Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCE English Language 6EN04

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Introduction

Candidates carried out research across a wide range of language topics. The most popular included child language, regional and cultural dialects, language within specific communities, language and gender and language in the communications media. The standard of work was high, with candidates showing real engagement with their own research, and centres clearly providing a good level of support, guidance and preparation.

Most centres provided evaluative comments either on the cover sheets or on the coursework itself, showing how the marks had been decided and distributed across the assessment objectives (AOs). This gave the moderators valuable insight into the marking process and was very helpful.

Most centres kept their work within the specified word count limits. Where a candidate's work exceeds the word count limit, the centre should stop marking at the point the limit is reached. Moderators will not moderate work beyond this point and award a mark appropriately. Please ensure candidates keep a running word count at the bottom of each page.

Task 1

Candidates submitted articles, presentations (for example, talks with PowerPoint or similar support, PowerPoint only, or posters) and talks. In some cases, the intended format and audience were not specified on the cover sheet. Candidates should make these clear in their title, for example 'Presentation to a group of A-Level English Language students,' or 'Article for the food section of the Observer Sunday magazine.'

Talks and presentations

Talks and presentations were most successful where they were delivered to peers, allowing the candidate to make references to a GCE investigation, to share knowledge with the group and test his or her ideas. Successful presentations were also written for other groups: a presentation on how children learn to write to an audience of parents in a primary school or a presentation on changes in the dialect of a region to a local history group.
The following is the opening of a candidate's presentation to her fellow GCE students about her investigation into aspects of language and gender:

This afternoon I'm going to talk to you about how gender affects the language used in arguments. As you all know, there are stereotypes of male and female behaviour in the media, but I'll be looking at 'Language and Gender,' and how language is used by the two sexes in the heat of the moment! Basically, my research will be 'An investigation into the role of gender in the language of arguments in the home.'

So, you ask, why am I investigating this area? Well, I want to look at gender theories and see if my data supports or challenges these claims. You've heard your parents argue before haven't you? Well, do our mums

really use hedges and direct quotation when they're angry? I hope to challenge the validity of research that was done thirty-five years ago and explore how far the language used according to gender has changed. Within my research, I also want to look into interesting linguistic aspects, so for example, the choice of lexis used in disagreements, the phonology — when does your dad's volume get louder and why does your mum's voice become higher pitched?

Moderator comments:

This opening shows a clear awareness of audience. The speaker addresses them directly and signposts the nature of the talk at the opening. She acknowledges their awareness of the issues she is going to look at ('*As you all know*') and discusses the problems relating to earlier research in the topic area. In this context, it is appropriate for her to talk about her investigation: '*my research*,' '*why am I investigating this area*?' For a different audience, this may not be appropriate.

Articles

Articles must have a focus or a direction. For example, a general account of how a child learns to write is unlikely to be very successful, but an article looking at one particular aspect of this – for example, the way a child's misspellings can demonstrate an understanding of phonics – can work very well.

Look at the different ways candidates introduce linguistic topics to their audience when writing an article.

Article 1 is about the way children develop reading and writing:
This supports the Cognitive approach because when a toddler is exposed to, for example, a picture book of animals, with the help of the caregiver, the toddler is able to identify the different pictures correctly as long as he/she understands the concept involved.

Article 2 is about the language of food:
Etymology (the study of word origins) is a complicated field of linguistics, which involves delving into past archives and validating references. This is done in order to find out just why lexis (word choice) is often counter-intuitive. Take the modest hotdog, a simple, well-loved dish that we all know is a sausage in a bun. Nevertheless, if you were to stop and think, do you know why it's called a `hotdog?'

Moderator comments:

Article 1 introduces an aspect of theory, the cognitive approach with no previous comment and no explanation. Though the next two lines give the reader some idea of what the cognitive approach might be, the use of the definite article suggests this piece is written for an audience already familiar with this concept. The overall tenor of the piece is also more appropriate for an academic essay, rather than an article.

Article 2 introduces *etymology* and *lexis*, but glosses them for readers who may not know, and explains why these topics might be worth exploring in relation to the language of food. The candidate then moves on to give an example that she knows her readers will be familiar with. Article 2 fits top band descriptors for AO4, but article 1 does not sustain a consistent and appropriate style, nor is it fully appropriate for the audience and format.

