

# Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
in English Language Unit 4  
(6EN04/01)

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Publications Code UA041454

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This year, around 80 centres submitted work for this unit. Candidates carried out research across a wide range of language topics. Popular tasks from previous years, such as child language acquisition, children's writing, advertising and TV and film language are still appearing. However, more candidates are tackling areas such as global English, forensic linguistics and social media. There were a number of centres who had introduced their candidates to corpus linguistics, which led to some very interesting investigations. Moderators also reported that more candidates are using recent linguistic theory to plan and support their investigations.

Too many investigations were overlarge, which meant that a potentially excellent investigation underachieved because of lack of focus. It is an important aspect of supervision that candidates are helped to identify the point at which an investigation is getting too large and the topic needs to be narrowed.

Administration was generally well carried out with consistent moderating within centres and useful evaluative comments provided either on the cover sheets or on the coursework itself, showing how the marks had been awarded and distributed across the AOs. This gave the moderators valuable insight into the marking process and was very helpful. Centres are reminded of word count limits, and the requirement to provide a running word count at the bottom of each page.

### **Task 1**

A majority of centres submitted tasks that were clearly written for the chosen audience and format. Articles targeted specific publications (Babel Magazine appeared frequently here), audiences were identified, presentations were accompanied by handouts and slides and were written with a specific audience in mind.

There were problems. Too many centres accepted vague, essay-like pieces, or what was an unadapted introduction to the investigation, often repeated at the beginning of Task 2 itself. This is not acceptable and is not in line with the requirements of the specification. Often, these unfocused pieces were submitted with no indication of what the task was intended to be, or for whom it was written. This information should be provided, either on the cover sheet, or on the task itself. Without this, it is very difficult for the moderator to assess the success of the task. Where marks were reduced, it was often because of poorly focused Task 1 submissions.

Centres are reminded that candidates have already explored the process of writing articles and presentations in Unit 2, and they should be encouraged to draw on these skills for their Unit 4, Task 1 pieces.

English Language Speech

[for blurb, see Appendices: p. 40; for slides, see Appendices: p:41]

**Topic: Crime and the classroom: when teacher becomes detective**

[slide 1] Thanks Mr. Jenkins. And thank you, teachers, for having me. I hope you've enjoyed your break. Yes, you have read your timetables correctly; you, the respected future teachers of our education system, are for the next few minutes going to be lectured by a student. Now, you may have glanced at the title of this lecture sceptically – 'How can this kid come here and tell us what our job is like?' Is that fair? Well, in my long time at the RGS, I've observed first-hand the ways students will deflect blame from themselves, and, I must say, it does resemble the actions of criminals when defending themselves. Because after all, both teachers like you and policemen, ~~are~~ authority figures. For instance, imagine a scenario, and, believe me, this isn't outlandish. You're a form tutor at RGS. [slide 2] You've just come back from the staff room at lunch, and find that, at the far corner of your form room, there's an explosion of food: I'm talking carpets stained by mashed-up crisps; recently fitted blinds covered with spreadable cheese; newly painted walls splatted with banana. So, what do you do?

A name's been hinted at by the other boys, and, as you've suspected, it's old Brent, the frequent offender in the form. Lunchtime, afterschool, Saturday, he's had them all in his short time at RGS. So, you call him behind after afternoon registration to ask him a few questions. He's confident, he looks you straight in the eye; he's done this before and, as far as he's concerned, you're not a difficult nut to crack for him. Now hear me out here, I actually think incidents such as ours with Brent can be solved by looking at criminology. I mean, do you remember that 'crocodile tears' case a few years back, where that guy, [slide 3] Mick Philpott, burned down his house with his children inside? Well, I remember watching the press conference he gave and I immediately felt something was wrong about it. Let's have a watch, and see what you think. [play YouTube clip of press conference: from 1:18]

Well, like our little interview with Brent, what can we pick out? [slide 4] The way Philpott's eyes are darting around – where's Brent looking? The filled pauses, uhms and uhs, and false starts Philpott exhibits – how fluent is Brent's speech? Philpott's threatening imperative at the end in "leave us alone" – does Brent subconsciously lead the blame away from him as well? The point is, out of the two of you in that afternoon interview with Brent, Brent is the one that knows the truth. So it's *him* that will subconsciously emit little hints, perhaps through language, perhaps through paralinguistics, and it's up to *you* to collect these clues.

