



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
June 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.

Candidates are becoming more adept at adopting a descriptivist approach but occasionally they still slip into the use of value-judgement based formulae such as ‘the correct version in standard English would be...’ This is best avoided.

Summary

Candidates generally performed well overall and as before, there were a number of very impressive responses. Nonetheless, in some cases, 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 skills, e.g. annotation, 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 copy or simply summarise large sections of the data. Candidates are required to reference the sources and identify the transition of language with examples, basing their discussion on the starting points provided in the three sources.

- Use the bullet points as a scaffold when writing your response to make sure all parts of the question are addressed and that 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 creole is and why the Nigerian versions exemplified were interesting.

This said, there was a little confusion about the speaker's position in relation to the development and usage of creoles in Africa and Standard English in general. There was a fairly common assertion that for the speaker in Text A 'English isn't their first language'. This is not impossible, of course, but it is not wholly likely either. The fact that the speaker in Text A is using a creolised version does not mean they are 'not first language speakers of English', just that they use a non-Standard variety on the post-creole continuum which is still, nonetheless, entirely recognisable as a variety of English. More plausibly, perhaps, the speaker is not a native speaker of, e.g. British English. That they are still intelligible to other English speakers should be taken as evidence of the transition of the language into different forms rather than it being the case that, for example, Standard English is in the process of supplanting a creole which had preceded it.

It would perhaps be advisable for candidates to start by identifying the acrolect to which they wish to compare the variety under discussion. Indeed, there was some evidence of this and a lot of good commentary ensued about the possibility of a shift in the acrolectal form from Standard British English (imported via colonialism, it was frequently asserted) towards other forms, e.g. American English (increasingly dominant due to trade and the influence of online and other media). The linguistic legacies of the slave trade and colonialism were also contextual factors with which some candidates chose to engage, with varying degrees of information and awareness.

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 pointing out that the accent on which the IPA is based is broadly Received Pronunciation (as is evidenced by, e.g. the 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.

It is not a requirement that candidates know and can refer to phonemic place and manner of articulation, but a lot seem to and there is no denying that this sort of detail, if used pertinently and accurately, adds some analytical depth to a response.

For candidates typing answers, e.g. for reasons of an extra time allocation, it is important that they can access a copiable version of the IPA, otherwise this can be the result:

First of all, we have to consider the speaker's pronunciation of certain words. Evidently, several features of creoles are also present in the pronunciation in the text, such as the words "west" being pronounced as "wes", and "just" being pronounced as "dzhoos" (sorry there are no IPA characters on this keyboard) dropping the hard consonants at the end of words for the sake of simplification of the pronunciation, which reflects the simplified nature of creoles as derivatives of pidgins, contact languages created out of necessity. This is also represented by the

An IPA can be copied into a word document from a previous iteration of WEN02 (it might need some light re-formatting) and then put on the desktop of the computer which the candidate will be using. It is emphasised that in examples such as the one above, the candidate is not being penalized for the omission; however, it would be better for them to have the facility available in terms of managing their exam, one would imagine.

For those typing answers using the online assessment route, which is recommended, 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.

From the point of view of the specific content of Text A, it is probably not ideal to confuse the gender of the speaker which, in this case, was clearly signposted. There was also some evidence of pattern errors in spelling of words which probably should have been established, e.g. 'constonant', 'concinant', 'consant'. 'Omission' also saw a lot of variant orthography.

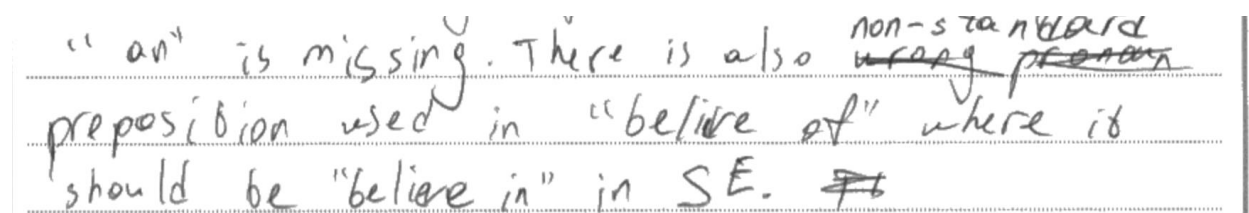
Many candidates made an interesting and relevant use of theory – Kachru; Giles; McCrum and Schneider were all pertinently referenced amongst a wide range of other credible sources.

