



# **Examiners' Report**

## **June 2023**

**GCE English Language 9EN0 02**

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June 2023

Publications Code 9EN0\_02\_2306\_ER

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## Introduction

This paper focused on written language with the data exemplifying a variety of texts produced at school by Celine over several months. The question was similar to previous years where the focus was written language and asked candidates to analyse and comment on how the development of features of literacy enabled Celine to communicate for a range of purposes. The expectation was that candidates would combine observations on the language features of the children's literacy development with a context-based analysis explaining how the child's language use reflected the purpose/genre of each text. As in previous years with written data, there were four texts (necessary because of the short nature of most written pieces) and there was no expectation that each text would be covered equally and there was no proscribed approach. Some candidates successfully analysed and selected examples from each text in turn while others chose to focus on a particular feature and used references to two or more pieces of data to illustrate before moving onto another feature and text selection.

Typically, lower level answers were often quite short, possibly indicating some lack of confidence with exam approaches / timed conditions and often very narrow in range with little to no acknowledgment of the different genres that Celine was attempting. Often, the primary focus was on graphological features such as the use of pictures, use of capitals and the formation of letters. Phonetic spelling was often noted (but not explained) and any comments on syntax tended to be restricted to general observations on tense and sentence type. A lack of specific focus on the relevance of these features meant there were significant aspects of feature spotting. At this level, references to theories, concepts and issues were sparse, muddled or candidates showed a lack of ability to distinguish between spoken and written language. Candidates who were placed in higher levels were not only able to maintain a focus on context/genre/purpose but also able to apply a wider range of language features from a full range of levels to their analysis, and terminology was wider ranging with fewer errors. At higher levels, fluent written expression enabled candidates to offer multiple interpretations using tentative language and to tie together multiple points and so increase the depth and breadth of their response.

Overall, it was clear that centres had worked hard preparing candidates for Component 2 and that the students had learned appropriate areas of children's written language development. Many candidates showed clear linguistic knowledge and there were very few who did not identify at least some issues in the data provided.

## Question 1

Both the range of data and focus of the question on this year's paper were similar to previous written papers in that candidates were expected to explain how the child's literacy development allowed them to communicate across a range of specific purposes and to explore the ways in which they were successful or showed evidence of still needing to acquire certain skills. Many at lower levels wrote only on the features of literacy that Celine demonstrated and often did not acknowledge the type/genre of the texts beyond copying the contextual information given above each text. Responses which just identified a list of features/skills that the child had, or had yet to develop, and discussed theories without clear and explicit links to the context, were unlikely to achieve higher levels, especially for AO3. Where candidates did focus on the question and specific language features shown in the data, there was an increasing sense of understanding about the different genres and forms the child had been asked to produce with a clear focus on how Celine used her knowledge of lexis, morphology, orthography, syntax and discourse to produce the range of different texts the data exemplified. As in the previous written exam, there was increasing evidence of centres moving away from the somewhat outdated reliance on Kroll and an increased focus on the external influences of teaching / the role of the teacher and references to Key Stages, OFSTED and other government based educational targets as well as more context-focused references to the likes of Britton and Rothery.

As in previous sittings, responses in the lower levels tended to be aware of some common issues/theories underpinning literacy but were not able to move beyond recalling these and seldom applied them specifically to the data, an example, or specific language feature. Basic 'stage' related theories like Kroll's stages were often recalled in some detail at the start of a response as a type of introduction with no reference to the data and then not mentioned again. This lack of application meant that such candidates could not reach beyond lower level 2. Additionally, although it was pleasing to see an increased focus on how the education system may influence the development of written language, a number of candidates at lower levels spent too long analysing the teacher's comments and, in some cases, discussed these more than the child's language and did not consider the impact of how these features affected the children's ability to complete their tasks. As in previous written language papers, candidates in level 1 and 2 often confused speech and writing development with discussions of telegraphic speech and innateness as well as muddling theories and theorists but pleasingly, even at this level, fewer were simply 'praising' the use of certain language features than in previous series.