Well, Philpott was charged a matter of weeks after this interview. And do you know what that tells me? That these traits in his speech were *why* I suspected him in the first place. And that's why you can listen for such techniques students will often subconsciously use. Now, back to Brent: as far as he's concerned, he was in the canteen at the time of the incident. You question him more and more, and he begins to [slide 5] fidget with his fingers, he stutters, he returns interrogatives and his story begins to seem more and more improbable. And – as a linguist myself – I can note how Brent's speech becomes interesting: he never mentions himself in his speech – never the first person 'I', rather the third person 'him' and 'her'. His verb usage is interesting, too: there are loads of "woulds" and "coulds", modal verbs, as opposed to more direct active verbs. Like Philpott, Brent is guilty and you can catch him simply by listening to him.

The thing is, we're all taught – you're all taught – to ignore this spark in your brain that I'm talking about, this impulse – to eliminate it, in fact, and that 'everyone's innocent until proven guilty'. What I'm saying, however, is to go by this inkling, stick to it, hold on to it. It's like a tennis match: I've witnessed many of these duels between teacher and student, and I'll admit the student often wins. But they'll always return your shot if you make it easy for them. Challenge them, make them run, and they'll find it harder and harder to return the ball over the net. And that's when those signs will become clearer and clearer, and, like a detective, you'll have your man.

[slide 6] I hope you've enjoyed the talk, and I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

## **Moderator's comment**

The talk was prefaced by an introduction making the format, the target audience and the situation in which the talk was to be delivered, clear. It was also accompanied by a small number of PowerPoint slides which have not been reproduced here.

The writing is fluent and competent, and the material the candidate uses has been selected with audience and topic in mind. The talk is confident, the style is consistent, and though it is relatively informal, the occasion itself is not highly formal so the tone is appropriate. The candidate uses slides and video clips to illustrate and clarify the points he is making, and these are incorporated well into the script.

AO1 6  
AO4 18

## **Task 2**

### **English Language Investigation**

The standard of work for this unit is high. Many candidates are carrying out genuine research in an attempt to answer questions they have posed. A good, well-focused research question will help the candidate to plan and structure an investigation that will lead to successful outcomes.

A wide range of topics were covered, for example, the influence of Apple on current lexis, politeness strategies in the classroom, the language of lies. Candidates explored Parliamentary debate, the extent to which the language of reality TV shows evidence of scripting. Candidates also submitted investigations on child language, comparisons of specific language genres over time, the language of political speeches and the language of news reporting. Language and gender was again popular, but with fewer candidates carrying out over-simple analyses that treated gender as the only variable.

Problems arose where research questions were not well-formulated or were not sufficiently focused. Where candidates looked at genres such as reviews, astrology or romance novels they needed a clear research question. For example, one candidate looked at the language of magazine astrologers who wrote for teenagers in her Kenyan community and compared these with teen magazines in the UK. This was a successful investigation because the candidate had a question to answer. A different investigation on this topic did not formulate a question beyond an implicit one: 'What is typical of the language of astrology in magazines?' The investigation looked at three examples from disparate publications. This investigation provided no useful findings as there was no research question and therefore no useful methodology.

Other problems that arose came from insufficient time taken in preparatory stages of the investigation, or from an incomplete understanding of the significance of findings. There was also sometimes a lack of theoretical

background to the topic under investigation and over-reliance on outdated theory.

### **Data collection**

Overall, candidates were careful to collect valid data and were explicit about their methods for doing this. Where they felt their data may contain unavoidable bias, they discussed the ways they could compensate for this. Some investigations require complex and carefully planned methods of data collection. For other topics, the data collection may appear more simple. However, an analysis of written text requires very careful selection to ensure that the data is representative of the genre under study, that there is sufficient data to answer the research question, and that it hasn't been chosen to represent the findings the candidate expects. For example, a potentially excellent investigation into sexism in superhero comics was flawed by data that was collected solely from a website looking into the topic.

Some candidates struggled with very large amounts of data that their chosen method of analysis could not handle. Large amounts of data can be very effective for certain analytical tools, for example, a corpus tool, or a statistical analysis; but in many cases, the candidates would have been better working with smaller amounts.

A linked problem is that of too little data, where the candidate works with very small amounts and draws overlarge conclusions from this. For example, an analysis of the language of film reviews requires more data than three reviews from different publications. The candidate firstly needs to focus the question: what is it the candidate wishes to find out about film reviews; then select enough data to provide a representative sample.