Both are fluent texts, but the first one has the characteristics of an essay about CLA, whereas the second one appears to be addressing a specific audience on an interesting language issue.

Task 1 exemplar on next page

"I Shall Say Zis Only Once…"

Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but the French accents put on by British actors are sometimes anything but. P... B... investigates what it is that's really tickling our funny bones…

From 1982 to 1992, the BBC broadcast a sitcom called *Allo 'Allo,* a gem of British TV which we loved so much that we hid it away and vowed never to mention it again. It followed the exploits of café owner Rene Artois (played by Gordon Kaye) during the Nazi Occupation of France, and was celebrated for cringe-worthy *double entendres,* scantily-clad waitresses, and the most appalling French accents since Pepe Le Pew. When the show was first broadcast, however, it was met with some controversy: it was, after all, a decidedly light-hearted take on events of the Second World War. So just how did the show's creators keep audiences rolling in their seats?

To answer this question, we need to look at two key linguistic theories of humour: Alison Ross' Incongruity Theory and the Superiority Theory of Plato and Aristotle. The Incongruity Theory is a key component of most of the jokes you've heard in your life. Essentially, the teller of the joke leads the listener into assuming one outcome, and then reveals a completely different one. It's when the listener pieces the puzzle together the joke becomes funny. *Double entendre* works in this way; but usually relies upon a shared cultural knowledge. In *'Allo 'Allo,* for example, when Rene notes that there's "a very good photo of Hitler on page three", the joke relies on the listener's knowledge of *The Sun's* 'page three girls' — not exactly the press coverage Hitler himself would have preferred.

The idea of incongruity also manifested in other ways: particularly by juxtaposing *what* was said with *how* it was said. The actors portraying the French often used elision, the rhotic voiced uvular fricative /ʁ/ and other phonetic traits to create a very stereotypical representation of the French accent. Meanwhile, however, the characters frequently used colloquialisms like "nick" for "steal", and "copper" for a *gendarme;* more often associated with the East End of London than 1940's France. The use of these lexical choices in a place where they clearly did not belong created another stark juxtaposition; one whose presence would frequently make audiences laugh.

The other theory we must explore is the Superiority Theory; certainly much firmer ground from a British perspective. The explanation of this theory is actually somewhat similar to the concept of *schadenfreude:* we laugh at others when our superiority (and conversely their inferiority) is affirmed, and it's here where the stereotypes surrounding the French are used to their fullest: the use of *double entendre,* for example, is so intrinsically tied to a view of the French as being overly sexually active that we even use the French term for it! Unelided phrases such as "I am" or "it is" mimic the syllable-intoned pronunciation of French, and sentences of possession frequently follow the French pattern of 'the verb of the subject' — for example, "the wardrobe of my mother". When coupled with the obvious French pronunciation, this gives the listener the impression of an overly formal tenor and poor grammar skills: in other words, the Frenchies can't speak English "properly". Phonetically, this is most noticeable in the character of Officer Crabtree; an English airman posing as a *gendarme* with a terrible grasp of French. His gimmick was a very clever swapping of vowels to simulate an even denser, "tourist's" French accent; "British Intelligence Headquarters" became "British Ontelligence Headquitters", whilst "two shots" became "two shats". Most of Crabtree's lines became malapropisms: using a similar word to make a sentence either nonsensical or, more likely, extremely risqué.

However, the portrayals of the French characters were never malicious; Crabtree may have had a funny accent, but he was an officer of the law. Rene and his staff, although serving German officers, frequently made gallant efforts to aid the French Resistance. That being said, they weren't British; they had to make a *few* slip-ups each week.

So the humour in *'Allo 'Allo,* it appears, is a matter of juxtaposition. The conflict of French and English phonemes in English words; the contrast of English colloquialisms spoken by characters who are quite clearly French, the countless puns and *double entendre* — all are part of the *mélange* of mirth that, despite the dark setting, kept viewers laughing for ten long years. Even the war itself didn't last that long.

