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Examiners' Report June 2010

GCE English Language 6EN03

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Introduction

This paper reflected the breadth and depth of the new specification with its focus on diversity and language change over time in Section A and the first use in this specification of children's spoken language in Section B.

There was some variation of achievement across the questions. Generally speaking, the responses to section 2, Children's language development, were slightly fuller and more convincing than those for section 1, Language Diversity, especially for AO3.

Very few candidates seemed to experience timing issues in the examination and most managed to write at considerable length. In some responses quantity sometimes outweighed quality with the material submitted not always clearly focussed on the data. However, many candidates realised that each of the four tasks required a succinct response and understood the importance of building their answer around the key constituents with clear links to contextual factors and language issues.

Each individual question is considered in this report and an example from a candidates response is also given for each question (for Q1 and Q2b these are extracts only). However, a general summary may be of benefit to centres.

In Question 1(a) some candidates tried to cover too many features or didn't select productive key constituents that allowed them to display the full range of their linguistics knowledge.

In Question 1(b) candidates need to remember the importance of covering a range of key constituents. Long narrative accounts of the history of printing, dictionaries and standardisation are seldom relevant.

In Question 2(a) candidates need to integrate child development theories alongside a description and analysis of specific language constituents and associated terminology. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the question carefully to ensure they have the correct focus.

Question 2(b) also requires knowledge of theories and key constituents but candidates need to respond carefully to the demands of the question. Merely identifying features in a list-like fashion or writing about child development theories in isolation will not achieve top bands. Instead, candidates need to organise the material effectively, identify and show understanding of key issues and state why they believe such features are present.

Question 1(a)

Question 1a is a short response question designed to allow candidates to focus in depth on two examples from the data and to show their knowledge of the key constituents, contextual factors and any relevant issues and concepts. In this case, candidates were asked to explore a text written by a student who had grown up in a Creole speaking environment but who most likely now speaks a form of Standard English (inferred from her status as an A level student). The 10 marks available for this question (5 marks per example analysed) reflects the length of response that is expected from candidates.

In lower mark bands, answers tended to be superficial and descriptive. Often, they demonstrated choice of unproductive key constituents, such as discussing the writer's use of punctuation or criticising the lack of complex sentences. Other lower band answers tended to ignore the question and ranged too widely through the data, which resulted in very thin coverage of individual points. Such candidates also tended to lack awareness of the key concepts underpinning this language form and either almost completely ignored the issue or focussed on the data's 'incorrectness' when compared to Standard English.

In the higher bands, candidates selected examples which allowed for more detailed exploration. The most commonly selected were from the level of spelling/phonology (such as 'di' and 'dem'), grammar (3rd person pronouns, the formation of the negative and the tag question 'no') and lexis (the Spanish influenced 'uno'). The difference between these forms and Standard English was then described and analysed closely using appropriate terminology (including accurate use of the IPA). These candidates then applied their knowledge of Creole languages to the text by relating their examples to issues such as mixing/blending, reduction and simplification. Additionally, they were able to acknowledge the writer's purpose of celebrating diversity and use this to explain patterns of use and inconsistencies in the data.

(A02 = 5, A03 = 5)

When analysing this text ^{it would seem} ~~but~~ although there are similarities between it and Standard English, there are also many differences. This is typical of a creole language, which has developed after Standard English has come into contact with another language.

One of the clearest differences is the use of the ^{grapheme} ~~letter~~ 'd' instead of 'th' in words such as 'dat' and 'dem'. This written piece would appear to mimic the sound of the creole so we can

deduce that they replace the /ð/
^{phoneme}
~~sound~~ used in Standard English for /d/.
 This also appears in the Jamaican Creole,
 suggesting it is a part of Standard
 English that is perhaps particularly
 prone to development.