Candidates performing at the mid-levels upward were more extensive in their selections and often adapted theories from other parts of the course such as narrative structure theories for Celine's retelling of Jack and the Beanstalk, or referenced a wider range of theorists who helped them address context as well as development such as Rothery, Britton and Halliday. As seen last year, an increasing number considered the educational goals that Celine would be expected to achieve in school by referencing the Key Stage literacy targets, DfE guidelines and the teacher's feedback to explain the educational focus of the activities, as well as making reference to Celine's contribution to her own learning. As candidates began to move out of level 3, there was often evidence of challenging theories, issues and concepts, for example tactful criticism of the phonics approach when it resulted in representation of regional or casual forms or how the child may perceive patterns which are not consistent in English spelling and so resulted in non – Standard forms. These candidates were often able to view Celine's 'mistakes' as positive examples of her engaging with the system and often explained how they did not fundamentally affect the success of the pieces. It's worth noting that although there was a marked decline at all levels in just dropping a theory/theorist reference in brackets after a comment has declined, candidates should be reminded that it can be beneficial to briefly define/explain a theory/concept on first reference to make understanding clear. For instance, some candidates referenced issues like the 'creative approach' or 'rules based approach' without explaining what they meant by these references.

Each year, the variation in the use of the IPA has been mentioned and there are some signs of its application becoming more consistent but many candidates still used the imprecise approach of phonetic spelling or using random bracket forms which made it difficult to assess whether they were discussing phonemes or grapheme (instead of the accepted // for phoneme and <> for grapheme). This often resulted in sections which lacked clarity and precision and prevented candidates from showing the accuracy and understanding associated with better responses as they did not show subject specific skills. For instance, many candidates discussed the child's spelling of 'bloo', but referenced the use of the 'oo' sound instead of using the relevant IPA symbol /u/, or just stated that they had been removed from 'life' because it is not pronounced, instead of noting the precise change in pronunciation it has on the vowel. Pattern spotting and drawing connections at level 2 and below were rare with candidates seldom drawing any connections between the spelling forms used by the child. At higher levels, pattern spotting was more common and enabled a more in-depth analysis of the data, such as those who discussed the representation of the /i:/ phoneme across texts or used examples such as 'wat' (wait), 'main' (mane) and 'plai' (play) to comment on Celine's learning and ability to adapt what she has been taught. Additionally, as often seen previously, few at lower levels related the children's spelling strategies to how spelling is taught in school and were content to just label spellings as 'phonetic' and sometimes to place the child within a stage of development (using Gentry/Kroll) with no consideration of why children approach spelling in this way. At higher levels, there was more awareness of the different strategies a phonics-based approach that a child may draw upon such as learned spelling or blending and the different approaches were explicitly exemplified. There was some evidence of more candidates acknowledging where and why the children could spell successfully, often linking to the classroom environment such as teacher modelling or word banks. At lower levels environment print was often cited to explain successful spellings but the implication that the child would remember the spelling of 'museum' because they had visited one was not wholly plausible.

Comments on syntax and morphology at lower levels were either absent, or were very narrow in range. When comments on significant language features were made, some candidates at lower levels lacked the ability to relate productively to the data. For instance, candidates at lower levels would often note the use of compound sentences but did not move beyond simple identification (feature spotting) whereas candidates placed in level 3 and above were often noting the function of conjunction and how it linked to purpose. Candidates performing in the mid-levels and above were able to offer a greater range of features and had more confidence with terminology. As such, they were able to identify but more importantly explain the use of features; most commonly adjectives, adverbials for sequencing and/or ensuring the focus was kept on the specific activity (e.g. 'in my garden'), Celine's ability to adopt different perspectives through her use of first and third person pronouns and some productive analysis on sentence type and how this allowed her to not only meet the goals of the task but also how it exemplified a growing awareness that written language is not just spoken forms written down. At high levels, these were consistently linked to the audience needs and the conventions of the genre with candidates grouping together various features of syntax that contributed to the same contextual factor.

This Level 4 script shows an analysis of orthography that could have been more assured with some additions.