There was often a more sustained focus on phonology than might have been the case in previous iterations of WEN02 but some candidates still handled it negligibly or not at all. Unfortunately, a small minority still appears under-aware of what a transcript actually is, as evidenced in comments such as 'Text A doesn't have any punctuation' or 'the micropauses are where the commas should be'. On a more specific level, quite a lot of candidates stated that /tu:lz/ swaps a common or RP terminal /s/ for /z/ whereas, in fact, most variations do actually have /z/ here. Precision is always desirable.

It can be quite useful to do discuss the field, mode and function of Text A, as long as this is made concise and relevant.

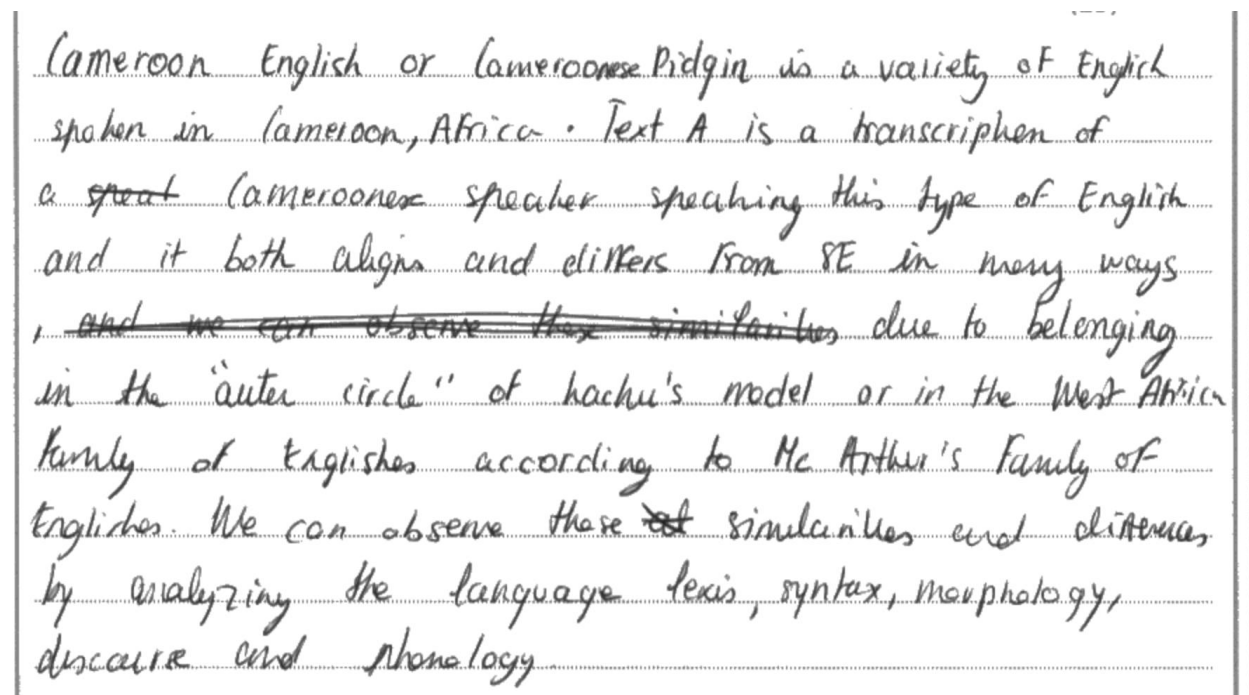
Assertions such as 'Standard English is the superstrate and other languages are the substrates' – could do with being more specific, e.g. 'local languages and dialects, such as the major African varieties are likely to have had a substrate role'. In the case of Nigerian English, there were some clear ideas about the significance of French, which was good.

