



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Subsidiary 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.

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.

As a starting point, centres are reminded that candidates should seek to avoid adopting, for both tasks, a deficit model with value-judgement based approach using terms such as 'incorrect', 'wrong' or 'lazy'. Options might include 'non-standard' or 'ungrammatical'.

For those typing answers, symbols from the IPA provided *should* be copiable into their answers using the hot keys on a standard keyboard, e.g. CTRL+C, CTRL+V.

## Summary

Candidates generally performed well overall and, once again, there were a number of very impressive responses. In some cases, however, there was evidence that understanding was incomplete or there were issues with exam technique.

Based on their performance on this paper candidates are offered the following advice:

- Employ effective exam technique 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 and in both questions. Make sure that it is accurate and relevant.
- Ensure you refer only to Text A for Question 1 and all three sources for Question 2. Support your points with evidence from the texts.
- In Q2 do not summarise and copy large sections of the data. Candidates are required to reference the sources 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.

- Make sure that you are familiar with the exam format and the nature of what you will be asked. This element of the qualification requires specific subject knowledge and it is far more than a proficiency test.

### Question 1

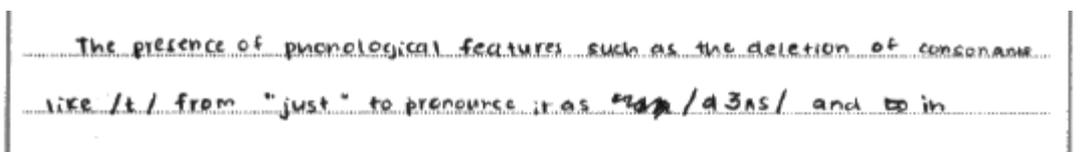
Candidates were mainly secure regarding both what a language variety is and why the Hong Kong version exemplified was interesting.

Commentary about the context was generally assured with many candidates discussing the significance of the interview format for mode and field, with some noting that the non-fluency features marked on the transcript might be as much to do with nervousness about being on camera as uncertainty with the language.

It would perhaps be advisable for candidates to start by identifying the acrolect to which they wish to compare the variety under discussion and go from there. Indeed, there was some evidence of this, and a lot of good commentary ensued about the significance of the acrolectal form: Standard British English (imported via colonialism, it was frequently asserted) and the role of American English (increasingly dominant due to the influence of online and other media). The importance of Hong Kong's recent history and the role of the main substrate, Cantonese, were also considered.

There was a lot of effective discussion of phonology, but equally some fairly limited commentary of the 'here is an example, here is what it should be' kind, which is not conducive to higher attainment. From a contextual point of view it is worth observing that the accent on which the IPA is based is broadly Received Pronunciation (as is evidenced by, e.g. the medial vowel of 'strut' being labelled as 'ʌ'). When commencing their analysis of speech sounds, candidates often use 'Standard English' as a covering term. Whilst this is understandable, from the point of view of clarity, Standard English can be viewed as a dialect of English which can be spoken with any accent, including Received Pronunciation, which is the prestige variety. Accordingly, for the purposes of phonologic comparison, R.P. is actually the form that the variety in Text A might most usefully be set against because this is the basis of the analytical approach with which candidates have been provided.

This extract from a candidate's answer deals very well with the phonological aspect of Text A. Not everything is perfect, but it doesn't have to be to attain well:



The presence of phonological features such as the deletion of consonants  
like /t/ from "just" to pronounce it as ~~ʃʌst~~ /dʒʌst/ and to in

words like  
 a "about" to ~~be~~ pronounced <sup>it</sup> as /əbaʊt/ implies a lack of ability  
~~and emphasis~~ like /t/ at the end of words  
 to pronounce stop sounds ~~it~~ possibly due to the  
 nature of the native language of that these speakers speak where there is  
 no significant employment ~~of~~ and stress ~~sound~~ on stop sounds ~~and~~  
 fricatives like /t/ on the other hand  
~~it~~ which is prominently utilised and expressed in Standard  
 English. ~~However~~ the non-rhotic feature of Hong Kong English  
 is conveyed through the pronunciation of "very" as /vɛrɪ/ ~~and~~  
 highlighting the fact that the "r" is not rolled in Hong Kong  
 English similar to that of Standard English. ~~Furthermore~~ in  
~~the~~ Hong Kong English  
 the /θ/ is substituted with /f/ causing a distinct pronunciation  
 of the word "think" that emphasises the unique accent of this  
 variety of English which tends to be more subtle than Standard  
 English. Additionally the ~~the~~ phoneme /æ/ is substituted with  
 /a:/ in "yeah" which also communicates unique aspects of Hong Kong  
 English in comparison to Standard English. In words like "people" the  
 phoneme /ə/ is substituted by /ɒ/ which another example of a Hong  
 Kong English. In the pronunciation of the word "especially" the  
~~the~~ speaker pronounces the ending "ally" as ~~the~~ /ɑ:li/  
 without emphasising on the "l" sound unlike in Standard English.

Here, a candidate discusses syntax, with reference to the concept of mesolectal and basilectal forms. Again, there are points at which it might be possible to disagree with the broad flow of the discussion or its absolute technical precision, but there is an attempt to form a thesis in this work which is based on a higher understanding of language concepts and issues.

The text follows the subject verb object order, this shows that the variety acknowledges that there are rules surrounding language formation and follows them, this is similar to Standard British English. "I didn't feel any regret." Speaker 1 used a lot of minor sentences, this shows the basalectal level of Standard English they are using however speaker 2 used compound sentences in some instances showing their mesolectal level of Standard English. "I just think worrying about how to adapt to the environment especially for our adults..."