Since texts A to D only range in about a year of age, with the final text D being produced at 6 years and 2 months, we can't expect full phonological awareness, since that is the longest aspect of language that tends to develop (around 8 years). However, Celine does show phonological progression within

her written language, which will enable her to form a standard foundation for written language that can be used for a range of purposes. For example, in text A Celine omits the non-salient 'e' phoneme from the lexeme 'like'. Since the 'e' is silent, it's use is difficult, and with Celine being 5 years 3 months (key stage 0) she may not have been taught the 'silent e' grammatical rule, and her school routines, especially at this point in development, may just ~~now~~ be evaluating where the child is at, at the beginning of their written language journey. Furthermore, in text B, we see further phonological development, and evidence of the 'segmenting and blending' method taught with the <sup>National</sup> curriculum's current synthetic phonics approach. For example, Celine is deciphering that a ~~word~~ <sup>she</sup> has lexemes 'blue' and ~~spotty~~ 'spotty' and 'sparkly' all contain phonetic components that sound similar to vowels, e.g. 'evue' in 'blue' sounds like the elongated vowel 'oo/u:', so ~~logically~~ ~~speaks~~ implements that into her spellings. The same goes for the other two examples in which the consonant 'y' is substituted for its similar sounding vowel counterpart 'ee/i:'. However in text D, ~~phonics~~ the second syllable 'dow' in 'window'

is substituted to 'doo', replacing phonetically 'əʊ' with 'u:'. Whereas this could be linked to the previous point on text B. This is also evidence of a dialectal variation, holding similarities to a Northern dialect. This shows inconsistencies in the segmenting/blending method, as individuals <sup>with</sup> ~~different~~ ~~standard~~ ~~pronunciation~~ pronunciation deviating from the standard are subjected to increased difficulty with phonetic spelling. However, in text B, the teacher does fulfil Lev's role as the teacher, acting as an MKO (social interactionism - Vygotsky) and employs positive reinforcement (Skinner's Behaviourism) in the form of ticks and spelling targets, which will help Celine form a foundation of standard phonics in her written language, <sup>which will</sup> ~~now~~ therefore allowing her to use language for a range of purposes.



The candidate opens the section with a general introduction. The term 'phonological awareness' would seem more appropriate to speech and it may be that the candidate was considering spoken language. A discussion of the final in 'life' was a popular choice. While this candidate attempts to discuss this, the lack of IPA makes the point less convincing. If the IPA had been used, the candidate could have proved that the final was not sounded and they could have discussed the phoneme/grapheme correspondence. However, there is some sophistication evident when the candidate discusses why this may have occurred (AO2). The impact of lack of clear IPA and /phoneme/ brackets is illustrated when the candidate discusses 'bloo'. The point the candidate makes is clear but the reader has to consider this section carefully to untangle the way the candidate has approached the discussion. Like a previous point made by this candidate, the concepts and issues shown here are discriminating. The candidate considers the phonics approach and shows understanding of key concepts within it by referencing 'blending'. They are also able to offer an implied criticism of the phonics system by referencing the regional language as well as the role of the teacher (AO2).



Ensure you use the IPA when discussing sound/spelling links and use brackets that help you to differentiate between phoneme and grapheme clearly. Considering the number of graphemes/phonemes and whether the word shows any of the irregularities found in the English spelling system can be a useful starting point for a detailed analysis.

This extract from a level 4 script shows a productive approach to discussing an aspect of literacy.

Additionally, in text B, Coleho can be seen to adhere to the National Curriculum in regards to the pre modifying adjectives. At 5 years and 9 months old (Text B), <sup>grammatically,</sup> lexically, Coleho is showing a more vast awareness of concrete nouns ('vegetables', 'flowers', '~~plants~~', 'garden'). Lexically, these concrete nouns create a semantic field of gardening ('vegetables', which

is what the task, set by her teacher, was to write about. The National Curriculum for that age (Year 1) at school, statistically requires children to be able to notice and introduce pre-modifying adjectives. However, it is in Year 2 that there should be confidence. Celina shows an advanced awareness of, although misspelt, she consistently uses pre-modifying adjectival phrases ~~adjectives~~ ~~constructively~~ ('sparkles'; 'sparkles blue'; 'sparkles blue hair'; 'sparkles blue hair'). This technique allows Celina to create expanded noun phrases ('sparkles blue hair'; 'sparkles blue hair'). ~~The~~ The purpose of these features allow Celina to portray a detailed description, which opposed to Text A, allows Celina to bring imagination and have a purpose to entertain, rather than to instruct (Text A).