# Introduction

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Reliably detecting deception has always been an objective in our everyday lives. From interrogatory torture, polygraphs and inferred brain scanners to monitoring blood pressure and breathing, many have tried to distinguish lies from truths through examining physiological patterns. However, I believe that the linguistic features of a liar are far more telling than any physical discrepancies in subjects. The linguistic attributes of lying particularly fascinate me as, being interested in criminology and the psyche of criminals, being able to detect deception is key in this field. I remember watching the infamous 'crocodile tears' press conference with Mick Philpott in 2012 and immediately being suspicious of his role in the arson. Having learned a matter of weeks later that he was charged, it struck me that there must have been features in his communication that indicated to me he was lying. Initial research around this topic supported the notion that deception can be detected through linguistic analysis, with such traits being found as liars being more "non-immediate" than truth-tellers<sup>1</sup> and liars "dissociating" themselves from their words<sup>2</sup>. Further research led me to discover that such linguistic features of deception can be compartmentalised into even more specific characteristics of language, for example that "liars used first-person pronouns at a lower rate than truth-tellers."<sup>3</sup> If true, the detection of deceitfulness through language could prove invaluable in everyday life, in which we are lied to up to 200 times a day<sup>4</sup>. To begin with, I observed the language features of teenagers when lying to a teacher under pressure, and this is included as 'Method 2' in the Appendices; this proved somewhat flawed, however, as the liars reacted differently to such a pressured setting and thus the data was skewed. Instead, I proposed a far more rigorous 'gameshow' style methodology whereby a points system replicates the gravity of a lie, with the sense of competition heightening the liar's risk and producing more reliable results with which I can analyse the linguistic features. In order to investigate this, I have formulated a hypothesis:

**If there exists such a thing as a language of lying, the linguistic features a liar will exhibit when lying to an audience will differ significantly from that of a person telling the truth.**

Fluent and confident. A01

Evidence of independent decisions & creative approach  
in constructing an investigation. A04

See appendix 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Wiener and Mehrabian, 1968

<sup>2</sup> Knapp, Hart and Dennis, 1974

<sup>3</sup> Newman, Matthew L., Pennebaker, James W., Berry, Dianne S., Richards, Jane M., *Lying Words: Predicting Deception From Linguistic Styles*, 2003

<sup>4</sup> Meyer, Pamela, "How to Spot a Liar", TEDGlobal 2011, Edinburgh, 2011

# Methodology

1. Six contestants and three panellists will arrive one lunchtime for the competition to begin.
2. For Round 1, the contestant will take a seat on an empty table in front of the panel, where in front of him there will be a shuffled stack of cards under his name, each containing four truths submitted by him and four lies to which he is oblivious.
3. The contestant will pick out the top card and read it to the panel; the panel will then interrogate him about the statement. This will be recorded.
4. After three minutes, each panellist will be asked to note on a card in front of them whether they perceive the said statement to be a lie or a truth. The contestant will reveal whether it is a truth or a lie, and the panellists will reveal their cards. Points will be given to each contestant accordingly:

Actual statement: Truth/ Lie	Panellist's opinion: Truth/ Lie	Points
Truth	Truth	+5
Truth	Lie	-5
Lie	Truth	+5
Lie	Lie	-5

5. This will be repeated for the remaining 5 contestants, and again for rounds two and three.
6. The recorder will then be stopped, and the points will be added for each contestant; the contestant with the highest score will win.
7. The recordings will then be transcribed and analysed.

## Accounting for bias:

- Each participant will say at least one lie and one truth in order that their transcripts will offer the opportunity to plainly compare the ways the same contestant alters his speech when lying.
- A score system will be set up in order to replicate the incentive present in real-world lying. Whereas in the reality, the incentive of lying ranges from monetary gain to bolstering status, the incentive of winning the game will induce the most realistic lying from the contestants.
- In order to compel the contestants to tell lies and truths realistically, the points system rewards those with true cards to tell the truth and those with false cards to convince the panel that it is a truth. This will render the true and false statements more realistic and thus reliable to compare.
- The interrogations will last 3 minutes for two reasons: the first is that implementing a time limit will induce the most appropriate questions from the panel; secondly, the abnegation of a time limit would increase the probability of the lie being realised by the panel.

Identifies and takes full account of any bias. A03.

Methodology will fully achieve aims of task. A01.



