

# A level ENGLISH LANGUAGE

## Unit 4 Spoken Texts & Creative Recasting

### Section A: Analysing Spoken Language

#### Sample marking guidelines



## Marking guidelines

### Notes

The content is designed to engage and entertain the target audiences: BBC3, a mid-range group of 16-34 year-olds (wedding-planning with a twist); BBC1, broad national audience (genealogy of celebrities). Despite the fact that these conversations are being recorded for broadcast, they are typical of spontaneous speech between family and friends. Turn-taking appears to be mostly unplanned and turns tend to be short. This works to draw in the audience, engaging them through familiarity and humour. The level of informality (e.g. incomplete and elliptical utterances, overlaps and many colloquial features) reflects the fact that participants are well-known to each other and are talking about familiar topics (wedding plans/dreams; family photographs/childhood memories). This is particularly the case in Text A (perhaps as a result of its target audience). The conversations are clearly cooperative, which is typical of entertainment programmes—the tension existing between Mike and Becky’s ideal weddings has been edited for dramatic effect, and the momentary misunderstanding of Barnes’ joke (ll.15-16) is resolved in laughter.

### Aspects of particular significance or interest for discussion:

Tenor (levels of formality and informality; terms of address; humour)

Subject matter: information, memories, opinions

Level of fluency – the non-fluency features are typical of informal conversation

The function of pauses

Absence of micropauses functioning as ‘sentence’ markers

Interaction and back-channel monitoring features (e.g. affirmation, non-verbal, echo)

Turn-taking (mostly short; initiating the talk and controlling the conversation; adjacency pairs)

Use of lexis: proper nouns, family relationships; formal/informal; colloquial

Grammatical structures: elliptical; minor; loosely structured compound/compound-complex

Verb phrases (tense, voice, mood)

Deictic features

Colloquial features: elision, informal expressions, non-standard grammar

The use of emphatic stress (frequency; word class)

Linguistic differences between participants

**Reward any other points: those above and below are only illustrative of what might be explored.**

## Text A

**Overview:** The audience is entertained by the humour of the proposed wedding theme and its potential for conflict between the bride and groom, but also by the good-natured interactions between the different participants. The positive mood of the interaction can be seen in the way in which Jimmy completes Mike's utterance (ll.39-40), and in the number of overlaps where speakers reinforce what is being said through affirmation. On two occasions, Becky and Mike are seen to be the dominant participants: Becky ignores her aunt's interruption and continues speaking (l.15); Mike interrupts his friend Rob and takes back the turn (ll.28/31). This is to be expected given that they are the focus of the programme—viewers need to engage with the bride and groom if the programme is to be a success. The fact that this is more like spontaneous speech than 'scripted reality' also draws viewers in. The lexis is typical of informal conversation: the range is narrow; the words tend to be high frequency and are often repeated. Although the grammatical structures tend to be complex (e.g. non-finite clauses and noun clauses as objects, non-finite clauses as adverbials), they are rarely long.

### Features of interest that could be analysed and discussed:

**Terms of address:** *Mike, Becky* (first names, familiar—creating relationship with viewers)

**Proper nouns** (shared knowledge): *Cinderella* (fairy tale reference); *Madison Square Garden, Wembley Arena, O<sub>2</sub>* (large venues)

**Field specific lexis** (source of humour/potential conflict): wrestling (*strangulation, elbow drop*); wrestling show (*fire-breathing, ring girls*)

**Concrete nouns** (theme of wedding): *ring girls, cards, popcorn, candyfloss, hot dogs*

**Abstract nouns:** *spectacle, show, plans, event; nightmare* (personal opinion – figurative)

**Adjectives** (representing points of view and engaging audience): *big, huge, good, nice, awesome* (positive); *disappointed* (negative); *masculine* (defining)

**Adverbs:** *probably, obviously* (comment i.e. disjunct); *totally, quite, really* (degree, personal judgement); *already* (time); *wrong* (manner); *better* (comparative)

**First person singular pronouns:** *I* – personal viewpoint of main participants (bride/groom)

**First person possessive determiners:** *my head* (singular – groom's point of view); *our day* (plural – inclusive)

**Noun phrases** (head in bold): mostly short and straightforward—typical of informal conversation; function is to entertain e.g. *the wedding, Cinderella, a nightmare, popcorn* (simple); *a wrestling show, some good plans, fairy tale (.), princessy wedding* (pre-modification); *ring girls with cards* (post-modification)

**Predicative adjective phrases** (personal judgement/evaluation—engaging audience): *disappointed, quite nice, really wow, really good, good, awesome* (high frequency)

