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Unit 1: Textual Commentary (6371)

General

There was no preference shown regarding question choice. Both questions were enabling and allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of spoken and written language using a descriptive approach. Candidates felt at ease with the scenarios provided by Texts A and were able to distinguish between Text A and Text B.

Less able candidates were able to recognize general differences between speech and writing. These types of responses tended to lack exemplification and terminology. More able candidates could interpret features in a thoughtful way, demonstrating knowledge of a wide range of linguistic terminology with consistent and effective exemplification.

There were still some centres whose candidates include theory, (Grice and Lakoff, for example), without truly understanding the nature and implications of the research. If theory is to be included, it must be applied to the analysis of practical features found within the texts.

Additionally, some centres seemed to encourage a checklist or centre-response approach. This worked for some candidates, but limited better candidates who seemed stymied by the narrow parameters.

Q1

Candidates identified clearly with the context of Text A. There were some particularly thoughtful responses discussing the methods used by the teacher to encourage Ben.

Most candidates had no difficulty commenting on lexis with some interesting discussion of the origins of *bootilicious*. Identification of interrogative structures and adjacency pairs escaped few candidates.

Lower band answers were often side-tracked by the issues of dominance and power. Some weaker candidates took a prescriptive approach and tended toward judgmental views with reference to Ben's competence and ability.

Text B inevitably produced comments focusing on graphology; however the text contained interesting features from a wide range of linguistic frameworks.

Most candidates were able to discuss lexical features (subject-specific lexis and jargon, for example). It was noted that there was a growing tendency in lower and middle-band answers to assume that shorter, monosyllabic words are all Anglo-Saxon in origin, while technical or polysyllabic words are all Latinate.

Imperatives were often linked back to the instructional purpose in middle-band answers. Only better candidates considered features such as passive constructions, ellipsis and modal verbs.

Q2

Many students found the situation in Text A familiar and accessible. Again, there tended to be some discussion of the roles of the interlocutors with weaker candidates often digressing into a discussion of dominance and power. Some students also entered into a discussion of the degree of formality of Text A.

Most candidates recognized that the Sales Assistant's turns tended to be polite and professional, while the male and female had a closer relationship. Higher band answers explored the roles in a more confident way, noting how dominance and formality can fluctuate throughout a conversation and making some meaningful analyses of the sales assistant-customer exchanges.

There were some very pleasing responses to Text B. Most candidates were able to comment on the lexis in this text and relate it to the young audience. Other widely discussed features included superlatives, comparatives and sentence type. Middle band answers were able to comment on how Dahl had manipulated language to entertain younger readers. The more able candidates looked at a wider range of features and were able to compare the use of direct speech and humour in the text to children's own natural conversations.

Summary

- Ensure that observations are supported by illustrations when discussing dominance or formality. Similarly, all research studies mentioned in answers should be accompanied by relevant practical examples from the text.
- Exemplification should be given (in the form of a quote, not a line reference) when identifying all features.
- Accuracy of writing should be checked with particular regard to the spelling of linguistic terminology.
- Be more specific in interpretations when identifying features. For example, pauses may indicate a spontaneous conversation but they may also indicate a strategic break while an extra-linguistic task is completed or they may be allowing another speaker to take their turn.

Unit 2: Desk Study (6372)

The pre-release material was on the topic of healthy eating.

Task (a) required candidates to re-shape the material to produce a text for a presentation delivered by a student to a meeting of parents, governors and teachers from local primary schools.

Bullet points provided further focus in terms of audience and purpose: more successful responses used the bullet points as a structure for their texts.

Task (b) asked candidates to comment on the language choices they had made in order to complete the first task.

Task (a)

Candidates seemed to find the pre-release material accessible and there was evident interest generated by the topic. The question offered a range of prompts to guide candidates to focus on the key elements of audience, purpose and context. Candidates who read the question carefully targeted all the AOs. The pre-release material needed very careful selection and this afforded clear differentiation between different levels of achievement.

The presentation format specified in the task was interpreted fairly broadly. The majority re-wrote the material to produce a straightforward speech but there were also some 'power-point' and other inclusions which were often very effective.

Some candidates misinterpreted the brief and produced a 'written' text: there were several leaflets which suggested over-preparation on the part of some centres and candidates by attempting to predict the task.

The multiple audience was a discriminator with some candidates failing to fully consider its precise composition, addressing their response to one component only. However, the best responses addressed the diversity in the audience and recognised the student voice/perspective embedded in the question.

Task (b)

Responses to Task (b) covered a wide range in terms of Assessment Objective achievement but there is evidence of real improvement in the analytical quality of the commentaries.

The best commentaries explained their language choices in the context of Task(a) and demonstrated a clear understanding of the link between form and function. Formulaic responses were still common but even here there was, in many, some evidence of understanding of how language works.

Features of successful answers:

Task (a)

- judicious editing/selection/re-shaping of material
- careful decoding of the task in terms of audience, purpose, context
- focus on school meals provision and proposed changes
- consistent register

Task (b)

- explanation of language choices with clear links between form and function
- consistent exemplification
- accurate use of a wide range of appropriate terminology.

Features of less successful answers:

Task (a)

- limited coverage and re-shaping of pre-release material
- misreading of purpose and/or context
- a too general 'healthy lifestyle' focus
- inconsistent register/tone.

Task (b)

- formulaic lists with minimal specific links to choices made in task a
- patchy exemplification
- limited and/or inaccurate use of terminology
- limited analysis beyond word level.