# Analysis

## Discourse

This being a study on spoken language features, the discourse elements of my data are hugely informative. It is clear that the liars' speeches were far less fluent than those of the truth-tellers: for example, as Figures A and B demonstrate respectively, the liars displayed a higher rate of fillers and pauses over one second long. Indeed, as Figure C shows, the number of false starts more than doubles in liars [182 per 10,000 words] compared to truth tellers [89 per 10,000 words]. If one assumes that lying requires far more cognitive resources than simply remembering true events (Zuckerman, DePaulo, & Rosenthal, 1981), then these discourse features are present due to such a high level of cognitive resources being expended in the process of formulating false events. The higher level of pausing for 1 second or greater and the higher number of fillers is therefore because of the 'cognitive load' prolonging the time for the interviewee to respond. *A02 - linguistics class*

However, merely lengthening the time for the brain to formulate a plausible lie in itself is not enough, and the liar recognises that, although their answers are plausible, the lack of fluency in their speech could render the lie conspicuous. Consequently, it seems the liar feels the need to elevate themselves from their interviewer, using a power advancement technique in order to conceal their lie. Figure D demonstrates this clearly, as the liars, perhaps concerned regarding their frequent pauses and false starts, increase their interruptions significantly compared to truth tellers by 36 interruptions per 10,000 words in an attempt to gain power over the interviewer.

Liars also tended to found some aspects of their lies in truths, for example "we had a badge printing machine at home which my sister got from Hamleys one year" (Transcript 1.6) and "He read **mine** and he gave me some feedback about it" (Transcript 2.3b). The formulation of fictitious facts being hugely exhaustive of the brain's cognitive resources, it seems a truth stored in the memory becomes desirable because it does not require any fictitious construction, a task cognitively very taxing and time-consuming, and so it is inserted more easily as part of the story. Lying being a typically spoken task and uttered spontaneously, the results do depict a difference between the discourse features of liars and truth-tellers, and, as the figures show, the monitoring of certain rates of such discourse features can aid one's detection of deception.

*Appropriate exemplification from data. A01*

## Grammar

Likewise, the grammatical features of the text are significant when comparing the language traits of liars and truth-tellers. Prepositions occurred at a rate of 169 prepositions per 10,000 words more in the speech of truth-tellers than in that of the liars (Figure E). The truth-tellers were far more able to express relative location in their speech, for example "he like banged his elbow on the table" (Transcript 2.1), unlike the liars. This is perhaps due to the ability for the truth-tellers to envisage with greater ease the orientation of themselves relative to the objects around them, whereas for liars this again requires greater cognitive resources. Likewise, the liars employed third person pronouns an average of 6% less than truth tellers (Figure F). Similar to the prepositions, this is probably due to liars being far less able to envisage figures outside the conversation area, and

therefore prefer to utilise first and second person pronouns such as "but you (.) mature with age and then you realise it's not real"; because 'you' and 'me' are not within the lie and are 'real' figures within the present 'conversation area', liars are naturally drawn to these pronouns.

However, one feature grammatically that hugely differs between the speeches of liars and truth-tellers is in the rate at which interrogatives were asked by the interviewees. As Figure G shows, the rate of interrogatives more than triples in liars [20 per 10,000 words in truth-tellers; 66 per 10,000 words in liars]. Indeed, many of the interrogatives uttered by the liars were purposeless, often the questions of the interviewers repeated, and were inserted almost as filled pauses such as "N: How far did you go?/ J: How far did I go?" (Transcript 2.2). Similar to the application of fillers, the main purpose of the interrogatives for the liars is to prolong the period before an answer is given; the liar requires more time because of the 'cognitive load' gathered in formulating the lie itself, and thus resorts to such methods as meaningless interrogatives in order to acquire that time. Grammatically, therefore, one can clearly note how the features of liars deviate from those of truth-tellers. Although many features are utilised at the same rate, it is certain features such as pronoun and sentence types that significantly marked the liars from the truth-tellers.

### Lexis and Semantics *clear knowledge of key constituents - A03*

Perhaps the most significant aspect lexically between the liars and truth-tellers was in the types of noun utilised. As Figure H shows, truth tellers prefer to use concrete nouns such as "scissors" (Transcript 2.1) or "Pokemon T-Shirt" (Transcript 1.4) over abstract nouns; however, with liars, as the graph depicts, these figures are flipped almost symmetrically, with liars being drawn far more to abstract nouns such as "the **theory** of vanishing" (Transcript 2.5) or "the **rush**" (Transcript 3.4). As Figure I shows, another feature lexically that deviated significantly between the speeches of liars and truth-tellers was in the rate at which modal verbs were employed, which more than doubled in liars as the figures show [102 modal verbs per 10,000 words in truth-tellers; 216 modal verbs per 10,000 words in liars]. This was seen in such examples as "well my parents would would either well they'd **ground** me **slash** put the telephones out of reach" (Transcript 2.6) and "so I wouldn't have (1) been able to like **turn** or anything" (Transcript 2.3b). A liar, who themselves acknowledge their accounts as fictitious, intends to avoid conveying actions as direct, and thus turn to modality to insert an almost subliminal hedging effect or quasi-hypothetical element to the actions in the speech.