Moderator comments:

This article is fluently and confidently written. It is appropriate for its chosen format, and the candidate sustains the writing style throughout the article. He includes quite challenging linguistic comment, but offers sufficient explanation to allow the reader to engage with this. He also writes in an entertaining and humorous way that is appropriate for the topic. This is an excellent piece.
Marks awarded: AO1 – 6, AO4 - 18

Task 2

The topics covered in this task ranged from the language development of identical twins, the effect on a text of translation into English, the characteristics of a specific regional dialect, and the use of linguistic stereotypes in representing French characters in British TV drama. It was evident that centres had taken into account feedback from last year with for example, several candidates conducting their own investigations into the language of emergency calls. This was a legitimate way of responding to research that had clearly sparked an interest in some candidates, and they were able to take the original investigation beyond the point where previous candidates had had to end their research.

A few candidates stayed within what they may have regarded as 'safe' areas, for example comparisons of newspapers or the language of sports commentary. The disadvantage here is that the candidate may make large assumptions that invalidate, to some extent, the research the candidate wants to carry out.

For example, an investigation into newspapers that starts from the point of comparing tabloid with broadsheet is likely to be limited in what it can achieve. The definitions 'tabloid' and 'broadsheet' are simplistic, and there as many differences within these broad groupings as there are between them. More successful were investigations that looked at the way specific stories had been presented in different newspapers. For example, an investigation into the reporting of the Jo Yeates murder enquiry and the arrest of her landlord Chris Jefferies was a rigorous piece of research into the way an innocent man can be subjected to and convicted by trial by media. The Murdoch phone hacking scandal should offer scope for investigations for candidates interested in newspaper language in 2012.

Investigations into the language of sports commentary tended to struggle. Many candidates made assumptions, and used their data to fit these: reporting of women's sport will show features of 'women's language', reporting of football will use war imagery. These intuitions are legitimate and may lead to useful investigations, but candidates must report what the data tells them, not what they assume the data should tell them.

Language and gender

This remains a popular topic, and was an aspect of analysis in a range of investigations. Many candidates over-simplify the issues around language and gender: much of the research in this area is simplistic or incorrect. Candidates tend to ignore other factors that may influence their data, and focus all their attention on gender issues.

Candidates need to treat Lakoff's findings with extreme caution. Lakoff herself says '*It is my impression, though I do not have precise statistical evidence…*' Lakoff's work relates to the women she has observed in her own social context. There is little reason to assume it is possible to extrapolate from these observations (which are not based on rigorous research) to draw conclusions about women's language in general. In fact, contemporary studies directly contradict many of Lakoff's assumptions.

Unfortunately, many candidates appear unaware of the dubious quality of her original work and the fact it is not research based. This leads them to force their data to fit the mould they expect, rather than observe what the data actually shows.

Candidates need to be aware that Lakoff's work is now seen as out of date and of doubtful use. It reflects Lakoff's own anecdotal observations of the way women within her community used language. She also makes assumptions about the links between language forms and functions. For example, she claims women use more tags than men, and tags show a lack of confidence. Other research, for example Dubois and Crouch, writing at the same time as Lakoff, demonstrate men use more tags than women. More recent studies have supported this finding.

Tag questions have a range of functions. This is discussed in some detail in the following paper: http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/tags that candidates will find useful to read. There is a range of research challenging Lakoff, and well-prepared candidates should be aware of this. The key point to remember about Lakoff is that she put forward some proposals about gender differences in language which raised some interesting questions, but her work has long been superseded by later research.

Grice's Maxims

Many candidates used Grice's maxims in their analysis to good effect, but not all of them understood these. Candidates need to understand the difference between violating the maxims and flouting the maxims. When maxims are violated, usually there is no implicature intended, and the maxims are not relevant.

For example in the following exchange:
A: *Do you like my new dress?*
B: *(Who does not like the dress) Yes.*

B is not obviously flouting the maxim of quality, but simply telling a lie. No implicature is possible.

Similarly, if someone overtly and explicitly violates a maxim as in the exchange:
A: Who's Lizzy seeing tonight?
B: I'm sorry, I promised I wouldn't tell.

B is making it clear the maxim of quantity cannot be followed, so there is no further implicature to be drawn from the response. The maxims are not relevant in these exchanges.

If, in the first exchange, B had said in response to A's question about the dress '*I like the colour*,' B is flouting the maxim of quantity by not fully answering the question. In this case, the implicature '*I don't like the dress*' can be drawn from the exchange.

Candidates may find it useful to consider a PowerPoint presentation on Grice's maxims which is available at the link below:
http://www.cog.brown.edu/courses/cg45/lecture%20slides/Gricean%20Maxims.pdf

Child Language

Child language, both spoken and written, was a popular topic, and candidates were generally well prepared for this. Again, data was sometimes disregarded in favour of theory, particularly in relation to written language. Kroll was frequently used as a basis for analysis. This research may not be the most useful for candidates.

