



Examiners' Report

June 2024

GCE English Language 9EN0 02

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Introduction

This year, after a two year period in which written language development was examined, the data focused on spoken language with a parent/child interaction. Candidates were expected to focus their analysis on the language features shown by the child (both skills they had acquired and those that were shown to be still developing) and how the child used language to interact with his mother. Typically, lower band answers illustrated a lack of confidence with the application of language features and often identified only a narrow range of issues focused on lexis and descriptions of phonology with a tendency to describe, but not explain. Also at this level, candidates did not focus on the specific question and tended to neglect the discussion of how the child used language and instead only focused on what Isaak could not do.

Higher band answers were able to offer analysis based on a range of language features while introducing a range of theories associated with child language. Responses at higher levels considered the specific question asked and often carefully considered the context of the conversation and how Isaak's language enabled him to converse with his mother. Overall, it was clear that centres had worked hard preparing candidates for paper 2 and had continued with a keen focus on child spoken language. Many showed clear linguistic knowledge and there were very few who did not identify at least some relevant issues in the data provided.

Question 1

This year's question and data required knowledge of the theories and issues that underpin development and the importance of interaction. It was expected that this would be supported with clear reference to a range of language features from different levels. Additionally, candidates needed to respond carefully to the demands of the question. Responses which just identified a list of features and discussed theories without clear and explicit links to the question or source material were unlikely to achieve high levels. Similarly, it was important to explicitly address context (the language in use), as this is awarded under AO3. In this case, context included issues such as where the conversation took place and how/what language features reflected the purpose(s) of the conversation and the participants.

Generally speaking, responses in the lower levels tended to be aware of common developmental and sometimes instrumental theories but tended to discuss these at length without clear links to the data, to just note them/bolt on without displaying understanding or merely listed the non-standard speech patterns found in the text with very few specific links to theories. Many at this level didn't always follow the basic approach of quoting an example, describing using appropriate terms, analysing it in terms of development/context and relating it to research. The middle stage tended to be left out with examples only linked to a theorist (often stating, 'this proves the theory of...') but with no accompanying analysis and explanation. In previous years, phonology has been identified as an issue for many candidates. This year, although there was still some uncertainty regarding the analysis of phonology in responses placed in the lower levels and a use of phonetic spelling, there was continued uplift in the number using the IPA. More candidates used speech sound terminology associated with place and manner of articulation but only candidates at mid and upper levels used this to explain the child's development whereas at lower levels, it was merely listed and not used effectively to describe any patterns of use. Although evident in many responses, errors in the IPA were found most commonly in lower levels such as candidates often confusing / θ / and / ð / or misunderstanding the difference between / ɔ / and / r / (which often resulted in candidates identifying / r / as missing in the final position of 'dinosaur'). Discussion of syntax and morphology is an essential skill for this paper but although most candidates were able to identify examples such as missing copula and auxiliary verbs (with or without relevant terminology), comments on syntax and morphology at lower levels were often limited to observations on what the adult form would have been and either didn't use or muddled basic terminology (such as pronouns, imperatives, types of interrogatives and compound/complex utterances). At lower levels, there was often much focus on lexical development by listing examples from various semantic fields.

Higher level answers showed more confidence with a range of language levels and were careful to consider the contextual factors such as the environment (both that in which the conversation took place, as well as the effect of other environments the children had experienced, such as the media), and the relationship the children and his mother. Candidates demonstrated secure and confident knowledge of a range of theories (both developmental and functional and often moved away from the ageing big four) and were aware of grey areas where a number of theories could be applied or where whole or aspects of a theory could be dismissed based on evidence from the given data. At Levels 4 and 5, the approach to the data was often much more systematic and candidates worked through a wide range of language features – often covering a ‘full’ range of levels (lexis, morphology, syntax, phonology, discourse and pragmatics). These candidates were also aware of the importance of looking for patterns of use across the given transcript to ascertain how developed a particular feature was and whether a child was consistent in use or not. For areas such as syntax/morphology and phonology, there was awareness that variation from the standard form may not have been wholly developmental and could instead be explained by a wide range of other factors such as region, the influence of carers and other language users, or the informal/domestic nature of the language event.

This extract from a mid-Level 4 response shows a candidate discussing an aspect of syntax with aspects of discrimination.