Moreover, as frequently was the case during the interviews, it was evident that liars would resort to humour when lying far more than the truth-tellers, for example "what do you think I was **doing**, having a bash" (Transcript 1.1), "Eighteen minus six is not twenty one it's twelve" (Transcript 1.1) and "I was popping them" (Transcript 3.5), all of which generated laughter. The application of humour is significant as its consequence is a stark lowering of formality, and thus the liars perhaps employed such jokes in an attempt to alleviate scrutiny through a change in register. It is through such methods semantically and lexically that the liars attempted to convey their lies as truths, yet, as the figures depict, there is a significant difference between the rates at which certain features were employed.

*Incredibly detailed*

## Conclusion

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Based on such evidence, there is some correlation in the results with the original hypothesis that the language of liars will alter significantly from that of truth-tellers. However, in addition to providing some backing to the notion that deception does have its own distinctive communication, explanations to such linguistic idiosyncrasies can also be established. Based on the results, it seems liars change their language due to a variety of reasons: a higher level of cognitive resources is expended leading to a liar requiring more time; a liar struggles to picture themselves relative to the things around them in the lie, thus they tend to dissociate themselves from the events; a liar's intention is to alleviate pressure and scrutiny, thus they divert the subject area or attempt to alter formality.

The data certainly correlates with what many other theorists have hypothesised, that "creating a false story about a personal topic takes work and results in a different pattern of language use"<sup>5</sup>. A recent study found that people are more likely to distinguish audible liars than visual liars (Bond & DePaulo), again supportive of the idea that language may be the most effective tool in detecting deception. Indeed, the liars in this experiment did leave gaps in their conversations (Knapp, Hart & Dennis, 1974) and their nouns were more concrete (Pennebaker, Newman, Berry & Richards), and these such correlations with key theorists and the actual hypothesis do further add credence to the notion that deception can to a certain extent be detected via linguistics.

A02 - supports from theory.  
- demonstrates clear knowledge of significance of research results.

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<sup>5</sup> Newman, Matthew L., Pennebaker, James W., Berry, Dianne S., Richards, Jane M., *Lying Words: Predicting Deception From Linguistic Styles*, 2003

## Evaluation

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Although the conclusion suggests an agreement with the original hypothesis, certain factors should be considered when assessing the reliability of this experiment. It goes without saying, for example, that the participants of this experiment do carry their own respective idiolects, and each of them communicate differently regardless of whether they are lying or not. In this way, one criticism of the reliability is that the comparison of a large group of people's recordings will differ starkly from comparing the differences between individual liars and truth-tellers. However, it is important to note that this experiment aimed to distinguish significant patterns in language collectively, identifying differences very much at a meso-level as opposed to a micro-level. With the methodology comprising of 23 interviews with 11 participants, for any significant language features to occur they would have had to arise among numerous people, thus reducing the possibility of anomalies.

Indeed, this experiment focused very much on the differences linguistically between the language of liars and truth-tellers generally, without really focusing on the linguistic idiosyncrasies among particular groups of people. Therefore, in order to further increase the validity of the investigation, further research must be carried out to differentiate the linguistic approaches to deception as various factors differ. A liar's aptitude depending hugely on their ability to process a large cognitive load effectively, one would expect a person of a higher IQ to lie linguistically differently to a person of a lower IQ. In this way, one avenue of further research analysing the language discrepancies between subjects of differing IQs would be a suitable field to touch upon in further validating the notion of a language of lying.

AO1 - identifies routes for further research.

AO1 - identifies strengths & weaknesses of evaluation.

Total word count: 13,904

Word count (not including titles, tables, footnotes or appendices): 2249

### **Moderator's comments**

The investigation is well-focused with a useful if/then hypothesis. The methodology is carefully planned and designed to achieve the aims of the investigation within a tight word count limit. The analysis is close, detailed and accurate, and the candidate analyses only those aspects of the language that are relevant to their investigation. The candidate uses a range of secondary sources to support their work, all meticulously footnoted. The evaluation is clear and honest, identifying potential weaknesses in the investigation and suggesting ways forward from this point. All the analysed data is supplied in appendices which assists the moderator in checking the analysis. The centre has provided detailed comments linked to AOs which show how marks have been awarded.

AO1	10
AO2	16
AO3	16
AO4	14

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