



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

**English Language and Literature A ELLA2
(Specification 2720)**

Unit 2: Analysing Speech and Its Representation

Report on the Examination

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General

Students are required to answer two questions. The first question requires an analytical comparison of unseen spoken texts. Two pieces of speech, one transcribed spontaneous speech, and the second prepared speech or other form of speech representation from a non-literary context, are presented for analysis.

The second section of the paper requires students to focus closely on the way speech is used in an extract from the set text they have studied and to consider particular stylistic and thematic matters relevant to the text.

These questions test the ability of students to:

- use appropriate terminology to support their analysis
- compare different kinds of spoken texts
- analyse set texts with reference to representation of speech as well as exploration of stylistic and thematic issues
- write fluently and coherently.

Successful students:

- showed clear and detailed knowledge and understanding of speech features and their effects
- identified specific features, gave examples of them and explained the effects created
- offered an integrated comparison of the two speech texts
- showed detailed analysis of specific features of language and the effects created
- supported their ideas with examples and comments
- used the appropriate terminology to describe the features they identified
- wrote fluently and accurately
- answered the question.

Less successful students:

- offered general comments about speech without giving examples or analysing the effects created
- did not compare the texts in Section A
- did not sustain a clear focus on the question
- offered general comments rather than detailed analysis of the text passage
- ignored the set passages or paid them scant regard and wrote about other parts of the text of their own choosing
- did not focus closely enough on the question
- did not support or illustrate their comments
- did not use a language or terminology appropriate to literary and linguistic study
- showed basic technical inaccuracies in their writing.

Section A: Analysing Speech

Students generally found the texts for this question accessible and were able to identify features from both texts. However, some students opted for an over-generalised approach lacking in identification of features and analytical detail. Some responses clearly identified features of speech or style but offered generalised commentaries on the texts and failed to offer evidence or analysis. It was evident that many students are still spending too long writing protracted and often mechanical accounts of each text's audience, mode and purpose. Such an initial focus on these issues is useful in contextualising the texts but these

introductory observations should be relatively short and not the page and a half or two pages that many students devote to this kind of comment. Time spent here is precious time that would be better devoted to the detailed textual analysis that characterises the work of students who achieve high marks on this paper. It is also advisable to avoid spending time commenting on features that are NOT present in either of the texts.

Most students could identify speech features accurately and give appropriate examples but not all solved the problem of how to avoid writing a list – usually because they offered only the barest and most general of explanations (e.g. ‘an overlap is when one person speaks while another is still speaking’). The best answers integrated them into a discussion of attitudes. As usual, language comparisons were much better than comparisons of structure.

Most students dealt successfully with the different views of Sonia and Rebecca and related them sensibly to the relaxed social context. But some were tempted into wasting time speculating at great length about who was ‘dominant’ and how long they had known each other (which ranged from ‘just met’ to ‘at school together’). Occasionally there was an attempt to discuss who was ‘dominant’ in Text B and whether they presented different attitudes, which was equally unprofitable.

Of some concern was the number of students who were ill prepared in terms of accurately identifying word classes or using them to assist linguistic or stylistic analysis. Disappointingly, many students, while being reasonably secure about speech terminology, showed serious lapses in ordinary word classes, many citing the verbs ‘hate’ or ‘love’ as abstract nouns, or occasionally adjectives and thinking that ‘passionate’ was a noun. Far too many clung to the use of pronouns, choosing to list with examples of the use of first, then second and then third person in both texts and leaving little time to discuss any other features. This was particularly ineffective as most discussion around these was broad and made little use of the specific contexts.

With regard to the texts themselves, most students seemed to be more confident when analysing the stylistic and linguistic features of Text A, making generalised comparisons with Text B rather than identifying its key features. Students seemed capable of discussing and comparing the attitudes and how they are conveyed in each text, although for the weaker students there was a tendency to repeat the same attitude rather than offering new ideas. There was a great deal of confusion around tag questions and rhetorical questions, and asyndetic and syndetic listing, students often identifying them inaccurately. However, more successful students offered detailed comparisons involving structural differences, variations in lexis and comparisons of attitude, thereby revealing good insights into the differences between prepared and spontaneous texts.

There continues to be a number of students who devote time to discussing aspects of theory (Grice, status, gender or class) which resulted in broad, mostly unfounded and de-contextualized assertions which failed to enhance the analysis. Overall, though, there were many good responses that offered detailed comparisons involving structural differences, variations in lexis and comparisons of attitude, thereby revealing very good insights into the differences between the prepared and spontaneous texts.

Section B: Analysing the Representation of Speech

Question 2: *Great Expectations*

Some good answers were seen on this question, in which students concentrated on Joe and Jaggers and offered shrewd comments on the different language, style, behaviour and class of each character and the way in which the narrative structure heightened the tension and sense of conflict. Unfortunately, though, some students spent too long on general comment

on the novel, some getting bogged down in lengthy introductions explaining it was a Bildungsroman, which also necessitated a plot summary. Others discussed the role of Dickens as social reformer and commentator and scourge of the judicial system. The focus of this question was detailed analysis of the passage in order to answer the question set and all the unnecessary introductions left too little time to actually answer the question and examine the set passage. The question generally elicited sensible references to elsewhere in the text, especially Pip's first encounter with Magwich, his first encounter with Estella, and the awkwardness of the later meeting between Pip (now the gentleman) and Joe.