Advice to candidates

- read the question very carefully and use the bullet points
- do not try to guess the task
- concentrate on the specific focus of the task
- try to give a specific and suitable 'voice' to the text
- if the task is a spoken one be aware of the features needed to make it sound authentic.

Conclusion

There was real evidence of engagement with the tasks in the majority of answers, with a definite improvement in the standard of the commentaries. Many speeches were informative and persuasive.

Unit 3a: The Language of the Media (6373/01)

General

There was evidence of much good practice in this year's coursework submission. The majority of candidates had produced structured, well organised work, usually based on the investigation approach used at A2.

There was a range of interesting data and tasks were mainly accessible and allowed candidates the opportunity to focus on the Assessment Objectives.

Many candidates chose to investigate press analysis and advertising, with a substantial increase in data taken from a variety of magazines.

Typically the most popular topic for press analysis was a comparison between broadsheet and tabloid articles. It has been suggested in previous examiner's reports that this is often not a productive line of investigation as it fails to recognise the changing nature of newspaper journalism and frequently leads to misguided generalisations about newspaper style and social class, age and gender of audiences. There are so many interesting possibilities in a journalism investigation that it is a pity that a number of candidates disadvantage themselves by adopting this rigid approach.

Analysis of magazine articles tended to be more individual and more thoughtful as the data chosen clearly stems from candidates' own personal interests.

Political speeches have been gaining in popularity and there were some original and insightful investigations on this topic. Most popular tasks were to compare speeches of Blair and Bush on the Iraq war or to contrast the speeches of contemporary world leaders with famous politicians from history e.g. Blair and Churchill. This is challenging material at AS level and was often impressively handled. There was a much stronger focus on spoken language topics this year with a pleasing return to data based on T.V. adverts and soap operas.

When data was transcribed it was often very good, including secure understanding of transcription conventions. Inclusion of annotated transcripts also indicated a genuine investigation. This is obviously excellent preparation for the A2 Spoken and Written Study and must have given candidates a real sense of achievement.

There were also some approaches to advertising which involved a mixture of written and transcribed data: this again usually extended the scope and variety of the investigation. More candidates this year had investigated comedy with a much greater degree of success than previously.

A few centres allowed candidates to attempt tasks that were self-penalising, either in terms of manageability i.e. too much material and diffuse aims or material that was too economical to provide a satisfying study. But there were many more centres where candidates had been guided towards a succinct hypothesis with a specific language focus.

Good practice

This year's coursework folders were generally better written: many high achieving folders read like basic approaches to linguistics. There was slightly more use of

technical terminology, especially that related to lexical features. There was more clear address to AO3i, the dominant AO. Prosodics and pragmatics featured in a number of higher band folders. It is encouraging to see candidates at AS level exploring these more challenging concepts, and this usually led to increased evidence for A04. Some centres had taken great care to label, number and ensure that folders were well-presented and organised as a basic piece of research, even including bibliographical details.

Internal moderation

The majority of submissions showed evidence of rigorous and thoughtful centre moderation. In many centres candidates' folders showed evidence of a dialogue between internal moderators which was often helpful in showing why a particular mark had been awarded. Most internal moderators had annotated the work where the Assessment Objectives were being recognised and rewarded. This is extremely helpful to the process of external moderation, although some centres had merely ticked work without explanatory comment or reference to Assessment Objectives. The very best practice involved AO referenced annotations on the folder and a summative comment which provided a profile of the individual candidate. Fortunately there were fewer examples of excessive word count and it was good to see that many centres are encouraging candidates to edit and to aim for succinctness. However, where there is an over-lengthy word count this should at least be acknowledged in the comments of the internal moderator.

Advice to centres

Candidates need to be steered away from approaches which are closer to Media Studies or Communications. This is a language investigation and topics and tasks must reflect this.

Data must be from an area of media [extracts from fiction are not appropriate for this unit].

Grammar and syntax is still an area of difficulty.

There seems to be some confusion between lexis and semantics with the two terms often being conflated.

There were some essay-style approaches which are inevitably less successful than those which are clearly divided into Introduction/Analysis/Conclusion.

Framework headings and sub-headings also help candidates to manage their material but the headings employed do need to reflect what is actually written about in that section.

Phonology is often not well understood: many candidates seem to limit this to the identification of examples of sibilance and alliteration.

This would be a productive area to work on and exploit.

Administration

There are still a number of centres where there were lapses in administrative matters i.e.:

- word counts not entered on cover sheets
- discrepancies between marks on OPTEMS and cover sheets
- marks not entered on OPTEMS
- missing data
- badly packaged folders
- articles torn from magazines and loosely tagged onto work.

Conclusion

There was evidence of much focused study and strong engagement with the chosen data.

In the majority of centres candidates had been offered excellent support and guidance.

Moderators expressed pleasure at reading so many well managed and interesting investigations.

Unit 3b: Language of the Media (6373/02)

General

Both questions featured a transcript and a newspaper article: Question 1 proved to be slightly more popular than Question 2.

Most candidates seemed to show some confidence in responding to either pair of texts.

Many made contrasts between the spoken/written mode and general/narrower target audience as a means of organising their ideas. This did mean that answers at every level showed a more coherent approach to presenting ideas. Most candidates demonstrated awareness of the requirements of the Assessment Objectives and at the very least attempted comments beyond simple identification of language features.

