



Pearson

Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel IAL
In English Language (WEN04)
Unit 4: Investigating Language

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Centre report WEN04

With this being the first year of unit 4, it was interesting to see how the students coped with the demands of the paper. Overall, students appear to have performed fairly well with a number achieving marks which clearly met the level 5 requirements. It is hoped, given the numbers of entries for Units 1 and 2 this year, that 2018 will see an increase in entries for Unit 4.

This unit introduces students to the demands of completing their own independent research in relation to one of four areas of language – global language, child language, language and power and language and technology. Students use their research to analyse unseen data in Section A of the paper and to challenge a statement or question related to their chosen topic for Section B. In addition to this they are expected to explore, apply and challenge differing attitudes and theoretical debates as well as promote their own opinion on their chosen topic.

Unit 4 is assessed by an examination of 2 hours. Students answer one question from Section A on their chosen topic and one question in Section B on the same topic. The paper is marked out of a total of 50 marks with 20 allocated to Section A and 30 to Section B.

The tasks are assessed across AO1, 2, 3 and 4:

AO1	Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.
AO2	Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use.
AO3	Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning.
AO4	Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods.

Centres received pre-release material in January 2017, which enabled students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the four sub-topics of the examination paper and to allow them time to research their chosen topic.

Exemplar materials and accompanying commentaries of this series will be available on the Edexcel website and give valuable insight into the marks awarded at each level and the standard required for future series.

Investigating Language

Section A:

Question 1. Global English. Sub topic – Australian English

This section provides an unseen piece of spoken language from the 21st century which is a variety of English. Question 1 engages students in an analysis of the development of this variety of English in relation to Standard English. In this series, the spoken language was an example of Australian English.

Text A was a transcript of an Australian university student describing what it is like to live and study in Brisbane. The question asked students to discuss to what extent they felt the transcript demonstrated features of Australian English.

Question 1 was the third most popular question and although there were a limited number of responses seen, the majority of marks fell between Level 1 and mid-level 3, with a couple achieving marks just into a level 4. A few students were able to apply relevant methods of language analysis to the data and some were able to use accurate terminology. However, a large number of responses generally resorted to a descriptive approach when exploring what the Australian student was describing in the transcript and the data selected was unassimilated and at times paraphrased: *'in the transcript she says she goes to the beach... drinks coffee'*. Terminology was infrequently or sometimes incorrectly applied to the data and when used was purely for feature-spotting purposes: *'the speaker uses repetition, slang and Australian words'* and lacked developed analysis. Some responses lacked reference to context and how it linked to the construction of meaning.

To achieve a higher-level mark for question 1, there needs to be very few if any lapses in clarity and transitioning between points made and close exemplification and scrutiny of a wide range of data would be expected. With regards to the analysis of Australian English, the response would need to explore the morphological nature of the speaker's language, her sociocultural influences from both Australia and the wider world, the lexical choices she made and any phonological features that identified her as a young Australian with a general accent from an urban background.

Question 2. Child language development. Sub topic – child directed speech.

Text B was a transcript of a conversation between Maddy (aged 3 years 1 month) and her childminder, Jan. It was recorded in Jan's home. Maddy and Jan were reading a book with pictures. Students were required to analyse the interaction between Maddy and Jan and consider the ways Jan applied CDS strategies/techniques when reading the book with Maddy and the effect they had on Maddy's language and social development.

Child language was the most popular question with around 75% of students choosing this topic. A wide range of responses were seen and one student was awarded full marks for what was a sophisticated and critical analysis of the transcript.

Students at lower levels tended to retell what was happening in the transcript and how the two players were interacting: *'the players... are in the same room so they maybe friends', 'they use a colloquial dialect'*. Use of terminology was simple, at times incorrect and generally seen in the form of feature spotting without any developed analysis. Contextual discussion was also limited: *'language of gaming is short as they are busy playing the game'*. The majority of responses lacked the application of concepts or theories.

Unfortunately, there were no examples of responses at the higher levels, however, response at this level would show an awareness of the morphology, syntax, lexis, phonology and graphical features used within the field of gaming, with specific mention to the social interaction of the two players in the transcript and the informality of their conversations. Discussion may also be made to the neologisms and technical jargon they used and how it could become an exclusive language only understood by those involved in the game.

Section B: Extended Response

For Section B students produce one extended response to an evaluative question. They must answer the question on the subtopic that they have researched and must make connections with data from their investigation. Students are prompted by two bullet points and must consider:

- relevant language frameworks and levels
- any relevant social, historical and cultural factors.

Question 5 – Australian English

The question required students to consider whether Australian English was according to a former Director of Education in New South Wales, 'the ugliest that existed'. Many responses seen in Section B achieved marks ranging from level 1 to 3. They generally retold the history of the first settlers in Australia and how their language became the language of modern Australia. Some very general comments were also made: *'many spoke this way because of alcohol and being drunk'* without exemplification from data. Many students had not included wider research, which would have placed their response in a higher level.

Question 6 – child directed speech

The question required students to consider whether according to Professor David Crystal, 'a great deal of what [children] say could not possibly have come from the language of adults.' Lower level responses generally re-told everything they could remember about the main child language theories – Chomsky, Brunner etc and did not apply it to the data. There was very little evidence of own research or opinion. Higher level responses included findings from their own research for areas such as pre-schools or with family members to support and challenge the data provided for Section A. This made for some very interesting debates.

Question 7 – language of charities

The question required students to consider whether 'charity advertising manipulates our emotions.' Responses seen in question 7 were mainly where students described what charities did to engage with their audience with limited discussion of language. Many students spent much of their response discussing the impact and use of pictures and websites to connect with their audience. Higher level responses reflected on the student's wider research and how charities other than those provided as source material for Section A used language to engage with their audience: *'in my investigation into UNICEF promotional material, I found...'*

Question 8 – language of online gaming

The question required students to consider whether 'playing digital games motivates players and develops social skills.' Question 8 responses tended to be more of a history of gaming essay, with limited discussion of language or exploration into how gaming has brought many neologisms within modern day English. Very little discussion stemmed from the statement given in the exam paper. For Section B students to achieve higher level marks, students may have considered gender specific gaming and how language would vary according to age, the genre of the game and whether it was a multi-player format enabling the creation of social communities. Responses would integrate examples of own research.

Advice for centres.

Section A:

- Students must use the language framework to disseminate the data provided and include appropriate terminology.
- Feature spotting needs to be avoided in favour of a more detailed analysis of the construction of meaning within the data.
- Links need to be made between the data and contextual factors, concepts and issues. If students apply a theoretical viewpoint it must be relevant to the discussion and to develop a point not just add it on at the end of paragraph to show they have learnt it.

Section B:

- Students need to avoid writing responses that are historical essays, especially for question 5, Global English. The main focus must be on the language and its relationship to Standard English.
- When applying theory in response to question 6, it must be used to explore the data not just as a bolt-on section that explains everything that the student knows about child language development and research.
- The statement given for all 4 questions needs to be challenged or used to open up a debate. It is also imperative that the student gives their own opinion to the statement.
- As well as using the data from Section A, there must be more evidence and integration of own research for Section B. Wider research must be used to support and/or challenge the question.