The transcription also shows evidence of Isaac missing different verb types within his speech. For example, we see him use the ~~a~~ non-standard declarative sentence, "I want to ice cream..." Here, it's clear that he has failed to include the lexical verb 'eat', making it more difficult for any listener to understand his meaning. We can also see evidence of him omitting the primary verb 'to be', shown within the sentence 'it yummy', which he uses to describe what he has eaten. This declarative sentence itself can also be used to show that Isaac is able to use his language for different purposes. Previously we saw him use declaratives to indirectly make a request to his mother (I want to ice cream), and now we see that he is also able to use it to ~~his~~ express his own personal opinions and likes about something. After using that non-standard declarative "it yummy" however, we do see that his mother's reply could actually aid his language development. She replies "it was yummy, wasn't it..." with the inclusion of the primary verb 'to be'. Hopefully the mother using standard responses towards Isaac could allow him to understand the standard version and use it effectively in his future conversations as he develops further.



The candidate begins to show discrimination by showing an understanding of different verb types through application of the terms 'lexical' and 'primary' and offer clear examples of each. Rather than just observe their absence, the candidate is able to make links to language in use and moves beyond a basic can/can't use a particular language feature to consider what language development lets a child 'do' by discussing the use Isaak puts his declaratives to. The role of the mother is also considered (this is developed further in the subsequent paragraph which has not been included here). The candidate could have improved this brief section by considering the precise function of the primary verb (as either its copula or auxiliary form), making a more detailed link to stage of development (telegraphic), discussing any patterns of use (does Isaak always omit primary/lexical verbs) and/or illustrating where he can successfully use these language features.



Looking carefully for patterns of use of a particular feature can allow you to make more discriminating comments on a child's stage of development and the influences on their language. For instance, you may find that a child can only use contracted forms of auxiliaries.

Discriminating application is a Level 4 characteristic.

Another short extract from a Level 4 script that shows some productive comment focused on the question and moving beyond just noting aspects of development, but, similarly to the response above, shows some underdevelopment.

Additionally, Isaak's syntactical development is also seen to be progressive through his usage of sentence structures and the types he includes. Throughout ~~the~~ text A, Isaak displays a wide range of knowledge ~~of~~ when it comes to sentence types and structures alongside how he utilises them to converse with his mother. For instance, when describing a "dinosaur", Isaak includes an adverbial of ~~the~~ reasoning in the line "I eat him up because I'm because I'm going to eat him up", therefore conveying his strong ability to include detail which can help a conversation flow, ~~which may have~~ It can also be argued that this was influenced by the encouragement to explore language through the child directed speech feature of tag questions. In text A, Isaak's mother frequently uses a range of interrogatives from the beginning until the end such as "is there

anything else you like?", "pink?" and "you want to?". As a result of this, it may allow him to feel more encouraged or desire to explore language as a way to interact with her thus preforming the benefits of Bruner's social interactionist theory. On the other hand, the amount of interrogatives in which the mother uses ~~that~~ has perhaps had a negative impact on Isaac's language development which is evident when the mother asks "you want to? (...) tell me that again" as Isaac ignores her ~~statement~~ imperative and repeats on "chocolate" being his favourite flavour of ice cream. Despite that being said, Isaac shows a variety of sentence types with his usage of compound sentences like "a big one with long neck" and a c indecipherable) and his common ~~usage~~ inclusion of simple sentences, which is common amongst children. Ultimately, his syntactical features are impressive and allows him to engage with others such as his mother.



The opening part of this section is a little unfocused with broad references to 'sentence types and structures'. The candidate shows a clear link to the question with the reference to 'converse with his mother'. A focused language feature, 'adverbial' is identified alongside an accurate example. There is some development of the point as the candidate offers some explanation of the conversational benefits of such a development, but the candidate could have been more precise than 'detail' and 'flow' by considering more specifically why reason could be important in this context and how it benefits this conversation, perhaps also including reference to functional approaches. Timing is important in this paper and candidates have to make choices about what they include, but there would also have been an option here to discuss on a wider level Isaak's development of a variety of adverbials (in a subsequent section, this candidate did pick up on other methods of detail by discussing the benefits of developing adjectives). There is an effective link to a theory/concept with the reference to child directed speech with a range of examples. There is a clear aspect of a discriminating approach when the candidate gives an alternative view of the mother's questioning strategies.