There was possibly less 'translation' in this series, though it still happens, along the lines of 'the SE version would be...', as here:



"an" is missing. There is also ^{non-standard} ~~wrong preposition~~ preposition used in "believe of" where it should be "believe in" in SE. #6

In this case, a candidate opens with a sensible introduction. Versions of this which simply repeat the rubric are almost always unhelpful and this candidate is doing enough to extend their opening into something more informed.



Cameroon English or Cameroonian Pidgin is a variety of English spoken in Cameroon, Africa. Text A is a transcription of a ~~great~~ Cameroonian speaker speaking this type of English and it both aligns and differs from SE in many ways, ~~and we can observe these similarities~~ due to belonging in the "outer circle" of Kachru's model or in the West African family of Englishes according to McArthur's Family of Englishes. We can observe these ~~at~~ similarities and differences by analyzing the language lexis, syntax, morphology, discourse and phonology.

The following example includes a neat, concise and accurate discussion of phonology, plausibly tied to Accommodation theory at the end. Even though we might not fully agree with it, there is a hypothesis and that is to be welcomed.

In terms of phonology, the speaker diverges from RP. This is evident in the consonant deletion of the alveolar stop /t/ in "just /dʒʌst/", whereby ^{RP} it would be pronounced as "dʒʌst". This ~~can~~ also deletion of the alveolar stop can also be seen in "yes /wɛs/". However, there is Th-stopping in "the /di:/", this is perhaps because it is easier to not pronounce the dental fricative /θ/ which is a common feature of CE. ~~Furthermore~~ Furthermore, the speaker

pronounces "it's" as "/ɪz/" which is non-standard as the alveolar stop /t/ has been substituted by the alveolar fricative /z/. However, this isn't the case throughout the whole of the discourse as the speaker pronounces "it's" in the standard form numerous times. This ~~is~~ ~~perhaps~~ concurs with Giles' Conversational Accommodation Theory which explains that the speaker adapts their language to whoever they're speaking to. In this scenario, the speaker adapts 'corrects' their language for the American audience.

This passage, taken from a typed answer, handles syntax well.

'The syntactical features of this variety of English is perhaps where it differs the most from standard forms of English. This is seen clearly in one of the first phrases in the piece being 'I'm from Bamileke girl' which uses the preposition of 'from' instead of the indefinite article of 'a'. In fact, this variety of English demonstrates a trend where the indefinite article of 'a' is omitted from sentences, which is seen with her hesitating to quantify the word 'Bamileke' in the phrase

'you go in Cameroon you will find er er Bamileke.' There are also certain subject-verb disagreements with phrases such as 'we are very attach to our tradition' demonstrating this, as the past tense of the word (attached) should have been used instead. This also reflects a feature of certain creoles to use the simple or historic present tense in their sentences which gives their speech a sense of immediacy and urgency. This immediacy is aided by the lack of conjunctions which make many of the speaker's sentences asyndetic. Moreover, the speaker's use of declarative sentences with modal auxiliary verbs consistently also differs from standard forms of English. This is seen when she states that 'I will tell my story', and since modal auxiliary verbs can be used to convey a sense of necessity or obligation, it gives this text significance and gravity.'

The next excerpt exemplifies the sort of tangled identification error which is not uncommon. The candidate does deserve some credit for trying (and getting part of the analysis right – 'to' is a preposition) and it's easy to see why they might think 'of' is an auxiliary verb (on the demotic principle of 'could of been') but this kind of mis-labelling, particularly if repeated during a response, tends to be unhelpful.

'The Cameroon speaker also uses the non standard auxiliary verb in the phrase 'we are very attach of our tradition'. Instead of the preposition 'to', she uses the auxiliary verb and copula 'of' which deviates from standard english syntax, emphasising her second language speaker features.'

