

Examiners' Report

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE in English
Language (6EN01)

Paper 1 Language Today

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide centres with an insight into the assessment process and give an overview of how candidates approached each question.

In this series candidates performed well, engaged positively with the texts and produced some developed and sophisticated responses. Clear knowledge and understanding of the requirements of each question was present, demonstrating that centres had prepared candidates well for the standard of the examination.

The majority of candidates managed their time effectively and attempted each question. There are still cases of students over writing for question 2 and question 3 which are worth 10 marks. Candidates are reminded to dedicate a realistic amount of time to each question and use the amount of marks available as a guideline.

Centres should provide candidates with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the content and format of the examination paper, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of the requirements of each question before the exam.

It is recommended that candidates should read through all five questions, as well as the extracts in the source booklet, before beginning their written response.

The paper is divided into two sections providing an opportunity for progressive analysis in Section A and an extended comparative analysis in Section B. Candidates are invited to analyse three texts representative of the spoken, written and electronic modes of language.

Section A: This section provides three groups of data from a single genre engaging students in an analysis of four questions of varying application. In this series the mode was written featuring memorials of war, national disasters and famous individuals.

Q1: assesses candidates' identification of linguistic terminology and recognition of key features. Candidates must comment on the bold underlined feature selected from the group of memorials and find a different example of the same feature within the source material provided.

Q2: candidates must consider the four contextual factors of mode, field, function and tenor, and explain how they influence the language used in 'memorials'. Candidates should make reference to all three groups.

Q3: invites candidates to identify similarities and differences between the language features of two of the groups. This series' comparison was between memorials of war and famous individuals. Candidates need to focus on the linguistic features used within the texts and support this with critical discussion.

Q4: this question is synoptic of Section A, engaging candidates in a linguistic investigation of a 'mystery text' with the aim of identifying the sub-group it is most likely to belong to, based on the language features present. Candidates should note the content on their analysis for Q2 and 3 and focus on the sub-group that has not been investigated.

Section B: This section contains Q5, which is an extended comparative essay. This series, candidates were asked to compare a review and an interview in the electronic and spoken mode.

Q5: candidates should make sure their analysis is applied equally to both texts. A focus on one text over the other will affect marks. Marks in AO2 are awarded for the discussion of presentation of self, relating to Theories of Language and marks for AO3 are achieved by the discussion of presentation of self, represented by the contextual factors and key constituents.

Question 1

The majority of candidates were able to apply terminology accurately to the underlined terms and demonstrated a strong understanding of the expectations of this question.

Examples of the responses provided by candidates are given below:

Q1(a) Their courage saved 12 lives.

The majority of candidates scored full marks for this question, identifying the feature as a declarative and simple sentence and providing correct examples.

Q1(b) SLEEP

The majority of students scored full marks for this question, identifying the feature as a verb, euphemism, metaphor or having peaceful connotations. The most common answer was verb with a correct example.

Q1(c) ON DECEMBER 16 1943

Many candidates managed the correct answers to this feature with the most common responses commenting on adverbial of time and numerical/factual information. Prepositional phrase was also a common correct response but responses stating preposition were not awarded as it only refers to 'on'. Appropriate examples were also provided which led to the majority of candidates scoring the full 3 marks.

Q1(d) THIS TREE NAMED

This was a challenging question. Many candidates correctly identified ellipsis and some candidates identified the passive voice. Common incorrect responses were 'deixis', 'determiner' and 'verb' which were features within the example. Candidates are not awarded for dividing the example and identifying individual features. They must comment on the underlined feature as a whole.

Q1(e) A SOLEMN OBLIGATION

Many candidates did manage this question successfully but there were a few common incorrect responses. Similar to Q1(d) candidates divided the example and commented on the two words separately. 'Abstract noun' and 'adjective' were not given a mark because they referred only to one aspect of the example. Some candidates identified the feature incorrectly as a declarative or simple sentence. Strong responses focused on noun phrase, pre modified noun, formality or connotations.

The majority of responses were relevant and demonstrated a strong knowledge of linguistic terminology taught at this level. It is important that candidates identify clearly which feature they are using as an example for part (ii) of this question so that examiners are able to award a mark. A minority of candidates quoted whole sentences for part (b) leaving

examiners unsure as to which feature was being provided as an answer. Consequently, this lost students marks as examiners cannot be put in the position to 'guess' a candidate's answer.

Candidates can provide clarity in the following ways:

- Underlining the selected feature within the quote
- Quoting an example and stating the feature selected for answer eg (ii) gave - a verb
- Quoting a single feature allowing no room for ambiguity.

Candidates are also reminded that they cannot use the same feature twice in Question 1.

Question 2

Candidates produced strong responses to this question and engaged well with the genre of 'memorials'. The majority of candidates approached the question using the Mode, Field, Function, and Tenor framework, addressing the contextual factors in a structured way and exploring at least one with some complexity, which was pleasing to see.

Low band responses only discussed the identification of one or two contextual factors, without relating them to the genre of memorials or without recognising that the contextual factors would affect the language across the groups.

