A level ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Unit 4   Spoken Texts & Creative Recasting

Section A: Analysing Spoken Language

Teachers' Notes

AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE

UNIT 4 SECTION A

TEACHERS' NOTES

The notes here are to accompany the digital resources, which offer some suggestions about how to tackle the question in Unit 4 Section A. The suggested approach is not definitive—candidates could respond to the question effectively in many other ways.

The digital resources encourage learners to think about and discuss the concepts before the explanatory information is revealed. There are printable copies of all the materials so that learners can carry out tasks individually or in groups before/after discussing the digital resources. These hard copies also extend the tasks by providing additional material. The printable resources include:

- sample question
- sample marking guidelines
- sample overviews
- sample essay extracts
- 'Tackling Section A' guide

1. GETTING STARTED

These tasks aim to encourage good practice, with learners developing close reading skills and applying them to the question and general information. It is worth pointing out to learners that the information provided about genre and background is an important part of understanding the transcripts. Having identified the key points, learners should use these to underpin their readings of the texts.

The consideration of 'expectations' is also an important part of reading the transcripts, but learners should be reminded to write specifically about the transcripts they are given rather than about genre in a more general way. In the exam, they will not be rewarded for lists of features associated with the genre where the effects are not explored and where supporting examples are not provided.

2. FIRST READ-THROUGH

By getting a broad sense of the register, the participants, their relationship with the target audience, their role, and the balance of turn-taking, learners will be able to make sensible comparative points about the transcripts.

Encourage learners to think about the areas they may consider under each of the key headings before revealing the suggested bullet points. These are not the only responses, and learners may well think of other valid suggestions.

'First thoughts' task: the opening sections of the transcripts (entertainment programmes)

Notes

Register:

- the tenor is informal and intimate in both transcripts because the interactions take place between friends and family
- Text B is slightly more formal—perhaps because of the respectful relationship between mother and son, or because of the more formal context of the programme (BBC1 vs BBC3) and purpose (informative vs human interest)
- the physical setting adds to the informal tenor: Text B = mother's home (domestic and familiar); Text A = the pub
- both transcripts are based on personal content, but the field of Text A is more informal (wedding planning with a twist vs genealogy)

Participants:

- familiar and known: friends (Text A); mother and son (Text B)
- Text A participants are of similar age/status; age gap in Text B possibly creates a more respectful tenor
- ordinary members of the public (Text A)—but M's role as a professional wrestler shapes the interaction and provides humour; celebrity (Text B)—engages viewers interested in JB

Relationship with target audience:

- the immediate audience is intimate and familiar
- the secondary television audience is distant
- no direct engagement with viewers

Role of participants:

- J/R (Text A) create social bond (phatic) and reinforce what M says (challenges gender theory that it is predominantly females who provide affirmation/support)
- M (Text A) entertains with his proposals (humorous juxtaposition of traditional wedding and proposed plans)
- BM (Text B) provides information (photographs act as a stimulus)
- JB (Text B) develops his mother's comments; entertains with humorous interpretations (e.g. bathrobe/sweater; being 'abandoned')

Turn-taking:

- M (Text A) is the dominant participant and his main turn is extended
- J/R (Text A) are in supporting roles with short turns
- JB (Text B) initially sets the topic by asking a question, but his mother is the dominant participant with more frequent turns and a longer MLU
- JB's (Text B) turns are short because he is in a supporting role, encouraging his mother to talk

3. CLOSE READING

As they read a transcript, learners need to become accustomed to marking interesting examples of language use and making marginal notes. Any features that they mark should have a semantic significance.

Encourage learners to think about the areas they may consider under each of the key headings before revealing the suggested bullet points. These are not the only responses, and learners may well think of other valid suggestions.

'Finding the evidence' tasks: the opening sections of the transcripts (entertainment programmes)

Using short extracts from the sample question transcripts should make it easier for learners to practise this technique.

It may be helpful to use the annotated example of Text A to demonstrate the kind of text markings/marginal notes that are useful. The annotations can be revealed one by one to allow discussion. Then get learners to work in small groups on the opening of Text B, identifying relevant examples and making marginal notes to explain their significance. The group findings can be compared with the annotated version of Text B as part of a whole class discussion.

At this point, learners can apply the same approach to analysing the rest of the transcripts. Small groups could work on different sections and feedback to the class.

4. ANSWERING THE QUESTION

When the process of text marking is complete, use the four structured sections (Planning, Writing an Overview, Developing an Argument, Summing Up) to stimulate discussion about the importance of producing a well-structured, clearly argued essay. There are a number of tasks which require learners to assess sample responses and then to produce their own.