Specific identification of target audiences proved problematic as usual, with over-generalised statements about the social class and educational level of the potential audiences [housewives and the unemployed featured regularly as audiences for 'Richard and Judy']. Many candidates are still determined to equate social class with intelligence and education and there were frequent examples of statements relating readership of newspapers to age e.g. 'The Independent is read by people aged 30 to 60'.

More successful answers were thoughtful about audience e.g. suggesting that BBC News 24 had a potentially large audience but would be accessed by people with an interest in hard news and current affairs whereas 'The Independent' article on the hurricane would attract a narrower range as it required more concentration and time to read and absorb.

Although the majority of candidates clearly felt on familiar ground with spoken language and with print media they did need to recognise the discrete nature of each of the texts. There was some confusion between scripted, edited and spontaneous forms of speech with some candidates applying methods for analysing spontaneous speech to the BBC report in Question 1.

Equally, sensible definitions of the target audience for Question 2 included adults of any age who were looking for light entertainment with an interesting everyday issue for the 'Richard and Judy' show and those who enjoyed reading feature articles and had some interest in nutrition and the fast-food industry for the monster burger article.

As in previous years one of the biggest discriminators for this unit is the ability to discuss the specific purposes and effects of the texts on their audiences.

Lower band responses relied on generalised and oft-repeated observations about the texts 'having impact' or 'appealing to' or 'grabbing the attention of' their audiences without further elaboration. More successful answers attempted a more precise definition of effects e.g. to provoke thought, to raise awareness of issues, to persuade [even if subliminally], with brief supporting illustration from the texts.

It was pleasing to note that most candidates demonstrated basic awareness of the tenor of the texts, with the more perceptive being able to identify the element of

bias and the nature of the satirical humour in Q2 Text B, and even some very thoughtful comments on the possible criticism of the Cuban government in Q1 Text B.

Q1

The most successful answers commented on features based on the comparison of the 'breaking news' report with video footage versus a written and pre-planned newspaper report from the next day.

Some insightful comments were made regarding the use of film in Text A, whereas Text B used still pictures, human interest stories/quotations from eye-witnesses and highly descriptive language. Almost all picked up on the contrasts between the fluent speech of the news correspondent in Text A, the rhetorical measured response of the Deputy High Commissioner and the more disjunctive and emotional speech of the Radio Cayman reporter.

In some responses there was confusion about the mode of Text A with some candidates describing it as a dialogue and some [surprisingly] referring to it as a 'transcript' and treating it as written language.

Stronger responses described the text as mixed-mode, recognising that the reporters would be reading from a script or auto cue [interestingly spelt as 'autoqueue'] and were able to differentiate between sections that were planned and those that were not.

A large number correctly described Sharon Saunders's use of 'we' as an inclusive device to make the viewer feel involved although in many cases this appeared as part of a check-list of learned devices: the more thoughtful suggested that 'we' showed the people of Jamaica as a united nation.

The requirement to 'compare and contrast' seemed to be a useful organisational technique for many but did also lead to artificial comparisons in less confident answers e.g. 'Text A is informal and Text B is formal'. Some thought that the comparative element could be satisfied by writing 'however' and 'although' throughout the answer without actually making any valid points.

A number of answers applied pre-learned responses to spoken language features e.g. claiming that micropauses in Text A signalled that the news correspondent needed time to think what to say. This is, of course, true of micropauses used in some contexts but evidently the reporter's speech was scripted and the micropauses here served a different purpose.

Better responses were actually able to explain the reasons for fillers in different utterances, rather than applying the same reason to every filler.

Q2

The majority of responses demonstrated awareness of the mode, purpose and tenor of the texts. There was occasional confusion over the genre of 'Richard and Judy' with some thinking that it was fictional and referring to participants as 'characters' but most were comfortable recognising the text as taken from a live chat show. Many were also able to note the multiplicity of audiences i.e. the participants themselves, a possible studio audience and the viewers at home.

There were some focused and well presented discussions on discourse management with purposeful comments on conversation dominance and a very pleasing steer in many answers towards the pragmatics of the interchange.

The least successful answers employed a linear, feature-spotting approach, but this was fortunately rare and many appeared genuinely interested in the way the participants reacted with one another.

With Text B the main issue seemed to be to get past the inevitable obsession with stereotypes of the social class, educational background, age and intelligence of the readership. Once that was dealt with answers were largely divided into those where the actual text had been read carefully and those which immediately employed an approach based on learned responses to the tabloid/broadsheet dichotomy.

The latter approach was clearly not useful and disadvantaged those candidates who adopted it as the search for typical 'broadsheet journalism' features proved irrelevant and led to a listing of generic features that were usually not present. Candidates who took the time to read and assimilate the text were able to identify the mixed registers, the informative content and the persuasively satirical tone. Some noted that it was an article written by a correspondent in Washington and that it dealt with wider attitudes to America and things associated with 'Americanism'.

There were a number of responses which showed real engagement with the text, commenting on the intertextuality, explaining the effect of first person quotations on the register of the text and noting both explicit and implicit indications of bias. The phrase 'politically incorrect burger' disturbed some candidates who decided that the article was about politics and control over what people should eat. Many were clearly delighted with the puns/play on words and colloquial expressions and almost all were pleased to be able to identify the clichéd film trailer phrase.

A number of candidates made lengthy observations on the use of assonance, sibilance and alliteration in Text B with little recognition of the precise use within the context: many of the examples given were brand names and were coincidental rather than created by the writer of the article. Where there was a lack of confidence in responding to Text B there was a tendency to take refuge in a discussion of graphological features, but a number of answers related the picture to specific language examples in the text and showed how it worked in conjunction with these features.

