

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCE

GCE English Language (8178/9178)

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Summer 2007

Publications Code UA 019120

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Contents

1. Textual Commentary (6371/01)	1
2. Desk Study (6372/01)	3
3. Language of the Media (6372/01)	5
4. Language of the Media (6373/02)	7
5. Varieties of English (6374/01)	11
6. Spoken or Written Study (6375/01)	15
7. Editorial and Language Topics (6376/01)	17
8. Statistics	23

6371/01 Textual Commentary

General Comments

This series more candidates chose to answer Question 2. Overall, the spoken texts, A and C, tended to provide the better responses. Candidates appeared to feel at ease and confident handling the scenarios presented in the transcripts and they were able to demonstrate their knowledge of features of spontaneous spoken language and interpret thoughtfully using a descriptive approach. Examiners felt that overall there was a reluctance to use grammatical terminology which meant that candidates found exploring the written texts more demanding.

It was felt that some candidates had not managed their time particularly well. This led to a rather sophisticated and detailed analysis of the spoken text but meant that the written text was often not examined in enough detail.

Across the paper as a whole, less able candidates were able to recognise general differences between speech and writing but tended to lack exemplification and use of 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 is a significant minority of candidates who included general comments related to linguistic theories. However, in the main, when theory was included, it was applied to observations related to the specific linguistic context.

It was pleasing to note that more candidates are linking features to their specific functions and contexts. So, instead of assuming that all pauses are simply a feature of spontaneous spoken English, more candidates are now also indicating examples of where pauses may be used strategically to signal the end of a turn, or to perform an extra-linguistic task, for example.

Some candidates included an introduction to their response, at times, this could take up one or two pages in an answer booklet. Please note that, in future, candidates should be discouraged from reproducing general statements at the beginning of their answer. Introductions take planning to produce and, in an examination situation, time taken in this area is not warranted.

Q1

It appeared that many candidates had preferred the context of the Transcript Text A but then appeared to be challenged by Text B.

The majority of candidates were able to discuss the significant features of spoken English but many candidates still take a 'checklist' approach in identifying key features rather than exploring them in context.

Additionally, some responses recognised that the speakers were 'older' and linked all common speech features to their age with comments such as 'the speakers pause a lot because they are old'. Vague and general comments about polysyllabic lexis abounded in many responses and, whilst this approach is not always inaccurate, candidates failed to make links with complexity rather than length.

For Text B, most candidates, across all bands, were able to identify subject specific lexis but those in lower bands struggled to expand the discussion further for this text. Higher band responses offered accurate comment on modification and sentence type, although at times there was a degree of confusion in defining simple and minor sentences and the difference between metaphor and simile. Only those in the highest bands were able to spot and offer insightful comment on adverbials and passive sentences.

Q2

Many candidates appeared to find the situation in Text C 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 gender, dominance and power.

A large number of candidates based their observations on theories related to gender rather than on the specific context presented by the text. Although theory-related observations can be effective when linked to a feature of the text, this sort of discussion should be avoided when used to provide generalised or non-specific comments.

Some of the best responses were seen in relation to Text D, with candidates often incorporating a wide range of linguistic terms to discuss the text. There was not an undue focus on graphology in this text and the majority of responses identified colloquial language, foreign lexis and formal language. There were some vague comments regarding sentence type, but overall the focus in this area has been better than in previous series. Some candidates neglected the grammatical features of the latter half of the text (perhaps due to timing issues) but there were some pleasing comments on the syntactic complexity of the opening paragraph.

Summary

Prescriptive attitudes should be avoided when responding to the spoken texts. Comments relating to speakers' geographical origins, gender and age must be supported by illustrations and phrased using appropriate terminology. Similarly, all research studies mentioned in answers should be accompanied by relevant practical examples from the text.

There was still confusion noted with regards some linguistic terminology. Examiners noted misunderstandings with elision and ellipsis as well as with interrogatives, imperatives and declaratives and simile and metaphor.

Timing issues are becoming more of a concern. Please ensure that candidates realise that the two texts are equally weighted and the analysis should reflect this. Furthermore, long introductions which take time to plan and produce are not required. Successful responses take an investigative approach, linking observations to the context of the texts.

6372/01 Desk Study

This unit assesses the candidates' skill in comprehension, editing and summarising; their knowledge of audience and purpose and their ability to shape the pre-release source material to achieve a different outcome through the selection of appropriate genre, format and register. A separate commentary assesses their application of linguistic knowledge to justify the language choices they have made.

This unit targets AO2 which has double weighting and assesses the ability to write expertly and accurately for a specific audience and purpose. It also assesses AO1 which is demonstrated by the quality of writing in Task (a) and the ability to use a range of appropriate linguistic terminology with accuracy and confidence in Task (b). AO4 is assessed by the selection and shaping of the material to suit the spoken context with clear links between form and function.

