

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE English Language
(4EB0)
Paper 1

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General Overview

Candidates engaged well with the texts and many examiners commented that candidates obviously enjoyed the opportunity to engage with the topic of technology. Despite this there were some misunderstandings of the content. Text 1 – David Crystal – was perhaps more challenging both in content and format.

There was evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to the examination.

Section A

- Questions 1-9 are short answer questions which require candidates to locate and retrieve relevant information.
- Questions 3 and 8 required candidates to use their own words in their response.
- Question 10 required a personal response to the texts and for candidates to support their comments with references to the texts.

Questions 1-9

Examiners commented that the accessible subject matter meant that there were fewer questions which candidates did not attempt than in previous series. However, there was some evidence that candidates found Text 1, the *David Crystal interview*, more challenging.

Although question 1 was fairly straightforward, there were a number of candidates who did not clearly identify that David Crystal wanted to find out if texting affected spelling and literacy, instead stating that texting caused problems with spelling and literacy.

Question 3 was generally well done with many candidates attempting to use their own words. There were still some candidates who did not attempt to use their own words or even re-work the original text. Centres are reminded that candidates will not be able to access full marks if they do not use their own words.

Question 4 was another fairly straightforward question, but some candidates did not appear to understand that exam boards banned text language in exams and said that people banned text language.

Question 5 produced a range of responses with those candidates who had read the question carefully able to gain full marks. Some candidates simply copied parts of the passage, which, although relevant, meant that they had not clearly identified the point the writer made. Some candidates struggled to identify points and then find appropriate support. Centres need to ensure that candidates

do not respond to the first part of this question by copying the passage but by explaining the point and then supporting it with reference to the passage. A small number gave a personal response to the text which showed they had not understood the requirements of the question.

Question 7 was a simple retrieval question but there was some evidence that candidates did not understand the word 'statistics'.

Although many candidates responded well to question 8 with appropriate use of their own words, some candidates struggled with the requirement for own words and a few just copied chunks of the text. A few candidates used their own ideas rather than responding to the content of the passage and a few apparently did not understand the word 'negative' and wrote about the positive aspects. There was some evidence of cultural differences – a few candidates saw 'flirting' as a negative point.

Some candidates are still providing too much information in response to the short answer questions. While it is understandable that candidates wish to ensure they achieve the maximum mark, candidates need to be sure they are not spending too much time on these questions.

Centres need to ensure that candidates are prepared to read a wide range of texts which may be presented in a range of formats. Candidates need to be aware of the need to read the questions carefully so they do not miss the point of the questions.

Question 10

Text 2 was the popular choice.

Question 10 provided more varied responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice, but only the more able were able to provide developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. Some examiners commented that this question was answered better than in previous series with candidates having a clear understanding of the requirements of the question.

There were clear responses to this task showing that candidates had been well prepared for this question and had a secure understanding of what is required. There were some thoughtful and considered responses stating, in support of their chosen text, how it was more mature to show their parents the negatives as well as the positives and how this might impress adults. Some candidates missed the point about a discussion with adults and addressed why they preferred one text. Some simply discussed the benefits of texting.

There were a few who summarised the texts and also a few who copied the whole text (or parts of it). There were a few candidates who wrote quite clearly about their preferred text, but then did not comment on the other text. There

are still some candidates who provide rather weak reasons for their choices, for example, 'It is too difficult'; 'I don't understand it'; 'It has too many long words'. These problems suggest that some candidates have not been prepared for this task and unfortunately these problems limited candidates' achievement. Centres need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts.

Section B

Question 11

There was evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this section.

There was some evidence of planning which was pleasing. The most useful plans were relatively short, but allowed candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively. Unfortunately long plans wasted time and often affected the final response as it was rushed. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet.

There were some excellent responses with a wide range of points, excellent awareness of audience and purpose and very accurate writing.

Most candidates addressed all three bullet points, but the final one (what the researchers say) was most commonly missed. Some candidates used their own ideas, but then forgot to incorporate those from the passage. Better candidates integrated their own ideas into their article. There was enough relevant material in the two texts for candidates to use to address all three bullet points. Centres should remind candidates that they must try to cover all three bullet points otherwise their achievement for AO1 will be limited.