Kroll's stages have little to say about emergent writing, which is more than simply a preparatory stage when the child learns the physical skills required to write and the basics principles of the spelling system. A glance at children's writing between the ages of 6 – 8 shows much more than a simple reproduction of spoken language, and candidates who tried to use Kroll as support for their investigation into children's writing often had problems getting their data to link to the theory. When this happens, it is often the theory that is at fault.

Making assumptions

Some candidates tend to make basic assumptions about language, For example, some assume that older forms of language are more formal and more complex and do not recognise that language at all observed stages of its development varies according to context. There was colloquial language in Shakespeare's time. Candidates who forget this make errors in analysis, equating the intimate or familiar singular form of the second person pronouns 'thee' and 'thou' with high levels of formality. Candidates should be familiar with the concept of T and V forms, even though they do not

operate in most dialects of modern English (and where they do, are generally stigmatised).

Presentations

Candidates should present their final submissions with ease of reading in mind. Data should be available close to the relevant analysis, and submissions should not need to be wrestled out of folders or wallets in order to be read.

Texts should be carefully proof read and errors corrected. If they are not, they should be penalised under AO1. Errors of spelling and punctuation in coursework are not acceptable at this level. Candidates should take responsibility for proof-reading and correcting their own work. They should also be aware of the weaknesses of spell checkers. All errors should attract a penalty. Where the error inhibits understanding, the penalty should be greater. Examples that occurred more than once this year included: *slag* for *slang*, *convocation* for *conversation* and *raped* for *wrapped*.

Task 2 exemplar on next page

"I Shall Say Zis Only Once..."

An investigation into the use of French linguistic stereotypes in *'Allo 'Allo*

2,152 words

Contents

Appendix I: Transcribed Data

Appendix II: French Phonemic Inventory

Appendix III: Language Differences (stress- and syllable-intoned language)

Introduction

British sitcoms play on stereotypes. Their characters are "instantly recognised in their parodied forms by home audiences" (Chiaro, pg. 7). Jokes in English are often reliant upon what Alison Ross calls the Incongruity Theory: the idea of a "conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in the joke" (pg.7). Essentially, by deliberately breaking the most important rule of language — to communicate as clearly as possible — the teller of the joke misleads the listener into assuming one outcome, and then tells them a completely different one, and it is the listener's solving of this puzzle that makes them laugh.

'Allo 'Allo, a popular sitcom broadcast in the 1980s, used many of the common examples of wordplay present in sitcoms of the time; however, its geo-historical context (Nazi-occupied France) was seen as quite controversial at the time. The question, then, is how did the show make audiences laugh without offensively making light of as harrowing an event as the Second World War?

I believe the answer may lie in the rather stereotypical portrayal of the French characters that made up the central cast of the show. As a student of French, I am extremely interested to see if the different cultural and linguistic contexts of French contribute to the humour of the show, or have any effect on the audience's reaction to the jokes.

Hypothesis

I expect to find from this investigation that the actors use rules of both English and French grammar; as well as utilizing lexis from both to create variety that will be humorous to the audience. If the humour in *'Allo 'Allo* does come from juxtaposition of elements of the two languages, then analysis of a range of lines from the show should reveal examples of both English and French pronunciation, grammar, and lexical choices.

3

300 words

Methodology

Since my investigation is focused techniques of juxtaposition of English and French to create humorous lines, I decided to take lines only from actors who are portraying French nationals (or British nationals pretending to be French) in the show.

I selected lines which appeared to elicit the strongest reactions from the studio audience, which also showed the clearest examples of pronunciation and grammar constructions specific to either language. Also, as there are significantly more female than male characters, I decided to ignore the variable of gender in order to give myself an adequately-sized sample to analyse. I transcribed these lines using standard spellings, except for in the case of the character of Officer Crabtree where some words had to be transcribed phonetically in order to understand how they were funny. I also ignored any prosodic features such as repetition or fillers — partly because the use of prosodic features is a trait universal to all languages and partly because it was difficult to determine whether they had been improvised or deliberately scripted for comedic effect.