The candidate begins by showing understanding that children's expected literacy development is in part shaped by guidance from the teacher and the education system (AO2) and the candidate uses some accurate terms (AO3). The use of the term 'concrete' is not wholly necessary as the candidate does not discuss this aspect of the lexis and the comment on semantic field could have been developed and expanded (e.g. where might she have learned this semantic field?) but there is a clear link to the task set by the teacher (AO3). The examples are useful and accurate (AO1) and the small error does not detract from the section.

In the final part of this short section, the candidate references context with comments referencing 'detailed description' and 'imagination' and uses a further example to contrast with the previous text showing the beginning of discriminating skills. In ideal circumstances, the candidate could have taken this further by offering brief comment on the type of description, in this case focused on colour/appearance.



When discussing features such as modifiers (and other features that can describe nouns) go further than just 'description' by considering what type of description is offered (eg colour, size) and why the child thought it would benefit the reader

This extract from a low level 4 response clearly illustrates where additional detail could significantly improve a candidate's response.

In texts A and B, Celine shows progressive understanding of simple sentences heading to use both compound and complex sentences in the later texts of C and D. Text A shows simple sentences in the use of 'Get the seeds' and 'Grow the seeds' and text B shows them as ~~'I like to sweep'~~ ~~and~~ 'I like to pick vegetables'. This clear understanding of simple sentence structures allows for Celine to meet the function of each text. While these are both different, she is successful in doing what the tasks require which displays her ability to successfully communicate for a range of purposes simply

through her literacy skills. Furthermore, still in terms of syntax, Celine begins to show a wider range of sentence types such as compound where she displays one in text B as 'I like to sweep and I like to play' and in text C as 'We went on the bus and I sat next to Jack'. The compound sentences here work to provide extra information within Celine's written language which is important for the functions of the text because text C is to create an account of a school trip and text B is writing about her garden - both require detail which is met through this clear aspect of development in sentence types. Lastly, in text D, Celine shows final developing literacy skills by displaying a complex sentence within her narrative of 'On the way to the market he saw a old man'. This complex sentence again meets the function of the text being a narrative because it gives order to the events within a single sentence which successfully communicates a narrative's structure.



At the start, the candidate clearly identifies the focus of the discussion and accurately identifies and exemplifies simple sentences (AO1) across two of the texts. Although there is a link to context, it is very broad and could be more specific than a generic link to function (for example, some candidates noted that simple sentences were perhaps more appropriate for instructions for reasons of clarity in Text A). The candidate is able to offer some explanation for the use of compound sentences but could have been a little more precise than offer 'extra information' by considering why and how a compound sentence is different from using two simple structures. The final comment on complex sentences is not accurate as the sentence is simple. There is a clear attempt to offer more contextual focus here but issues such as the 'order of events' would perhaps be better tackled through the use of adverbials.



When you are exploring texts, you should always consider the context and try to explain why specific language features are needed for the purpose or the audience, and what this shows about a child's developing literacy. This could include how they have adapted their syntax for the purpose or whether their spelling and graphology affects their ability to convey meaning.

This section from a Level 4 response shows a generally productive approach to spelling but also illustrates a number of areas that could have been developed that were commonly seen across responses this series.

In terms of orthography, there are inconsistencies with doubling consonants, such as Text A Celine can comfortably double the <ee> digraph in "seeds", which is most likely because she has rounded this out as in Text B when she first attempts to write "sparklee" the <ee> digraph is used to substitute the representing /i:/ phoneme is used to substitute the /y/ phoneme as this perhaps makes the same sounding text as the /y/ rather than the /i:/ phoneme in the oral position. None the less, the teacher writes the correction above, which shows that has evidently influenced her ability as in Text C she uses the /y/ phoneme correctly in "Discovery" which could highlight the importance of LASS as - Bruner - because Celine has formed the standard written form.

