

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCSE English Language
(5EN03) The Spoken Language

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This was the first series for GCSE English Language unit 3: Spoken Language (5EN03). Candidates had generally been well prepared for the two controlled assessment tasks. They demonstrated a clear understanding of the way spoken language works and used a wide range of linguistic terms to support their discussions. Pieces of work submitted for Writing for the spoken voice were often very interesting.

Speaking and Listening

Centres generally applied the criteria accurately when marking the performances observed during the moderation visits undertaken. In many centres, good use seemed to have been made of the Edexcel Standardising DVD, both to internally standardise teaching teams and also to indicate to students the standards required for the award of particular grades.

Centres are reminded of the importance of

- robust internal standardising to ensure that all teachers are applying accurate standards
- the teacher with responsibility for GCSE within the department is confident that there is sufficient detail in the notes being kept by all teachers to explain the marks given

Although the contexts are named differently and the assessment criteria are new, the tasks which had previously been used for GCSE Speaking and Listening remained appropriate for use in the new Specification. Characters from *Of Mice and Men* continued to feature in the *Creating and Sustaining Role* activity; candidates presented their ideas, interests and opinions on a range of topics to their classmates to show how they *Communicate and Adapt* their spoken language; groups of anything between two and seven pupils once again explored the established canon of topics from animal cruelty to school uniform to *Interact and Respond*.

Some centres attending Regional Network meetings have requested that a list of effective tasks is published. Centres should note a task which does not appeal to one set of candidates may appeal remarkably well to a different set of candidates or at a different time. Centres should also note contains some key principles which allowed candidates to access the full range of marks for each context, which are outlined below.

In general terms, centres should be familiar with research promoted many years ago by the National Oracy Project (NOP). Drawing on the work of the linguist M.A.K. Halliday, the NOP suggested that there were three aspects to consider when students talk to or with each other:

- Ideational aspects (what is said)
- Interpersonal aspects (how it is said)
- Textual aspects (the form chosen to say it)

Each of these will be important to moderators assessing how effective students have been in a speaking and listening task. They may provide the basis for any field notes teachers keep to back up their judgements; centres should keep a record for the purposes of moderation.

Textual aspects

Whatever context candidates work in, the words candidates choose to use and the way in which they structure them will be key to ensuring they achieve the highest mark of which they are capable. Just as assessments in writing require a wide and interesting vocabulary and a sophistication in the way in which a piece is structured, the same is true of the *textual* aspects of speaking and listening: in all three contexts the words they use and the way they deploy them will be a key consideration when awarding a mark.

Ideational aspects

In order to achieve in Band 5 for Communicating and Adapting for example, candidates must be engaging with “complex and demanding subject matter.” In some cases during moderation visits, very able students were constrained by being asked to give a presentation about “my hobby” or “work experience”. Whilst these could involve complex and challenging material, too often they did not; they were a general description of activities. Some excellent Band 5 work was observed where candidates had, for example, given detailed presentations about the impact of global warming, the moral responsibility of the media to present positive representations of ethnic minorities or whether violence is ever justified to promote an idea or cause.

Similarly for Interacting and Responding, in order to achieve marks in Band 5, candidates must show “understanding of complex ideas through interrogating what is said”. It is thus necessary for the task the group is set to contain sufficiently challenging material for individuals to develop the ideational aspect of their performance.

Interpersonal aspects

Although *interpersonal* skills are important to ensure audience engagement in Communicating and Adapting and Listening and Responding, it is the third context, Creating and Sustaining a role, where there is considerable emphasis on this aspect. Candidates must use a range of skills to “become someone else in an ‘as if’ situation”. These skills will include:

- Voice: accent, pace, pitch, volume, inflection
- Facial expression
- Gesture and posture
- Using language suitable to the role
- Movement
- Idiosyncratic behaviour

It is also important to remember that this context requires students to both create and *sustain* a role. As an indication of someone who created a role but failed to sustain it, centres are reminded of Zac on the Standardising DVD. He is involved in a paired activity which lasts less than a minute and in which, although he is the main contributor, he speaks less than 100 words. Although he does use some of the skills of role play identified above to “become” Candy, because he speaks so little he does not develop *what* is said or show any range in the *textual* dimension. In short, he neither

develops or sustains his performance, which is why he was awarded a mark of 6 at the top of Band 2.