Another clear difference between
 Standard English and Belize Kriol is
 the usage of the word 'no'. In
 Standard English it usually either
 appears as part of an adjacency pair -
 as a reply to a question or as a
 numerical determiner 'no one'. However
 in this piece it is used to form the
 negative 'if dat experience no satisfy uno'.
 The 'no' replaces both the ~~aux. verb~~
 aux. verb 'does' and the negation
 marker 'not'. This word is also
 used at the very end of the text as
 a sort of discourse marker, ~~but it must~~
~~be noted that~~ ^{although} it could be argued that
 it is being used to ensure the other
 party is listening and understanding, much
 like the Australian High Rising Intonation.
 Again both of these uses of ^{the} word 'no'

are common in creoles suggesting
another part of Standard English prone
to change.



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Examiner Comments

This full example of a top band response demonstrates a suitable approach to this question.

The candidate begins by demonstrating their knowledge of Creole forms before selecting examples from the areas of orthography/phonology and grammar. The candidate demonstrates a confident understanding of the key constituents by explaining and exploring the examples and considers how they fit into diversity studies with the comments on Jamaican Creole, Australian English and Standard English. By doing so the answer meets the criteria for the top bands in AO2 and AO3.

Question 1(b)

This year this question focussed on change over time and had two examples of travel writing. Centres had seemingly prepared candidates well for the notion of language change but the relatively late date of Text 2 seemed to cause difficulty for some candidates as they could not use their knowledge of earlier forms. Some uncertainty about the application of key constituents was evident in the responses to the question and this meant that a number of candidates were unable to score highly in AO3. However, the different purposes of the texts and the needs of their audiences gave many different and productive areas for analysis and there were many insightful and detailed answers.

Because the texts were focussed on language change some candidates, especially in lower bands, offered long narrative paragraphs of information on Caxton, the development of the dictionary and process of standardisation. Whilst these factors can have a supporting contextual role in an analysis they are unlikely to warrant more than a few sentences and, as these texts were comparatively late, their in-depth application here was not particularly productive. Lower band answers also tended to have long narrative discussions about changes in society. Once again, these were broadly valid but often overlong and leaving little time for discussion of specific language features. The main language focus for lower mark bands was graphology, description of the punctuation and lexical comments focussed on the supposed archaic nature of the vast majority of lexis and its polysyllabic nature.

Higher band answers kept more focus on the relevant issues and worked productively through a flexible linguistic framework. They were aware of the need to cover several issues from each key constituent (including grammar) which allowed for higher achievement for AO3. Lexical discussion was related to factors such as the educated audience's demands for precision as well as Dr Johnston's desire to be seen as authoritative and learned and they were more cautious about claiming that words were obsolete. Higher band answers also managed to offer grammatical comment (on issues such as use of the passive, sentence type, adverbials and relative clauses) and were aware of the importance of providing specific examples to back up grammatical points. They also discussed aspects of the discourse structure, pragmatics and graphology of the texts in the context of changing purposes and audience expectations. Finally, stronger answers showed an awareness of what hadn't changed and identified some constants in travel writing.

Both texts are flooded with adverbials of place but they serve different purposes. Adverbials in text 2 such as: 'Open to the main sea' and 'high shore' are used to paint a picture for the reader and allow them to visualise the scene. However in text 3, adverbials are used to give readers referencing points for when they visit the

destination: 'entrance to Tham Phra Nang' and 'East Railae'. The sentence mood of text 2 is mostly declarative. This is because the writer has set out to inform and is not looking to interact with the reader: 'Upon these rocks there was nothing that could...' Text 3 uses a variation of both declarative and imperative moods. The declaratives inform and describe: 'the loveliest spot on the cape' and the imperatives instruct the reader on how to navigate to certain locations: 'Walk past the entrance to Tham Phra Nang'. Readers are looking to be guided or else they wouldn't have purchased the book. Text 2 often uses the 1st person plural pronoun 'We'. This notifies the reader that it was a group of people who were on the journey: 'We however were round'. The writer of text 3 never directly refers to themselves but addresses the audience as 'you'll'. This is because they know that if people have bought the guide then they probably intend to visit the places mentioned within it: 'You'll see a host of red-tipped...' A few

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Examiner Comments

This answer shows a candidate who is clearly in the top band and demonstrates how a variety of AOs can be addressed in the course of an answer. In this extract, the candidate scores well in AO2 and AO3 because they have identified and explained relevant issues from the data and have clearly and concisely related these to the changing function and audience of the text. Additionally, the start of this extract shows a clear awareness that there are some similarities between the texts but that these similar features have been employed for subtly different purposes. The candidate also writes with clarity and fluency (AO1) but has also adopted quite a compact writing style to enable coverage of more points (three grammatical points in this extract) which also allows the candidate to score highly in AO3.