Furthermore, in Text D it could be argued Celine is ~~working~~ <sup>working</sup> into Gentry's Transitional stage phonetic stage as in her "Litl" she <sup>uses</sup> ~~uses~~ the alveolar plosive /t/, which is not surprising considering the phonetic approach is favoured at British primary school and the word adjective is still understandable. However, it is



There is a minor error at the start of the response as the candidate is discussing vowels. Small errors such as this seemed to be more common this series and if too frequent can affect awarding. However, terms like diagraph, phoneme and clear differentiation between these in the examples, coupled with clear and fluent expression, shows some confident application. The candidate notes the teacher correction (but in this extract does not expand on their role) and a pattern of use across texts but the theory reference is confused and it is not clear how the reference to LASS and Gentry apply to the data. They do acknowledge that spelling does not affect understanding and there is an implied understanding of the phonics approach to spelling but the candidate could have made this stronger by referencing the strategy the child has adopted and considered when double consonants are taught to children.



If you have time, always quickly check your work. It can help avoid terminology errors.

This extract illustrates a candidate with wide coverage and an efficient style (with some lack of development) who achieved Level 4.

Across the texts, Celine demonstrates an understanding of different modes of texts and uses language to the best of her ability to recreate certain genres of writing. Beginning with Text A, the child presents her knowledge of texts with an instructive function. She shows this through her use of imperatives <get>, <plant> and <water>. This reflects her knowledge of instructional texts by using standard conventions such as numbering the different steps - additionally this highlights her ability to write a text in chronological order, creating clarity for the audience. ~~Exercis~~<sup>text</sup>, there is a creative element to her text which is portrayed through the illustration paired with the instructions, as well as the idea that she is creating ~~a~~ instructions on how to grow a dinosaur.

This correlates with Halliday's imaginative function theory, which is the notion that a child uses their language to create ~~fictional~~<sup>imaginative</sup> stories and ideas. Focusing on grammar, the child non-standardly writes the abstract noun <lif> which suggests the child's lack of understanding of the function of silent letters such as the grapheme <e> at the end of the noun <lifes>. This is evidence that the child is using phonetic spelling as the child possibly doesn't possess the knowledge that the grapheme <i> has multiple phonemic representations as it is an allograph. The child corresponds the <i> grapheme with the ~~/i:/~~ phoneme which is <sup>in fact</sup> standard correspondence, however, the omission of the silent <e> at the end of the noun is non-standardly written.



The first few lines show a candidate who may be focused on context (AO3) and there is a clear and brief link with 'instructive function'. Appropriate terms are used alongside a list of examples with additional comment on 'standard conventions' and audience needs, all showing strong AO1 and 3. However, the candidate does not yet speculate on where/how Celine acquired these skills (AO2). Halliday is used to explain the slightly unusual focus of Text A but the candidate could have gone further by explaining why imaginative writing is often a literacy feature of children Celine's age (some candidates speculated that imaginative tasks were more motivating for the child and supported this with appropriate theory reference). The discussion of the spelling of 'life' shows further accurate terms and has clarity because phonemes and graphemes are clearly differentiated in the examples and discussion.



Showing understanding of core theories or more general issues associated with literacy education can help you explain why children exhibit certain characteristics. You should briefly explain the relevancy of any language issues and concepts that you introduce in the course of your analysis. To show a more discriminating and critical application of theories and concepts, you should attempt to use the data to both support and refute issues with the theories that you have studied and could use tentative language to explore alternatives.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Make sure you read the question carefully and follow its demands.
- Context is always referenced in the AO3 grid and should always be discussed. Linking language features to context is essential to achieve Level 3 and above.
- Always relate language features to a literacy development issue and/or contextual factors to avoid feature spotting.
- Discuss a range of language features, including aspects of syntax. Areas such as graphology should be acknowledged but avoid letting them dominate your response.
- Avoid recall/knowledge dumps by introducing issues, concepts or theories associated with literacy development only when they are relevant to the discussion of a specific example within the data
- If you are going to reference a theory associated with child development, you should briefly explain it (to demonstrate your understanding) and its relevance to the data.
- If relevant, use the data to refute any of the theories you have studied to show a discriminating / critical approach.
- Try to use the data to spot consistent / inconsistent patterns of use
- Develop your knowledge of relevant phonological terminology and the IPA, including use of appropriate brackets for phonemes and graphemes, to avoid errors and ambiguities in your analysis.
- Take care with your written expression, including use of capital letters, and avoid colloquialisms in your writing.
- Although you will likely refer to issues such as the child's age and where the texts were produced in the course of your analysis, there is no need to reproduce the contextual information given in the source booklet at the start of your response.
- If you have time, check your work for errors in terminology.

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