It is also possible that, as the show was broadcast over a period of ten years, the actors' portrayals of their respective characters (and therefore their accents) may have evolved over time; this is something that I will consider when drawing conclusions. However, due the short time-frame I had been given I decided to only use data compiled from the first and second series of *'Allo 'Allo.*

Features List

In the course of my investigation, I will be looking for the following linguistic features when analysing my data:

Specific Feature	Reason for analysis of feature
Pronunciation	Whether the phonemes used are more common in French or in English, and whether either language is used consistently.
Grammatical choices	Whether the grammatical construction of lines adheres more closely to English or French
Lexical choices	Whether any particular idioms, cultural references or vocabulary typical of one language are used.
Use of *double entendre*	Any jokes using *double entendre* would probably only be understood by native speakers of English.

4

563 words

An integral part of *'Allo 'Allo* was the French setting, and the French accents of the characters which were created by introducing phonemes which were commonly used in the French phonemic inventory but not the English.

Use of Rhotic

There are several examples of words containing a word initial or word median "r" pronounced using a rhotic voiced uvular fricative /ʁ/, rather than the usual alveolar approximant /ɹ/ of English:

Word	Pronunciation
"Rene"	[ʁɛne]
"restaurant"	[ʁestɒʁɒ]
"room"	[ʁuːm]
"wardrobe"	[wɔːdʁəʊb]
"very"	[veʁiːl
"victorious"	[viktɒʁiːʌs]
"bricks"	[bʁɪks]

The first two examples in the table above are examples of French words pronounced "correctly"; whilst others are simply English words pronounced with a French accent — note that "Rene" contains the open-mid front vowel /ɛ/ found exclusively in French.

Most words with a vowel followed by a word-final "r" are pronounced using the open-mid front vowel /ɛ/, followed by use of a rhotic pronunciation of the word final /ʁ/:

Word	Pronunciation
"butter"	[bʌtɛʁ]
"sugar"	[ʃʊgɛʁ]
"copper"	[kɒpɛʁ]

As in English, a stress-intoned language, these words have an unstressed final syllable. If they were being spoken in French, a syllable-intoned language, then the penultimate vowel would most likely be an open front /œ/ as the syllables would be equally stressed (see Appendix III).

Use of Fricatives

There is also an inconsistency in pronunciation of the letters "th"; because the voiced dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/ are not present in French, the actors produce these as the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ and the unvoiced alveolar stop /t/ on different occasions:

5

794 words

Word	Pronunciation
"Edith"	[idi:ð]
"Edith"	[idi:t]
"mother"	[mʌzœʁ]
"mother"	[mʌðœʁ]
"that"	[ðæt]
"that"	[zæt]
"there"	[ðɛːʁ]
"they"	[zeɪ]
"the"	[ðə]
"the"	[zə]
"think"	[ðɪŋk]

Elision of "H"

Because "h" is considered to be a "semi-vowel" in French, and is therefore not pronounced, there are several cases of elision involving words with a word-initial "h".

Word	Pronunciation
"hiding"	[ai:di:ŋ]
"home…"	[əʊm]
"henhouse"	[enaʊs]
"helmet"	[elmət]
"How does he know?"	[aʊdʌsi:nəʊ]
"hallo "	[aləʊ]

Use of Vowels

There is also evidence of the substitution of vowels for comedic effect in the case of the character of Officer Crabtree. In French, the letter "i" is most often pronounced using the unvoiced close front monophthong /i/, while others such as the open back /D/, the open front /a/ and the central /au/ are pronounced more nasally. For Officer Crabtree, however, nasals are not used and the English vowels are exaggerated almost to the point of incomprehensibility, turning otherwise banal lines into nonsensical "pseudo-French" sentences which were often malapropisms:

Sentence	"Phonetic" Sentence	Pronunciation
"British Intelligence Headquarters"	"British Ontelligence Headquitters"[1]	[brɪtlʃontelldʒənsedkwtœs]
"Rene, who works in the bar"	"Rend, who walks in the beer"	[ʁɛnelhuwɔkslnðəblə]

Crabtree's lines seem to be built around the idea of the Superiority Theory which, according to the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, comes about at "a triumph of our own or at an indignity suffered by someone else" (Ross, pg.

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[1] This particular example, owing to the swapping of vowels, could also be classed as a spoonerism.

