

Examiners' Report January 2008

GCE

GCE English Language (8178)

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6371/01 Textual Commentary

General Comments

Overall, there was an improvement in the quality of responses across the paper as a whole.

For this series there was a preference for Question 1. Candidates seem to enjoy the opportunity to explore the relationship between the children and their mother in Text A.

In general, the spoken Texts, A and C, provided the better responses. Candidates felt 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. There was a greater use of grammatical terminology which meant that there was an improvement in the responses to the written texts in comparison to recent exam series.

Across the paper as a whole, less able candidates were able to recognise general differences between speech and writing; however 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.

Candidates are continuing to link forms to their specific functions within the texts. Credit was given where responses explored the role of a particular feature and its relationship to the wider context.

Some candidates included an introduction and conclusion to their response. At times, these sections could take up a significant proportion of a candidates response. Please note that, in future, candidates should be discouraged from reproducing general statements at the beginning and end of their answer. These sections take planning to produce and, in an exam, candidates should use the time to discuss the texts in a more focused way.

Centres are reminded that spelling, punctuation and paragraphing are all assessed under AO1 for this unit.

Q1

Q1 produced a wide range of suitable and interesting responses.

Text A proved accessible to the majority of candidates and responses to this text discussed the significant features of spoken English. Candidates should not list a series of typical features which can be found in any spontaneous exchange. To produce a higher band response, candidates need to demonstrate how features have been adapted to context, audience and purpose.

Many candidates demonstrated confident knowledge of parent/child interaction, though examiners did note that some candidates drifted into non-linguistic discussions on family relationships in some cases.

On the whole Text B was handled well, with even lower band answers making comments linking forms to functions and contexts. Higher band responses considered the more complex purpose(s) of the text whereas lower band responses often related all features to one purpose with minimal wider exploration.

Q2

Text C had an accessible context and subject matter and most candidates made a robust interpretation of the relationship and interaction between the speakers; higher level candidates could often shine here making a detailed range of comments.

Some interpretations were found to be underdeveloped in responses to Text D. Although terminology was often wide-ranging, a few responses often lacked exploration when discussing this text. Perhaps timing was a factor here.

Summary and Hints

When discussing spoken texts, candidates should try to avoid generalisations pertaining to speakers and their relationships. Comments relating to speakers must be supported by reference to specific features within the texts.

Candidates need to pay attention to their technical accuracy. Spelling, punctuation and organisation are all assessed in this unit.

Timing remains a concern. Please ensure that candidates are aware of the equal weighting of the spoken and written texts. Lengthy long introductions and conclusions are not required.

Statistics

Unit 1: Textual Commentary (6371)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	34	31	28	26	24
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

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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