Here is an interesting approach to discourse, based on a particular theoretical position. This is on the good side of relevant but even more direct reference to the text would have elevated it further.

'In terms of discourse, in the antepenultimate sentence ("also Cameroon is a bilingual country"), the speaker begins to discuss the absence of an official language, stating that they "have English and French as official languages", carrying on after also highlighting that they "don't have an official religion" either. This can be directly related to Robert Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism (1992) theory, which discusses the innerworkings of English as a tool for dominance and control rather than a useful means to communicate in terms of trade. While it does recognise the usefulness of having English as a lingua franca, the theory moreso focuses a spotlight on how it came to be a linguafranca and how it kills out other languages, erasing culture and heritage. The belief is that by the English (and the French, in this case) colonising the countries they have, their cultural features still stay integrated within postcolonial countries even after they've (the English) have left, and that as an after-effect, English still continues to dominate at least some part of the modern day forms of communication with postcolonial countries. This links to Text A as pertinent historical context that has shaped the trajectory of Western Cameroon and the absence of one of their own languages being an official language. This further supports the

speakers choice to speak English non-standardly, in their own right, as a means to represent the remains of culture and heritage that continues to prevail post-colonisation.'

As stated, candidates should really avoid a prescriptive approach. This has been signaled in previous Reports and it remains an issue which is damaging attainment, as here, where an otherwise reasonable answer is somewhat derailed.

Throughout text (A) the speaker displays a poor use of lexis, she use poor ~~the~~ range of vocab, and tries to use more formal language to try and communicate her ideas, the use of language is weak suggesting that she had to 'look' for certain words and doesn't know them at the top of her head, that could be because of the difference between her English and what she believed was proper English. "I will make a personal testimony", the use of 'testimony' in this context comes up as too formal, since she is giving a class presentation in university. The word "testimony" gives the idea of something serious, like something someone would say in court, or a police investigation. This ~~suggests~~ implies that she ~~isn't~~ is trying to make herself clearer

Question 2

Timing was clearly a problem for some candidates who had plainly not left themselves long enough to deal with Section B.

Quite a lot of candidates are still not getting far beyond just summarizing the texts with little to no comment on context, analysis or evaluation. The unit is quite a long way into its life by now and there has been plenty of advice in previous Reports about, e.g. not lifting unassimilated chunks and not simply paraphrasing the content of the Source Booklet.

Many of the principles which apply to one variety, e.g. superstrate and substrate; convergence; the influence of colonization, trade and globalization; the role of advancing technology and the internet in spreading lexical, phonological, semantic and discursive forms and patterns; the principles of word formation; the relatively static nature of syntax and grammar; cultural transmission and identity (the idea that varieties of English such as Kamtok, once viewed pejoratively as ‘Bush English’, for instance, are now moving along the post-creole continuum towards being markers of linguistic nationhood and sources of cultural pride) apply to others. Thus, there is something to be made from practising with the previous iterations of WEN02 in order to identify bodies of transferable knowledge (and skills) which can be adapted (though not rote-learned and replicated, ideally) to whatever varieties future papers might be based upon.

As established, candidates should avoid repeating the Question 2 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 series, 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 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. In this series, some answers adopted a bullet-by-bullet approach with others going for something more integrated. Both methods can work.

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.

Many candidates drew effectively enough on Text A and commented on both the specifics of the transcript, the general issues related to transition and the ways in which the specifics of language apparent in the text are tied up with that. There was a good deal of interesting commentary about the value which the speaker put on the particularity of their creole and their consciousness of how it was tied to their personal, social and cultural identity.

Text B, about Kamtok, drew some sound comments on the ways in which the content fed into bullets one and two in particular. There was a clear sense that many candidates were already armed with some knowledge of the history of the region and a very small number who were especially well-informed. Such insight can be highly creditworthy, as long as it is made relevant.

