Examiners' Report
June 2023

International Advanced Level English Language WEN04 01

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the performance of the June 2023 paper. This paper offers a choice of four topic areas focusing on Global English, Child Language, Language and Power and Language and Technology. The pre-release material was available to centres via the Pearson website in December 2022, enabling candidates time to research their chosen sub-topic in preparation for the exam on 13th June 2023.

The sub-topics for the June series were:

Barbadian English

Children's Television

Public Apologies

Radio Sports Commentary

Candidates should read through both questions, as well as the source material for Section A, before beginning their written response. This will allow them to gain an understanding of the focus of the task and with regards to Section B, the perspective for discussion. Candidates performed well, engaged positively with the data and demonstrated their subject knowledge in their responses.

Section A (questions 1-4) is marked out of 20 and section B (questions 5-8) is marked out of 30. The time spent and length of response for Section B should be longer than Section A as reflected in a higher number of marks and the requirement to include research completed by the candidate within their response. All candidates answered the corresponding questions for Section A and B this series.

The most popular choice was question 3 and its corresponding question in Section B, Question 7 – Language of Power (Public Apologies).

The remaining questions were as follows:

Second popular – Q2/Q6 Child Language (Children's Television)

Third popular – Q1/5 Global English (Barbadian English)

Fourth popular – Q4/8 Language and Technology (Radio Sports Commentary)

Question 1

For question 1, candidates were asked to analyse a transcript from a YouTube video on gaming by a speaker of Barbadian English providing a commentary on how to use the gaming controls. Candidates were required to focus on the language frameworks, the context behind the transcript and to introduce relevant theories and concepts to explore the language of Barbadian English.

Overall, candidates performed well on this question continuing to show progression of their knowledge of Global English from their study of Unit 2: Language in Transition. Most candidates were able to integrate theoretical analysis to support their points. Candidates awarded in the higher levels of the mark scheme used the language framework to analyse the transcript and the way the speaker demonstrated features of Barbadian English.

Top level responses covered a range of features including grammatical, phonological and lexical features using sophisticated terminology as well as explanations of nonstandard features linking to contextual factors and their research. Some candidates identified specific features and referenced accommodation theory, Kachru's three circle model and substrate/superstrate languages to discuss the development of Barbadian English. There was an awareness of the history and development of Barbadian English as well as knowledge of specific phonetic features and articulation demonstrating confidence in their analysis and discriminate selection of the source material.

In the lower levels candidates generally applied a descriptive approach and examples selected tended to be unassimilated and at times paraphrased with limited analysis. Weaker candidates tended to feature spot and describe what was there particularly with phonology and lexis with some utilising terminology and others using general phrases such as 'this word' or 'this sound'. Some linked their points to language development. Candidates are reminded to avoid terms such as 'incorrect/wrong' or 'bad/broken english' when referring to nonstandard features.

Question 2

For question 2, candidates were asked to analyse 4 transcripts from children's television shows which were aimed at children aged 1-7 years old and at different stages of language acquisition. The transcripts provided data which covered a range of features associated with informing and engaging children and supporting language development. Candidates were required to discuss to what extent are Texts B1 to B4 representative of language used in television shows.

Higher level candidates produced a clear, controlled response and demonstrated their knowledge of language development with relation to the stages of language development from birth to 7 years old. Candidates were systematic in their approach, commenting on a range of features across the levels and were able to link features to theories of language development. The progressing phonological, lexical and grammatical development was discussed using examples from the data and candidates discussed strategies used by the narration or television presenters to encourage interaction such as songs, narrative and interrogatives. They also discussed the use of repetition, rhyme, lexical and phonetic features and how this provided a memorable function to support language acquisition. Candidates who covered a range of features and linked them to the stages of the language acquisition in the audience were most successful.

Candidates at the lower end of the mark range tended to describe the features or made statements regarding children's television shows without linking to stages of language development or described theories with limited reference to the data or minimal use of terminology.

This candidate scored within level 5. This candidate wrote a clear effective response, consistently utilised terminology, embedded theory well and featured examples from all the data.

Considering the texts from a discoursal, ^phonetic and pragmatic framework, all three texts employ different techniques in order to successfully fulfil their functions. Text B2's focus on the alphabet and phonetics requires the audience to engage and focus heavily, in order to acquire the skills ~~and~~ to replicate their use. During the babbling stage, infants ~~are~~ attempt to reproduce sounds heard in their surroundings, produced by MKO's and caregivers in their surroundings; building vocal dexterity through 'babbling' (producing a range of sounds with both meaning and no meaning). The show in B1 takes an ~~behav~~ empiricist approach, and attempts to contribute to the child's language acquisition support system (Bruner) by modelling the use of phonemes, reduplicating them, ~~using the~~ displaying them on the screen and using them in song. The use of melody can encourage the audience to sing along and engage further.

In this extract they are demonstrating their understanding of how the TV show, aimed towards learners in early stages of language acquisition, focused on the methods used to develop the audience's phonetic development. They demonstrate knowledge of the stages of development and theories and link them to the purpose and audience of the TV show.

Relate language to context and explore the reasons for its use engaging theory.

Question 3

For question 3, candidates were asked to analyse the language used in two public apologies made by a politician and a CEO regarding behaviours/incidents which had a negative impact on their public image. Candidates were asked to what extent are Texts C1 and C2 representative of language used in public apologies?

Candidates engaged well with the data demonstrating clear and discriminating understanding of the language and techniques employed by public figures when making an apology. Mid-level to top level responses identified a range of features linking to theories of power, accommodation theory and positive/negative face. Candidates were able to discuss successful aspects of the apologies as well as weaker components and most were able to differentiate between the politician apologising for his personal behaviour and the CEO apologising for poor behaviour by his employees. There was some interesting discussion regarding the positions of power held within politics and corporations and how they need to maintain a positive public image/persona to be successful within their roles. Candidates in the lower levels lacked theoretical application linking mainly to synthetic personalisation or described the features within public apologies with limited analysis and without utilising terminology.

Question 4

For question 4, candidates were asked to analyse two extracts of radio sports commentary from a football match and Formula One racing. Candidates were asked to discuss to what extent are Texts D1 and D2 representative of the language used by radio sports commentators.

This question had the lowest entries, but the candidates performed generally well with marks awarded across L1-L4. Candidates demonstrated knowledge of the techniques of radio sports commentators using their research to explore the features present linking to accommodation theory and Grice's Conversational Maxims.

Candidates in the mid – high – levels demonstrated good understanding of the function and audience of sports commentary. They were able to identify language features such as noun phrases to aid description and the extra knowledge commentators need to display in order to provide informative commentary in between key moments of action to maintain audience engagement. Some weaker candidates described the contents of the commentary or paraphrased, generally lacking the range and discussion required for more marks. Overall, the majority of the candidates made links to the contextual factors of mode, purpose and audience exploring how certain features were employed to compensate for the lack of visual elements and create an exciting dramatic listening experience for the listener.

Question 5

The question posed the statement: 'Despite Barbados being located within the Caribbean, Barbadian English has more in common with dialects of English in the UK than it does with Caribbean English-based creoles.' Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Responses were awarded across all levels with some candidates providing well researched and detailed answers. The best responses were by those candidates who were able to tailor their knowledge and research to form an argumentative response to the question. There were some interesting responses which explained the historical factors well, linking the influence of English and African languages on the variety. Many candidates discussed the rhotic accent in Barbadian (Bajan) English as possibly being influenced by Irish and Scottish English speakers who were brought to Barbados and how this feature differentiated from non-rhotic accent in British English. Candidates also made reference to the process of decreolization and the creole continuum to show their understanding of how Barbadian English developed and embedded knowledge of specific features which were shared with British English varieties. There were some candidates who showed good historical knowledge but did not reference any language features to illustrate their points either from the data or their own research.