The higher band responses explored the significant features of memorials very well. They focused on multiple overlapping functions of remembrance and appreciation and how direct address in war memorials instilled a sense of duty in the audience.

Many responses identified formality, date, proper nouns, ellipsis and passive voice with the data covering a range of features. Weaker responses recognised the permanence linked to the written mode and discussed the graphology of the texts. The majority of responses discussed the emotive nature of memorials and how the semantics reflected this.

Generally, candidates were successful in responding to this question, referencing all three groups and managing to score in Band 2. Lower mid-band scores were too limited in their discussion by just referring to the four contextual factors in a formulaic way or only applying them to one group of data.

Question 3

Most candidates completed a detailed comparison between the groups and engaged well with the data. Many focused on Group A's remembrance of many in comparison to Group C's individual loss, citing proper nouns and differing levels of formality. More detailed comparison discussed the sense of celebration of a productive life in Group C as opposed to gratitude for

self-sacrifice in group A. Some responses were hampered by trying to include group B which is not a requirement of the question.

Most candidates discussed the lexical and semantic content of both data sets, often explaining these through the proposed function for each. Many identified the euphemisms within Group A and emotive language to convey the tragedy. For grammar, many candidates did well to identify the use of adverbials, pronouns and the different sentence functions. They recognised Group A's use of inclusive pronouns 'we' to unify loss and Group C's recognition of success with listing of achievements.

Strong responses explained the function of the groups to bring a group/person to remembrance and express appreciation by discussing the effect of language features on the audiences with reference to convergence. In AO2 again, some candidates noted the language in Group A promotes the idea of an honourable, dutiful death where soldiers were willing to die.

Low band responses gave quite general comments on language use, comparing lexical differences and feature spotting without any real analysis of the complexity of the language used in each group. Some pertinent points of contrast were made but these were related mainly to the difference in the events in which people died with war viewed as more formal and serious. A focus on graphology and discussion of fonts was also present. Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of key constituents during their analysis of this question and used terminology appropriately.

Question 4

Generally, candidates approached this question methodically, matching evidence from the mystery text to elements of a variety of extracts from Groups A, B and C. Most candidates focused on the lexical similarities, with some going on to look at some grammatical elements such as adverbials, passive voice, sentence types and functions. There were some sophisticated responses where the discussion of language features was focused, developed and woven in with contextual features very effectively.

AO3 marks were generally stronger in this question because many candidates understood how the different events in which people died impacted on how the tragedy was presented to the audience. High-band candidates were able to show clear and detailed linguistic reasons as to why the mystery belonged to their chosen group. They discussed the emotive nature within group B, sense of honour and collective duty in Group B and celebratory nature of Group C. Responses in the lower bands tended to make general and underdeveloped comments on language use or involved feature-spotting with limited discussion. This would largely feature around the varying graphology of each group and the lexis used.

Question 5

On the whole, the responses to this question were good with most candidates exploring presentation of self to some extent. Many showed a detailed understanding of the mode, tenor, purpose, audience and language

use in both texts and managed to compare and contrast them quite effectively.

Regarding AO2, stronger responses demonstrated clear evidence of theoretical awareness. The most successful approaches applied Accommodation Theory when considering the construction of both texts. Candidates who looked at Austin & Searle, along with Goffman's or Brown & Levinson's Face Theories produced more meaningful discussions, scoring in the upper bands. A lot of candidates also discussed Lakoff Theories on Gender in relation to both texts with differing levels of success. Least successful attempts, automatically attributed certain language features to the writer's/speaker's gender without considering the function or tenor.

Text A's multi-modal elements, humour, informality and colloquial lexis choice provided much comment and were related well to the contextual factors. Many candidates attempted to write about discourse and structure which was very encouraging. Analysis of Text A was slightly better than Text B although most candidates noted humour, modesty or nervousness and commented relevantly. More perceptive answers saw that pragmatically Nicola needed to be polite about her paid job while talking publicly about her ambitions. Her accent was noted by most candidates and was variously attributed to regions and countries. The best responses didn't attempt to pinpoint where she was from but used her accent to illustrate divergence theory and her independence.

Lower band responses didn't cover a range of features, analyse both texts equally and made comments on the difference in modes and graphology. In AO3, most candidates achieved at least a Band 3, with the majority able to go beyond the level of lexis to analyse significant features of grammar, discourse and pragmatics, supporting their claims with precise reference to key constituents in the texts. The best responses for AO3 were those where candidates used contextual frameworks to deconstruct both texts.

Paper Summary

A good standard was evident this year. Based on their performance on this paper candidates are offered the following advice.

- Employ effective time management in the examination to ensure that appropriate time is spent on each question in relation to the assessment objectives.
- For Q1 remember to comment on the underlined feature only, as a whole and be clear in examples which feature is being identified.
- In Q2 consider the overarching contextual factors across all three groups. Do not limit your response to one set of data in the genre.
- Ensure that you balance your analysis equally between the two texts in Q5.
- Use the contextual factors and key constituents as a scaffold when discussing the presentation of self in Q5.

Grade Boundaries

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<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

