

GCE AS English Language

Case Study 1

Loreto College, Coleraine

Unit 2 Coursework

Exploring the Writing Process

Edexcel is grateful to the staff and students for their collaboration in supplying guidance and examples of student work



Loreto College, Coleraine

UNIT 2: Exploring the Writing Process

What kind of teaching approaches are currently producing excellent results in the Unit 2 coursework element for English Language AS? The unit, Exploring the Writing Process, challenges students to develop their writing skills and demonstrate their ability to write for a range of different purposes and audiences, showing an awareness of genre conventions. They are asked to reflect on their writing in the context of their growing awareness of linguistic concepts, by writing a commentary on their work. In this they are able to link what they are learning about language in unit 1 with their own practice as writers. How can centres best prepare students to meet this challenge? We asked two centres that had consistently submitted work from candidates which was of a high standard and successfully met the assessment objectives, to give us an insight into how they approached this part of the specification. The centres were extremely generous in their response. What follows are two case studies based on their feedback.

Case Study 1

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Case Study 1: Loreto College

The first Case Study comes from Loreto College in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. The person responsible for A level Language there is the Head of English Caragh Little. In this Case Study she explains how the department approaches the unit 2 coursework. The centre focuses primarily on just two of the four possible tasks. However, they do allow students to attempt the other tasks if they wish. The notes which follow relate to a scheme of work for teaching the Journalism Interview. I was impressed with the thoroughness of the approach and the imaginative use of examples, including two written by the teacher herself, which are very entertaining. The speed dating idea seemed to be a wonderfully energetic and engaging way of starting the students on the task. It was also good to see how the approach makes links between linguistic concepts learned in Unit 1 and the coursework, ensuring, for example, that students don't start on their writing tasks before they have a good grounding in linguistic concepts. Similarly, direct links are made between the Journalism Interview and the work done for part B of paper one, 'Presentation of Self'. I am very grateful to Caragh Little for this very detailed account.

An essential part of the teaching of this part of the unit at Loreto is the use of a booklet of interviews, which is used as a source of examples for analysis by the students as part of their preparation. For copyright reasons we are not able to reproduce these interviews here. However, I have included a list of them to give an idea of the kind of texts which were used (Appendix 1). The 'textbook' which is mentioned here is the Edexcel AS English Language Student Book by Alison Ross, published by Pearson.

What follows is Caragh Little's account of her work at Loreto.

Overview

Loreto College Coleraine has approximately 800 students, boys and girls, aged between 11-18. A typical year group up to GCSE has 125 students, and a typical sixth form year group has approximately 100 students. The terminology of year groups follows the model used in Northern Ireland, with Year 13 as Lower Sixth (Year 12 in England) and Year 14 as Upper Sixth (Year 13 in England): in each of Year 13 and Year 14, typically there will be between 30-40 students studying English Language A level (Edexcel) with classes of between 10-20 also in each year group taking A level English Literature (CCEA): some students take both subjects. The school also offers A level Theatre Studies (Edexcel). To return into sixth form, all students are asked to have a minimum of BBBC at GCSE, with a preference that students have gained grade B or better in the subjects they hope to take to the full A level. A breakdown of recent English results can be found here:

<http://www.loretocollege.org.uk/departments.php?sec=8>

Most students from Loreto College go on to third level education: most to universities in Northern Ireland (either Queen's University Belfast or the University of Ulster), some to FHE colleges, some to universities in England, Scotland, Wales and southern Ireland and one or perhaps two to Oxbridge

most years. In a typical year group, up to ten students might go on to study English at FHE/HE level; more if related courses such as Communication and Media, Film Studies, Journalism are counted.

How we organise the AS teaching at Loreto

Our system works on an equal split of our two AS classes between two teachers: each takes 4 x 35 minute sessions with the class (usually one double x 70 minutes plus two singles x 35 minutes each week). From September, we introduce the AS Language course with a few starter activities (trying to keep these topical: for instance I used Twitter in Sept. 2009 for creative starters, and in 2010 used the changed title of Tony Blair's autobiography as a stimulus, asking students to entitle and design the front cover for their own memoirs) and then move straight into the Key Constituents for language analysis. Whereas we split these between us, and use the Edexcel textbook as a basis, I find that the students have most difficulty with the Grammar section (which I teach), and supplement the textbook with David Crystal's 'Discover Grammar'. As a Christmas exam, we give the students a Section A of a past or sample AS paper.

After the Christmas break, we start working on the coursework, as we feel the students now have the linguistic knowledge to approach this properly. I take the 'Writing for a reading audience' and my colleague takes the 'Writing for a listening audience'; as time is at a premium, I offer the Journalistic Interview and my colleague offers the Formal Presentation option to all students: we have had negative experiences of students' creative writing in the past and, unless individuals particularly want to choose the alternative option, we each teach just one task. This may be restrictive but we have not had any complaints, and we do facilitate anyone who wants to try a different task.