General technical comments

A number of technical terms and concepts are causing confusion and are being used incorrectly or without discrimination:

- 'hyperbole' is widely over-used to refer to any language which is descriptive or emotive: an alarming number of candidates insisted that the response to the hurricane in both texts was 'exaggerated' and/or 'hyperbolic' [clearly the writers concerned have never experienced a hurricane]
- 'pre/post modification' appeared regularly as an all-embracing term, often used to describe nouns and verbs when precise terminology was not known
- confusion between complex/compound/simple sentences with inaccurate examples offered: in many cases the discussion of sentence type lacked any relevance

- 'adverbial' used to describe proper nouns eg 'Cayman Islands' rather than adverbials of place 'across the Cayman Islands'
- 'cataphoric/anaphoric' used to describe absolutely any type of reference to past or future events
- 'discourse markers': it was pleasing to see the increased use of this term but not when it referred to any word beginning a sentence or paragraph.

Advice to centres

Candidates do need more advice on how to discriminate between different media genres.

Basic parts of speech with appropriate terminology need to be understood and assimilated.

Generic features of spoken and written language should be discussed in relation to the specific texts on the paper.

More suggestions about ways of describing newspapers and identifying target audiences would help many candidates eg it was suggested in last year's examiner's report that we need to move away from stark divisions between tabloid and broadsheet press as this does not recognise the changing nature of newspaper journalism. Descriptions such as 'quality or serious press' and 'mass-market journalism' would be preferable. We also need to provide candidates with other criteria than social class to describe audiences [there were many examples of 'middle-aged businessmen' and 'affluent upper classes' [The Independent] and 'housewives, pensioners and the unemployed' [Richard and Judy].

Conclusion

There was a great deal of subject knowledge to reward in this year's answers. The movement away from lengthy empty observations on graphology was welcome as was the increasing interest into exploring the pragmatics of texts. Naturally, the most successful candidates were those who took the time to read the texts carefully and then thought about which frameworks to apply and which language features to identify. Selection and discrimination were the characteristics of the best responses.

Unit 4: Varieties of English (6374)

General

The dominant Assessment Objective is AO5ii. AO1 & AO4 are used to determine and refine marks.

Candidates were required to answer one of either of the two questions available. Both questions presented three texts for analysis and discussion. The rubric for Question 1 asked candidates to analyse and evaluate the language of the texts, commenting on how this was affected by context. Question 2 required an analysis of the texts, and commentary on the ways in which the speakers or writers used language in order to communicate their ideas.

The materials were either generically or thematically linked. The texts for Question 1 were all concerned with the preparation of food or drink. The first was a recipe for making a spiced ale, written in approximately 1430 (1A). The second text was a recipe for "Emu Pie". It appeared on a website which featured recipes from Aboriginal culture, originally presented on Australian television (1B). Text three was an extract from a written record of an American radio broadcast in which a chef cooked a dish "on air". The programme was recorded in 2001 (1C). Again, the texts were intended to reflect regional and historical variation, with 1C making the most obvious concessions to the possibility of discussing spoken language forms.

In Question 2, text A was a written record of a debate in The House of Lords from 2003 (2A). The second text was an extract from an instruction book written by Sir Thomas Elyot and published in the sixteenth century. Its audience was governors employed to educate and care for the children of the nobility and its main aim was to tell them what aspects of language they should teach (2B). The third text was a posting to an internet message board. Here, the topic was how teachers could make learners of English as a second language feel more comfortable when asking them to interact during lessons (2C). These texts were all concerned with the teaching and learning of English and were intended to meet the requirements of the specification by including regional and historical variation. 2A & 2C in particular had some speech-like features, though in the case of 2A these were of a very specific kind.

As in previous sittings, very few candidates indeed appeared wholly under-prepared for the demands of the paper and centres are to be commended for their hard work in ensuring that students were aware of and attempting to address the Assessment Objectives

Timing was not a problem for the majority of entrants. This said, the challenge of analyzing "precisely and fully in all texts" as well as evaluating "incisively", as demanded by the mark scheme for Band 5 answers remains considerable, especially given the time limit of one hour thirty minutes.

Three texts per question is obviously a good model for 6374. However, there may well be a return to questions with four shorter texts at some point in the remaining life of the unit.

The quality of written communication continues to improve overall - there were no candidates whose expression was an impediment to the comprehensibility of their work.

Candidates should continue to be exposed to as wide a range of varieties of English as resources allow, including materials from as far back as Middle English and from both literary and non-literary sources. They should be encouraged to “think laterally” about the texts with which they are presented, transferring skills and subject knowledge as purposefully as they are able.

Assessment Objectives

Some indicative comments about the general nature of candidates’ responses follow. In the main, the discussion will relate to better answers although some guidance regarding what might constitute less positive characteristics is included.

AO5ii

Analyse and evaluate variations in the meanings and forms of spoken and written language from different times according to context.

Q1

A range of approaches was adopted, some candidates favouring an integrated organizing principle, others opting for a linear scheme. As ever, the stronger responses engaged with all three items equally whilst those doing less well tended to offer minimal coverage of one or two texts. Many of the good commentaries picked up on the register and formality issues in 1A, moving through discussions of orthography, lexis and grammar with assurance and purpose. Contextual awareness was usually very good here, with some candidates appearing very well informed about Middle English, the influence of French and the process of standardisation for example, though there were still those who thought the Paston Letters were either OE or EModE. A significant improvement on previous years was the ability of middle and lower band students to identify and discuss the evidence of inflection or inflectional decay (if not always with perfect understanding).

