauses at a nearby mirror and stares intently at her reflection.)

I know this is possible. They told me. Whom, you ask? I cannot say, they are ...everywhere and everything. The three.

Here the candidate creates a new and convincing 'voice' for the well known character which brings out the psychological conflict very skilfully. Stage directions are used to enhance the dramatic effect.

Dramatic Monologue: Examiner tips

Think about the piece as a performance. Use stage directions to control the staging of the piece. Think about how sound effects and lighting might be used to establish changes in mood or shifts in time or place. If the piece is envisioned as a narrative to be performed on film or television it is still important to make it clear where the speaker is and what they are doing as they perform the monologue.

The Commentaries

The word limit for each commentary is 500 words: candidates can achieve full marks for A01 and A02 within this number of words. The following candidate wrote an excellent commentary in exactly 499 words. Here is the first part to give an idea what can be achieved in a limited number of words. She is commenting on a dramatic monologue in which a girl has agreed to take part in an arranged marriage.

Commentary: Example 1

Within the monologue, Rehma isn't addressing anyone specifically. Were she talking to an actual person it would suggest that she has someone to reach out to. I wanted to write about someone trapped, surrounded by people and in a country she doesn't know (she defines the field specific lexis when she discusses the mayoon 'a beauty treatment ...' comparing it to western things to underline its unfamiliarity).

I made the lexical choice for her to sound like a westernised teenager, but I was worried that excessive slang would make her seem too light-hearted (due to its colloquialness). Similarly, taboo words would be inappropriate; I worried these would give my character something of a rebellious streak when her nature is largely submissive, "Cause ... 'cause you can't say 'no" I kept the slang minimalistic 'annoying', 'ok', used non-standard English occasionally, 'is what Mum says', and established a useful sociolect ('I'm like'). I also used some gender specific language, namely tag-questions, 'Lovely, isn't it?' and I allowed her to focus on things that one associates with the interests of teenage girls, such as fashion, 'she wears just the craziest, brightest colours, practically neon, shiny too ...' Like a teenager she also recounts events with intensifiers or superlatives 'craziest, brightest colours', which I emphasized the tone of with capitalization, 'A TON'.

Examiner Comments:

One of the strengths of this commentary is the way that each assertion about linguistic choices is supported with evidence from the piece itself. The strongest candidates always gave examples from their text to support the points they were making in the commentary.

In order to achieve the top two bands for A02 in the commentaries the assessment objectives stipulate that candidates should discuss linguistic choices in 'both stimulus texts and own writing'. There were quite a few cases this year where candidates were given a high mark for A02 in the commentaries even though they had made no reference at all to 'stimulus texts'. It is a clear requirement of the specification that candidates should study some examples of the genre that they are working on and this study should be reflected to some extent in the commentaries. Here is an example of a candidate doing exactly this:

Commentary: Example 2

Before I began to plan my monologue we looked at Alan Bennett's Talking Heads and I based my monologue on 'Playing Sandwiches'. I learned how to foreshadow events giving clues to the audience about what secrets the characters are hiding. I chose this one because the character also shows low self awareness like my own character and tries to justify his actions and blames others. With my character I used dramatic irony showing to the audience that the character believes their behaviour is normal but also showing to the audience that they have something to reveal making the audience recognise the character's faults. Bennett also used age specific lexis and working class sociolect to create a believable character.

Examiner Comments:

Here the candidate is making clear reference to the stimulus materials.

Candidates who do not make comments on how language is used in stimulus materials should not be receiving marks above 3 for A02 on the commentaries.

Commentaries: Examiner tips

Include examples to illustrate points made.

Make reference to language choices in stimulus materials and discuss how the final piece was influenced by the stimulus texts.

Keep to within the word limit.

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