

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary
AS English Language

Paper 2: Child Language (8EN0/02)

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General Overview

For this series, there were a little over 200 candidates entered for the AS English Language Paper 2: Child Language. Although this is a small cohort, it is very pleasing to see that there are a number of centres who find the educational value in the teaching and preparation of candidates for this particular topic. Candidates' experience of this paper will support them in their preparation for 9ENO_02 Child Language at A level. There appeared to be no significant issues in the length of answers produced for both questions, indicating that generally the cohort had managed their time effectively across both sections.

The vast majority of responses showed at least general knowledge and clear application of language frameworks with a small number achieving more detailed consistent responses to the question set. Candidates who scored higher in the marking grids were able to showcase their knowledge about both children's written and spoken language development effectively, offering explanations rooted in secure understanding of context. These responses demonstrated consistency in their discussions but overall, there was a limited number of responses that showed discrimination, therefore preventing many candidates achieving level 5.

Question 1 required candidates to produce an article aimed at parents explaining the common features of children's literacy development and to support them with their written development. Question 2 required candidates to analyse the language of a child aged 2 years and 1 month conversing with her mother in relation to how her language enabled her to engage in imaginative play.

Question 1:

As with previous series, this question proved a challenge for many candidates, largely due to its dual demands: to demonstrate secure conceptual knowledge of literacy development (AO2), while simultaneously crafting a non-fiction piece appropriate for an audience of parents (AO5).

A significant number of candidates struggled to balance these two demands, with many offering either overly technical linguistic commentary that lacked audience awareness, or generalised advice with little reference to the language data provided. At the lower end, candidates were often heavily reliant on surface-level features such as graphology and orthography, with minimal commentary beyond these features and limited, sometimes reductive, advice (for example, simply recommending the use of lined paper).

At the higher levels, however, responses were marked by a clear understanding of how to combine analysis and advisory writing. These candidates frequently drew on relevant theoretical frameworks such as Vygotsky's concepts of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to explain how Erin's writing could be supported at home. These concepts were often integrated fluently, either through a clearly embedded glossary or carefully phrased explanations tailored to the parent audience. For example, some candidates were able to explain how an MKO might scaffold spelling corrections without overt correction, reinforcing confidence and independence.

Many successful responses also made apt reference to practices commonly used in primary schools, such as phonics schemes or strategies like 'look, cover, write, check', offering practical and relevant recommendations to parents. Some responses displayed an awareness of the influence of regional accent on spelling development and were able to offer layered discussions of phonetically plausible

errors, sometimes even glossing basic IPA symbols to show where Erin's spelling choices may have originated.

That said, some candidates, especially those operating around the mid-range, tended to focus too narrowly on features such as phonetic spelling without extending their analysis into teaching strategies or broader developmental patterns. While most students could correctly identify features such as overgeneralisation or omission of graphemes, fewer were able to relate these patterns to the cognitive and social aspects of literacy acquisition in a meaningful way.

One common feature across many mid- to lower-level responses was an over-reliance on stylistic representations of hyperlinks (e.g., underlined blue text) without any accompanying gloss or explanation. While this mirrors the visual style of many online articles, it often resulted in lost opportunities to demonstrate understanding of linguistic concepts. In contrast, higher-level responses used such techniques more judiciously, integrating them into an advisory tone that remained accessible to non-specialist readers.

Most candidates were able to adopt an appropriate register for the task, though the sophistication and control of tone varied significantly. The most effective pieces maintained a balance between professionalism and approachability, reassuring the reader while clearly presenting expertise. In contrast, some lower-band responses defaulted to either academic essay-style writing—which lacked the direct engagement required by the task—or took on a tone that was overly critical of parents, which undermined the advisory purpose.

In summary, the strongest responses were those that understood the dual purpose of the task: to explain Erin's development through secure linguistic analysis, and to offer insightful, constructive support for parents navigating their child's early writing. These responses integrated theory with practical advice, tailored to audience needs, and structured in a way that mirrored real-world informative writing.

Question 2

This question required candidates to engage with both the child's linguistic development and the function of imaginative play, and performance on this task was varied depending on how well both aspects were addressed. While most candidates were able to identify how Lucie maintained an effective interaction with her mother, fewer were able to explore the imaginative context with the same level of insight.

The strongest responses demonstrated a secure ability to balance the demands of the question, integrating relevant theoretical knowledge of child language acquisition (AO2) with specific discussion of how Lucie's language supported the imaginative task at hand. These candidates frequently examined the mother's role in scaffolding the interaction and made explicit links to theories such as Bruner's Language Acquisition Support System (LASS), Vygotsky's notion of shared play, and the concept of Child Directed Speech (CDS). Many also considered the conversational functions of Lucie's utterances, successfully commenting on her turn-taking ability, her lexical creativity, and her capacity to maintain topic continuity.

At the higher levels, candidates were able to interpret the imaginative context as more than a backdrop to the interaction. Instead, they explored how the fictional play scenario enabled linguistic experimentation and helped Lucie negotiate meaning, test new vocabulary, and build narrative coherence. Particularly perceptive responses identified features such as Lucie's invented compound noun 'daddy penny' and discussed this either in terms of overextension, early classification strategies, or as an example of emergent semantic control. These discussions were well-anchored in theory but remained firmly focused on the data and task.

Successful responses also paid attention to discourse-level features, noting how both participants worked collaboratively to create cohesion. Candidates were rewarded for considering the dynamic nature of caregiver-child interaction, with many commenting on how Lucie's mother reformulated and extended Lucie's utterances as a form of positive reinforcement or modelling.

At the lower end, a number of responses failed to engage meaningfully with the imaginative context, instead defaulting to generic lists of language features. As in previous years, some candidates prioritised phonological features regardless of their relevance to the data, and while phonology may sometimes be useful, it was rarely significant in this transcript. Similarly, some responses focused heavily on what Lucie could not do, adopting a deficit approach that described errors without analysing their communicative impact or developmental significance. These responses often included accurate identification of features but lacked interpretation or relevance to the task set.

One recurring issue in mid-range responses was a tendency to evaluate Lucie's language in isolation, with minimal reference to the mother's input. Candidates who failed to discuss the collaborative nature of the interaction, and the importance of adult scaffolding in imaginative play, missed opportunities to address the second part of the question and, in doing so, limited their access to the higher bands.

In summary, the most successful candidates recognised that imaginative play serves a crucial role in linguistic development and were able to analyse Lucie's interaction as a form of co-constructed meaning-making. These responses combined accurate linguistic terminology with conceptual insight and audience-appropriate tone, all grounded in a sustained focus on the question's dual requirements.