You should always consider aspects of context/how the child's language development allows them to communicate in a specific environment or language event. This will often involve moving beyond noting whether the child's language is standard or not to considering how the child uses language, e.g. how the child is able to give levels of detail or control the actions of others.

The focus of this mid-Level 4 response is phonology. It shows some detailed application and attempts at spotting patterns of use show clear discriminating application.

When analysing Issac's phonological development he displays great difficulty when pronouncing the fricative phonemes such as the dental fricative /θ/ in /wɪθ/ <with> and the dental fricative /ð/ in /ðə/ <the> always substituting the phoneme with an easier to pronounce alveolar plosive /d/. According to Pamela Greenwell the fricative phoneme is one of the hardest for a child to pronounce because of the ~~need~~ requirement of having to be able to control the air flow so ~~phonemes are~~ the fricative phoneme is replaced with an easier alternative. This suggests that Issac is unable to pronounce these ~~harder~~ harder phonemes.

because he does not possess the motor skills to do so. However, Issac's substitution of the fricative phoneme is inconsistent throughout the text evident in the adverb /feɪvəl/ <favorite> with his use of the labio-dental fricative /f/ when in initial position. This could suggest Issac ^{has the} ability to pronounce the fricative phoneme ~~when~~ when in the initial position ~~in~~ inconsistently compared to the final position in a lexical device as it's harder to accomplish. ~~This~~ ~~is~~ supporting the theory of nativism that children have the innate ability to understand language and that Issac's innate ability is progressing over time.



The term 'fricative' is used accurately and productively in this section to indicate the target sound, but there is a distracting error with 'with'. This error was seen a number of times but in this instance, as it was not the focus of the response, it has little effect on awarding. Other terms such as 'dental' and 'alveolar' are used accurately to distinguish between the sounds. The substitution is explained showing detailed knowledge. Evidence of a discriminating approach is seen when the candidate is able to discuss a pattern of use across fricatives using the supporting example 'favourite'. Further detailed terms are used productively and the speculation that this rested on position shows plausibility, although it is a shame that the candidate did not show further discrimination by considering that the place of articulation could be an influencing factor for a labio-dental. The final comment about innateness, although a clear attempt to apply theory, is not explained and feels a little bolted on. The candidate could have improved this section by considering the effect on the conversation of his non standard forms and whether and why the mother accepts these.



Errors in terminology and technical lapses may affect the awarding of a response. Although a one-off error is unlikely to have a significant impact, if these are frequent, or undermine the focus of a section, it could mean that the response has some Level 2 aspects for AO1. The most common errors at all levels are often confusing sound and spelling when using the IPA (e.g. the plural <-s> may be a /z/ sound), mislabelling word class (e.g. adverbs/adjectives and pronoun terminology) and errors in sentence level terminology.

This Level 4 script combines a clear language focus with links to both the construction of meaning and language development.

Syntactically, Isaak ~~begins the conversation~~^{first} engages in the conversation using holophrastic concrete nouns such as 'ice cream' and 'chocolate' to simply respond to his mum's questions such as 'what does it taste like?' which she uses to prompt communication with Isaak. Although this suggests he is in an earlier stage of language development, telegraphic utterances can then clearly be seen as he begins to offer his opinions through the adjectival phrase 'my favourite' ~~with the use of the correct~~ with the correct use of the second person object pronoun 'my'. This suggests that his use of holophrases may have been due to the cognitive load of trying to eat his ice cream and produce language at once, rather than a lack of language ability prohibiting his communication with his mum. Further telegraphic utterances can be observed in Isaak's language, as he uses the verb phrase 'I going to eat him up' with the ~~omission~~^{omission} ~~of the~~.

of the auxiliary verb 'am' conjugating from 'to be'. This auxiliary verb doesn't provide any extra context for Isaak's mother to understand ~~what he~~ the meaning he is attempting to portray, ensuring she still understands him and what he means by this, which is reinforced through her follow-up question 'oh because you have got your crocodile pyjamas?' This shows how Isaak is able to effectively communicate with his mum socially through his language. However, there is evidence that Isaak is moving into the post-telegraphic stage as he does, on occasion, use function words such as the auxiliary verb 'am' in 'I'm going to eat him up', showing he is able to use the grammatically standard and complete form of the utterance, and further supporting his communication with his mum.