Writing about Text C, perhaps too few candidates commented on the formal, academic aspect of the text as in, e.g. 'French loans abound in various domains of the official life of the country.' The extract provided a number of examples of lexemes drawn into the Nigerian variants of English and these might have been more precisely used – the items exemplified were all nouns and this could have led to some speculation as to the ways in which lexical transition is typically influenced by the addition or adaptation of words from the content classes, specifically nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Once again, quite a lot of theories were deployed, from Aitchison's 'Progress or Decay?' model to Zipf's Principle of Least Effort. Some of these were used more relevantly than others and some of them were only partially understood. For example, the 'damp spoon' and 'crumbling castle' concepts were often attributed to Aitchison whereas in fact, the Professor simply references them in order to make a point about prescriptivist tendencies.

Giles' Accommodation theory featured heavily, as did Labov's concept of overt and covert prestige. It was interesting (and rewarding) to see some ambitious embarkation into the challenging waters of, e.g. relexification theory. Centres are to be commended for giving their candidates access to such advanced ideas.

As suggested, simple repetition of the rubric, as exemplified in this excerpt from a candidate's response, is not a particularly helpful way to start.

Text A is a transcript from a speaker of the English dialect from Cameroon, Text B is a transcript from a website describing Kamtok which is formally known as Cameroon Pidgin and text C is an extract from a university paper record on impact of French on the English spoken in Cameroon.

These approaches can easily be improved by offering some form of commentary, as here:

Text A is a spoken presentation by a speaker from Cameroon that is in written format. Text A highlights exactly how 'Bamileke people' [people from West Cameroon] would interact with a Western Caucasian audience in an educational setting. It also indicates that the audience being from an American University, the audience of Text A is highly educated while in text B, the extract was retrieved from a website, that is, written format with the context of Kamtok being a ~~pidg~~ pidginised English in Cameroon, how it is not a creole but rather a ~~to~~ lingua franca for people from Cameroon.

In the next example, theory is brought into play in an orderly and well-managed fashion. The candidate takes an interesting approach to assimilating the texts into an overview:

‘English is an everchanging, exponentially spreading language that has continued to grow and develop over the past 400 years. It's importance to Cameroon is signified as it has been established as one of the official languages of Cameroon since the 19th century. It appears on Kachru's outer circle and Streven's expanding circle. English is shown throughout three texts in both informal and formal settings.

In text B, English is recognised both as a language on it's own as well as pidginised English, also known informally as 'Kamtok'. The context in which English is used is to provide information on the different language varieties all over the world. The text recognises that this variety is still informal, however it is still used "in Churches and on Radio and Television... and is taking its place as a recognised medium of interaction", indicating that this variety supports the theoretical assumption that Cameroon falls into 'Phase 3: Nativisation' of Schneider's dynamic models. Text B is written formally, aside from the use of the term 'Kamtok'.

In text C, English is used in the context of a university research paper on the impact of French on the English language in Cameroon. French is recognised as "the dominant official language", and that many borrowings are present not only in casual speech but in "various domains of the official life of the country". The recognition of borrowings as a commonly used technique emphasises the development of the postcolonial country as well as the adaption to English as a variety. When discussing Schneider's dynamic models, Cameroon English as a variety falls under Nativisation (phase 3) as the locals have began to adopt English in their own write, and use their own grammar, lexis, slang, and pronunciation when speaking English, for example, words which are specific to Cameroon Pidgin, such as "kanda (cow hide)", "quacha (an alcoholic drink)", and "buga (dried herring)". The use of English in this context is to identify how English is used in Cameroon and the impact of the French language, and it successfully reaches its aim by discussing how the country operates with French as its dominant official language, however it also shines a light on borrowings from West African Pidgin, Cameroon Pidgin, and Cameroon indigenous languages, which may be useful to give context, however it does not align with the goal of the research paper.’

Here, a candidate offers a very neat conclusion.

In Conclusion, Kamtok and Cameroon English are both widely influenced by French and English, the superstrate languages however use their own dialect words to present a sense of cultural preservation.’

