

A level ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Unit 4 Spoken Texts & Creative Recasting

Section A: Analysing Spoken Language

Sample essay responses



Sample essay responses

Read through the following extracts from responses to the sample question and identify places where the candidates are meeting the different elements of the AOs.

You should look for evidence that each candidate has:

AO1

- analyse texts and explore effects created
- use terminology
- write accurately, fluently and logically in an appropriate academic style

AO2

- apply your knowledge of key concepts, using relevant terminology
- explore issues related to language use
- discuss appropriate examples

AO3

- analyse the ways the contextual factors have shaped the transcripts
- analyse key language features and explore how meaning is communicated
- consider the effect of the language choices.

RESPONSE 1

As the main topic of the text is the wedding a lot of descriptive language can be anticipated and is evidence in the text. For example the syntactic parallelism “I want to incorporate ... I want loads of action ... I want ring girls ...” This means that there is relevance in relation to the topic being discussed. Also, Mike speaks more in the second half of the text (quantity) and there is a lot more turn-taking between Mike, his friends Rob and Jimmy.

In regards to the lexis aspects of the conversation there are a lot of field specific lexis specific to a wedding for example the concrete noun “ring girls”. Again this can be expected as the main topic is the wedding and his ideas are entertaining and unexpected.

Throughout the text we get a sense that Mike wants to make an impression with the wedding he is planning as he takes time to describe in detail exactly what he wants for example the asyndetic listing of concrete nouns linked to party food “... popcorn candyfloss hot dogs ...” This is also evident through how frequently Mike uses the first person pronoun “I” e.g. “I want it to go ...” This does not necessarily mean that Mike dominates the conversation, however it shows that he initiates the topic of the discussion.

From this text, we can gather that the main purpose of it is to entertain the audience. This is evident through the sheer use of adjectives showing Mike’s enthusiasm. He starts off talking with “big” and “huge” and ends with “massive” and “awesome”. It’s the same with abstract nouns. He describes his wedding as a “spectacle and “show” and ends with “event”.

Text B is also about entertainment because the programme is about sharing memories with the viewers. Concrete nouns like “football” and “football” are part of the theme of a programme about the celebrity John Barnes and the humour about the presents (concrete nouns “bathrobe” and “sweater”) for children who lived in Jamaica amuses the audience. They understand the emphatic stress on the adjective “hot” and the enumerator “hundred” quicker than the mother who overlaps with the prepositional phrase “in Up Park Camp” when her son says the declarative utterance “he forgot where we lived.” The prosodics of laughter and the use of stress on key words like the noun “nightmare” and the verb “reading” help make the viewers feel part of the conversation.

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, ‘/3:/’, 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.

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”).