(6)

954 words

53). Crabtree's "improper" use of English makes him appear stupid to a British audience, just as the characters in 'Allo 'Allo perceive him to be stupid because of his poor grasp of French.

All of the phonetic traits mentioned above are common in spoken French; by utilising them (and in some cases exaggerating them), the accents adhere to the common stereotypical view of French within English society, and it is this recognition that makes the audience laugh.

<u>Use of Colloquialisms</u>

It has already been established that the actors used certain phonemes in order to create a French accent. However, characters regularly used euphemistic and dysphemistic colloquialisms more suited to English; particularly to those speakers from certain boroughs of London. Examples of English colloquialisms include:

Colloquialism	Pronunciation	Idea Represented
"copper"	[kɒpɛʁ]	Police officer
"nick"	[nik]	To steal something
"nick"	[nik]	Prison
"bat"	[bat]	Senile person
"hitting the bottle"	[hi:tinðbu:tl][2]	Drinking heavily
"boobies"	[bu:bi:z]	Women's breasts

The use of idiom seems to be a clear example of phonetic incongruity; considering how much emphasis has been put on both the setting and the French accents of the central cast, the audience does not expect to hear colloquialisms that are so common in the English language. They therefore sound out of place, and make the audience laugh when they are used.

It should be noted that the examples of French used are most common words in English, such as "restaurant" or "bureau".

<u>Use of *Double Entendre*</u>

Like many British sitcoms of the time, the show also made frequent use of *double entendre.* Some of these involved a phonetic difference (usually concerning vowels) between two words, deliberately confused by the scriptwriters and actors for humorous effect.

Word/Phrase	Pronunciation	Pragmatic meaning	Semantic meaning
"Bols"	[bo:lz]	A type of gin	Dysphemism for male genitalia
"Nancy boys"	[nansi:bɔi:z]	From the French town of Nancy	Euphemism for homosexuals[3]
"Pacing"	[pi:siŋ]	Walking in a nervous manner	Dysphemism for urinating
"Two shots"	[tyʃats]	Two gunshots	Taboo language for faecal matter

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[2] This reason for the irregular pronunciation of this phrase (literally "heeting the bootie") is that this was one of Officer Crabtree's lines (see above).

[3] It should be noted that "nancy boys" was considered a euphemistic term in 1980s, when the show was originally broadcast; nowadays it would almost certainly be considered a dysphemism.

1,205 words

However, there are also examples of *double entendre* where the double meaning is purely semantic and has nothing to do with the pronunciation of specific words — the joke in these instances is usually sexual:

Word/Phrase	Pragmatic Meaning	Semantic Meaning
"There's a very good photo of Hitler on page three."	Use of Nazi propaganda in French newspapers.	Reference to The Sun's "page three girls" — usually topless women.
"I have no experience of laying bricks/Just pretend it is a German officer."	Has no experience of masonry; is unable to build a wall.	Allusion to promiscuity — use of the verb "to lay" in a sexual context.
"Not the wet celery and the flying helmet."	Bizarre combination of common, household items.	Used in some sort of sexual manner with a German officer.[4]

There is also one prominent example of a paralinguistic *double entendre* — *when* talking about "The Painting of the Fallen Madonna with the Big Boobies"; the actors used a hand gesture to demonstrate the idea of a large chest. Over time, this gesture came to replace the phrase "big boobies", the allusion to the shared meaning with the viewers meaning that the gesture was still understood, and therefore still amusing.

The use of *double entendre,* as in many English sitcoms, seems to be extremely reliant upon "knowledge which is shared between sender and recipient" (Chiaro, pg.11) about English culture and the English language.

Use of Grammar

For the most part, the actors' lines seem to adhere to the rules of English grammar purely for the sake of making the lines comprehensible to an English audience, with certain nuances of the French exaggerated to make the lines humorous. Conjunctions of verbs like "to be" and "to have", which are normally elided in colloquial speech, are almost constantly unabbreviated. The result is an overly formal tenor, common amongst people who speak English as a second language:

Elided	Complete
It's	It is
I've	I have
They're	They are
I'm	I am
I didn't	I did not

Sentences referring to possession, meanwhile, frequently follow the French pattern of "the *object* of the **subject",** i.e.:

"The *blouse* of **Yvette..."**

"The *wardrobe* of **my mother..."**

"The *bread* of **the victorious German soldier..."**

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[4] This is an example of a kind of "shared knowledge" (see above) within the text; at the time, it was a common stereotype in Britain to believe that Europeans had very perverse sexual preferences.