It is important to emphasise that these are only broad suggestions. In the exam, candidates are free to tackle the essay in any way they wish. However, these key areas remind them of what they should be thinking about as they plan and write.

Having a formula/mnemonic to remind learners of the areas to include can be helpful (particularly for learners who need a little extra support). Where topic sentences are shaped by these, however, it can restrict the ability of more able students to produce a personalised and distinctive response. It is important that learners are able to demonstrate their personal engagement with the transcripts as well as their linguistic knowledge.

'Making judgements' task: sample overviews of the transcripts (entertainment programmes)

The first three responses have comments re. strengths/weaknesses in the digital resources, which can be revealed after classroom discussion. The notes below cover the additional three responses included in the printed material.

Notes

RESPONSE 4

Strengths: sensible focus on subject matter; engages directly with content of Text A; shows secure understanding of central premise of programme and of wrestling theme; accurate and fluent written style

Weaknesses: no examples to support points about Text A; summary of Text B is rather broad; the point about the fluency of the speakers is not developed; links between the subject matter/background of the participants and the spoken features are not made clear

RESPONSE 5

Strengths: perceptive summary of Text A with evidence of engagement with the meaning; confident use of terminology; relevant and concise supporting examples which are effectively embedded in the argument; purposeful comments re. moods/purposes; effective discussion of dramatic tension in Text A; coherent and well developed argument

Weaknesses: a little more discussion of Text B would have balanced the paragraph

RESPONSE 6

Strengths: shows basic understanding of medium; some broad understanding of relevant language areas (genre, audience, subject matter, function, tone); discussion tends to be rather broad

Weaknesses: no need to explain 'semi-scripted'; rather general comments re. audience; no need to list 'expectations'; lacks textual support; limited use of terminology; approach is descriptive rather than analytical; adequate expression, but some technical inaccuracy

5. ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES FOR SECTION A

This section is designed to develop familiarity with the criteria by which Section A essays will be assessed. Once learners have a clear idea of the key constituents of each AO, they can consider the essay extracts and identify where the AOs are being fulfilled. Response 1 can be discussed as a whole class exercise with the annotated copy used to indicate examples of AO1, AO2 and AO3.

Clearly this is an extract from a longer essay, but it is a good example of writing that demonstrates secure Band 3 qualities. The writing is technically accurate and the style is mostly clear; there is a sense of progression in the argument—though topic sentences could be more precisely defined. The use of terminology is sound and a reasonable range is covered. Knowledge of spoken concepts is secure and textual support is used consistently to underpin points. References to contextual factors are sensible. The demonstration of wider knowledge and the discussion of meaning are less developed here.

The notes below cover the two additional responses included in the printed material.

RESPONSE 2

The spoken language concept is very evident straight away. The elision technique is used throughout, "it's", this not only reveals the informality of the text but it also emphasises the dialects and the type of accent the speakers have. The expressiveness from MB is very clear with the use of adjectives, ''good' and 'pleased', the emphatic stress on these reveal her excitement about the past. This appears all throughout 'favourite picture' the programme. The pronoun 'you have' is shortened 'you've', this reveals how the text is not formal. On the other hand, this is typical of spoken language as it reveals how the speaker has said it.

   There are many features of spoken language throughout this text. The filled pause, '/ɜː/', is typical of spontaneous language as they need to pause and think of what they are next going to say. This is also what fillers are used for, in this text the filler '/kaɪndə/' is used numerous times, more evidence of spontaneous spoken language is on line 5, 'I had (1) well all times', this is a very unclear utterance. The filler 'well' reveals that JB is having time to think of what next to say. This also reveals some aspects of his memories he is having so many different things rushing through his head he cannot get his words out properly.

This response demonstrates secure Band 2 qualities: it is stronger on AO1 and AO2 (top Band 2) than on AO3 (low Band 2). There is some evidence of linguistic knowledge with the accurate use of some terminology. Analysis is basic, but there is a clear attempt to make points. Discussion tends to be rather broad (e.g. fillers used to give speakers time 'to pause and think') or underdeveloped (e.g. the speakers' accents; unclear utterance). The style is clear, but there is a lack of sentence control. Some knowledge of spoken concepts is evident (e.g. fillers), but the range is quite narrow. Generally appropriate selection of examples, but these are not embedded. Reference to contextual factors is limited and discussion of meaning remains broad rather than directly linked to the content of the transcripts—the comment about the mother's excitement, however, shows some understanding.