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Examiner Tip

Examples are essential for clearly demonstrating your understanding, especially for complex grammatical points. However, if the example is a full sentence it can be time consuming to write out. In such cases, it is acceptable to give a line reference and the start and end of the particular example. For example Line 7-9 'Upon these rocks...delight in rarity.'

Question 2(a)

Like Question 1a, this is a short answer response worth 10 marks. In this case, the candidates were asked to display their knowledge of linguistic theories relating to the role of the parent and how the mother's language could influence Niamh's language development.

Most candidates responded positively to this question and generally followed a productive pattern of relating an example to a theory, describing the mother's language and discussing the results this would have on the child's language development.

The majority chose two relevant examples from the data and identified issues such as reinforcement and repetition before exploring these in varying depths. Candidates had been well prepared by centres to cite theories and the most popular selections were related to behaviourism and social interaction. Stronger answers not only applied multiple theories but in addition also used the selected example to refute some theorists.

Application of the key constituents showed greater variation with higher band answers predominantly using their knowledge of grammar, lexis and discourse to describe precisely how the mother interacted by, for example, describing her use of declaratives, interrogatives, repetition of key concrete nouns and recasting of sentences in different forms (with a precise explanation of how and why these forms differed). Weaker responses lacked clear focus on the data and took a narrative approach.

The child Niamh, is in the two word stage. Her mother corrects her when she refers to ~~an apple as~~ banana as an apple. This supports skinner's behaviourist approach as he says that parents use praise and correction to help develop their child's language. The mother also repeats the word. This is to make it as clear as possible to the child and set as best a model as possible. This again supports the behaviourist approach. The child agrees with the correction even though it is ~~pron~~ not fully pronounced. The child has learnt what a banana is.

When the child pronounces the word 'dog' incorrectly, she is again corrected by her mother. Once the mother is happy with the child's pronunciation of dog she moves on to adding modifiers to the word to try and

get the child to repeat: 'Big dog'. She also adds a tag question: 'isn't it?' to get the child to agree. By looking for feedback and therefore a response from the child, the mother is an example of the social interaction theory.

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Examiner Comments

In this top band answer, the candidate shows a clear awareness of concepts and theories by referring to both Skinner and more generally to social interaction theories. As well as showing understanding of these issues, the candidate uses knowledge of the key constituents aptly and confidently as evidenced through terms such as 'modifier' and 'tag question'.

Question 2(b)

This question asked candidates to explore spoken language development. The primary focus of the analysis was Text 5 with candidates free to make brief references to Text 4 to help illustrate Niamh's development. Most candidates approached this question with confidence and it was pleasing to see the hard work that centres had obviously put in to preparing for this part of the unit.

Most candidates were aware of a number of theories and specific theorists such as Chomsky, Skinner etc. and referenced these appropriately in their exploration of the data. However, some candidates in the lower bands digressed from examining Niamh's language to focus almost solely on explanations of child development theories. Stronger candidates were able to make reference to relevant theories to support the specific feature they were analysing. Like Question 2a, higher band answers often used features from the data to refute specific theories. Nearly all candidates avoided judgemental comments or a deficit approach and the terms 'non Standard' and 'virtuous error' were widely employed.

There was more confidence from candidates in the use of key constituents than in Question 1b, perhaps because they were able to adopt a more universal framework for the analysis of spoken language than for the diversity question. Such frameworks were employed accurately and with varying degrees of depth.