Task (a)

Candidates are required to reshape pre-released material to produce the text for a presentation delivered by an AS student to an audience of 16-19 year old students attending a national conference held to raise awareness of the issues surrounding global warming. Additional prompts embedded within the question gave opportunities to explore the political issues contained within the source materials in order to persuade the government to raise the issue to the top of the political agenda. Bullet points provided further focus in terms of audience and purpose.

This was a generally successful task which generated an inventive range of responses, some of an extremely high quality.

The scientific slant of the pre-release provided quite a challenge for some candidates and the less able struggled to rework this effectively, especially to bullet points 2 and 3. The scaffolding afforded by the structure of the question (as in previous series) enabled all but a small minority to cover a reasonable range of source materials although the weakest struggled to fully assimilate the more technical information which in some cases resulted in awkward shifts in register/lapses in cohesion which proved to be something of a discriminator for Task (a). The pre-release provided material that needed very careful selection - this afforded clear differentiation between candidates of different abilities.

A significant minority of less able candidates struggled to decode the more complex elements of the source. Common areas of uncertainty include:

- 'Migrogeneration' is not the term for large scale wind farms
- Nuclear power is not a fossil fuel
- Cutting down rainforests does NOT emit CO2.

A significant differentiating factor in the responses was the degree by which the source material was reshaped or 'slanted' to task. Successful reading and absorption of the pre-release texts showed clearly in the selection, the editing, the organisation and the 'slant' towards audience and purpose.

Higher band candidates generated significant amounts of new text which made full concession to the potential of the spoken context. They targeted the given audience with flexibility and imagination, often demonstrating their absorption of the subject matter with fluid movement over the source texts.

Many candidates produced a viable text for a presentation which had real engagement with the audience and a range of features suitable for spoken communication. The higher band responses also conceded to the student voice/perspective embedded within the question and used this as a 'hook' to engage with and persuade their audience.

Task (b)

This task asked candidates to comment on the language choices they had made in order to complete the first task.

The most successful candidates worked hard to produce a linguistic analysis. These offered a clear and focused justification of the choices they had made, giving clear and appropriate exemplification and applying linguistic terms and features with focus and incision. More able candidates contextualised their choices within the remit of the task, moving beyond the formulaic to stand back from their own work and reflect analytically on their approach.

Less successful were those responses that applied a system which spotted (and often exemplified) features but which went on to generate generalised definitions/comments which did not fully relate to the specific context or the choices candidates had made in order to fulfil the brief.

Many candidates made noteworthy points which lacked exemplification, thus failing to reveal their full understanding. Candidates with least security with analytical terms and frameworks tended to concentrate on describing their methodology rather than analysing their choices.

Overall some candidates were clearly better prepared for the commentary than others and the effectiveness of this preparation significantly impacted upon performance. Those candidates with a good grounding in theory and terminology were keen to show what they could do. Others simply described content and/or intention and let down some lively responses to the first task. In some responses the focus shifted significantly from Task (a) to Task (b) with the commentaries outstripping the achievement of the creative task due to the thorough and systematic teaching of analysis.

6373/01 Language Of The Media

General Comments

The majority of candidates had engaged in a genuine investigative study, often modelled on the structure used for A2 coursework. Use of sub-headings and sections is usually productive in helping candidates to structure their work and to give it a sharper analytical focus than an essay style submission. However, there were some folders where sub-headings did not match the content of the section (this was frequently a problem with sections entitled 'pragmatics' and 'phonology'). This suggests that candidates have been provided with a framework which is perhaps too restrictive. It is important that candidates have some flexibility in deciding which frameworks suit their data and, also, which aspects of language they can confidently write about.

Choice of data and tasks

Material was usually well chosen, accessible and manageable with the most popular being newspaper/magazine analysis and advertising.

Newspaper analysis is still mainly confined to a comparison of broadsheet/tabloid press. Previous moderator's reports have urged centres to consider the changing face of print media and the lack of a clear division between broadsheet/tabloid, yet this divisive approach is still common and usually leads to a discussion based on expectations and stereotypes which are frequently invalid. Unfortunately, there was little evidence of awareness of contemporary changes in this aspect of the media. It is more fruitful to focus on particular aspects of *how* articles have presented an event or topic, rather than adopt the all purpose approach to assumed generic features of broadsheet/tabloid.

Magazine analysis clearly reflects candidates' personal interests and there was much visible engagement and enjoyment shown with this type of task. Advertising continues to be a rich source of data and often produced more actively personal investigations. Many centres are encouraging candidates to include a spoken advert to complement written ones and this gives an excellent opportunity to address the requirement to comment on spoken forms of language. In addition, some centres have already introduced IPA which added an extra dimension to the analysis of spoken texts when applied accurately.

Analysis of the spoken word has gained in popularity and there were a number of very successful investigations of political speeches, magazine-style television programmes, chat shows and soap opera scripts. Transcriptions were usually accurate and well presented and a pleasing number of candidates had acquired good transcription skills: this is an excellent preparation for A2 Coursework.

Quality of analysis

Investigations generally adopted a suitably analytical approach, using technical terminology and exploring concepts related to language in use. Questions with a clear hypothesis do produce more analytical responses than the vague 'an exploration of the language of newspapers'. It is certainly worth taking time to devise a question with specific aims rather than one which just invites general discussion.

Most candidates showed secure understanding of each of the Assessment Objectives but the conclusion tends to be a weak area, with many candidates adding a conclusion which lacked meaning and was often a repetition or summary of earlier points.

The growing tendency for centres to describe this as an 'evaluation' is more helpful in focusing candidates on the need to discuss what they have found out rather than a summary of what they expected to be there.

Internal Moderation

There were many excellent examples of good practice in terms of internal moderation. It is, of course, immensely helpful to external moderators when folders are annotated with cross-references to the AOs with a summative comment giving a profile of the individual candidate.

Presentation of folders

Folders should be organised with the cover sheet followed by the data, then the analysis and conclusion/evaluation/references/bibliography. Many candidates now include annotated copies in addition to clean copies of data and this can be interesting to see evidence of work in progress.

Administrative issues included the following:

- coursework **sample** incomplete or received late
- OPTEMs not sent to moderator
- incomplete cover sheets
- missing marks from coversheet
- discrepancy between marks on cover sheet and marks on OPTEMs
- missing data
- poorly packaged folders
- inclusion of video cassettes - we do stress every year that video-cassettes should not be sent to moderators.

These administrative issues do cause significant problems for moderators so we do urge centres to check that all details are correct before submitting the sample.

Conclusion

The majority of centres submitted the work punctually and with the appropriate documentation.

6373/02 Language Of The Media

Candidates answer one question from a choice of two. Question 1 featured three texts; two campaign adverts and an article from a magazine aimed at young females. Question 2 featured two texts; a film review and an extract from an information book aimed at primary age children.

The range of texts gave candidates at all levels the opportunity to write with interest and to identify and comment on relevant spoken and written features of language. There were many thoughtful responses and the majority of answers were coherent, well organised and demonstrated a systematic approach.

Q1

Candidates found a great deal to comment on in all three texts and there were some very good links made between language and graphology. It is encouraging that most candidates are now aware of the need to comment on graphological features as part of the structure of the whole text and to show how graphology complements language.

The few candidates who did not recognise Text A's replication of a till receipt still carefully considered the impact of the unusual graphology, suggesting, for example, that it conveyed the idea of a cage like that of battery hens, making an imaginative connection with the language of the text. There were far fewer responses with lengthy and irrelevant descriptions of layout.

Many candidates showed understanding and appreciation of the variety of persuasive techniques employed in the three texts and there was some focused, precise discussion of features such as the use of emotive lexis

Time management and coverage of the texts was an issue for some candidates. Text C was often discussed in less detail even if a comparative approach had been taken. This could be a reflection of the interest that many candidates showed in the magazine article about fashion victims, which led them to write at length about this text.

Q2

Candidates who chose this question were usually able to write more confidently on Text B. Some candidates appeared to have difficulty in assimilating the range of detail in Text A and found it hard to discern the text's tone and viewpoint. Many noticed that the text had a distinct synopsis and review division, but some failed to notice the dual authorship and became confused by the apparent contradiction in tone.

Although film reviews are a popular choice with candidates they do need to be made aware of the different approaches and motives of film reviewers: there was often an implied assumption that the purpose of a film review should be promotional and persuasive.

It would be helpful if candidates could be provided with film and music reviews from a variety of sources to illustrate different approaches. Many candidates appeared to feel more comfortable with Text B, there was evidence of thoughtful consideration of the precise audience requirements and the text's mixed informational and entertainment purposes. It was pleasing that most answers restricted comments on Text B's layout features to a relevant brief discussion of how it made the text more accessible to the audience.

However, candidates do need to be reminded that texts written for children are not necessarily composed entirely of simple sentences and monosyllabic lexis. There are still too many preconceptions about how to write for children. Text B was sometimes criticised for including vocabulary that primary age children would not readily understand, therefore ignoring the ability of many children and not recognising the educational purpose of the text.

General Comments

The majority of candidates were clear about the task, that is to say were able to describe and explore the texts' features objectively. A minority of candidates adopted an unhelpful approach by beginning with an outline of their expectations of the texts' features based on their knowledge of genre. This restricted the time available for in-depth analysis.

The main differentiator between the high band responses and the less successful responses was the issue of engagement with and good assimilation of the texts gained from careful reading. Those candidates who had taken the time to read the texts as 'the audience' showed that they had really thought about what the writer was trying to achieve and how the reader would react. This produced a much more insightful commentary on language.

There was a generally high quality of responses: one reason seemed to be that candidates had been well prepared with a suitable 'toolkit' of technical terms and concepts. Candidates did tackle a range of frameworks and there was less evidence of a checklist approach.

The numerous spoken language features in all the texts gave virtually all candidates the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of both written and spoken forms of language and at times this prompted some interesting analysis of grammatical features. Unfortunately a number of candidates seemed inhibited by the need to cram their answer with lists of features that they had recognised without leading onto any purposeful evaluation of their purpose and effects. Higher band candidates had the confidence to select with discrimination the key features that were relevant.

Comments on specific aspects of answers

Sentence mood

This was the most popular grammatical point. The majority of candidates recognised this aspect of language and most were able to accurately identify the use of declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives, with appropriate examples. There were some effective comparisons made across the texts and some perceptive analyses of how advertisers, in particular, relate to their audiences using imperatives and interrogatives. But, there were also a lot of responses where sentences were categorised according to their mood for little purpose.

Sentence types

A very popular grammatical feature. Again, the distinction between stronger and less successful responses lay in the ability to discuss the structure of sentences relevantly. Some candidates spent time breaking sentences down into clauses and phrases, labelling every component; a much smaller number were able to take the further step to explain why they were written that way and how that would effect the audience. There were many generalised statements that the texts 'use mainly simple/compound/complex sentences' without supporting examples to demonstrate understanding and no explanation

as to why it was significant. In many cases this general identification of sentence types was actually inaccurate. Previous examiner's reports have urged candidates not to spend time on pointless clause/phrase analysis when it is merely a demonstration of knowledge. There are always many other aspects of the language of the texts chosen that would provide more fruitful and interesting discussion.

Alliteration/sibilance/assonance

Many candidates seem reassured when they recognised examples of these features and list them without a precise discussion of their purpose or effect. Many were unable to distinguish between alliteration as a deliberate technique as in 'deft dazzle' and a coincidental use of two words with the same initial letter eg 'your money means'. More perceptive and thoughtful candidates, however, were able to explore phonological strategies and effects in a way that added an extra dimension to their answers.

Audience

There is still much uncertainty about definitions of audience, with many assertions and generalisations based on class, age and intellectual ability eg there were many contradictory and largely unsupported statements about the audience of Text A in Q1 eg that they were lower class and between the ages of 18-25, or chicken farmers, agricultural workers and scientists, or middle class older people because they read the 'Observer'.

Technical terminology

Answers demonstrated that candidates are generally confident in using a narrow range of terminology but seem reluctant to comment on linguistic features which fall outside of this range, leading to a limitation of scope which can restrict AO3i achievement.

Conclusion

Candidates responded with interest and enthusiasm to the texts used in both questions. Answers were systematic and often very appealing to read. There is a good understanding of genre conventions and of the strategies employed by text producers to persuade, manipulate and entertain their target audiences. There were many perceptive and original comments relating to the pragmatics of language and evidence that more candidates are making a genuine attempt to read and interpret individual texts rather than making assumptions based on pre-conception

6374/01 Varieties of English

General

There were two questions on this paper. Candidates were required to answer either one. Both questions presented three texts for analysis and discussion. The rubric for Question 1 asked candidates to analyse the language of the texts, taking into account relevant contextual factors. Question 2 required an analysis of the texts, considering their different contexts and functions.

The materials were either generically or thematically linked. The texts for Question 1 were all concerned with lions. Text A was an extract from John Maplet's "A Greene Forest", first published in 1567. The book describes the features of animals, plants and minerals (A). Text B was part of a translation of a South African folk tale into English which was originally made by a European and published in 1911. The story concerned a man who found shelter in a cave, only to discover that it was already inhabited by a sleeping lion. Text C was an extract from a written record of a 2005 television programme. Host Tara Brown was reporting on the release of a white lion called Mara and her four cubs back into the wild, supervised by conservationist Linda Tucker. The texts were intended to provide the opportunity for candidates to analyse and explore language variation both synchronic and diachronic. Although the texts were written versions, Text C recorded direct speech and Text B contained some speech-like features. Candidates were able to explore variations in language not only according to time and medium but to provenance (Britain, Africa and the U.S.), intended audience, and genre (early 'scientific' information / moralistic narrative / television journalism). All three texts dealt with their subject matter rather differently.

In Question 2, Text D was taken from Phillip Stubbs' "The Anatomy of Abuses", first published in 1583. In it, the author described how football was played in the sixteenth century. Text E was an excerpt from a written record of part of an Australian television programme, broadcast in 2003. A young Muslim woman and members of her family and team were interviewed about her involvement with soccer. The Text F was taken from an unofficial website devoted to Singaporean football. It gave a brief match report of a game which took place in the "Tiger Cup" of 1998. The texts were intended to allow candidates to analyse and evaluate language use related to context. Here, Text E was the most obviously "speech-like", but Text F had some mixed-mode aspects. There was plentiful material for comment regarding historical and regional change and variety in the language.

There appeared to be a very equal spread of responses to the questions.

Timing was not a problem for the majority of entrants. This said, the challenge of analysing "precisely and fully in all texts" as well as evaluating "incisively", as demanded by the mark scheme for Band 5 answers remains considerable

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 once again adopted, with the vast majority opting for a linear organising principle, others opting for a comparative 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 higher band commentaries picked up on the register and formality issues in Text A, moving through discussions of orthography, and lexis purposefully. Contextual awareness was usually very good here, with some candidates appearing very well informed about Early Modern English, though a surprisingly high number of candidates placed "A Greene Forest" in the Middle English period. Many observed the influence of French and Latin as well as the emerging process of standardisation for example. As in 2006, many middle and lower band responses were able to identify and discuss the evidence of inflection or inflectional decay. The analysis of grammar, syntax and semantics ranged from the systematic, ambitious and relevant to the generalised and limited. However, the majority of candidates at least essayed *some* comment in these areas, which has not always been the case.

The folk tale was not as well handled as might have been expected. Many recognised the effect of the translation and a considerable proportion could see that the story was almost certainly descended from an oral tradition. There was not, however, sufficient meaningful focus on language and only a small handful were able to offer comment on the possible influence of biblical writing on the piece, which reads something akin to a parable. A good deal of responses were broad stroke and general - the result being to mark Text B out as a differentiator. Where candidates managed to *analyse* this text (and it is important to stress that they did not have to deal with anything like the whole thing to gain credit) rather than simply describing it, they were likely to stand out.

As with Text B, approaches to Text C tended to lack precision and focus. A conjectural approach is not a bad thing, indeed candidates are to be encouraged to work up hypotheses about the texts and follow them through, but where a position is taken and then barely explored in terms of specific language analysis, the outcome will almost certainly be indifferent. This said, there were some interesting responses, particularly around the mediated nature of the report, its tonality and the contextual elements germane to its provenance.

Q2

Candidates choosing this question dealt effectively with Text D. As with Text A, there was, in most cases, a sound or better understanding of the context and a good ability to discuss the formality features that were so apparent, though not everyone saw that Stubbs was utterly disapproving of the game of football. There were plenty of interesting comments about orthographical and lexical issues, though there was a recurrent problem with "muthering" (and to a lesser extent "picke"). The Early Modern English context was largely well covered and a lot of very effective teaching has clearly gone on in this respect.

Text E drew a variety of responses - much as was the case with Text B, it had been anticipated that there would be a good deal of recognition of the medium and mode. However some candidates did not think meaningfully about the specifics of the speakers' usages. Where there was deeper discussion, it dealt well with the potential impact of the interviewee's background on their language (specifically for instance, Afifa Saad's grammar), the relative formality of the interviewer's utterances (and the role of status on them) and the attitudes and values conveyed, either explicitly or implicitly in respect of gender.

Candidates had difficulty with exploring the syntax, lexis and semantics of Text F.

General

Comments on orthography and lexis remain indicative of a pragmatic approach to framework-based analysis and are therefore clearly welcome. Candidates who supplement this with meaningful discussion of grammar, syntax, phonology and semantics usually do better.

Discussion of graphology can be pertinent but happily, fewer students are attempting to make it a significant focus and where there is comment, it tends to be to the point and interesting.

The examining team continues to be impressed by the depth and detail of the candidates' contextual subject knowledge. Understanding of the historical development of English is at a high point, as is the general grasp of speech and discourse theory, for example.

No apology is made for repeating almost verbatim last year's comment about the evaluative element of the response, as it is every bit true: a good deal of the work undertaken demonstrates sound assessment of the language implicitly. Often that succeeds. Candidates have largely moved away from the once endemic "bolt-on" evaluative conclusion, which is a good thing. Many now assess 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 heavily mediated or not..." are welcome and candidates should not feel that they will be automatically penalized for well-explained changes of heart or considered re-formulation of their ideas as a result of thorough investigation .

AO1 Communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to the study of language, using appropriate terminology and accurate and coherent written expression.

There are always some routine and some other more surprising errors and occasionally candidates are not nearly as coherent or articulate as might be expected.

The use of terminology remains an important factor. "Feature-spotting" unsupported by evaluation is still not desirable but it is at least preferable to an answer wholly devoid of relevant meta-language. Generally, 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 informed manner, offering a rich and relevant supply of terms which they apply to fine purpose.

Interestingly, each year a number of “new” terms are noticed by the examining team. These included ‘acylic’, ‘gyric’ and ‘stycomythic’

AO4 Understand, discuss and explore concepts and issues relating to language in use.

A descriptive approach remains the ideal and most responses both adopt this attitude and are able to explain their reasons for it with impressive verve.

No candidates 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 more of the middle band answers are hitting the upper end of that bracket. Higher band responses are often genuinely rewarding to read and show real insight, acuity and understanding. They are often expressed with flair and poise.

6375/01 Spoken Or Written Study

There were many excellent A2 coursework folders this year. Some experienced centres are exacting in the standards they aspire to and this stimulated a number of insightful, academic studies which were a pleasure to read. There is evidence of more genuinely independent research and investigative work, with an increasing number of candidates choosing challenging rather than predictable subjects.

Choice of tasks and data

Interesting data included:

- The Paston Letters, with a variety of different perspectives on this data
- Investigations into conversational behaviour
- Studies of gender in conversation which challenged the accepted textbook views
- Linguistic investigations into deviation between Standard English and electronic forms of language.

Studies of Child Language Acquisition continue to be popular and there are more candidates interested in language acquisition as a second language. There were some highly proficient, academic analyses of regional accent and dialect and the standard of analysis regarding e-language is becoming more sophisticated.

Popular written data included:

- books written for children
- childrens' own writing
- horror or fantasy fiction
- comparisons between blogs and paper diaries (this is a particularly profitable area of investigation)
- comparisons between historical and contemporary versions of the Bible
- written song lyrics.

Investigations into literature texts, which had proved a problem in previous years for some candidates who adopted an over-literary approach, were given an appropriately linguistic treatment and often resulted in fascinating analyses of aspects of language use.

Evaluations in general were more detailed and meaningful but the quality of evaluation did vary. Clearly the more successful folders showed evidence that this aspect had been specifically taught as an important part of the coursework process.

Internal Moderation

This was mainly accurate and rigorous. There were very few centres where the moderation was inconsistent, although there were a few centres where candidates were slightly over-rewarded, in particular the placing of folders in Band 5 when the analytical detail in the investigation did not fully meet Band 5 descriptors.

Word Count

There were fewer infringements of word count this year: it does seem that most centres are encouraging candidates to appreciate the skills developed through editing.

Administration

The majority of folders were appropriately organised and were well presented. The specification booklet provides clear instructions on how to organise the A2 Coursework folder, and most centres are aware of this. Bibliographies/references to sources are necessary and their inclusion helps to establish an academic approach to investigations at this level.

The majority of centres submitted coursework on time with the correct sample and appropriate documentation but there were still some issues with incomplete cover sheets, missing Optems, inconsistencies between marks on folders and marks on Optems.

The amount of data included can also be a problem. For written tasks, only the data used for analysis should be included, not complete copies of books or pages of appendices. Investigations into spoken language must include an accurate transcript and should be supported by the recording on a cassette tape-video cassettes should **not** be sent to moderators.

Moderators were impressed once again by the excellent standard of work, the challenging tasks, interesting data and insightful analyses produced by candidates in this year's submissions. Centres should be congratulated for their commitment and energy in preparing candidates for this unit.

6376/01 Editorial and Language Topics

The Editorial and Language Topic paper is the synoptic element of the specification. It therefore tests the skills learnt throughout the study of this subject. Marks in higher bands are achieved by good performances in rewriting a text for an audience and purpose, in analysing changes linguistically and relating to context, in applying knowledge about language issues to a topic, and in arguing a case well. This all needs to be done fluently and accurately.

Section A

Q1 'Ivanhoe' for an Adult Foreign Readership

Most candidates managed to modernise the text in some way, and cover much of the source material with some fluency. However, there were varying degrees of success in the comprehension of the source material, and in ensuring that the rewritten text was simplified without being simplistic, and without losing sight of purpose.

Lower band answers tended to take 'seats' or 'bands' (music) literally, and misunderstood 'fabulous', 'haunted' and 'license'. Some took 'yore' as 'your'. They were sometimes unable to outline the events relating to the various kings. Some retained polysyllabic, low-frequency lexis such as 'subordinate oppression' and 'national convulsions', probably because they could not understand what was meant. Such answers merely listed changes and sometimes struggled to paragraph. The focus tended to be on the requirement to simplify. They were less able to make productive changes and comments relating to the foreign readership.

In their analyses, most candidates were able to discuss changes made to vocabulary and grammar, although lower band answers sometimes grouped different kinds of vocabulary together. They tended to make general statements about long and complex sentences becoming short and simple, but did not exemplify or label them.

Higher band answers were more aware of the audience and created new texts by successfully rearranging or slightly reducing certain elements. Such answers were aware that they needed a balance between simplifying the narrative for the foreign audience, but also maintaining enough complexity to challenge adults learning English. They saw the need to avoid some instances of figurative language. They were also aware that one of the purposes of the novel was to entertain:

"Though the text has to be simplified greatly for a foreign audience, I sustained a certain degree of complexity, as the audience is still adult and the story still needs to hold their interest."

Some answers also showed an awareness that the early nineteenth century text contained features that were possibly archaic for that time, in order to recreate something of the feel of the twelfth century setting. Others had a glossary or explained the background in parentheses:

"Wars of the Roses: Two families fighting to take control of England."

"The nobles (powerful men with lots of land) ..."

Some higher band answers demonstrated an impressive technical knowledge of the syntax of the original, noting adverbials which delayed the main subject and verb such as in:

“In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don ...”

There was some comment on passives such as ‘is watered’ or inserted adverbials such as “in ancient times”. These would have affected comprehension for the new audience. They were usually simplified.

Some responses noted that they had retained some premodification in order to set an interesting scene. Higher band answers were able to distinguish between lexis which was archaic, obsolete, rare, Latinate and polysyllabic.

Q2 Eighteenth Century Letter for a Modern Museum Audience

Most candidates were able to cover the material, modernise and simplify. Again, the level of understanding of the original differentiated answers.

Lower band answers showed some confusion about the word ‘coach’ being used for a person as well as an object. They were unaware that there were two coachmen mentioned in the original letter. They tended to misinterpret ‘seldom’ and thought that Lady Wentworth still did not go out in her carriage. It seemed to them that the Grand Chamberlain was going to Hanover in order to meet the Queen.

Few candidates used a letter format, possibly because these were extracts from within the letter. Some candidates did have a lead in such as: *“As I was saying, I was feeling fairly fed up with the behaviour of my former coachman ...”*. Some ‘rewrites’, however, were overly colloquial in an attempt to modernise the extract. These responses sometimes failed to capture the tenor of the period for the museum audience. One or two candidates interpreted ‘text’ to mean ‘texting’ and reproduced the letter as a text message which was difficult to understand.

Higher band answers were more acutely aware of the purpose of the ‘rewrite’, and managed to maintain clarity and comprehension for the audience, and to convey the spirit of the era but in a modern idiom. They recognised the mixed register of the original and realised the purpose of the new text was to afford insight into past ways of living. In some responses, there was a recognition that what might seem formal to a modern audience may have, in fact, been colloquial at the time the letter was written:

“The archaic idiom ‘take the air’ was modernised to ‘get some fresh air’. The original expression may have been colloquial at the time but does not sound so today.”

There was also an attempt to convey some of the humour of the original:

“I’ve heard rumours that the Grand Chamberlain has died. Can you please let me know whether this is true? Apparently, he kissed the Queen’s hand, all ready to go to Hanover the next day, but ended up in Heaven (I hope). Bit of a detour if you ask me!”

Most candidates were able to comment on changes in spelling and vocabulary. Lower band answers were inclined to be observational merely noting that one spelling, word or expression was replaced by another.

Higher band responses showed a good awareness of the context relating to the spellings in the letter. In addition to exemplification, their analyses contained explanations:

“The spelling perhaps has remnants of pre-Great Vowel Shift pronunciations in the use of ‘instead’ /i:/ for ‘instead’ /e/.”

“Lady Wentworth spelt the word ‘kist’ phonetically. This may be because the letter was written in a period before Johnson’s Dictionary (1751). Spelling was generally less standardised in 1710, even though there had been some moves towards standardisation with the introduction of the printing press at the end of the 15thc.”

“ ‘hard’ possibly represents Lady Wentworth’s pronunciation of ‘heard’ with an /a:/ not an /ɜ:/ . This is an older form of pronunciation which is still current in some regional accents. It may have been regional or aristocratic in the early 18thc.”

“Although Lady Wentworth was part of the upper class, as a woman, she may not have received the formalised education which a man did. This may explain some of the inconsistencies in her spellings ...”

Some candidates also commented on a possible female trait regarding the fairly frequent use of the intensifier ‘very’ in the original letter.

Many candidates noted the frequent use of the conjunction ‘and’ and the similarities to its use as a continuer in speech. Some introduced ‘topic shifters’ such as “anyway” to make smoother links between paragraphs. Others made the text colloquial for the modern era by introducing prepositional verb phrases such as “ended up”, to replace some of the few Latinate and polysyllabic lexical items.

The higher band answers were aware of the dual audience, private, consisting of Lady Wentworth’s son, and public, of the visitors to a museum housing the original letter.

Section B

Q3 Plain English and Public Communication

Most candidates were able to point to some examples of unclear English used in various contexts relating to public communication. Many were able to describe these using terms and were aware of the Plain English Campaign’s drive to improve the clarity of communication for the lay person. There were various views about whether this was a good thing or not.

Lower band answers could be narrow. Their focus was sometimes on one aspect of plain English in one context. Their responses tended not to develop points or explanations. Specific examples and linguistic terms were rarer in such answers. Sometimes they showed confusion about a descriptivist’s or prescriptivist’s approach to plain English, or viewed plain English as being imposed in every context.

Higher band answers usually ranged more widely. They sometimes explored the concept of plain English, not only in the Law, but in Medicine and Science. Some noted how obfuscation could also occur in euphemistic expressions used in political or military statements.

Such responses analysed and explained examples using detailed technical terminology. Illustrations were pertinent to the contexts described. They included a wide range of points relating to plain English guidelines.

Approaches were usually balanced with a recognition that, jargon, for example, was concise and effective between professionals, but was not always appropriate for a professional to use, when communicating with members of the general public. Conversely, there was some concern about ‘freedom of speech’ and excessive control.

Q4 The 'Smartness' of Pre-School Language Learning

Most candidates answering this question showed some knowledge of child language acquisition. The main task was to relate this to the idea quoted in the question that 'babies are smart'.