RESPONSE 3

It is clear to see that both texts are cooperative conversations between participants with a close social relationship. The use of tag questions by the mother in Text B ("you had … didn't you?") demonstrates her eagerness for a cooperative exchange by involving her son in her utterance. The direct address of the 2nd person pronoun explicitly draws Barnes in and we can see his positive role through the backchannelling of his non-verbal affirmation ("mm") and the prosodic feature of laughter. These demonstrate that he is listening and also that he remembers the events she is describing from his childhood (e.g. remembering his father's pleasure at receiving the photograph and remembering his grandfather being an "'indoor /kaɪndə/ guy"). A similar pattern of affirmation can be seen in Text A where the verbal interjections "yeah" and the prosodic feature of laughter are used by Rob to support his friend Mike. This, along with Mike's enthusiasm for the occasion he is planning and Becky's humorous use of subject specific lexis (the abstract noun phrases "strangulation" and "an elbow drop"), make the exchange entertaining for viewers who appreciate the good-natured tone and the imminent potential for disaster (created by the editing which sets Mike's dream of a wedding characterised by the abstract nouns "spectacle"/"show" against Becky's dreams characterised by the pre-modified noun phrase "fairy tale princess wedding"). In both transcripts, the emphasis is on entertainment value for the wider television audience, with clear sense of the relatable nature of the participants (who use familiar colloquialisms like the clipping /kɒz/ and the assimilated /gʌnə/) and their positive relationships.

In terms of roles and goals, it is John Barnes' role to elicit information from his mother about their shared past (Text B), which he does through direct interrogatives ("what was that?" and "who's this?"). His mother, who has the role of providing information that is clear enough for a viewing audience who have no shared experience, responds to these questions with deictic pronouns in simple utterances ("that was …"/"this is …"). She completes the adjacency pairs by providing information in the form of dates (often elliptical e.g. "'64") and sometimes proper nouns ("Stephen Hill"). Her use of polite imperatives ("Let me show you …") demonstrates her relative authority in a mother-son exchange, but also her eagerness to remind her son of previous times and to reminisce with him. Barnes has the role of describing for the wider audience: he uses noun phrases such as "eighty mango trees" and adverbials such as "right opposite" and "in the garden" to place the location for viewers who do not have shared experience. There is a similar relationship between Becky and her aunt since she asks questions (the elliptical interrogative "you know what you want?" where the auxiliary 'do' is elided) to draw out Becky's ideas about the perfect wedding. Her emphatic stress on the adjective modifier "masculine" and the noun modifier "fairy" serve to entertain the audience—who know that Mike's plans are closely linked to their profession (wrestling) and are far from being like the neologistic modifier used by Becky ("princessy").

This response demonstrates secure Band 5 qualities. The analysis is sophisticated with a confident use of a range of terminology. Comments are perceptive and the discussion develops logically with clear topic sentences (e.g. cooperative interactions; participants' roles). The style is coherent and adopts a suitably formal tone. Knowledge of the genre and of spoken concepts is very good, with a clear critical understanding and an ability to apply knowledge to the transcripts. Evidence of wider knowledge is less developed (e.g. theorists). Textual support is concise and selected carefully to underpin the points made. Analysis of the contextual factors is effective and there is a productive discussion of meaning with a clear focus on details from the transcripts.

Having completed the exercises on recognising how the AOs can be met in terms of content, discuss the Assessment Grid one AO at a time. Encourage learners to look at:

- the content markers e.g. AO1—methods of analysis; use of terminology; discussion of texts; style/expression
- (if you feel it is appropriate) the key evaluative words e.g. limited, basic, sensible, secure, confident etc.

6. WRITING THE ESSAY

This is an opportunity for learners to put into practice all the things they have considered so far. Writing the essay could be:

- a timed task
- a 'walking, talking' exam
- an individual homework assignment
- group work in which a class plan is created and groups work on different elements of the essay (the ultimate aim being to create a model answer by using class/teacher comments to improve the individual segments).

Where this is an individual task, feedback should aim to consider how well learners have assimilated the knowledge gained from working through the exercises, as well as their ability to meet the AOs.

7. ASSESSING RESPONSES

Working individually or in groups, students can consider the qualities of some class responses to the sample question. Students could exchange essays, or could be presented with a selection of completed responses chosen by the teacher.

The list of key areas in the digital resources and the assessment grid should form the basis for their annotations, comments and advice.