Question 3: *Eden Close*

There were some good answers on this text and it was clear that many students had arrived at a clear understanding of it and were able to use their knowledge to focus effectively on the question. However, some students struggled rather more and, despite the extract having a wealth of speech features and imagery within it, seemed intent on focusing only on simple words that were entirely removed from their context. Some students seemed to lack detailed understanding and were unable to comment on the overall context at all and a few misread the events entirely. Others completely ignored the actual question of Shreve creating a sense of tension and instead focused on the relationship between Eden and Andy, and this became particularly obvious when they tried to make links to elsewhere in the novel.

Question 4: *The Lovely Bones*

This continues to be a popular text and many students were confidently able to focus on the topic of the relationship between Abigail and Jack with many of the responses tracking purposefully through the extract; an approach that produced some perceptive and thoughtful analysis. Unfortunately the same could not always be said for the references to elsewhere, many responses focusing on irrelevancies such as Abigail's relationship with Buckley and Lindsay. There was a particularly strong focus on the use of reporting clauses, although students were rarely able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the ways they are used to convey meaning. Although it is commendable that students are aware of the narrative perspective, there were many occasions where the focus on Suzie's viewpoint, as well as the imagery associated with her, led them away from the focus of the question, taking up valuable time that could have been dedicated to more purposeful discussion.

Question 5: *Strange Meeting*

Some very high quality responses to this question were seen and students engaged well with the question of how Hill conveyed reactions to death. The extract contained a number of features and students offered thoughtful analysis of a range of speech features as well as exploring other stylistic and linguistic features. It was disappointing, though, that some students focused on isolated features that produced responses lacking the sense of overview required for Upper Band 4. Most students were able to integrate thoughtful, meaningful and effective discussion about elsewhere.

Question 6: *All My Sons*

This text is becoming increasingly popular and some good responses to the question were seen. There was plenty of material in the extract in terms of stage directions and a range of speech features and many students utilised these to explore Chris's attitude towards Keller and to explore Chris's volatility through the extract. Some students, though, struggled to get to grips with the question of Chris's attitude to his father, some choosing instead to discuss their relationship or simply the character traits of Chris, and even in a few cases the character of Keller. Despite the extract containing a variety of features, the discussion around the representation of speech focused far too heavily on the use of sentence types and, more specifically, questions. The context itself seemed to be accessible to all students and a large number made good use of "elsewhere" by effectively showing the way Chris's view of his father had changed from earlier in the play.

Question 7: *The Caretaker*

There was plenty for students to discuss in this extract but many students found it difficult to remain focused on the way that Davies exerts control over Aston. These students often became more concerned with the way Aston's character is presented or how the relationship between Aston and Davies is presented. There were far too many responses where the discussion was based on the surface features of the text, in particular commenting simply on the use of questions. Some answers descended into narrative, describing the events of the play overall rather than effectively contextualising the extract and analysing Pinter's use of features. The more successful responses had a keen eye for the subtleties in language choices as well as offering thoughtful analysis of Davies's tone and the stage directions. It was surprising that quite a number failed to discuss the stage direction about the knife, although they engaged enthusiastically with the bedclothes being thrown off the bed. Discussion of the 'elsewhere' element sometimes focused on episodes that were not relevant to the question. The more successful students had a keen eye for the subtleties in language choices as well as offering thoughtful analysis of Davies's tone and Pinter's use of stage directions. Such answers often examined with some insight both stylistic and dramatic elements, using detail to great effect.

Question 8: *Othello*

This was a very popular text and a wide range of responses on this question were seen, most of which engaged well with Iago's manipulation of Othello. Students were able to contextualise the events concisely in order to support the discussion that followed. Some intelligent and perceptive answers successfully analysed Iago's manipulative tactics. Many understood Iago's tactics of question and evasion and the effect they were having on Othello but their comments lacked clarity, precision and development. Many responses again demonstrated that some students require detailed practice in the analysis of passages such as this which offered a wealth of material for detailed stylistic comment. Some students offered a narrative approach, drifting into plot outlines; some spent time wrestling with ideas about whether the extract was prose or verse, and how that might reflect upon the status of the characters; some ascribed all kinds of subtle claims to the use of iambic pentameter. Some lost sight of 'Iago's manipulation of Othello' and decided to discuss Iago's dealings with Roderigo instead.

In the extract dramatic irony was carefully explored by almost all students, with even the weakest explaining the irony in the word "honest". Most commentaries included the shared lines, the adjacency pairings, repetition of "honest", "think" and "love". Some students, though, became caught up in strange ideas about Iago calling Othello "my lord", focusing on

the pronoun as an indication of Iago's possession of Othello. Unfortunately some students did not understand the last two speeches of Iago and either ignored them entirely or isolated a few words such as 'vile', 'false' 'plague' and 'as evidence of Iago's evil character, without relating them to the context.

Question 9: *Equus*

Those students who responded to this text showed good insights and most were able to focus effectively on the presentation of Alan, demonstrating a clear grasp of his character and his motivations. Discussions were mainly focused on Shaffer's use of questions in the extract, and this became a little repetitive with the less successful responses offering little explanation beyond the very general. However, there were some impressive responses to this text, with explorations of the subtleties in the dramatic devices and making thoughtful connections to the wider context as a way of supporting discussions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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