

A level ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Unit 4 Spoken Texts & Creative Recasting

Section A: Analysing Spoken Language

Tackling the Unseen Transcripts



The following advice is not a checklist and it is not definitive. Instead, it offers some suggestions about how you might approach the unseen transcripts in A level English Language Unit 4 Section A.

Unit 4 Spoken Texts & Creative Recasting

Section A: Analysing Spoken Language

1 hour	Analysis of unseen transcripts	AO1 AO2 AO3	40 marks
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Getting started: reading the question and contextual information

- underline the **genre(s)** of the transcripts and think about the key features. Your background knowledge will help you decide which features to look for—you don't need to write these expectations down in your introduction.
- underline key information about the **background** of each transcript—it may help you develop points
- underline the **focus** of the question.



First read-through: identifying the broad principles

As you read, you need to think about:

- the **register** e.g. level of formality/informality (tenor), subject matter (field)
- the **participants** e.g. age, gender, social status, relationship, expert/amateur, professional/members of the public, etc.
- their relationship with the **target audience** e.g. direct/indirect, familiar/formal/somewhere in-between/changing, distant/immediate, primary/secondary
- their **role** e.g. create social bond, provide information, explain, interpret, entertain, persuade, argue etc.
- where **turns** begin and end e.g. length, latching, overlaps, interruptions, back channel affirmation etc. Read carefully—don't be misled by words at the start of a line which continue an utterance from a previous line after an overlap.



Close reading: annotating the texts

Re-read the transcripts. Underline important features and jot notes in the margin. This will help you to find examples quickly when you write your essay. Look for:

- **prosodic features** used to enhance meaning e.g. emphatic stress; stretched sounds; changes in intonation, pitch, volume, pace (including use of micro/timed pauses)
- the presence or absence of **non-fluency features** e.g. fillers, unintentional repetition, hesitation, false starts
- genre-specific use of **word classes** e.g. proper nouns/honorifics/vocatives for terms of address/names; concrete nouns to create a sense of place; abstract nouns to reflect; pronouns/determiners for self-/other-references; modifiers to describe mood/POV; dynamic verbs to describe activity/processes; adverb/pronouns for deictic references; interjections for expressions of emotion, greetings, curses, politeness markers etc.
- **interesting** or **unusual** words, expressions or pronunciations e.g. idiosyncrasies, colloquialisms, slang, neologisms, creative personal choices, informalities (e.g. elision, clipping, reduction)
- **verb phrases** e.g. grammatical mood, tense, aspect, modality, passive voice
- interesting **utterance types** to engage the immediate/wider audience e.g. simple, using subordination, minor, incomplete, elliptical.



Answering the question: fitting the pieces together

Remember that you have an hour to complete Section A, so always spend a little time thinking about how you are going to approach the writing task. Use an appropriate, formal style and try to check that your writing is technically accurate.

1. PLANNING

- briefly jot down the **main areas** you wish to cover
- decide how you are going to **structure** your response. You can use any approach::
 - overview; discuss Text A; discuss Text B; conclusion
 - overview; participants and their relationships; presentation of the topic; distinctive language features relevant to the focus of the question;

- engagement of the audience through spoken features; conclusion
 - your own version—try experimenting ... different transcripts may give you different ideas ...
- think about **timing**—you don't need to write equal amounts on each text, but if you spend too long on one it will affect the overall quality of your response.

2. OVERVIEW

- write an **overview** that introduces the texts. You may like to include a brief discussion of some of the following:
 - genre
 - place of transmission
 - location
 - occasion
 - target audience
 - purpose
- avoid discussing your expectations—instead, focus on examples (accompanied by appropriate terminology) to support the broad points you make.

3. DEVELOPING AN ARGUMENT

- develop your **paragraphs** and avoid list-like sequences of very short ones
- make sure your **topic sentences** clearly show the focus of each paragraph. If you reference a particular concept (e.g. emphatic stress) or language feature (e.g. the use of declaratives), link points to meaning or you will slip into feature spotting. To show your engagement with the genre and content of the transcript, choose topic sentences that focus on meaning
- provide **examples** to support each point you make
- demonstrate your **engagement** with the texts by referencing specific details.

4. SUMMING UP

- write a **conclusion**—avoid repeating points from your introductory overview and think about pragmatics, or any linguistic features or contextual factors that you haven't yet addressed.



Assessment objectives for Section A: hitting the targets

The areas listed below highlight the different parts of AO1, AO2 and AO3. You need to make sure that you cover all of these somewhere in your response. Remember that AO1 is worth twice as many marks as AO2 and AO3.

As you prepare for the exam, look back over your essays and see where you have met the different elements of each assessment objective. Use the bullet points to help you find ways of improving your responses.

AO1 20 marks

- analyse the transcripts and explore **effects**
- use appropriate **spoken language terminology** to describe and analyse examples
- address wider language features using a range of **linguistic terminology**
- **engage** with the texts, analysing and interpreting key features
- use an appropriate formal **style**—express your ideas logically, clearly and accurately

AO2 10 marks

- demonstrate knowledge of **genre**
- demonstrate knowledge of a range of **spoken concepts** and relevant **theorists**
- consider relevant language **issues** e.g. appropriateness/acceptability, role of expert, social status, occasion, gender etc.
- provide relevant **examples** to support each point made

AO3 10 marks

- demonstrate an understanding of how **context** shapes language use and points of view about language
- interpret examples and show how **meaning** is created
- use **appropriate terminology** to explore the effect of key language features
- consider the effectiveness of communication.