The recipe for “Emu Pie” led to some interesting writing. Many responses considered the issues generated by the provenance of the text to sound purpose, although there was quite a lot of confusion about the level of formality which its language use represented - a typical view appearing to be that its background as an excerpt from a website automatically guaranteed a lack of formality. Indeed, there was a good deal of speculation about the role of the internet in creating “new” forms, but a lot of students had grasped the clue in the rubric more firmly and saw that this recipe had been broadcast on a television programme before it was transferred to the internet. The mixed modality of the piece and the implications for its language, as well as the ways in which it fulfilled its generic structure potential were often well debated by these candidates in particular. Commentary on lexical, grammatical and semantic matters was often technical and focused. In the best responses it was clear, perceptive and relevant also.

1C was potentially tricky for three reasons: 1) its mediated nature; 2) the fact that it appeared primarily descriptive as opposed to instructional (there were relatively few direct imperatives, for example) and 3) its having been a radio broadcast dealing with a genre which very often relies on visual aids and cues. Candidates were able to pick up on the more obvious lexical and grammatical matters such as

pronominalisation, the use of Americanisms and loan words (such as “Voilà!” and “sautéing”), but were harder pressed to move far beyond these aspects of the language in use. Where they were more successful was often in the deployment of knowledge adapted from their AS studies, specifically relating to spoken discourse. A good deal of pertinent and interesting work explored these avenues of investigation. As is now customary with texts from this background, there was a certain amount of anti-American sentiment, in this case often directed at the “gushing” element of Duffus’ closure of the piece (“MMM! Absolutely wonderful!...Very, very wonderful...wonderful, heartfelt recipes.”) which was seen as, for instance, “typically false”. Candidates are, of course, encouraged to have opinions, but where these descend into basic stereotype (which is less often the case now than it once was) they are not as likely to prosper.

Q2

Candidates choosing this question dealt proficiently with 2A. There was, in most cases, a clear understanding of the context and a good ability to delineate and discuss the key features of formality that were so clearly manifest here. Lexical, grammatical and discursive issues were competently treated. Many responses moved on to consider the attitudinal and philosophical concepts embodied in the piece, to good effect. However, not such a large proportion noticed that underneath the apparent rigour of code and conduct, there was a definite “matiness” implicit in some of the exchanges, though there were plenty who could see that there was at least an attempt at levity by the main participants. This was one of the more interesting ways in which “the speakers...use(d) language...to communicate their ideas” of course and deserved a little more attention.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the overall progress made with the teaching of this unit, a lot of confusion of Standard English and Received Pronunciation was evident here - for the purposes of this exam at least, these are not considered to be the same thing.

The Early Modern English piece was handled in much the same way as 1A. Responses ranged from the minimal to the engaged and informed. The better answers contrasted the didactic content and tone of 2B with the more conciliatory language of 2C and the formality issues of 2A. Lexical and orthographical analysis formed the bulk of the comment and this was usually sound or better, again reinforcing the notion that this element of study is extremely well covered by the majority of centres. Some responses moved on to speculate on gender roles in the period, basing their assertions on “folisshe women”, for example and this was, where pertinent, rewarded. Many candidates made interesting and valid connections between the overt prescriptivism of 2B and the ways in which similar ideas were communicated in 2A.

Text C also drew a variety of responses - much as was the case with 1B there was a clear desire to launch into a discussion of the effect of new technology on English, with many quick to apportion blame to the internet for the “errors” they perceived in the piece. However, quite a large proportion were confident that the deviations from the Standard had as much to do with the probability that the author was a non-native speaker and that English is evolving interestingly as its spread becomes more global. The speechlike features of the posting, its occasional slight mangling of the idiom, its grammar and lexis

and the discursive positioning of the message all drew varying degrees of comment, much of it clear, concise and interesting.

General

Comments on orthography and lexis are indicative of a pragmatic approach to framework-based analysis and therefore clearly welcome. It is usually true, however, that those who supplement this with meaningful discussion of grammar, syntax, phonology and semantics, for instance (assuming that this aspect of the work is both accurate and relevant) generally fare better than those who are less "ambitious".

Discussion of graphology can be pertinent. However, observation along the lines of "the texts are all written in Times New Roman, point 12 and read from top left to bottom right" is generally not useful.

The application of theoretical and contextual information continues to advance apace and there is plenty of evidence of sophisticated and impressive subject knowledge. Many candidates make a very good use of their understanding from diverse areas of the course - from the historical development of English, to speech and discourse theory, to comments about gender and so on. The key here is, of course, relevance.

The evaluative element of the response is also worthy of discussion. A good deal of the work undertaken demonstrates sound assessment of the language implicitly. Often that does very well. Centres have moved away from encouraging the once traditional "bolt-on" evaluative conclusion, which is a good thing. Many students now evaluate as they move through the materials, developing and drawing conclusions as they go, working on a deductive principle. It is both interesting and oddly rewarding to see responses go even as far as almost complete re-formulation as they progress, for this clearly demonstrates a thinking process at work. Assertions along the lines of "I initially stated that text X was informal, but my closer analysis of it actually suggests that it has a surprising number of formal features..." or "This has made me re-consider whether this text is entirely prescriptive in its attitude or not..." are quite welcome and candidates should not feel that they will be automatically penalized for switching horses mid-race or that they have to nail their colours to the mast at the outset and defend them unto death thereafter.