(8)

1,455 words

There are also other examples of isolated use of French grammatical convention, including;

Phrase	Grammatical convention in use
"The grass will make **the milk**; **the milk** will make **the butter** and **the butter** we will spread on **the bread...**	Use of a definite article in front of concrete nouns.
"I have disguised **as policeman...**"	Omission of any article when making reference to job titles.
"Also the priceless cuckoo clock."	Use of a connective at the beginning of a sentence.[5]

The use of these grammatical conventions, which are quite abnormal in English, coupled with the overly formal tenor created by the lack of elision, makes these lines seem humorous to the audience because the characters seem unable to speak English "properly". This seems to be congruent with the Superiority Theory in a similar way to Officer Crabtree's use of malapropism.

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[5] This was, at the time, considered an incorrect use of English grammar — now, however, it is more acceptable, particularly in colloquial English.

([9])

Conclusions

In 'Allo 'Allo, the only use of French lexis came from proper nouns, or words present in English which were directly borrowed from French (such as "restaurant"). Moreover, only some features of spoken French - notably the rhotic fricative and the elision of word-initial "h", and to a lesser extent the replacement of dental fricatives with alveolar - were used frequently, and the only grammatical rule of French that was frequently followed was that of "the object of the subject" — this seems to be because these linguistic "stereotypes" are the ones most frequently associated with French. In addition the existence of so many English colloquialisms and cultural references, particularly concerning *double entendre,* seems to have a practical application as well as a humorous one; these kinds of jokes rely on shared knowledge, and the typical audience member's knowledge of French colloquialisms would have been somewhat low. The overall objective, as is congruent with my hypothesis, seems to be to use some of the most commonly used aspects of spoken French to create a "variety" that provides enough of a contrast to spoken Standard English to make the French characters in *Allo 'Allo* seem somewhat poorly educated, and it is ultimately this portrayal that the audience would find so amusing.

At the time of its broadcast, *'Alto 'Allo* was seen by some as a very risqué concept for a British sitcom; it was, after all, a comedy set during the Second World War. Given this context, we may be able to explain why the French characters' use of language was presented so comically. The frequent use of *double entendre* was at the time congruent with the stereotypical view of the French people as sexual deviants (so much so that we now use the French term to describe it), whilst the juxtaposing use of English colloquialisms and cultural references with French grammatical constructions created an image of the characters being somewhat idiotic, an image that is congruent with the Superiority Theory. This image of the French and Germans as being comical was designed to be a more "light-hearted" take on events in the war. However, the image of the French is never a malicious one; Rene, for example, is portrayed as a hero. He is a petty thief who serves German officers in his café, yet he also works on behalf of the French Resistance. In brief, the French protagonists always "outwitted" the Germans, but in a sufficiently comical and bumbling fashion that the British audiences would subconsciously regard them as inferior.[6]

Evaluation

My field of data was relatively small, and this will of course have to be considered when drawing conclusions based on analysis. However, it was not the small number of characters in the central cast that posed a problem, but rather the time limit which I had to collect data and analyse it. There is also the problem of the show's ten year duration; different writing staff and directors may have altered the characters in later series of the show; therefore, an analysis of the show in its entirety would have to be made in order to draw any further conclusions about it. However, I do not feel that I would change my methodology if the experiment was repeated — merely the sample size.

I also feel that, given the historical context of the show, it would be interesting to see the effect of language use in representing the German characters. As much as the French characters are portrayed as heroes the German officers are certainly the villains, and it would interesting to observe how their use of language conveys this other extreme to the audience.

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[6] Ironically, an image not far removed from some opinions of how events in the War actually unfolded.

(10)

2,152 words

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11

Moderator comments:

This investigation looks at the way linguistic stereotyping can be used to create humour. There is no research 'template' for this study: the candidate has had to identify relevant research into humour and apply what he has found to his data.

The investigation is rigorous. The data is valid, the analysis is accurate and the conclusions are drawn from the analysis the candidate has carried out. The candidate shows full awareness of the context of his data, and is open-minded in his analysis. The investigation is presented in a way that makes it accessible for the reader.
Marks awarded: AO1 10, AO2 16, AO3 16, AO4 14

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