Tackling the Journalistic Interview

I start by working methodically through the section in the Edexcel textbook which deals with this. We spend some time studying, for instance, the different styles of speech representation – students are expected to learn these. I supplement the activities in the textbook with a few creative 'five finger exercises' such as students carrying out brief interviews with one another during class time, and then writing these up, first of all using different methods of speech representation, and then, later in the process, creating an 'angle' or 'slant' on the conversation. One tactic which proved successful this year was, in a double lesson, organising a 'speed dating' structure for students interviewing each other: sitting in pairs, with one person moving on to the next double desk every 5 – 7 minutes to interview someone else, with each student both interviewing and being interviewed by 3 others. The second class (and homework time) were then spent writing the encounters up using various speech styles and with different objectives and feedback was provided on the following day, with students allowed to read and comment on how they had been presented. I contributed to this activity too (see Appendix 1 – Transcript to Article) at the start of the exercise, to model the kind of outcome I was looking for.

Once the section in the textbook has been completed, (end of January) the students receive a booklet of professional journalistic interviews from a wide variety of sources (see appendix 2 for list of interviews), and are also encouraged to look for examples of their own (eg. in newspapers, magazines, online...). They receive some reading time in class and for homework, and then spend some time discussing their reactions to / preferences among the interviews in the booklet in groups. I then present them with the mark scheme for the coursework assignment, and they spend some time assessing at least one of the

professional examples against these criteria. This has two benefits: it allows them to look critically at articles they have found effective, helping them to identify what exactly was good about these articles, and at the same time it familiarises them with the mark scheme against which their own efforts will be judged. Again, I provide them with an example of my own based on a discussion with a group of class members (see appendix 3 - 'OMG') and invite them to make an honest assessment of this piece based on the mark scheme.

Over a weekend (just before the mid-February holiday), they then write their first draft of the journalistic interview, having had several weeks to discuss and consider whom they might interview. We will by this time have talked in some detail in class each week about the identification of a good subject for interview, selection of effective questions, etc. Many end up choosing family members to interview, or friends, but one or two choose more 'significant' figures: eg. this year I was delighted to see one student interviewing Professor Terry Eagleton! Draft 1 is returned to the student after the February mid term with a feedback sheet (Appendix 4 'AS CW assessment feedback) giving some advice. We will, by this point, have moved on in class to the pages in the textbook dealing with the Commentary section of the coursework. We work through this section, and turn again to the booklet of professional interviews. Over a week's worth of homework (plus one weekend), the students are asked to choose one or two (one long article or two short ones) interviews from the booklet and analyse them in detail: a handout is given to help scaffold this (Appendix 5 - Analysis of Interview). After this is complete and feedback has been given, the students receive a handout entitled 'Year 13 English Language Coursework: My Plan to Improve' (see Appendix 6), in which they have the opportunity for some self-assessment of their own coursework draft and some action-planning on how to improve the piece having read my feedback and reflected on it. The students then complete a commentary on their own journalistic piece, and then complete the final drafts of the two sections of the journalistic coursework (see handout entitled Year 13 EL coursework deadlines Feb11). With these pieces of work going on in the background as we move into late February, I return to examination work, looking at the Presenting Self section of the paper. This ties in well with the coursework, as the classes will have looked at how they have presented themselves and their interviewees in their work, and how professional journalists do this. At this point too, my colleague has finished all the preliminary work on the Presentation coursework: we try very hard to time things so that the final deadlines for our two pieces of work are staggered, to prevent unnecessary levels of student stress: to this end we compare notes on deadlines and progress at least once a week, but usually much more often!

Some details about me:



I have been teaching at Loreto College since 1997 and have been Head of English since 2005. I am also Literacy Co-ordinator and Press Officer in school, and editor of the School Magazine, as well as assisting students applying to Oxford or Cambridge with interview preparation. I have previously taught in Mount Lourdes Grammar School Enniskillen and Lycée Fabert, Metz. I have written resources on English Literature A level for www.learnpremium.com and have had a small number of articles, poems etc published in local and national newspapers as well as maintaining a blog, which I update when time allows.

Longer ago than I care to remember, I studied at Somerville College Oxford.

Appendix 1: From Transcript to Article.

Transcript

A – Good morning.

B – Good morning!

A – How are you today?

B – Oh, good! It's very cold but I'm very happy!

A – And why is that?

B – Because it's almost half term and I'm like, going to send like, so many rolos to people.

A – I see. And what are your plans for half term?

B – Oh... I'm going to like, sleep and stuff? And like – read 'Twilight' again and like, watch the dvd and like, cry and stuff. It'll be like, dead romantic.

A – Any other plans?