Phonology was particularly productive in this text and many candidates demonstrated a high degree of confidence with terminology associated with speech sound (although there was widespread confusion between /θ/ /ð/). Unfortunately, some candidates focussed the majority of their response on this key constituent and so could not achieve higher bands. The importance of grammar and morphology were also recognised by many candidates, although weaker answers showed much confusion with terminology. This was especially true of pronouns, tense and aspect ('drawing' described variably as showing past or present tense) and the verb 'to be' always being described as an auxiliary. Higher bands tended to be more precise and accurate, employing terms such as present participle and copula verb. Lexically, the data attracted many valid but general comments on the number of syllables and on the expanding word classes when compared to the previous data but alone these were not indicative of a sophisticated response. Answers in the higher bands included this information but also used the context to inform their comments by relating some of her lexical sets (such as builders, building and mending) to something that had happened recently in her immediate environment. These candidates were also careful to acknowledge the context of the language event and made reference to emerging conversational skills.

The following two extracts are from an answer that achieved band 4 for AO2 and AO3 and achieved low band 3 for AO1 and shows a typical and valid approach to the question. The candidate clearly understands issues related to child language but a lack of depth and some gaps prevents the response for achieving the top bands for AO2 and AO3.

Niamh has progressed a lot in text 5 and I would suggest she is now in the telegraphic stage whereas in text 4 I think she was in the two-word stage, maybe even just left the holophrastic stage. In both texts, she continues to talk about herself in the third person, for example "Niamh's room" from text 5 and "Niamh bottle" from text 4. I would consider this to be a virtuous mistake and a feature of Skinner's theory of behaviourism, she will hear her parents saying her name and so she will copy this as she doesn't seem to understand the concept of first person pronouns.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate gives a suitably brief introduction and shows knowledge of the stages of child language development before quickly selecting the first issue. There is accurate use of terminology and a clear writing style in the extract (AO1) and the candidate shows clear knowledge of the selected aspect and child language theories by referencing Skinner (AO2 and AO3). However, the candidate seems unaware that later in the data Niamh does show some knowledge of these forms and an exploration of these and the virtuous errors made would have improved this section of the response.

In text 4 Niamh tends to replace fricatives with plosives as they are much easier to say. "juice /dʌs/" So she has replaced the fricative <j> with the plosive /d/ <dʌs>. However in text 5, although some words still are pronounced in a standard English form, some are for example <push> pronounced standardly as /pʊʃ/

She tends to now use more reduction, such as, <cos> /kɔz/ instead of <because>, removal of consonant cluster, so cluster reduction. Another example of reduction is <having> pronounced as /hævɪn/ and later pronounced as /hævɪn/. It should be pronounced as /hævɪn/, however many English adult users do this and so she may have just copied.



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Examiner Comments

In this second extract, the candidate discusses phonology. There is clearly some knowledge of terminology such as 'fricative' but some uncertainty with the IPA. However, the candidate does not really offer any detail in their explanation of this feature. The next example is inaccurately labelled as a consonant cluster (a very common error) but the spirit of the comment is accurate and the candidate offers an insightful observation as to why this may have occurred. This part of the response could have been improved with reference to a specific theory/theorist and by noting how Niamh now corrects her own pronunciation. Once again the writing is clear and fluent.



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Examiner Tip

Where the data allows, try to explain and analyse at least two or three relevant examples from each key constituent (including grammar) in the course of the response. This will help ensure higher achievement in A03.

Marking this first full sitting of the new specification was a positive and often pleasurable experience. It was clear that centres had worked hard preparing candidates for Unit 3 and that the students were eager to display their learning. Most candidates had expanded their knowledge of language issues during their A2 studies and there were very few who did not identify at least some interesting aspects in the data provided or who showed fundamental problems in their approach. Issues around the application of key constituents in Question 1a and b and Question 2a perhaps indicate an area where there should be some additional focus.

Grade boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	100	82	74	66	58	51	44	37
Uniform boundary mark	120	108	96	84	72	60	48	36

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