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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
Subsidiary and International Advanced Level in
English Language (WEN03)

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Introduction

This unit has an explicit focus on how language is crafted. It requires candidates to demonstrate their skills as writers, crafting a text for a specific genre, audience, purpose and context, as well reflecting on their own work in an accompanying analytical commentary. Candidates can be given source texts and creative tasks from a range of different genres for Section A, but they can choose their own audience, purpose and context, allowing them some freedom to select a suitable persona and authorial voice. The question for Section B of this paper is worded in the same way each year, requiring candidates to write a detailed technical commentary on their own writing.

This series, the source booklet consisted of three texts relating to the topic of Music Therapy taken from a range of sources, and many candidates clearly engaged with the task of producing a speech on this subject. Section A prompted a variety of valid approaches to the task and some skilled pieces that used the material creatively and demonstrated insight into writing for a listening audience. There were very few responses that did not manage to produce a speech of some kind, although at all levels there were candidates who showed less skill when selecting and editing material from the source texts.

The second task required the candidates to produce an analytical commentary on the text produced in Section A. This commentary should explore the intended audience, purpose and context of the speech and how this influenced the candidates' choice of register, tone and language techniques, as well as discussing structure, organisation and how the original sources were adapted to create a new text. For many candidates, comments on audience, purpose and context proved to be more insightful than analysis of language techniques. Centres must continue to focus on developing technical skills learned in Unit 1 and applying these to the commentary for this unit.

Candidates continue to find Section B more of a challenge than Section A, and again this series there was often a marked imbalance between the effort and time spent on the two sections. Section B is worth 30 out of the 50 marks for this exam and candidates must ensure that they leave themselves enough time to answer this section fully. It can be very disappointing to read engaging creative tasks that are then let down by unfinished or rushed commentaries. Many candidates simply wrote too much or failed to edit and summarise in Section A, and then ran out of time in Section B.

Overall, candidates produced work which was often engaging and sometimes highly convincing as a speech for a listening audience. Similarly, many commentaries at all levels included carefully considered ideas about audience, purpose and context and comments on these ideas that showed some insight. Centres continue to prepare candidates for the exam in a way that enables them to demonstrate their ability to write both creatively and analytically. However, they should continue to work on the timing of the two questions and on developing technical linguistic knowledge.

Section A

At all levels, there were candidates who showed the ability to write with engagement and flair, often alongside some understanding of the genre and the potential audiences for their speech. However, where candidates made better use of the source materials, achievement was much higher. Centres should continue to work on their candidates' ability to select key information from the source texts and use that information to create a completely original new text. Some candidates used only a little material from the sources, resulting in speeches that were often well expressed and entertaining, but relying too much on material from the candidates' personal knowledge of music and mental or physical health issues.

Equally, significant direct "lifting" from the source texts, even with some attempt to reorganise, reframe or paraphrase the material, is not a productive approach to this question. Inevitably, the writing can lack originality and flair and the responses can be quite long, as candidates struggle to be selective with the information. Even at the higher levels, where candidates were often able to adopt a fluent and lively voice when writing sections entirely from their own imagination or experience, many included passages that were lifted from the source with only minor amendments.

At the lower levels, this kind of reliance on the language of the source texts can be quite significant. In particular, many students had adopted the approach of just editing Text A, the interview with the music therapist at a British hospital, so that whole sections were retained, the Q&A sections in particular, which was quite inappropriate for the spoken mode; essentially copying the original text with some occasional rephrasing, but in the same format. Inevitably, this limited achievement as the style, tone and register of the source material had not been adapted to suit the new audience, purpose and genre. More successful responses managed to combine their additional creative ideas and original language with facts, case studies and people mentioned in the source texts.

In the question, candidates are reminded that they must use appropriate information from the source booklet to create their speech. This does not mean that candidates have to use all the material from the source booklet or that it needs to be in the order in which it has been given. Candidates can be selective, picking individual facts and information and using them to support their own ideas. The response should be a piece of completely original writing, using the information in the source booklet, rather than just a summary of the sources.

It should be noted that candidates do not need to reference the source texts in their own original writing and can present paraphrased or quoted material as their own ideas. For example, rather than explaining that they had read about the actress Vicky McClure in an article (Text B), more successful responses might actually adopt the persona of someone who has a relative in the dementia choir, or someone who has interviewed her, or even McClure herself!

Some candidates chose to adopt this kind of specific persona for their speech, such as a speech therapist, medical professional, parent or careers adviser. Others decided on a very

clear and appropriate register and tone for their speaker, audience and context: more formal and serious for medical professionals; warm and friendly yet not overly informal for parents of children with speech disorders, for example. For future series, it is recommended that candidates think carefully about their persona for any genre; it can be very helpful for them to understand who they are representing as a writer or speaker. Similarly, register and tone needs to be appropriate for the chosen audience, purpose and genre; some candidates fall back on an informal, "chatty" register too readily when given the speech genre when it is not appropriate for their stated context.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a wide range of effective and interesting rhetorical and linguistic devices available to candidates when writing speeches. They are encouraged to be more deliberate in the shaping of their own writing and in how they consider the effect of the methods they employ. For some candidates, aside from the occasional direct address to the audience at the start of the response or the use of some rhetorical questions, there was little evidence to suggest that they had studied or practised speechwriting. By using a wider and more considered range of methods and techniques in their Section A response, candidates will also find the task in Section B easier to complete.