B – Not really. Apart from sleeping.

A – So... what kind of films do you like?

B – Oh, well... romantic stuff really. 'Twilight' and 'New Moon'. They're like, so amazing. They make me cry like, so much. And I like 'Harry Potter'. At least I really liked it when I was younger, but it's still ok. I wish Robert Pattinson was in other films. He's like, so the best actor at the moment.

A – And how about hobbies? Is there anything else you like doing in your spare time?

B – Well I really like computers. I fell asleep on my laptop last night. I'm like – such a nerd. I'm always beboing and facebooking and ipodding and stuff... and I use MSN like, all the time. I download stuff all the time. Don't tell anyone. Shshhh.

Article.

OPHELIA O'KANE – TYPICAL TEENAGER OR UNIQUE, JUST LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE?

Stereotypical teenager Ophelia O'Kane spoke to our reporters yesterday about her social life. Cheerful and energetic, Ophelia breezed into our interview room with a smile, clearly looking forward to the half term break ahead. Plans to catch up on sleep figured large among Ophelia's plans for half term, adding some substance to recent research suggesting that teenagers do indeed need more sleep than those in other age brackets. Blushing, Ophelia also admitted to sending various seasonal tokens of appreciation of a few fellow students for Valentine's Day: 'I'm going to send, like, so many rolos to people.' One can only assume that, either the charitable aspect of the endeavour has provoked generosity, or that she wishes to keep her options open.

Growing misty-eyed, Ophelia told us about her love for the 'Twilight' series of books and films. They're 'dead romantic', she commented – not entirely an unironic statement about a vampire-heavy series. Romance seems to figure high among the interests of this cheerful daydreamer, as does Robert Pattinson, whom she rates, with a smile, as 'the best actor at the moment'. She seems to enjoy a good cry – a therapeutic, cathartic cry at a book or a film – though it does seem somehow at odds with her frequent laughter.

How is Ophelia so upbeat, though, when she seems quite sleep-deprived? An avid social networker, she admits to having 'fallen asleep on [her] laptop' the previous night. Her embrace of all things technological advances to turning the names of popular social networking websites (and the like) into verbs. She lists 'beboing and facebooking and i-podding' among her favourite ways of spending her spare time, alongside MSN instant messenger use. An admission suggesting some less-than-legal downloading activity is accompanied by an appeal that we keep this activity quiet. And a blush. And with a giggle and a flick of long, mid-brown hair, Ophelia is gone, as the bell has sounded to summon her to her next class.

Appendix 2

Loreto College's booklet of exemplary interviews contained (amongst others) the following interviews;

Bill Nighy interviewed by Ariel Leve in the Sunday Times, 18.01.2009

Cate Blanchett interviewed by Leslie Bennetts in Vanity Fair, February 2009

George Osborne interviewed by Jonathan Oliver and Martin Ivers in the Sunday Times, 28.12.2008

Simon Cowell interviewed by Ariel Leve in The Sunday Times, 30.12.2005

A transcript of Heather Mills being interviewed by Andrew Castle on TV which appeared in MailOnline, 11.04.2008

Cat Deeley interviewed by Christopher Goodwin in The Sunday Times on 04.01.2009

Dustin Hoffman responding to 'The Proust Questionnaire' in Vanity Fair, January 2009

Julie Waters interviewed by Andrew Billen in The Times, 19.01.2009

Batack Obama, 'Q&A with Rick Stengal' in Time Magazine, November 2007

Steve Daley interviewed by Paul Lewis in Guardian.co.uk on 20.01.2009

'The Thoroughly Modern Interview', an article on the 'rules' of interviews by Jeff Jarvis in The Guardian, 14.05.2007

Appendix 3: Journalism example

My Big Fat Television Conversation

'OMG,' she said, beginning to laugh. The hysteria bubbling beneath the surface. 'You've like, so got to watch it. It's like, so amazing...'

And so it began. My TV-viewing schedule for the evenings ahead was being sorted. I was like, so going to have to watch this programme. If I didn't, she said, I'd be 'like, so rare.'

But I'm starting this all wrong: jumping in *in medias res* before explaining what or who or when. It was a Monday afternoon. Right at the end of January. Everyone was tired – it was that kind of day – but a few people were laughing without cease. They explained, on questioning, that they were laughing about their favourite TV programme: *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*. As I had yet to experience the joys of this televisual feast, it had to be explained to me.

'It's like, so good,' Cassandra began. 'So funny. OMG. Like – so funny...' Laughter took over narrative again and she wiped the tears from her eyes. 'There was this girl last week. And she was like, getting married and stuff and she had like, lights – like actual *lights* – in her dress. And they like, lit up and stuff...' The laughter lights up the room and Cassandra can't tell me any more. Mariana takes up the story. 'You see, the dress was like, massive and then Christine Bleakley wore it the next day on that breakfast programme...' Smiles are exchanged in a telegraphing of shared amusement, and Clementina takes up the story. 'She like, put it on and like, oh my actual God, when she sat down it was like... over her head!'