A final consideration for the Creating and Sustaining role assessment is the extent to which the task set genuinely requires candidates to “become someone else.” Some tasks used on moderation visits put the emphasis on task-focused roles which required little consideration of character. If candidates are asked to be a Youth Worker as part of a discussion on developing community facilities, there is the possibility that they present good ideas and use a wide vocabulary – but remain essentially themselves. Of course it would be possible to develop a character who is a youth worker and give them very different characteristics. However it was noticeable that, where candidates were taking a character from literature as their starting point, it was often easier for them to adopt a persona different from themselves.

Spoken Language Study Task

Most candidates used the resources produced by Edexcel; this allowed them to explore all of the assessment criteria. Some centres provided their own resources which also allowed their candidates to explore all of the assessment criteria. For example, one centre provided recordings and transcripts of Lord Alan Sugar talking to apprentices and then being interviewed on a chat show. However, some centres who provided their own resources which did not allow candidates to explore all of the assessment criteria. Examples of poor resources included: two examples of speech that were so similar that students could not explain how language is used according to different contexts; examples of scripted speech that could not be rewarded; monologues that did not allow students to talk about interaction. In one centre candidates talked in general terms about speech without considering any specific examples at all.

Most candidates performed well with this new requirement. Many understood how language changed according to context and explained clearly how language worked. Unfortunately, some relied too heavily on identifying features of spoken language, using a wide range of technical vocabulary, without analysing why these features had been used and what effects they might have achieved. Generally, centres need to focus more effectively on the fourth assessment criterion which asks candidates to explain how and why language use can influence the language of others.

Writing for the Spoken Voice

The tasks set by Edexcel allow centres to select tasks appropriate for their candidates. There was a wide range of tasks and candidates produced some very interesting writing. All of the assignments were answered.

There were some interesting pieces of candidate work. However, there were difficulties in moderating the centres' marks because scripts did not make the purpose and audience clear. Some scripts consisted of a long list of single sentence dialogue and consequently it was difficult for candidates to

demonstrate development of ideas or characterisation. Centres should consider the conventions of different genre.

The most successful candidates were those who wrote speeches. Rhetorical devices were often used effectively and arguments developed coherently. Some candidates did not understand the conventions of speech writing and produced interesting pieces of persuasive writing that were difficult to reward as pieces of writing for the spoken voice.

The least popular task was the story in which direct speech was a key feature. However, those candidates who did tackle this task often produced interesting tasks which demonstrated cohesion, and well-judged text structure.

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently, with very few inconsistent centres arising. All tasks achieved the required differentiation; the whole mark range was evident.

Spoken Language Study

The sources that candidates use should be included with the moderation sample. Centres must note that candidates should analyse two examples of spoken language. However, there were examples of where candidates were rewarded for description rather than analysis. For example, some centres awarded marks in Bands 4 and 5, which require 'assured understanding' and 'perceptive understanding' where the candidate had only demonstrated 'clear understanding'. Some candidates were hindered by technical vocabulary which they did not entirely understand – this prevented them from analysing the spoken language. While candidates need to show how language is used in different ways in two different situations, they are not required to make comparisons. Some penalised themselves by trying to make comparisons which made their analysis unnecessarily clumsy.

Writing for the Spoken Voice

Centres were more confident assessing their candidates' writing for the spoken voice. Candidates did not always seem to be clear about the purpose and audience of their writing and did not always demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of their chosen genre. Centres were often too harsh with the marks awarded for AO4 (iii).

Administrative issues

There were some administrative issues which affected the moderation process. These included:

- late submission of moderation samples (only sent when requested)
- missing front sheets for each candidate
- samples did not always include the highest and lowest scoring candidates
- some candidate work did not include any teacher comments
- samples missing the print out of marks from Edexcel Online

- some information was missing from coversheets
- some marks on Edexcel online did not match those on the candidates' coversheets.

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