**Verb phrases:** *is, want, know, 're* (mainly present—sense of immediacy); *be demonstrating, 's going to ...* (progressive for on-going actions); *'ve got, 've thought about ...* (perfective for actions in past with on-going relevance); *didn't ... know* (negative)

**Modal** (hypothetical): *might be* (potential for disappointment—emotive), *might ... be demonstrating/wouldn't survive* (hypothetical prediction—humour)

**Deixis** (locational—references clear for viewers): *that* l.24, *there* l.25, *this* l.36

**Sentence structure** (typical of informal conversation): most sentences are simple (*I want ring girls ..., that's quite nice ...*); even the complex sentences tend to be short (*I want to incorporate a wrestling show ...*)

**Subordination:** non-finite clauses in object site (*I want to incorporate ...*); noun clauses in

complement site (*this is what I've got in my head*); relative clause reflecting on whole sentence (*which is the main thing*); conditional clause (*if he gets it totally wrong ...*)

**Compound-complex sentences** (verbs in bold and conjunctions underlined): loosely structured, which is typical of informal conversation (*if he **gets** it ... it **might be** ... plus ... **freak out** ... **be** a bit disappointed that **didn't** ... **know** ... or **consider** what I **want** ...; I **want it to feel** like that ... but up close ... and it **to be** ...)*

**Comment clauses:** typical of informal conversation (*I mean, I think*)

**Incomplete structures** (typical of unscripted conversation): *getting ol. married an' stuff* (humorous—repair to avoid offending Mike); *I want it to go ..., since kinda ...*

**Patterning:** parallel phrases e.g. *a big spectacle a huge show* (incrementum—Mike's enthusiasm); *mine and Becky's* (recognition of importance of day for them both); parallel clauses e.g. *getting ol. Ø married; I want ...*; fronted adverbials (*considering ..., if ...*)

**Listing:** *strangulation ... elbow drop; Madison Square Garden Wembley Arena the O<sub>2</sub>; popcorn candyfloss hot dogs* (asyndetic)

**Emphatic stress:** thematic nouns (*wrestling, plans, event, show*); modifiers indicating scale (*big, huge, massive*); predicative adjectives reflecting attitude (*masculine, nice, awesome*); adverbs (*totally wrong, better*); verbs (*survive = humour*)

**Pauses:** grammatical function e.g. marking the end of a grammatical structure (ll.1, 3, 20) or dividing elements in a list (l.28); some mark hesitation (ll.7, 17, 25); some create emphasis (*so (1) kinda masculine; want it to be (1) mine and Becky's ...*)

**Absence of micropauses** at the end of grammatical unit: *... ring girls with ca:::rds I want ...; ... this is good what I want ...* (communicating a sense of excitement and enthusiasm)

**Complete adjacency pairs:** *you know what you want ... Considering ... I want; how might you ... strangulation ...* (co-operative discourse)

**Informal features:** *ol., an', you've, that's, meal's* (elision); *Ø you know what you want?, that Ø didn't kinda know ...*(ellipsis)

**Normal non-fluency:** *er, kinda, y'know* (fillers); *I want it to go I want it to feel ...* (false start); *he he, yeah yeah* (unintentional repetition)

**Colloquialisms:** *yeah, kinda, y'know, gonna* (pronunciation); *an' all sorts, freak out* (idioms); *cheers, wow* (interjections—phatic)

## Text B

**Overview:** The domestic scene and the personal subject matter of the conversation create an intimate tone which is appealing to the viewer, who feels privileged to be a party to this family discussion. The conversation is clearly cooperative with both John Barnes and his mother contributing more or less equally: both ask and answer questions, echo each other's utterances, and provide back channel affirmation. Viewers interested in celebrity genealogy will be engaged by the information provided about Barnes' family background, but the relationship between Barnes and his mother is an equally important part of the programme's entertainment value. Barnes' good-natured teasing, his mother's acceptance of it, and their frequent laughter contribute to the viewers' engagement. While the programme will have been planned (and perhaps even partially scripted), the subject matter appears to evolve naturally: the physical images they look at trigger memories of childhood and of particular family members. The many deictic references are typical of spontaneous conversation where the participants relate directly to their context. Body language (e.g. pointing) and stills of the photographs make these references explicit and directly engage viewers.

## Features of interest that could be analysed and discussed:

**Semantic field** (theme of programme): *father, family, grandfather, great grandfather*

**Recurring lexical items:** *remember* (verb); *picture(s), father, grandfather* (noun)

**Proper nouns** (communicating information to viewers): *Up Park Camp, Jamaica, England* (place); *Frank Hill, Stephen Hill* (relations); *Chairman of the National Heritage Trust* (title)

**Wide range of pronouns** (e.g. first person singular *I/me* and plural *we*; second person *you*; third person singular *he/him* and plural *they*) and **possessive determiners** (e.g. *my grandfather, our little family, your father*)—establishing relationships

**Deictic references** (contextual references—clear to viewers): demonstrative pronouns (*that, this*) and determiners (*this hot climate, those pictures*)

**Adjective pre-modifiers** (engage audience): *favourite, good, outdoor, indoor* (evaluative); *hot, big, last* (factual); *little* (diminutive – term of endearment)

**Adverbs** (place): *there, here* (deictic); *right opposite where we lived* (pre-modified with adverb/post-modified with noun clause)

**Noun phrases** (mostly straightforward—providing comment/information): often simple (*the wall, your father*); pre-modification (*some good times, eighty mango trees*); most post-modification is prepositional – some exceptions e.g. *the earliest picture I can remember, the first thing I did ...* (RelCl); *every time I went round* (noun clause)

**Predicative adjective phrase** (attitude): *very pleased* (stressed position)

**Simple past verb phrases:** i.e. remembering events, places, people (*was, had, lived, went*)

**Simple present verb phrases:** i.e. related to current context (*is, remember, think*)

**Other verb phrases:** present perfective i.e. events in past with current relevance (*'ve got,* ); past progressive i.e. ongoing (*were using, was ... reading*); passive (*was taken, were deserted*); modal (*could run, used to, can remember*)

**Simple and complex utterances:** many are short e.g. *that was taken 1988* (simple), *I only know I was a outdoor kinda guy* complex (i.e. with noun clause in object site)

**Loosely structured compound-complex** (typical of informal conversation): *he sent ... and he sent ... and we wanted ... to show that you were ... you were using ...*

**Elliptical** (informal): *that was taken 1988* (preposition 'in'); *and something for the girls* (S + P); *Ø set up ...* (S); *Ø you remember ...* (auxiliary 'do'); *this Ø a bust ...*:

**Minor utterances** (informal): *we wanted him, so he was like* (incomplete grammatically); *all good times, hundred degrees, stayed longer* (fragments)

**Mood:** mainly declarative; interrogatives e.g. *what was that?, Ø you remember much about him?, who's this?* (typical of show's format); one polite imperative e.g. *let me show you ...*

**Colloquialisms:** /koz/, *yeah, /kaɪndə/* (pronunciation); *stuff* (informal lexis); *and the football field ..., and this is ...* (fronted conjunctions); *didn't, I've, who's* (elision)

**Non-standard grammar:** *a outdoor kinda guy* (no indefinite article 'an' preceding a vowel); *this Ø a bust* (omitted copula verb—possibly linked to AAVE i.e. omission of 'to be' before a noun phrase)

**Normal non-fluency features** (relatively few examples—participants comfortable): *th. , an.* (incomplete words); /3:l, /ʌm/ (fillers); *an. an.* (hesitation); *all times ... all good times, so he wanted so this is what we took* (self-correction); *so he was like (.) I only know* (false starts); *in th. (.) in the garden, you were ... you were using, this this* (unintentional repetition)

**Interaction features:** *well, right, so* l.34 (discourse markers); *yes, ohh* (interjections); *didn't you* (tag question); *I mean* (common in spoken mode – comment clause used to explain or as thinking time); paralinguistic features e.g. laughter (reinforce co-operative nature of discourse); *mm* (affirmation); *stayed longer, indoor kinda guy, typing* (echo utterances)

**Humour:** *he forgot where we lived*—semantic ambiguity: M takes it literally, making a reference to the actual place where they were living (*Up Park Camp*)—justification of the presents (*it's what they were selling in England*) shows that she has understood the joke, but feels the need to explain her husband's choice of gift; *some of us who were deserted*—M's understanding of JB's joke about 'desertion' in her echo of his words and her laughter

### Pragmatics

- entertainment value of 'overheard' conversations (apparently close, intimate interactions broadcast for wider audience)
- participants in reality television engage audience in different ways e.g. celebrity interest (Text B: John Barnes) or familiar/man-in-the-street (e.g. text A: members of the public)
- shared knowledge: some references known to viewers (e.g. locations, *Cinderella*) others are personal, known only to speakers (e.g. *eighty mango trees in th. in the garden*)
- humour of gender role reversal for bride/groom (Text A)
- humour of presents and 'abandonment' of the young John Barnes (Text B)