The initial comments in this response show a focus on both development and language in use in this conversation. Whilst holophrase is not inaccurate, the candidate does not speculate that single word answers may not necessarily be out of the ordinary in adult speech. However, there is some focus on conversational exchanges here and the candidate does speculate in a controlled manner about the context affecting the child's language choices.

Firm examples of telegraphic utterances are offered which also show the candidate's ability to accurately apply terms such as 'auxiliary' and demonstrating an understanding of the uninflected form (although they do not do anything with this information). This is followed with an explanation of why this occurs (often missing in lower level responses) and the writer takes the extra step of considering the effect of this developmental issue on the mother's understanding and, in doing so, is beginning to consider the construction of meaning. The section ends with a tantalising glimpse of a pattern by identifying an exception to their observations but the candidate does not take the next step of speculating why there is variability/why contracted forms may be more common than full forms.



A common characteristic of higher level responses is the use of linguistic knowledge to speculate as to why a feature may present. It is perfectly acceptable (and sometimes preferable) to offer a number of explanations for the presence or absence of a feature in the data. Discussing a range of reasons why a particular feature is present is often a characteristic of Level 4 and above.

This script achieved Level 5 for AO1 and 2 and top Level 4 for AO3.

It shows a sound grasp of terminology and convincing analysis of a single example of phonology.

In terms of phonology, Isaac uses phonological ~~and~~ simplification strategies in order to achieve the interactional function, as per Halliday, of socially connecting with his mother. This can be seen when he approximates the word 'sprinkler' using the non-standard pronunciation /bɪŋkəlɪz/ to approximate the standard /sprɪŋkəlɪz/. His ~~substitution of~~ use of consonant cluster reduction when ^{substituting} ~~replacing~~ the phonologically complex ^{consonant} ~~consonant~~ cluster that requires precise positioning of articulators, ^{from} ~~producing~~ the bilabial plosive /b/, which is easier to produce as it requires less precise articulatory placement (aligning also with Brunwell's observations on phonological acquisition that plosives are acquired before fricatives) shows how Isaac can employ aspects of his nascent control of phonology to produce an accurate approximation of the concrete noun "sprinkler" by overcoming articulatory challenges ~~in order to~~ ^{successfully} achieve the

representational function of responding
to the question asked by his mother
to engage with her using an appropriate
and understandable response/more detail.



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Examiner Comments

The response opens with the first analytical point and has no introduction. Introductions, especially those that repeat the information given in the source booklet, do not add a great deal of awardable material to a candidate's response.

This candidate clearly links an aspect of development, phonological substitution, to the function of the conversation and is implicitly considering how the non-standard communication may affect the child's ability to use language to develop social bonds with his parent. The candidate shows some confidence with the IPA by representing the standard form of the target 'sprinkles' (it is a shame about the inaccurate /s/ symbol at the end, but this is not the candidate's focus) and a range of precise terminology. While many candidates noticed and described the fricative/plosive substitution, fewer were able to identify the initial consonant cluster as an issue. Candidates at the higher levels were often aware that multiple phonological issues could be applied to some examples. This response could have been taken further by identifying whether consonant clusters were a consistent issue for Isaak.



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Examiner Tip

Use of precise terms can add analytical depth and can be useful in a discriminating analysis, but you should ensure that any terminology you use is relevant to your analytical point and that you use it to explore development. Listing of accurate but irrelevant terminology does not show discriminating use. Use of relevant terminology is awarded under AO1.

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.
- Some brief planning before you start to write may allow you to decide which examples best enable you to cover a range of language features and issues/concepts and spot patterns of use. There is no preferred overall structure, but many successful candidates have sections for each of the key language levels.
- Avoid 'feature spotting' by always relating a language feature to a language development issue and/or a contextual factor.
- Keep your focus firmly on the data and introduce issues such as child language development/instrumental theories 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 explain it (to demonstrate your understanding) and illustrate its relevance to the data by applying it to specific examples of the child and/or parent. If possible, use the data to refute any of the theories you have studied or introduce more than one to show discriminating understanding.
- Develop your knowledge of relevant phonological terminology and commonly confused phonemes to avoid errors in your analysis. Always use the IPA to discuss speech sound and avoid non-standard spelling. To make the analysis more manageable, only certain words will be represented in the IPA. You should avoid commenting on phonology for words not in the IPA as you cannot be certain of the phonology.
- Take care with your written expression and avoid colloquialisms (such as 'mum') in your formal academic writing.
- If you have time, check your work for errors in terminology.

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