AO1

Communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to the study of language, using appropriate terminology and accurate and coherent written expression.

Although there are candidates who continue to be flustered into avoidable error by the pressure of the exam and others who forget to paragraph for instance, "SPAG" remains a minor component in the overall assessment profile. Nonetheless, where the volume of error is obtrusive (which is rarely the case) some downward adjustment in the mark is likely to follow. The use of terminology remains an important factor. "Feature-spotting" unsupported by evaluation is not desirable, of course, but it is at least preferable to an answer wholly devoid of relevant meta-language. The need for precision remains paramount for those aiming at the higher bands. The use of "word" as a catch-all is not sufficiently specific, for example. The terms "simple", "complex" and "compound sentences" continue to be deployed with variable effect and accuracy, "complex" often appearing to be intended as a synonym for "complicated". On a more positive note, a lot of

students present themselves in a thoroughly articulate manner, offering a rich and relevant supply of terms which they apply to fine purpose.

From an organisational point of view, the vast majority analysed the texts sequentially, moving from text A to B then C, sometimes with little comparison or contrast. This kind of approach can and does work but an overview should be incorporated for higher attainment. Use of sub-headings is certainly not forbidden but as a rule a continuous essay style is preferable. An integrated or "global" analytical method can be a marker of higher achievement - one examiner commented "perhaps teachers feel that this structure is more risky in exam conditions. Nevertheless, when done well this approach produced the usual scintillating responses..."

Evidence of appropriate exemplification is usually an essential determinant in assessing the merit of a response.

AO4

Understand, discuss and explore concepts and issues relating to language in use.

Candidates were often able to bring some contextual and theoretical knowledge to bear on their answers. The bywords here remain relevance and accuracy. A descriptive approach was fairly consistently adopted by the majority of candidates and this is both welcome and desirable however it is fair to say that a new species of comment has evolved, something along the lines of "I know that it's wrong and my teachers have told me not to, but I can't help myself from saying that this spelling is simply incorrect." Where this kind of assertion is an ongoing aspect of a wider analysis and where it does not simply descend into narrow judgementalism it is unlikely to be penalized.

No entrants reacted problematically or negatively to this exam. As before, the instinctive feeling of those examiners who have worked on 6374 for a period of time is that the general quality of response continues on an upward curve. It seems that some centres are actively using the mark schemes for previous years' papers as teaching tools and this is leading to some focused and coherent comment and analysis - Lower and middle band answers typically demonstrate the effects of conscious and conscientious instruction (this was not always the case, which was not, of course, necessarily the fault of the instructors).

Higher band responses show authentic awareness of the growth and development of the language, its variety and the issues inherent to its changing nature. One of the primary aims of the paper is to try and encourage candidates to demonstrate engagement with the materials presented. The fact that so few of the answers offered are noticeably lacking in this quality is, as stated in previous years, a source of great credit to both the students themselves and our colleagues in schools and colleges who prepare their charges with a care that even Sir Thomas Elyot would be able to commend.

Unit 5: Spoken Or Written Study (6375)

General Comments

Investigations based on speech are still the most popular but a large number of candidates this year attempted written investigations: there was real diversity in the data chosen and some exciting and stimulating topics.

Equally, there are a number of centres who are clearly very practised in the teaching of this unit and there were some impressive transcriptions of spoken data. Where candidates had included annotated as well as clean copies of data there was often evidence of very close, systematic analysis.

Choice Of Data And Tasks

There are some exemplary centres where candidates make efforts to be innovative and to engage in projects that appeal to their own personal tastes but there was also an indication that some centres are limiting the options available to their candidates because their projects were very similar in data and content. There were variations on a theme but too many similarities to make these genuinely individual studies. Centres undoubtedly have valid reasons for adopting this approach but they do need to recognise that unless very well managed this could curtail the creativity of candidates.

Literary topics are becoming increasingly popular and the best of these analysed familiar literature texts with a clearly established linguistic focus. In some cases these were scholarly and produced genuine findings.

Where literature data has been chosen it is, however, essential to ensure that the focus is linguistic, which should be signalled by appropriate descriptions of task and aims.

Since the opportunity to explore written data was introduced into this unit there have been examples of candidates who have been severely disadvantaged by being allowed to pursue a purely literary investigation. However well written and interesting these projects are, they are not in line with Assessment Objectives: some centres are clearly confused as internal moderators had awarded very high marks to folders which were entirely literature-orientated.

Internal Moderation And Guidance By Centres

Evidence of internal moderation was usually rigorous and substantial. Annotations on folders and detailed summative comments were extremely helpful in the process of external moderation.

Centres should be congratulated on the exemplary nature of their moderation. Word count in general is less of an issue that in previous years although moderators did note some centres where the work of candidates was erudite and sophisticated but they had been allowed to produce investigations of excessive length. This does actually make comparisons between centres extremely difficult.

If tutors have experienced problems in persuading candidates to edit work appropriately it would be helpful to have this acknowledged in the summative

comment. In some cases it did appear that even very experienced teachers had been seduced by the articulate prose of very able candidates.

One problem is the increase in candidates opting for AS style data and approaches e.g. newspaper journalism and advertising. This presents a problem for external moderators and disadvantages A2 candidates who are not sufficiently challenged by the material or task.

There were a number of investigations based on specific language theory areas where theoretical knowledge had been genuinely applied to the data for analysis. These were both absorbing and instructive but frequently with the more familiar topics such as Child Language Acquisition and Language and Gender some candidates relied too heavily on secondary sources, using them without question and sometimes beginning their projects with chunks of learned theoretical material.

It was exciting to read one project which challenged the present canon of work on Language and Gender, using personally acquired data to present a different perspective on the topic.

Organisation And Presentation

The organisation of most folders is good and the evaluations produced by candidates are becoming more of a genuine critique with succinct identification of findings rather than a predictable summary of the aims.

Once again we need to ask centres not to send enormous quantities of irrelevant data, complete books, and video cassettes.

Some folders were completely unmanageable in terms of weight and presentation.

Administrative Issues

Most centres dealt efficiently with the administrative processes and it was heartening to see that a number of centres had made an effort to address the recommendations made in previous Reports to the Centre. However there were cases where the recommendations had been ignored, and therefore the same problems and issues presented themselves as in previous sessions.

It would, however, expedite the moderation process if all centres could observe the following points:

- Work should be attached by staples or treasury tag. Plastic sheets or cardboard folders are not practical. Please encourage candidates to number their pages. Please do not send loose sheets.
- The mark sheets should be filled in, with word counts, candidate numbers, and ticks in the AO box. Missing candidate and centre numbers make identification of folders difficult, particularly in large centres.
- All work should include a bibliography which is a true reflection of critical works actually used by the candidate.
- The marks on the OPTEMS should match the marks on the actual coursework.

- The coursework mark sheet must be signed by both teacher and candidate.
- The coursework should be sent to the correct moderator by ordinary post, not Special or Recorded Delivery, and not using any form of courier where a signature is required.
- Centres must send the work of the top and the bottom candidates if this does not already form part of the requested sample.
- Work of an absent candidate which forms part of the asterisked sample should be replaced by an appropriate substitute.
- Centres should send only the asterisked sample plus any additional candidates' work required, such as top, bottom or substitute coursework: some centres sent the whole sample to the moderator.
- Centres should ensure that the right work is sent to the right moderator: there were several examples this session of moderators receiving both AS and A level coursework, or the coursework for more than one subject or the coursework being sent to the centre's coursework advisor.

Examples Of Tasks And Titles

Spoken Investigations

Regional accents in 'Eastenders'

Occupational Language eg Sales-talk, Teacher talk

Informal Conversations [family, student common rooms, pubs]

Political Speeches [to qualify as spoken investigations these do need to be transcribed]

Child Language Acquisition: there was one delightful study based on a conversation with a young child about the 'Narnia' film

Language Acquisition based on adults learning English as a second language

Black American English

Language of Comedy eg 'Little Britain'

Interview with Bob Dylan

Melvyn Bragg interviewing Alan Bennett

A driving lesson.

Written Investigations

Text messaging, e-mails, MSN

Dialect in works of fiction eg Dickens, Steinbeck

The Language of love exchanges in 'Romeo and Juliet'

Language stereotyping [age and gender] in travel brochures

Children's reading books

Children's writing [many used examples of their own writing from primary school]

Song Lyrics [Rap is particularly popular]

Screenplay of films eg 'Pulp Fiction'

Historical and contemporary recipes.

Unit 6: Editorial and Language Topics (Unit 6376)

Section A

Q1: Modern Tabloid Article on Lisbon Earthquake

Most candidates managed to modernise in some way and cover much of the source material with some fluency. However, there were varying degrees of success in the production of a tabloid article.

Lower band answers retained a first person account and paraphrased the original chronologically, although some did employ techniques to dramatise the event. Responses were sometimes more like a third person narrative than a tabloid article. Some candidates wrote a first person interview more suitable for a radio or television programme. It is quite surprising that some candidates should be unaware of tabloid format and features at this stage. In some cases, the ideas of entertainment and modernisation were taken too far, with jocular or flippant accounts involving puns and rhymes, and much additional information or changes of name throughout the 'rewrite'.

There was sometimes confusion about whether the article should be contemporary or eighteenth century. Some candidates also had difficulty in selecting the information and either included everything from the original or omitted important details.

Higher band answers selected significant points and restructured them into a typical tabloid article, with a summary covering the first and second shocks, the fire, and the number of casualties in the first short paragraph. Subsequent short paragraphs covered the event in a little more detail. These paragraphs generally included comments on the rumbling noise which followed the stillness; the swaying walls, the crashing noises, the destruction of houses and St Paul's Church; the praying survivors at the riverside and the brightness of the fire after the initial gloom. First-hand quotations were modernised and well integrated.

Some indication was generally given of layout with dramatic, truncated headlines, tag lines, sub-headings, columns and the use of figures for numbers. Sentences had been shortened and simplified, to some extent. Archaic and complex lexis was replaced. A third person past tense style involving pre and post-modification was adopted.

Overall the quality of the 'commentary' was better than the rewrite. Lower band answers tended to be able to comment on graphology, alliteration and some emotive vocabulary. Grammatical analysis was limited. Some responses adopted a checklist approach in which some insignificant features were discussed. There was a general awareness of purpose, audience and the tabloid genre.

Higher band answers were able to exemplify and explain archaic and Latinate lexis which they had replaced. Some successfully labelled simple, compound, complex and minor sentences or noun phrases in apposition. A few noted archaic syntax, such as in the negative "I could now distinguish no particular object". A number were careful to distinguish between polysyllabic non-core and core lexis. Higher band responses were detailed, wide-ranging and full.

Q2: Biographical Account from Nelson's Correspondence

Most candidates were able to cover the material, modernise and write in the third person. The introductory paragraph was a good help to candidates at the beginning of this task. It meant that most managed to write in the third person. However, lower band answers showed some difficulty in understanding the material. Accounts were often unclear or poorly expressed. Some responses retained the letter and diary headings and repeated the introductory information in each section rather than producing a third person narrative. Much of the subject specific lexis and many older expressions were retained.

Higher band answers excelled in the opportunity to exhibit high level editing skills. They provided linking and explanatory comments which interpreted the material for a modern audience. The result was a fluent and interesting end product.

The 'commentaries' overall tended to focus on discourse. Lower band responses contained many observational points, noting how one expression had been changed to another, with few terms or explanations. Some focused almost exclusively on content. There was some difficulty in selecting language frameworks to analyse. Few candidates took the opportunity to analyse or contrast the language in the original extracts compared to their 'rewrite'.

Higher band answers were more systematic with perceptive analyses of a range of frameworks. Comments were made about differences in tone and form amongst the various original letters and diary extracts, as well as how these had been reflected in features of the final single rewritten version.

Section B

Q3: PC Handbook for Judges

Most candidates were able to discuss some aspects of PC language and give a reasonably argued view. Examples generally included some 'extreme' illustrations which candidates did not agree with, as opposed to others which they felt to be worthy of inclusion in a handbook.

Lower band answers tended to regurgitate stock information which had sometimes been poorly understood and which was, in a few cases, insensitive. There was little mention of a Judges' Handbook. Some candidates used non-PC terms themselves in their answers or used their answers as an opportunity to rant about political correctness. Sometimes the answer amounted to little more than a list of examples without explanation. Some of the examples from the question had been misunderstood.

Higher band answers showed an awareness of the importance of judges using language carefully. They subtly explored a wide range of examples, using the history of PC, and, for example, arguments for and against the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. They were also aware of how semantic perjury plays a part in the relatively frequent changes in such words and expressions. The argument was coherent.

Q4: Spelling Reform

There was an impressive amount of knowledge about this topic ranging from the historical background causing unpredictable and illogical spellings, to various

attempts at spelling reform, and statistics relating to the numbers and percentages of irregular spellings. Many candidates were able to use the concepts of 'homophony' and 'homography' accurately and productively.

Lower band answers, however, often strayed on to other topics such as Standard English and text messaging, or gave stock historical or very general information about the pros and cons of spelling reform. Some of these responses were brief or anecdotal. On occasion it was difficult to work out how they reached the particular conclusion they did.

Higher band answers were able to explain by giving specific examples of spellings emerging at various periods. Some interrogated the comments about illogicality and unpredictability, and questioned how to define irregularity. There was a detailed exploration of reasons for any orthographic-phonological mismatch, with a number of candidates using the IPA effectively. Various systems of reform were explored. Many answers showed an awareness of the current teaching of literacy in schools, and of the possibility of reform emerging from the technological revolution. Conclusions were well argued.

Q5: Anger about Language 'Misuse'

Most candidates recognised this as a 'prescriptive-descriptive' question and were able to give some examples of language usage which caused emotive responses. Generally, approaches were descriptive.

Lower band answers, however, had some difficulty in maintaining a consistently descriptive stance. Some showed very prescriptive views themselves, or flew into either a descriptive or prescriptive rage. Generally examples of 'misuse' were given, but in these responses, explanations were either missing or showed confusion. There was some digression on to PC language, text messaging or Plain English. Again stock information was given and was sometimes misunderstood.

Higher band answers explored language change, variety and context in terms of a wide range of examples relating to grammar, lexis and phonology. There was an impressive use of terminology. Some candidates gave in-depth explanations relating to the examples in the question. They were able to engage in the descriptive-prescriptive debate in detail while maintaining their own descriptive stance. Conclusions were well argued.

Q6: The Derivation of New Words

Most candidates were able to comment on the words in the questions and give examples of new words and their meanings. The focus was largely on words relating to new technologies. However, only the higher band responses managed to explain sensitively about context or used terminology to describe the forms and derivation in general.

Lower band answers tended to list a limited number of words and sometimes showed confusion about their meanings and context. On occasion, it was difficult to regard examples discussed as particularly new. There was some digression on to change generally.

Higher band answers not only provided examples of coinages but also knowledgeably discussed the technicalities of morphology. These often covered a range, using terms such as 'loan', 'blend', 'affix', 'acronym' and 'compound'.

Some interesting background information was explained for each word. The coinage 'bouncebackability', from the world of football, appeared with some frequency, and offered much scope in terms of a technical discussion about its formation and the context relating to its origin. Higher band responses were also able to explore any reasons for the popularity of various kinds of word-formation, and related these comments to their examples.

Statistics

Unit 1: Textual Commentary (6371)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	34	29	24	19	15
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 2: Desk Study (6372)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	37	32	28	24	20
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 3a: The Language of Media (6373/01)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	39	33	27	22	17
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 3b: The Language of Media (6373/02)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	33	28	24	20	16
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4: Varieties of English (6374)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	40	34	29	24	19
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 5: Spoken or Written Study (6375)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	40	34	28	23	18
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6: Editorial and Language Topics (6376)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	78	65	52	40	28
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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