Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Level In English Language (WEN02)
UNIT 2: Language in Transition

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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.

Candidates engaged positively with the data and demonstrated their subject knowledge in their responses. Most candidates' approach to their analysis demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of each question. However, some responses lacked the refinement of exam technique and in-depth analysis required for mid or top-level marks, suggesting that were not ready to sit the exam. The January cohort tends to be varied as the candidates may be resitting the exam or taking it early in preparation for the summer series. This was reflected in the standard of responses. Overall, most of the candidates scored within levels 1 - 3 with a minority achieving marks in level 4.

The paper is divided into two sections providing an opportunity for a comparative analysis in Section A and a discussion-based essay in Section B. Candidates are invited to analyse three texts representative of the spoken and written modes of language. Each section contains one question worth 25 marks each. Candidates must answer both questions.

It is recommended that candidates should read through both questions, as well as the extracts in the source booklet, before beginning their written response. This will allow them to gain an understanding of the discussion points within the paper and note connections across the texts before they begin.

Section A: Spoken Language Today This section provides an unseen piece of spoken language from the 21st century which is a variety of English. Question 1 engages candidates in an analysis of the development of this variety in relation to Standard English. In this series the spoken language was an example of Trinidadian English.

Section B: Written Language of the 19th -21st Century Candidates answer one discussion question on two written texts in the Source Booklet that look at the issue raised in Section A from a wider perspective. This series, the two extracts featured were a blog post about the Trinidadian tradition of storytelling through song and an online article discussing the preservation of Trinidadian English. Candidates were asked to discuss how Trinidadian English reflects the changes to and development of English across the world.

Section A

Most candidates commented on the full range of language levels showing an understanding of the question requirements and made attempts to discuss features relating to each framework. The majority of candidates continue to meet the AO1 objective regarding use of terminology showing an understanding of the features present within varieties of English across the world. Those awarded in level 3 and 4 demonstrated accurate use of terminology which was consistent, wide ranging and paired with analysis of the text. Candidates also covered a range features including grammatical, phonological and lexical features using sophisticated terminology and explanations of non-standard features linking to other varieties of English. There was some reference to theories of language change, such as Kachru's Circle and superstrate/substrate languages in the higher levels which demonstrated an understanding of the development of varieties of English.

Candidates produced a variety of responses ranging from detailed and wide ranging to some brief one-page answers. There were a few candidates who did not attempt the question or wrote very little rewardable material demonstrating they were unprepared for the demands of the exam. Some candidates in the lower levels were able to identify features accurately but engage in no discussion leading to a more descriptive approach focused on feature spotting and little else. The majority of candidates attempted to analyse the features present within the data, linking to theories and identifying the connections to standard varieties of English. The most common theories and concepts applied to the data were, covert/overt prestige and accommodation theory which was linked to identity as well as attitudes to non-standard varieties as the speaker references this in the transcript. Aitchison's crumbling castle theory was applied when discussing the attitudes to non-standard features and the stigma speakers encounter from negative views of their language. Level 2 and 3 candidates tended to lack the range of features in their analysis which is required for the higher bands and may have limited discussion on theories or discourse. Level 2 were able to identify the phonological variations and discussed lexical features that were influenced by Trinidadian culture such as phrases 'reverse back' and abbreviations.

Section B

As with section A there were some weak responses which were awarded in level 1 and level 2 whereby the candidate employed a largely descriptive approach. This involved detailing the contents of the extracts and not engaging in any analysis or highlighting any features. There were marks awarded within level 3 and 4 where the strongest answers focused on all bullet points, referred to the source texts and structured their answer around the development of Global English with reference to features present in Trinidadian English. Some responses were explained in detail utilising terminology and were able to clarify how different languages had influenced Trinidadian English. A few insightful remarks about cultural identity and the stigmatisation of non-standard varieties were made, and they were linked to accommodation theory, covert/overt prestige, in reference to Text A and C. Candidates also demonstrated an awareness of historical developments like immigration and colonisation that influenced the growth of English.

Middle level responses tended to address all three texts and made some relevant points linking to similar features in other varieties of English to explain the development of English and the role of international English. Responses at the upper level 2 used a broad analysis to acknowledge the growth of different English varieties and their connections to media and technology. They usually only talked briefly about one or two of the bullet points. They may have focused on a single piece of data, but they did cite a few examples from the text. Some applicants focused only on the material in the texts, doing a lot of data summarisation rather than draw their own conclusions.

Paper Summary

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.
- Read all three sets of data before attempting the question to gain an understanding of the discussion points across the paper.
- Use terminology throughout your response in both questions.
- Ensure you refer to the sources in both questions and support your points with evidence from the texts.
- In Q2 consider all three texts in your discussion. Do not limit your response to one set of data or to one discussion point.
- In Q2 do not summarise and copy large sections of the data. Candidates are required to reference it and identify the transition of language with examples.
- Use the bullet points as a scaffold when writing your response to make sure all parts of the question are addressed and you have the opportunity to achieve full marks.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx