



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Level in English Language (WEN04)  
Unit 4: Investigating Language

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to provide centres with an overview of the performance of the January 2024 paper. This paper offers a choice of four topic areas focusing on global language, child language, language and power and language and technology. The pre-release material was available to centres via the Pearson website in August 2023, enabling candidates time to research their chosen subtopic in preparation for the exam on 15th January.

The sub-topics for the June series were:

1. Afro-Seminole Creole
2. Role-Play
3. Fundraising
4. The Printing Press

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 Section B, the perspective for discussion. The cohort was small with 48 entries however, there was a wide range of responses with candidates scoring across all levels. There were some strong level 4 and level 5 responses demonstrating most candidates were well prepared for the exam. Overall, 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 Sections A and B this series.

The most popular choice were Questions 1 (Global English) and 3 (Language of Power) and their corresponding question in Section B, Questions 5 and 7.

The remaining questions were as follows:

Second popular – Q2/6 Child Language (Role-Play)

Least popular – Q4/8 Language and Technology (The Printing Press)

## **Section A.**

### **Question 1.**

For Question 1, candidates were asked to analyse a speaker of Afro-Seminole Creole discussing memories of her childhood growing up in Texas. 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 Afro Seminole Creole.

Candidates awarded in the higher levels of the mark scheme used the language framework to analyse the transcripts and the way the speakers' demonstrated features of Afro-Seminole Creole. Top level responses covered a range of features including grammatical, phonological and lexical features using sophisticated terminology as well as explanations of non-standard features linking to the contextual factors and their research. Many candidates referenced theories of language change, accommodation theory, prescriptivism and were able to identify specific features associated with Afro-Seminole Creole and discuss their development. There was an awareness of American history and development of Afro-Seminole Creole and knowledge of the specific phonetic features and articulation. This demonstrated confidence in their analysis and allowed for relevant and discriminating selection of source material. Mid-range responses either lacked a range of features for analysis, not covering all of the frameworks or lacked theoretical application when discussing Afro-Seminole Creole.

At the lower end of the mark range for Question 1, candidates generally resorted to a descriptive approach when exploring what the data provided and any examples selected were unassimilated and at times paraphrased. Weaker candidates tended to feature spot and describe what was there particularly with phonology and lexis. Candidates would mention some terminology such as word class or phonology and be able to link one or two features to language development. Candidates continue to show confidence with the topic and demonstrate strong linguistic analysis of Global English building on their skill set from studying varieties of English at AS level for the Unit WEN02-Language in Transition.

### **Question 2.**

For Question 2, candidates were asked to analyse two transcripts from a child, at different ages, engaged in role-play activities with their caregivers. The transcripts provided data which covered a range of features associated with different stages of language development. Candidates were required to discuss to what extent the texts were representative of language used by children and their caregivers during role-play.

Higher level candidates produced a clear, controlled response and demonstrated their knowledge of language development with close relation to the different stages. They were able to explain how the child's language skills had progressed between each role-play with some candidates recognising that the child took on a more proactive role leading the activity in the second transcript. Candidates were systematic in their approach, commenting on a range of features across the levels and were able link features to theories of language development. The progression of phonological, lexical and grammatical development was discussed using

examples from data such as the emphasis on phonetic and grammatical development. Candidates recognised the techniques used by care givers to encourage participation and interaction throughout the role play such as use of interrogatives, imperatives, simple lexis and repetition to reinforce language. Some candidates made links to theories but there were some responses which did not make any reference which limited their analysis. Responses at the lower end of the mark range tended to describe the features and make statements regarding language acquisition without linking it to the stages of development or described theories with limited reference to the data.

### **Question 3.**

For Question 3, candidates were asked to analyse the language used in two fundraising appeals, one shared on social media and business networks and one from a personal fundraising page. Candidates were asked to what extent the texts were representative of how the language of power is used in fundraising appeals.

This was a popular topic alongside Global English and candidates scored across levels 1-4 demonstrating clear and discriminate understanding of the data and confidence with discussing the topic. Higher level responses identified a range of features used to inform and persuade the audience to donate to their chosen charity/cause with reference to theories on Power, rhetoric, and pragmatics. This was the discriminator between the level 4 and level 3 candidates as those in level 3 lacked theoretical application linking mainly to synthetic personalisation and rhetorical techniques to persuade. Candidates at the lower levels commented on some features linking to contextual factors but made no reference to power or theoretical analysis.

### **Question 4.**

For Question 4, candidates were asked to analyse three texts written in Early Modern English dated 1619, 1688 and 1690. The sources demonstrated the language used in the 1600's in printed materials to showcase the impact of the printing press on English. Candidates were asked to discuss to what extent the texts were representative of English printed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

This question had limited candidates so there is not a variety of responses to comment on. Candidates scored within level 2 and 3. There was a good attempt at research showing an awareness of the types of orthographical features and lexis found within Early Modern English Texts with some links to historical development. Grammatical commentary leaned towards sentence length and complexity with no reference to higher level features such as older forms of verb endings '-eth'. The candidates engaged with the data however there was a lack of range with regards to the features and in theoretical application which prevented marks within the higher levels. Candidate's level 2 demonstrated general understanding and were able to identify the use of old-fashioned lexis and spelling.

## **Section B**

Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 required the candidates to use their wider research to discuss the statements given in the 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.

### **Question 5**

The question posed the statement: 'Although lingua francas have streamlined global communication, it is still important to preserve varieties which are facing extinction'. Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Responses ranged between level 2 and level 5 with some candidates providing well researched and detailed answers. There was a collection of responses which were overly long covering all their research. These were very good responses but there was evidence that not enough time had been spent on section A as there was an imbalance of marks. Section B is a higher mark question so attempting it first and dedicating more time to it is an effective strategy, but candidates should make sure they leave enough time to write a developed response to section A as well.

The best responses were those candidates who were able to tailor their knowledge and research to form an argumentative response to the question. Mid-level responses tended to focus on the historical development of Afro-Seminole Creole making links to the slave trade and the stigma of certain features. Lower levels demonstrated knowledge of the history of Afro-Seminole Creole and its development but were unable to develop their answer beyond that and make reference to the debate posed within the question. Higher level responses covered a range of features present within Afro-Seminole Creole, made links to language theories, language preservation, historical development and attitudes towards the variety referencing its importance to cultural identity. All candidates showed evidence of research.

### **Question 6.**

The question posed the statement: 'The contribution of role-play activities to facilitating and reinforcing the growth of communication skills and social development cannot be overstated.' Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

Candidates scored across level 1 to level 4 with the majority scoring within level 2 and 3. Those within level 2 and low level 3 made some good points regarding the benefits of role play in the development of communication skills but were largely under-developed responses. The weakest responses focused on the stages of language development and the need for interaction with care givers but made general points that did not agree or disagree with the question posed. Mid-level responses went beyond this and made reference to observations and case studies they had researched with varying degrees of relevance. Strong candidates presented knowledge and

understanding of language acquisition, the different factors which can impact language development and theories and research were well integrated within responses and used to establish an argument.

### **Question 7.**

The question posed the statement: 'Fundraising requests are more successful if they avoid aggressive communication tactics'. Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

The majority of candidates produced well-structured arguments demonstrating an engagement with the research and topic. Candidates were awarded across level 2 to 4 focusing largely on evidence they had found in their research. Higher level responses engaged in theoretical discussion showing strong understanding of the power dynamics within fundraising activities and provided real world examples of campaigns which had been both successful/unsuccessful depending on the techniques they used. They were able to discuss communication tactics that were classed as aggressive and others that were rhetorical with a more emotive appeal and explain the effectiveness of each strategy in different contexts. Some mid-level responses were able to use the data and some of their research to argue how language can persuade individuals to donate and provide examples of lexical, semantic or grammatical features to demonstrate the difference between negative and positive techniques. Low level responses were unable to form a structured argument and produced undeveloped response which focused on fundraising and how certain terminology can impact individuals with little reference to specific language features.

### **Question 8.**

The question posed the statement: 'The introduction of the printing press to England is given too much credit for the standardisation of the English language'. Candidates needed to consider relevant language frameworks and levels and any relevant social, historical and cultural factors when answering this question.

There were very limited responses to this question which scored in level 1 and level 3. The level 1 response did not focus on the question and wrote an essay based on communication and technology in general. Those in level 3 demonstrated more specific research and discussed the social context of the time linking to literacy rates, dialects used in printing, key texts and the influence the printing press had on the development of English.

### **Paper Summary**

Based on their performance on this paper, I would like to offer the following advice to candidates:

- 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 the 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 Section 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.

### **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