Question 6

The question posed the statement: 'Evidence suggests that exposing children to television too early can cause delays in speech development'. Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Candidates performed well and produced some interesting responses. Candidates scoring within mid – level 3 and onwards presented knowledge and understanding of the impact early exposure to television can have on language development, developing a good argumentative response. Some made reference to theories of language development and were able to explain the impact of the benefit of interaction with care givers and how it compared to exposure to language via television. This was supported with good examples from the data or their own research. Some candidates had conducted their own studies observing children watching shows aimed at their age group and identified the features utilised to engage them and how the content supported their stages of development. Others made reference to studies into the effect of television on early language development to debate the question. Evidence that was collected was well integrated into the responses and terminology was utilised when identifying features. Candidate responses at the lower end of the mark range generally did not establish an argument relating to the question or focused on children's television shows and made no reference to the impact on language development.

Question 7

The question posed the statement: 'The language of public apologies appears to be mainly concerned with restoring a positive public image.' Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any social, historic and cultural factors when answering the question. Candidates produced well-structured arguments demonstrating an engagement with the research and topic.

Candidates were awarded across all levels utilising evidence they had found in their research and the source data. Higher level responses engaged in theoretical discussion showing strong understanding of rhetoric and power dynamics employed in apologies in order restore/maintain a positive public image and influence people's perception. They also identified the techniques, language patterns and structure which are common within effective apologies as well as those which fail to convey authenticity and sincerity, explaining how they could be improved. Candidates used a variety of real-life examples of corporate, political and celebrity apologies to illustrate their points. Mid-level responses were able to use the data and their research to demonstrate persuasive techniques with links to accommodation theory, face theory, overt/covert prestige and synthetic personalisation. Those scoring in the lower levels were unable to develop a structured argument and produced undeveloped responses with a lack of terminology or reference to the data.

Question 8

The question posed the statement: `Despite increased audience engagement in sport due to advances in visual technologies, many experts still say that the language of sports radio offers a better experience than sports TV.' Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

The responses to this question were varied and awarded within level 1-4. Some demonstrated a lot of research and a good understanding of the sophisticated and precise language techniques which are used in sports radio commentary and how this made for a more dramatic and engaging experience than watching sport on TV. Candidates scoring in the mid to upper levels demonstrated knowledge of how radio sports commentary has developed and how it is more demanding on the commentators who have to talk continuously throughout the game providing informative as well as descriptive commentary. Candidates were aware of the different functions of radio and television commentary and how sports radio have developed over time. Candidates awarded in the lower levels demonstrated research but produced undeveloped answers and largely focused on the history or genre of radio sports describing the purpose of commentary in very general terms. Some failed to develop an argument or reference examples from research.

This candidate was awarded in the top of level 3.

The discourse of radio sports commentary is characterised by turn-taking, a concept which has been ~~named~~ split into two (Play-by-Play -PP) and Color Commentary - CC). Ferguson describes PP as the "discursive" element of commentary with live action whereas CC is the "leisurely" evaluation purposed ~~to~~ to provide statistics and tactical ~~of~~ analysis to the audience. In my research, ~~the~~ the transcriptions that I produced reflected the variation in the Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) between the adjacency pairs, with radio sports commentary having longer turns during the PP commentary (an average of ~~thirty-two~~ seventy-five words per ~~utterance~~ turn) as compared to CC (thirty words per turn). The purpose of this, Ransure suggests, is the overall purpose of radio sports commentary —to visualise the unseen action to the audience.

WEN04_01_SecA

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 required the candidates to perform a linguistic analysis of the data provided utilising their research to demonstrate how the text is representative of the subtopic they have chosen to research.

WEN04_01_SecB

Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 required the candidates to use their wider research to discuss the statement in the given question. Each question enabled the candidates to build an argument for or against the statement and to support their ideas with evidence and concepts from their wider research.

Paper Summary

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

- ensure you employ effective time management in the examination to ensure that appropriate time is spent on Section A and B in relation to the number of marks awarded
- read all source data carefully before attempting the questions in Section A
- support each point you make with evidence from the source material in Section A and your wider research in Section B
- make sure you cover the language framework when analysing the data in both Sections A and B
- support your discussion with appropriate theories, concepts and contextual features
- create a discussion/debate for Section B, tailoring your research to the question and form an argument responding to the statement
- use theoretical discussion to explore and challenge/support your findings rather than including everything you can remember about a particular theory/theorist or the main body of your research

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