



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **English Language 5706** *Specification B*

**ENB2      Language and Social Contexts**

# **Report on the Examination** *2007 examination - January series*

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## General Introduction

This January the entry figures remained very stable in comparison with previous years with approximately 3,000 candidates sitting this module. The majority of the candidates were re-sits.

This January saw the return of Gender as an ENB2 topic. As expected, very few candidates attempted this question. The remaining three questions were addressed in fairly equal proportions which was very encouraging. By way of a reminder the topics for this summer will be:

- Language and Technology
- Language and Occupation
- Language and Gender

Candidates who performed well this January did so for a variety of reasons, as always there was not one particular style of response which achieved more credit than others. However, candidates who performed well were all able to engage with the data and the question.

Generally responses which achieved the higher marks tended to:

- use the question as a starting point for the data analysis
- use the language frameworks systematically, with judicious selection of appropriate frameworks
- use the contextual information to inform the analysis, making clear links between context and language use
- use ideas from language study to illuminate the analysis.

Once again this January, lower band responses were often characterised by a descriptive approach. Generally responses which were less successful tended to:

- overlook, or occasionally ignore, the question set
- describe or paraphrase the data
- apply frameworks in a rigid manner, sometimes inappropriately eg using graphology when considering transcripts
- ignore contextual issues or simply repeat the contextual information given with the question
- import unhelpful ideas from language study with little consideration as to how they added to the analysis of the data.

However, this January examiners were pleased to see that far fewer candidates were using ideas from language study (AO4) in an unhelpful way. Previous reports have discussed the use of AO4 in more detail (June 2006), but it is worth mentioning here that all AO4 knowledge should assist the analysis of the data. It is also worth reiterating that data on the ENB2 paper is as likely to challenge published theories, as it is to substantiate it. It is clear from the quality of the majority of the responses this January, that many centres are encouraging candidates to form their own opinions about the validity of published studies. Examiners felt that this was an extremely positive development.

As always, this January the higher quality responses were a balance of contextual awareness, language analysis and supportive ideas from language study.

## 1. English Dialects of the British Isles

This proved to be a very popular question this sitting. Candidates had been very well prepared for this style of question and candidates of all abilities responded well to the data. The bullet points for this question were helpful in giving candidates access to the data, and many candidates improved the quality of their response by considering each bullet point separately. The final bullet point: 'how the writer uses dialect to present a character' was particularly helpful in moving candidates beyond simple framework analysis of the data.

Successful responses tended to include:

- a strong understanding of the complexities surrounding the nature of representing dialect
- a sensitive understanding of the contextual issues surrounding the data eg the nature of small rural communities/discussion of the character's prejudices
- a range of frameworks used to analyse the data, considering grammatical features (non-standard verb forms, prepositions, negatives etc) alongside lexical and phonological features
- a recognition of the inconsistencies in the representation of the accent by the writer and the problems of representing speech in writing
- illuminating ideas from language study to support the analysis eg issues of Standard English/class/stereotypes/social networks
- a perceptive appreciation of the nature of the data eg written to entertain and issues of audience.

Less successful responses tended to include:

- narrative accounts of the data demonstrating very little understanding of the scope of the topic
- unhelpful 'learned' ideas from language study, often bearing little relevance to the data
- a misunderstanding of the nature of the data (occasionally treating the data as a transcript rather than an extract from a short story)
- inaccurate comment about the language features, especially relating to the representation of accent
- speculative discussion about the nature of the character and/or the Whites
- dogmatic assertions about the intelligence of the main character and negative stereotypes about rural communities.

## 2. Language and Technology

As in previous sittings this was a popular question for many candidates. Generally candidates were very well prepared for this aspect of the technology topic and many produced insightful and engaged responses. However, there was a tendency in some candidates to simply analyse the data as an extract of speech without considering the context of technology. This clearly had an impact on the quality of the response.

Successful responses tended to include:

- perceptive discussion of the discourse structures within the text often developed into discussion of planned and unplanned aspects of the data
- insightful awareness of the conventions of the TV medium linked to the language choices of the speakers
- pragmatic discussion of Anker cf. TV professionals
- systematic analysis of the different aspects of the commentators' styles eg movement from description to review and performance analysis
- supportive contextual awareness re nature of 'live' event and audience needs/knowledge
- analysis of the language frameworks moving beyond simple comment on 'technical' lexis or semantic field of sport.

Less successful responses tended to include:

- dogmatic assertions about the TV medium revealing little awareness of the complexities of the medium eg that the data was all planned or completely spontaneous
- generalisations about the speakers demonstrating a lack of understanding about the different roles of each of the professionals and Anker
- a limited use of the frameworks to analyse the data – comments focused mainly on lexis – often with little exemplification from the data
- little sense that the language used accompanied a visual event – often leading to misinterpretation of pauses/emphasis etc
- limited understanding of the needs and knowledge of the audience eg that the overuse of specialist terminology would exclude those who were not experts in athletics
- speculative comment on the visual elements which accompanied the transcript, often linked to speculative comment as to what the speakers might say if it were a radio broadcast.

### 3. Language and Occupation

This was the first use of written data for this topic since it returned to the paper in January 2006, and candidates coped very well, often demonstrating insightful awareness of how the data might be used in an occupational environment. The bullet points allowed less confident candidates to carefully scaffold their responses, and there was a marked difference in quality between those candidates who addressed the bullet points and those who chose not to. The fact that the data came from an educational environment meant that the quality of the analysis was often improved by strong contextual awareness.

Successful responses tended to include:

- perceptive discussion of formality levels, including subtle awareness that the formality was not necessarily lowered by the use of ellipsis, initials etc
- engaged discussion of the grammatical features in the text, including pragmatic awareness of the impact of the passive voice
- a range of frameworks – often considering sentence types, adverbials, semantic fields alongside graphological features
- strong awareness of the contextual issues surrounding the data especially related to audience and the potential uses of the document
- subtle awareness of the differences between the actual meeting and the recording of the meeting as minutes – much of the talk would not be recorded
- sensible discussion of issues of hierarchy relating to who controlled the talk at the meeting and the action points contained in the minutes.

Less successful responses tended to include:

- limited understanding that the document came from a 'real' occupational context
- unhelpful generalisations about the number of people who might be excluded from understanding the data because of the occupational jargon
- limited framework analysis, often focusing solely on describing the layout and identifying a semantic field of education
- assertive comment on the formality of the document – many misreading the data and attempting to discuss the informality of the document because of the use of ellipsis/bullet points/initials etc
- speculative comment on the personalities of the named individuals in the data sometimes exemplified from personal experience
- laboured discussion of the time recorded for the close of the meeting.

#### 4. Language and Gender

This was the returning topic for January 2007, and as such was the least popular question on this paper. Examiners felt that many of the candidates who attempted this question had not prepared for the topic and therefore many of the responses were marred by an unhelpful approach focusing on power or occupation in particular. However, centres clearly had prepared some candidates very well and in those cases the quality of the response was much stronger.

Successful responses tended to include:

- tentative discussion of the impact of gender on the language choices of the speakers
- perceptive awareness of the impact of the environment on the language choices, including discussion of the lexical choices relating to the purpose of the talk
- illuminating use of ideas from language study to support analysis of the data, including the 'female' conversational features exhibited by the customer
- insightful pragmatic awareness of the nature of the exchange, including all female environment
- strong grammatical analysis eg pronoun use, intensifiers – alongside lexical choices and discourse.

Less successful responses tended to include:

- an unhelpful focus on occupation and/or power to the exclusion of gender
- simple dogmatic assertions about the personality of the manager eg she is very bossy, and misunderstandings about the role of the customer, sometimes assuming that the customer was annoyed, bored or had a 'weak' personality without exemplification from the data
- lengthy discussion of the semantic field of health and beauty without considering other relevant frameworks
- unhelpful ideas from language study (sometimes misquoted) not related to the data eg lengthy discussion of mixed-sex interactions
- little consideration of the speakers as individuals, often grouping the women and failing to unpick the differences in their conversational styles
- speculative comment about the intelligence of the manager and her ability to run a business.

#### Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.