

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE English Language (5EN03)
The Spoken Language

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General Overview

This is the third series of the unit, and as this was the first opportunity for centres to 'cash-in' their students units for full certification of GCSE English Language there was a large increase in the number of students entering the unit. Over the first two series teachers have become increasingly familiar with the new Spoken Language Study task; at first there were some understandable concerns about this part of the unit, as this was for many an entirely new area of teaching. The more familiar Writing task and the requirements of the three Speaking and Listening tasks have caused centres less concern.

Speaking and Listening Tasks

Although all centres were using completely new criteria, they had generally applied these 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. The practice of video recording their own candidates paid dividends, both as a means for internally standardising judgements across the team and also – significantly – for use instead of 'live' candidates during the moderation visit. Not only does this facilitate 're-visiting' candidates where there is a discrepancy between the centre mark and the moderator mark, it means that this very same candidates' work can be taken to a department meeting and the decisions explained.

Centres are reminded that the only tangible 'evidence' available when moderating this work during the visit to centres is the contemporaneous notes kept by teachers at the point of assessment. Although moderators reported some very good practice in this regard, there was also a concern that in some centres these notes were lacking in detail, and in a tiny majority there were no notes being kept at all. It is vital that centres ensure they are accurately reflecting the judgements they make about their candidates. This is to ensure that:

- robust internal standardising has taken place to guarantee 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 teachers to justify the higher marks.

Centres need to be aware that a feature of future moderation visits will be a check by moderators whether the centre considers they have any candidates who are likely to get significantly higher marks for Speaking and Listening, and

where practicable, these candidates should feature in the sample being jointly marked during the visit.

Spoken Language Study Task

Most students performed well with this new task. Many students understood how language changed according to context and explained clearly how language worked. Most centres directed their students to use the resources produced by Edexcel; this allowed students to access all of the assessment criteria, and so all of the marks. Where centres chose to produce or provide their own resources, most made suitable choices; however, in some centres the choice of resources occasionally limited students' access to the full range of assessment criteria and consequently the full range of marks. Examples of limited resources included:

- two examples of speech that were so similar that students found it difficult to explain how language is used according to different contexts;
- examples of scripted speech that could not be rewarded; the task must involve spontaneous spoken language, not spoken language that has been edited in order to imitate spontaneous spoken language
- scripted monologues, that could not be rewarded
- unscripted monologues that did not allow students to talk about interaction.

Some students 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. Some students found that the PEE model of analysis was useful and helped avoid feature spotting.

One way that centres can improve their students' performance in this task is to help them to an understanding of the implications of the fourth bullet in the assessment criterion which asks for an understanding of the ways in which language use and language choices may influence other speakers and listeners.

The sources that the students use for their two examples of spoken language should be identified in the response and if they are the centre's own resources these must be included with the moderation sample.

Higher marks are achieved if students *analyse* their chosen examples rather than just *describe* features of them. Some centres were rather generous in their interpretation of *assured* and *perceptive understanding*, awarding marks in Bands 4 and 5, where moderators felt these responses were showing *clear understanding* – a Band 3 criterion.

While students need to show how language is used in different ways in two different situations, they are not required to make comparisons. Some students found it useful to scaffold their response by using similarities and differences, but comparison must not become a primary purpose of the responses, as there is no credit for it in the assessment criteria. There was evidence from the responses from some students that they disadvantaged themselves by trying to force comparisons from their material.

Some students hampered their responses with an over-reliance on technical vocabulary, which they did not fully understand – this prevented them from describing or analysing the spoken language with clarity. The Chief Examiner of English Language has advised teachers in the 5EN02 report that feature spotting is not an alternative to language analysis and this applies equally in this part of 5EN03.

Writing for the Spoken Voice

Centres were more confident assessing their students' writing for the spoken voice because they were familiar with this style of writing. There was a wide range of interesting responses to the tasks set by Edexcel. Many students produced compelling high quality writing that was a pleasure to read. The wide choice of task allowed centres to select tasks appropriate for their students. There were responses to all of the tasks that were set.

Teachers should remind their students that although this task can be interpreted quite openly it is *writing for the spoken voice*, and that criteria must be borne in mind throughout the student's preparation; this is especially important if the student's choice of task is the speech – the most popular choice. Students did not always seem to be clear about the purpose and audience of their writing. They did not always demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of their chosen genre.

Many students responded very well to the speech writing task using persuasive and cohesive arguments. Rhetorical devices were often used effectively and arguments developed coherently. However, some students were not fully aware of the conventions of speech writing and although they produced interesting pieces of persuasive writing, these would have benefited from an awareness of the different kinds of audience available for a speech; in some responses it was not easy to identify the target audience of the student's speech. It is helpful for students if they clearly identified the listening audience in their task title or made it clear in their opening remarks.

The least popular task was the story in which direct speech was a key feature. Students who did tackle this task often produced interesting and lively responses

with a strong focus on the writer's purpose and audience. However, a significant number of students wrote a narrative piece with very little direct speech included. As this writing response is for the spoken voice this type of narrative writing with little direct speech did not meet the fulfilment of the writing task for purpose and audience bullet of AO4 (i) & (ii)

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently; there were very few inconsistent centres. Although some centres were over generous in their awarding of AO4 (i) & (ii) marks to very basic responses, some centres were a little harsh on marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar - AO4 (iii).

Administration

The following should be noted:

- Candidates that are required for the moderation sample are identified on the Gateway website.
- The deadline for moderation samples to be sent to the centre's moderator must be adhered to.
- In addition to the selected sample on Gateway **the top and bottom candidates must be added.**
- The sources used for the Spoken Language Study should be submitted with the moderation sample.
- Annotations and summative comments are helpful in letting the moderator see where the teacher has awarded marks; they should be addressed to the moderator, not the student. These comments should be drawn from the assessment criteria and help the teacher place the response into the appropriate band, however it is of very limited help to the moderator if the annotations are only a phrase from the criteria, such as 'language influence', 'language choices' or 'purpose and audience' without the crucial modifier, such as 'assured use', 'perceptive understanding' or 'secure sustained'.
- Teachers should not record GCSE grades on students' work, but marks derived from grade boundaries.
- Where there is more than one teacher in the centre it is a requirement that internal moderation takes place; clear evidence of this internal moderation should be included in the sample of responses.
- Care should be taken when completing all parts of the cover sheet: centre and candidate details; separate marks and correct mark total; the marks on the cover sheet match the marks on the candidate's work; the total mark matches the one put into Edexcel Gateway
- It is helpful to moderators if the candidates' work is NOT in plastic folders; please use treasury tags.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>