Morphology and syntax were often well dealt with. Candidates were able at least to identify some of the key examples, such as the dropping of the /s/ plural marker or the absence of the copula in some instances. Again, there is merit in identifying these things, but better answers tend to be technical, specific *and* evaluative. One or two candidates commented interestingly, for example, that the speakers' morphological choices were in the main, standard, despite a number of 'ungrammatical' items. It is worth observing that, as stated in some of the more astute analysis, many of the more established varieties of contemporary English are notable far more for their phonological differences than their grammatical ones.

The following extract illustrates a candidate reaching a satisfactory conclusion and centres are reminded that some sort of evaluative overview is usually an advantage, though reference to the concept of 'flow' as it appears here is perhaps not something which is strongly advocated.

Finally, the discourse of the text is somewhat smooth. It has a lot of non-fluency features. For example, many micropauses are used, which can be attributed to 'thinking time' or the unrehearsed nature of the interview. Also, fillers such as 'um' and 'er' are extensively used, displaying ~~the~~ less fluency. Lastly, reduplication is a frequent occurrence for both speakers. For example, they repeat 'we, for, I, in a, I will,'. These ~~are~~ are non-fluency features that also exhibit limited vocabulary. This further proves their ~~limited~~ English background as not rich. They use discourse markers to sequence the text and structure their responses. This adds to the flow.

In this case, an otherwise competent answer is derailed by lapsing into prescriptivism.

Speaker 1 in text A speaks hesitantly (um), this speaker briefly describes the state Hong Kong is in and why him and his children are better off in London rather than going back to Hong Kong. When speaking, speaker 1 ~~often~~ often uses the word "um". This indicates ~~weakness~~ that his English is weak, and he <sup>and he does not practice his language a lot</sup> doesn't have confidence to speak up properly. Speaker 1

Finally for Section A, centres are reminded that whilst a bullet-pointed approach to answering this task might look appealing, it very rarely leads to marks beyond Level 2.

## Question 2

Candidates should avoid repeating the rubric information without, at the very least, adding something about field, mode, function, register, mediation or a more nuanced comment on provenance. Thereafter, as many did in this case, it would be sensible to deal with the bullet points which follow the stem, in an orderly fashion (not necessarily sequentially however):

- the contexts in which this variety of English is used
- other influences on this variety of language
- how the role of English as an international language is reflected in the texts.

There is no stipulation about, e.g. equal coverage of each bullet and it is perfectly possible for an answer to deal impressively with the first and the third points but not as well with the second and still score highly. That said, ignoring one of the three altogether is not usually conducive to success.

The further injunction: 'You must refer closely to the texts in the Source Booklet in your response.' is also worth noting, once again. There were not many 'prepared' answers along the lines of 'here is everything I know about language in transition (but with little reference to the sources)', but that approach persists and it is unlikely to succeed.

Candidates must therefore make use of the texts but simply paraphrasing their contents is not enough to secure a mark above Level 2.

Many candidates drew effectively enough on Text A and commented on both the specifics of the transcript and the general issues related to identity and the ways in which language is tied up with that. There was a good deal of interesting commentary about the contextual factors which have led to the 'Hong Kong diaspora' and the ways in which English is developing as a result of that.

Text B drew some sound comments on the ways in which the content fed into bullets one and two in particular. Although there was a general grasp of the context and influences which the text raised however, this piece was particularly prone to unassimilated lifting and un-evaluative summary with many candidates quoting the examples provided, for example, without any more meaningful or in-depth response.

Writing about Text C, many candidates could see that there was something to explore in terms of context and, unquestionably, influence, but there was a little less clarity about the role of English when, although not obviously, the writer was presenting some useful ideas about social values, roles and modernisation.

Fewer theories were deployed than had been evident in the 2406 series but there were still lots of sensible references to, amongst other things, Aitchison's 'Progress or Decay?', Khachru, Golden Age theory, convergence and assimilation and Superstrate theory. Some of these were used more relevantly than others and some of them were only partially understood. As previously, Giles' Accommodation theory featured heavily, as did Labov's concept of overt and covert prestige.

This candidate writes effectively and interestingly, mixing plausible speculation, strong subject awareness and some evaluative commentary:

preserved as heritage sites in Hong Kong. However, with increased informercialization and cultural exchange between the ~~Outer~~ 'inner' circles of English as elaborated by Kachru: countries that utilize English as their first language, and the ~~Outer~~ <sup>'expanding'</sup> circles: countries that do not have a significant usage of English, but are starting to as English becomes a lingua franca — Hong Kong, as the middleman between 'expanding circle' China and 'inner circle' UK, USA, and more, is experiencing a rise in the usage of English thanks to slobalization opportunities and trade. From Text C, Hong Kong is stated to ~~be~~ utilize English in 'higher' settings between businessmen and trade as English is seen as a more 'educated language'. This viewpoint is further emphasized as Hong Kong acts as a world center for trade between foreign nations and China which results in various Englishes being spoken and used in Hong Kong. As the economy in Hong Kong develops, foreign investors are likely to use English to communicate with local businessmen, thus setting the precedent that English is a 'language of power'. However, the local people primarily speak Cantonese, and the majority of locals utilize Cantonese to interact with one another in their daily lives. As English is taught in schools, the class barriers between 'English' and 'Cantonese' becomes irrelevant, reflecting the linguistic belief that language can be used as a tool to build connections and remove barriers as different social groups mingle and pick

UP opposing linguistic features of each group.

