Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Level In English Language (WEN03)
Unit 3: Crafting Language (Writing)

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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 bread and baking taken from a range of sources, and many candidates clearly engaged with the task of producing a script for a short video 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 viewing/listening audience. There were very few responses that did not manage to produce a script 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 video script 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 January 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 script to be used to produce a short video. 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 then 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 script, including presenters and crew, as well as the final viewing audience. 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 scripts that were often well expressed and entertaining, but relying too much on material from the candidates' personal knowledge of food and culture, or the benefits of taking up a hobby for one's mental health, for example.

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 blog entry on the origins of bread, so that whole sections were retained in date order, even including the 'interesting facts', which was quite inappropriate for the spoken mode of a video; essentially copying the original text with some occasional rephrasing, but in the same chronological 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 video script. 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 baker Kitty Tait in an article (Text C), more successful responses might actually adopt the persona of someone who was a customer of Tait's bakery, or someone who has interviewed her, or even Kitty Tait herself!

Some candidates chose to adopt this kind of specific persona as the presenter of the video, such as a professional baker, food vlogger, influencer or historian. Others decided on a very clear and appropriate register and tone for their speaker, audience and context: more formal and serious for food historians; lively and informal for influencers aiming at a youth audience, 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 any spoken genre when it is not appropriate for their stated context.

Overall, candidates dealt well with the task, drawing on a range of methods and techniques to engage their audiences and demonstrating creativity when considering the context of their video. For example, scripts were written for entertaining videos on YouTube, to be shown at Ted Talks, for culinary school training or to educate history students in the classroom.

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 watching the video and why they might be interested in the in the topic of bread and baking. Moreover, this had enabled candidates to tailor their anecdotes, facts or details from the texts to build their viewers' interests to make the video 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 scripts, 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.

It should be noted that for this unit, the analysis of the linguistic frameworks such as discourse, grammar or lexis/semantics, linked to issues of audience, purpose and context, is a much richer source for the commentary than the application of theory. Unless the theorist is entirely relevant and specific to a particular point the candidate needs to make, for Unit 3 it is not necessary to overload commentaries with every linguistic theorist in their revision notes!

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; candidates had clearly found the topic interesting and were able to add in their own experience of food from their home countries and their travels. They also showed confidence when writing for the video genre. 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. This should be the main focus, rather than on theorists. 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.