Section B

Where candidates had allowed sufficient time to produce a detailed commentary and had covered a range of features from their own writing, perceptive and accurate analytical commentaries were produced; if they prioritise planning and writing for Section B, candidates are more likely to cover a range of different methods and effects within the commentary. For many candidates, writing over-long responses for Section A limited the time available to produce a meaningful response for Section B.

Many candidates were able to make some insightful and considered comments on audience, purpose and context and link these to register and tone. There was often a clear sense of who would be listening to their speech and why they might be interested in the in the topic of music therapy. Moreover, this had enabled candidates to tailor their anecdotes, facts or details from the texts to build their listeners' interests to make the speech more relevant to them, as well as guiding decisions made about register and tone (see Section A). It was encouraging to see that the majority of candidates at all levels had made specific decisions about audience, purpose and context before writing their speeches, enabling them to make detailed comments about these factors in their response to Section B.

However, at the lower levels, comments on audience, purpose and context were often not linked to specific effects or language choices. This is an area where candidates at all levels could achieve better results in their commentaries, by giving more detailed evidence and analysis of how they crafted their writing to meet the requirements of their stated audience, purpose and context. Many commentaries at the lower levels lacked terminology,

exemplification or close analysis of technique. This was particularly disappointing to see for those candidates who had produced an effective response for Section A.

Candidates at the higher levels were more able to describe the examples they provided using relevant terminology and to analyse the intended effect of their writing techniques. Similarly, the range and relevance of technical methods and terminology explored were often a discriminator between the lower and higher levels. For the commentary, candidates need a toolkit of a range of terminology and techniques to discuss and this is an area where centres can continue to develop their candidates' knowledge. There is a natural development from Unit 1 of the qualification, where candidates are required to analyse other writers' techniques and make comparisons, to this unit where candidates must comment on their own use of those techniques and compare their own writing with the language used in the source material. As outlined in Section A above, for genres such as speeches, where one might expect to see clear analysis of a range of specific rhetorical devices, for example, this lack of detailed technical analysis can be particularly disappointing.

Once candidates are able to apply a wide range of techniques and terminology accurately and with confidence, it is important that they can evaluate their use of language in some detail. Levels 4 and 5 of the mark scheme require more analytical and evaluative discussion of why these techniques have been used and their connection to context, so candidates should ensure that they allow enough time in their commentaries for this level of detailed discussion. If the commentary is rushed due to a lack of time, the points are often listed with limited analysis or evaluation, which does limit achievement.

Paper Summary

Many candidates were able to take inspiration from the source materials, producing some engaging work at all levels. The task was accessible for all and candidates had clearly found the topic interesting and were able to add in their own experience of listening to (and be inspired by) music, showing confidence when writing their speech. Where candidates managed their time well and had a clear sense of audience, purpose and context, detailed commentaries were produced in Section B to explore the writing process and analyse the language choices made.

Centres can continue to help their candidates by developing their skills in selecting relevant information from the source materials and then using that information in a completely original new text. For the commentary, candidates would benefit from a more comprehensive range of technical methods and terminology with which to comment on their own writing. Similarly, encouraging candidates to make consistent links with a specific audience, purpose and context enables them to make more insightful comments about the choices they have made in their writing. For this unit, candidates should build on the skills and techniques first studied for Unit 1, applying these analytical and evaluative methods to their own original writing.

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

Section A

- Take the time to decide on a specific audience, purpose and context before you start writing and try to adopt an appropriate register, tone and language techniques
- It can also be useful to adopt a specific 'persona' as the writer or speaker
- Be selective with the material you use from the source texts, combining it with your own original writing; avoid any direct "lifting" of whole sentences or sections from the material, unless deliberately quoting an individual
- Plan your response, paying close attention to structure and organisation; you do not have to follow the same structure as the source material.
- Think about your commentary when planning your response to Section A, noting down any decisions you have made or techniques you have used that you could explore in Section B
- Time your response and make sure you leave enough time for Section B.

Section B

- Explain why you chose the language methods and techniques you used in your response to Section A, and evaluate their effect on your new audience, purpose and genre
- Link technical features to audience, purpose and context; explain why the language used was appropriate and be as specific as you can
- Develop a flexible 'toolkit' of frameworks that can be applied to a variety of texts and techniques, along with a range of linguistic terminology
- Always supports your points with examples from your writing, or from the source materials, as appropriate.