Lower band answers tended to respond with stock information. This was sometimes linked to the various stages of child language acquisition, or was sometimes concerned with different theories. Often the theories were only half understood, and there was some confusion about the names of the linguists or psychologists associated with the various ideas. Sometimes there was no mention at all about whether these showed if babies were 'smart' or not.

Higher band answers were able to relate the various stages of pre-school language learning to the 'smartness' idea. They discussed a range, often starting before birth and progressing through crying, cooing and babbling phases, to holophrastic, two-word, telegraphic and conversational stages. Experimentation with sounds, expansion of vocabulary and overgeneralisation were also usually noted.

Many of these answers also explored the various theories of innateness, behaviouralism, cognitive development, interaction, child directed language and so on. These were related to well known figures such as Chomsky, Skinner and Piaget. Some made mention of the critical importance of age and environment, and included a brief discussion about feral children.

Higher band answers also sometimes interrogated the word 'smart'. At the end of each point, such responses returned to the question to debate whether or not the evidence showed that 'babies are smart'.

Q5 The 'Dramatic' Spread of English since the Early Modern Period

Most candidates were able to explore the globalisation of English and English as an international language, with some reasons for its spread. Giving examples of the impact on English itself, as well as the effect of English on other languages, proved to be more of a challenge.

Lower band answers were generally more confident with discussing the spread of English in the modern era, in particular as a result of technologies. In fact, a few responses concentrated mainly or solely on texting, emails, mobile phones and the internet. Some answers in this category were general rather than linguistic. Few of these responses made any comment on whether the impact was dramatic or not. Some strayed apparently irrelevantly on to research findings by, for example, Labov on the pronunciation of /r/ in New York.

Lower band answers which made any mention of an historical aspect tended to reiterate stock information on a potted history of English from the Romans and Anglo Saxons onwards. This was sometimes non-chronological and anachronistic, and was not clearly linked to the question.

Higher band answers were more wide ranging and showed a good understanding of the effects of exploration, colonisation and Empire, as well as of the impact of America and new technologies. They were able to quote words borrowed from, for example, India, or the New World via Spanish, as well as later Americanisms, including US spellings.

An interesting aspect of this topic which was explored in more depth this year was the impact of Caribbean and other Commonwealth settlers on English, and the possible effects of the language of Eastern European immigrants on English. There was some discussion of young people adopting Jamaican pronunciations and expressions. Some answers pointed out the cyclical nature of the impact, with English based creoles developing in the Caribbean through the slave trade then being introduced into England in the twentieth century by immigration and popular culture.

Some candidates adopted a useful categorisation of reasons for the spread of English. These included: intellectual (science and technology - telephone, radio, television, computers etc), economic (trade including slave trade and business including brand names), political (power, EU, UN, the media), practical (air traffic control etc), entertainment (pop music, film, advertisements) and historical (imperialism). Some answers speculated on the future nature of English as a global language, although sometimes this could have been related more to the specific question.

Higher band answers, using historical examples before early modern English, did so to illustrate the dramatic impact of previous change on vocabulary and phraseology after the Norman Conquest, or the structural impact of the Vikings on inflections, word order and pronouns. Some argued that English has always changed and would continue to do so. In the light of history, some felt the changes brought about by globalisation were gradual and not particularly dramatic. Again, examiners accepted any well argued answers.

Q6 Differences in Speech and Writing Leading to Literacy Problems

The focus for many candidates with this answer was spelling difficulties. Lower band answers tended to treat the question as one on spelling reform. They spent time outlining the advantages and disadvantages of reform, and giving their views in favour or against it. They often did not adapt this material to the question and did not include other points about the differences between speech and writing which might cause literacy problems. Such answers were sometimes general with little exemplification or development of explanations relating to spelling difficulties.

Higher band answers on spelling explained difficulties in detail, linking comments to, for example, the 'inert' <a> at the end of 'practically', or 'dummy' letters from Latin in 'receipt' or 'debt'. The exploration of the effects of text messaging on writing was quite common. The ideas of spoken language as 'learnt', and writing as 'taught' were generally not explored to any great extent.

In addition to spelling, many higher band answers ranged more widely and explored difficulties with punctuation such as the 'greengrocers' apostrophe'. Some noted problems with learning to write in structured sentences with full stops and capital letters, when spontaneous speech is in utterances with non-fluent pauses and many continuers such as 'and'. The formality of written Standard English was sometimes introduced as a problem. Others explored the effect that regional accents might have on spelling, or local dialects on the use of vocabulary and grammar. Some mentioned double negatives or non-standard past tenses of 'strong' verbs, which pupils, who use non-standard varieties of English in speech, need to learn not to use in writing.

Overall, examiners were pleased to note the progress candidates had made in this paper in acquiring the knowledge, understanding and skills crucial to the study of English Language at Advanced Level.

Statistics

Unit 1: Textual Commentary (6371)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	34	30	27	24	21
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	34	31	28	25	22
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

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

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	35	31	27	24	21
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4: Varieties of Language (6374)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	36	31	27	23	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	73	65	57	49	42
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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