Some examiners again noted that some candidates are lifting wholesale from the texts, either a few sentences or, more worryingly, simply copying the texts with a minor adjustment or two. This is not a successful approach and candidates cannot be rewarded for this. The third bullet point on research was most commonly copied, especially the statistics.

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task, however, not all were able to use the appropriate register for an article. Better responses had a lively style and conscious attempt to engage the reader. Some candidates wrote an essay. Some responses were like speeches. Quite a lot of candidates started off their responses in the appropriate style, but they lost the sense of audience and purpose as they progressed. These problems limited candidates' achievement for AO2. Centres must work with candidates to ensure they have a secure grasp of audience and purpose and how to develop the appropriate register.

Language controls were not always secure, especially grammar and sentence structure. Some responses lacked paragraphing. The three bullet points provide a rudimentary structure, which should help students to use basic paragraphing. Centres need to remind candidates that lack of accurate paragraphing will limit their achievement.

Section C

Question 12

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section.

There was evidence of planning in this section which is to be encouraged. However, the use of very long plans or draft essays is to be discouraged as they are not a good use of time. Candidates should be encouraged to plan their response in the answer booklet rather than on separate additional sheets.

There seemed to be less evidence of prepared responses this series, although some examiners saw a few responses to 12b and 12c that appeared to have been prepared. Candidates should be reminded that they are being rewarded for a personal response and that prepared responses will never be successful.

There were some imaginative and well written responses that fully engaged the reader.

Question 12a produced some thoughtful and well-argued responses, but also some that were less well done. Interestingly the majority of candidates agreed with the title. Better candidates produced well-balanced arguments and responses were reasonably well developed, although examiners commented that too many candidates relied too heavily on the texts, often repeating material from them. Weaker responses had difficulty maintaining focus on the topic and often presented ideas in a rather dull and plodding manner suggesting that the candidate had not chosen well. Centres need to ensure that candidates who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Question 12b was the most popular choice in Section C and produced a wide range of interpretations. Better responses were lively and imaginative developing a convincing story-line but weaker ones were dull and unambitious with limited ideas. There were many that focused on messages that contained bad news and threats and also those about messages that changed a person's life either for the better or worse. There were inevitably responses that involved text messages and cyber bullying. One examiner commented that there were quite a number of responses involving frightening text messages from mysterious strangers. A small number of responses involved religious messages. There were some responses where the message was peripheral to the story line,

slotting it in as an afterthought, or it was not altogether clear what the message was. There were a number of responses with weak endings: disasters or ending in the death of the narrator. A minority of responses were prepared essays loosely adapted and one examiner commented on the use of film plots. These responses do not develop a personal response and candidates will not be able to access the full range of marks. Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response. There were a small number of unfinished essays suggesting a lack of time. Candidates must practice what is possible in an hour.

Question 12c produced some imaginative and well written responses describing a range of rooms, most commonly the candidate's bedroom. On the whole candidates responded quite well to this question, although weaker candidates were limited by the lack of a range of vocabulary. Many examiners commented on the imaginative rooms the candidates described, which contained items such as swimming pools, gyms and giant widescreen televisions. More realistic rooms still had exotic decoration with a couple of examiners commenting on the prevalence of zebra striped wallpaper, fluffy cushions and purple paint. Better responses were able to create a convincing picture of the chosen room with good vocabulary choices and evidence of crafting. Several examiners commented that responses tended to be pedestrian and lacked detail. Weaker responses tended to list items in chosen room or give uninspired detail of every facet of the room, some even detailing length/height of walls. These responses did not engage the reader and did not give a real sense of the room. Centres need to ensure candidates are aware of the techniques they can use in descriptive writing and also ensure candidates develop a varied vocabulary. There were a small number of prepared responses.

Some responses lacked paragraphing, not just the weaker ones. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

Better responses were accurate using a wide range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary.

There was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation, but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar/expression. Some of this was unidiomatic English, but there were also problems with tenses and sentence structure. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Centres need to focus on developing accurate and effective grammatical structuring and idiomatic English to enable candidates to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark bands.

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