Over my head is just what this programme is beginning to feel. I am increasingly bewildered and am starting to think that this would be a stressful viewing experience. My puzzlement is clearly communicating itself, and Cassandra recovers her composure enough to explain:

'You see. They have these like – morals. But they're like, completely different depending on whether they're like, men or women.' So far, so absolutely normal, I think, but I don't dare interrupt. 'The women are all like, no sex before marriage and stuff but the men are like, that's my woman and I'm like, going to hit her and stuff.'

More convinced than ever that Neanderthal man is alive and well and not just confined to the cast of *EastEnders*, I thank the girls and move further on in my wander around the Monday afternoon classroom. 'Miss!' I'm called back. 'Don't forget! Tuesday night, Channel 4, 9pm. Be there or be like, totally rare.' When I look round from my next discussion, I see that the recommendation has been written on my board as a reminder. Because I totally, like, take my whiteboard home with me. Or so they think.

Be there or be rare? Perhaps the fact that I am old enough to remember when geometry not extinction was the threatened outcome of non-participation – be there or be square – is comment

enough. And as to the question of whether I'll be watching Channel 4 at 9 o'clock tonight? The jury is still like, out and stuff.

Appendix 4: Coursework Feedback

AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE: JOURNALISTIC WRITING FEEDBACK

A01

Select and apply a range of linguistic methods, to communicate relevant knowledge using appropriate terminology and coherent, accurate written expression. This AO is applied to accuracy of expression in own texts.

Band 1: 0-1	Band 2: 2-3	Band 3: 4-5

A02

Demonstrate critical understanding of a range of concepts and issues related to the construction and analysis of meanings in spoken and written language, using knowledge of linguistic approaches.

Band 1: 0-1	Band 2: 2-3	Band 3: 4-5

A03

Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English in a range of different contexts, informed by linguistic study.

Band 1: 0-4	Band 2: 5-8	Band 3: 9-12	Band 4: 13-16	Band 5: 17-20

Comments on the text

What I liked most:

What I would have liked to see:

Appendix 5: Interview Analysis Handout

YEAR 13 ENGLISH LANGUAGE: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW

Reminder – write a detailed analysis of ONE interview from the booklet, to be handed in on Tuesday 22nd February. Pp. 110/111 of the textbook may be helpful

You should include reference to the following points (not necessarily in this order):

Graphology – the layout of the interview, whether illustrations are used etc

Structure of the interview – Q&A, paragraphs etc

Discourse – how was the interview conducted, do you think, and how do you know this? What was the transition from the actual interview to the written document? What was changed, why and how?

Speech representation – use the continuum on p.99 of your textbook as a guide for this. Look at the reasons for and effects of the chosen means of speech representation used.

Phonology – Is eye-dialect or standard written English used? Does regional accent or any other speech sound effect find any representation in the finished text? How and to what effect?

Authorial intention – what did the writer hope to portray and how did he/she go about doing this? Is there any authorial intervention? If so – how is it done, and to what effect? If not, is its omission significant?

Pragmatics – does the writer appear to have a particular attitude towards the interviewee, and if so, how is this conveyed?

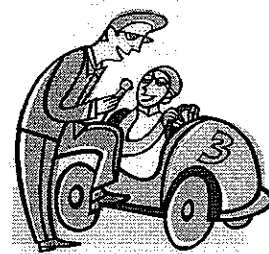
Lexis – Do you gather anything about the interviewee's idiolect or dialect from the interview? Are any idiosyncratic words or phrases either left unaltered, or changed? Why and to what effect?

Grammar – Is standard grammar used throughout? (why/ why not?) Look at the style of grammar used at sentence, clause and word level and provide some grammatical analysis of key examples.

Questioning technique – look at the questions asked – open, closed, leading, sensitive, informed... to what extent have these been effective in garnering an interesting or telling response? To what extent have answers been either direct or evasive?

Your finished analysis for Monday 08-02-09 should be approximately 3-5 A4 sheets, either handwritten or typed (your preference!); bear in mind that when you have had your interview coursework first draft back, you will be analysing it using similar methods as a component of the final coursework.

Deadline for Interview CW draft 1



Appendix 6: Improving Coursework Handout.

YEAR 13 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSEWORK DRAFT 1 – MY PLAN TO IMPROVE

Please answer these questions honestly as they are designed to help you to gain an even higher mark in your coursework final draft.

1. What did you like best about the professional interviews you read in the booklet and the textbook?

2. What were you most pleased with in your own article, and was this reflected in the feedback you received?

3. What are you going to do to improve your article when redrafting it?

Signed:

Date: