

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2014

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

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Introduction

Students carried out research across a wide range of language topics. In many cases the standards of research were high and the students had been given a good level of support and guidance. There was clear evidence of students drawing on two years of language study and applying it to their own research interests.

Marking and assessment was generally accurate. Where adjustments were made, it was to bring the centre into line with the standard and represented slight generosity or slight severity in the application of the assessment criteria.

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 AOs. This gave the moderators valuable insight into the marking process and was very helpful.

Task 1

Some centres still seem unclear about the requirements for this task. Task 1 is a writing task that draws on the skills developed in AS Unit 2. Seventy-five percent of the marks available for this task are awarded for AO4. Some students showed awareness of this and produced excellent articles that were written with a publication and specific audience in mind, some wrote and delivered presentations that again showed good audience awareness. In other cases, however, students wrote formulaic introductions to their investigations with no identifiable audience and format. Where marks were reduced, it was often because of a poorly planned and written Task 1 piece.

Articles

If students choose to write an article, they must indicate for what kind of publication they are writing. It is also important to remember that references to their own work must be couched in terms that are appropriate for the chosen format and publication. A student who wrote in an article for Babel Magazine, 'In my own observations of children's language, I have found this is not necessarily the case. Children do not progress neatly through different 'stages', switching them on and off like little machines,' is making appropriate reference to her own research. On the other hand, vague references to 'my investigation' show a lack of understanding of the chosen format which suggests the task should be placed in the lower bands for AO4.

Presentations

The best presentations were ones where the students had actually delivered these. Delivering the presentation will identify any weaknesses in the script, and will allow all the students to share a range of knowledge about language they might not otherwise have gained.

Centres are reminded that Task 1 pieces must be clearly identified by format, and the chosen audience must be indicated.



Is the internet splitting your personality?

J [redacted] investigates the unusual repercussions of an 'Online' world of language, relevant due to its growing prominence as a primary mode of communication...

The amorphous and decentralized nature of the internet means that your only tangible presence online is your digital persona, and it is with this persona with which we traverse our age's multiplicity of communicational forms- social media, instant-chat, email, virtual worlds (video games), and 'blogging'. All of these, even something as specific as the niche communities of aspiring writers producing 'fanfiction' have a considerable effect on shaping the overall linguistic etiquette of the internet. "But what effect is that actually having?" I hear you scream in anticipation (on the inside, of course). Well, despite such an upheaval of communication, David Crystal in a recent speech¹ explains that despite the plethora of new styles from each form, only a few hundred new words have entered the dictionary as a result - no new verb endings, no considerable grammatical divergence. Perhaps this solidifies the idea that as people are at the heart of the Internet, to use 'digital' or 'Internet' as a premodifier is to really just imply an increase in quantity and opportunity, rather than a totally different language. The tools are at our disposal to instigate such grammatical changes manifest in the form of keyboards, but it seems the influx of such a huge melting pot of users is seeing more of a pragmatic shift in language.

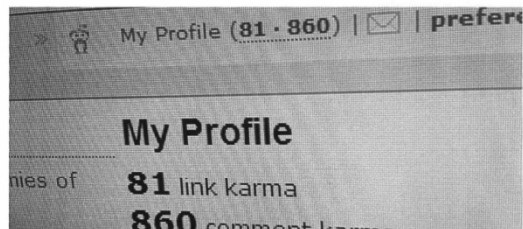
Delving deeper...

And this is where it gets interesting, and almost psychological. As the clever Computer Scientists of the world bring about new technological and systematic advancements, the interplay between the agency and structure of the internet disintegrates; however, text is still the primary means of self-representation. And that's what language is all about- whether you're informing your best mate about last night's drunken shenanigans, or making a

PSA on human rights, the way you represent yourself is quintessential in conveying the core information of both, and is the reason you'd only find expletives in one of those scenarios.

With the advent of user profiles to mitigate spam and allow online personalisation, **a curious phenomenon has risen.**

The concept of *avatars*.



And no, not the James Cameron film- the word 'avatar' was first used in the 1980s in relation to video games, but is now defined by the omniscient 'Wikipedia' as "an Internet user's representation of himself/herself... It is an 'object' representing the embodiment of the user"².

Your avatar is, therefore, your online persona- anything tied to it, any traceable posts you've made using it, are demonstrative of you. They are first impressions, powerful collections of the building blocks of a personality under an assumed name. Or... are they? Brown and Levison's ancient 1987 theory of 'face' bears some relevance here: a person can 'put on' a face tailored to certain circumstances. This is still apparent online, except online, *you can have more than one face.*

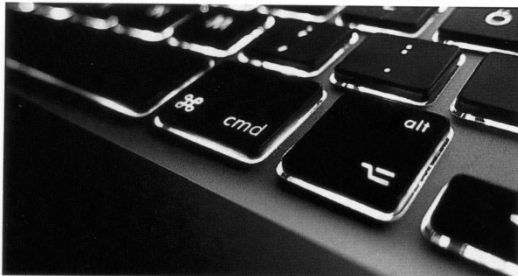
24

Be yourself- or don't.

This is significant phenomenon because it is almost completely unprecedented, which means we are yet to explore how the process actually happens.

Megan Casserly of Forbes provides a comprehensive list of sources and opinions on what she calls the 'Multiple Personalities of Social Media'³; citing Ashley Brown, a PR consultant, who uses the Internet as a means of marketing company products, people's online-personas have become 'curated', with their language "presenting the most positive, or most specific presentation of themselves". This is a consequence of the ability to split yourself into separate avatars, best described by science writer Mark Changizi: "Whereas individuals were traditionally members of just one community, and risky ventures such as entrepreneurship, science and the arts could get only one roll of the dice... people can [now] split themselves into multiple selves inhabiting multiple communities."⁴

So, it's not all bad!



In practice...

It is an intriguing area of study from a linguistic perspective. Take for example, the contrast between your key constituents on Facebook and Twitter; both have different social context, therefore for a user with the same alias on both, the language differs.

On Facebook we may see a more formal register, with more declarative sentences to express personal opinion relative to life events: "Editors exceeded my already high expectations last night." On Twitter, the same user takes a more colloquial, sometimes incomprehensible lexicon that employs diectic humour and different forms of punctuation to portray a different persona:

I's not da bestest fone speekr

← Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ... More

Sources:

¹<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2XVdDSJHqY>

²<http://www.suite101.com/a/how-we-represent-ourselves-on-the-Internet-a125182>

³<http://www.forbes.com/sites/meghancasserly/2011/01/26/multiple-personalities-and-social-media-the-many-faces-of-me/>

⁴http://www.science20.com/mark_changizi/multiple_personality_social_media

⁵<http://www.davidcrystal.com/?fileid=4105>

To analyse the online language of users, well-documented and readily available, to identify specific patterns and trends you would almost be embarking on a mystery befitting of a well-read private detective, spotting patterns... But what if you're a culprit?!

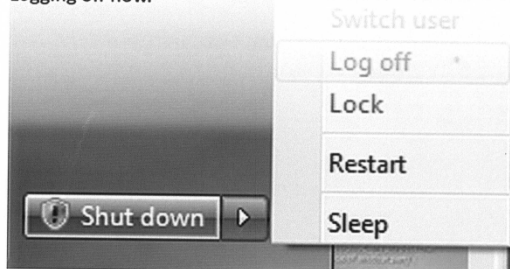
If your Facebook paints a different picture of you than your Twitter, you might want to understand why those avatars differ, and how you are doing it subconsciously, or at a morphological level.



In reading this article, you are only reading my narrative as a representation of me, and I'll bet the voice you're hearing starkly contrasts the image of a 17 year old adolescent sitting shirtless at his computer, baggy-eyed at 11:15pm; good evidence that this mask can be deceptive. However, David Crystal's 1998 article on the 'Language of the Internet' foreshadows itself, inasmuch that it cautions to "Treat nothing as final, in the electronic world. Everything I have said in this article could be out of date within a decade"⁵.

The same applies here, but if you don't try to monitor the change and interpret the trends, our ignorance may entail us losing a potentially wonderful and causative development in the history of the English language.

Logging off now.



Moderator's comments:

This is a well-written article in which the student shows himself on control of the format and aware of the requirements of his topic and audience. The writing is fluent, confident and controlled. The student was awarded full marks for both Assessment Objectives.

Task 2

Topics under investigation included child language, language and gender, newspapers, television, popular music, code switching, international varieties of English and popular music. Many of these investigations were closely focused, for example, the speech of a deaf child who had cochlear implants, errors in TV subtitles, political bias in a popular TV current affairs panel game, representations of gender in the presenters of morning TV. There were some interesting individual studies including an analysis of the language of the narrator in the computer game 'The Stanley Parable.'

The students who produced the best work showed an ability to ask meaningful questions about language, or to form hypotheses based on their own observations and the theory they had studied. The main weakness was, as in previous years, a lack of focus and badly framed questions. As one moderator observed, sometimes students set themselves questions that would take a team of researchers ten years to make any headway with, such as 'Is children's language development affected by watching TV?.' In other cases, questions were so vague that it was hard to see how anyone could come up with an answer.

Centres are now teaching well how to organise and set out an investigation. Almost all submissions used a systematic framework, including evaluation and conclusion and some recognition of weaknesses and potential weaknesses in their design. However, some centres need to ensure that the initial question/hypothesis is framed in a way that makes it achievable for students.

Popular topics**Language and gender**

This continues to be a popular topic. Fewer students were using Robin Lakoff's model to support their investigations, though there were a few who diligently hammered their data to ensure that the women used 'empty' adjectives and the men used a lot of taboo language. There was a strong feminist element in many investigations with studies of representations of gender in magazines, toy adverts, TV programmes and films often with a specifically feminist perspective, looking for examples of discriminatory language. The influence of Laura Bates was evident here.

Child language

This is also a popular topic. It was refreshing to see very few linear studies in which the language of the child under investigation was analysed to fit the categories and stages theorists suggest. It was interesting to see that several centres were moving their students beyond a simple 'nature vs. nurture' approach. Several students carried out studies looking at the way developmental

disorders affected a child's productive and receptive language skills. Children's reading and writing skills were a popular focus, and several students analysed books written for small children.

Spoken language

There were fewer investigations into spoken language. This probably represents the difficulties with collecting this: finding informants, finding recording opportunities, transcribing the data. Where students did research spoken language, there were some very interesting investigations. In one centre several students investigated the language differences between a layman and an expert in an interesting way. For example one student asked an art teacher to describe a couple of famous paintings then asked someone who had never studied art to do the same.

Research tools

Corpus linguistics

More centres are now using corpus tools to analyse data. It was interesting to see this approach gaining ground and some very interesting investigations came out of this. One student analysed newspaper reports of a specific incident to look at collocations that suggested bias. Some students produced investigations that were little more than sophisticated number crunching. Centres need to remember that a corpus tool is a method of analysis that will answer research questions that might not be possible to research using other methods, but the research question must be asked and must be valid.

Questionnaires

There were a lot of questionnaire approaches this year, and many of these were excellent and gave interesting results. Students were using Voyant, Textalyser and Monkey Survey to help produce questionnaires or analyse large amounts of data, and there were genuine attempts to identify a representative range of informants (though there were still a few candidates who drew very large conclusions from questionnaires filled out by 'three mates and my Nan.')

Submitting data

Students are not required to submit all raw data, but they must submit enough data to allow the moderator to assess the accuracy of the analysis. Transcripts of spoken language should be submitted, texts that have been analysed, blank copies of any questionnaires along with the collated findings. Centres should ask: What is needed to allow the moderator to assess this submission? and submit data accordingly.

Introduction

A common trope of video-games is to use the dialogue of characters to further progress the plot and character development of the game. There are a few games that will take away from this feeling by having what is often described as a "silent protagonist", and thus rely on the speech of other characters to get these motifs across. *The Stanley Parable* takes this one step further, leaving the silent protagonist in a world void of any conscious life, with the sole exception of the game's narrator. Therefore providing the game's largely-praised humour, entertainment, messages and conflict seems to fall solely on the voice of the narrator.

The aims of this investigation are to:

- Identify the linguistic techniques that *The Stanley Parable* utilises in order to establish the narrator as an entertaining and engaging character.
- Demonstrate how language is used to explore his character traits as the game progresses.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of these techniques within the context of the gameplay.

Aims are stated but
could be supported with
better links to theory.

Methodology

The Stanley Parable is an interactive video game modification (mod) that takes a very different approach to the general formula on which video games are built. Rather than focusing its elements on graphical capabilities and gameplay, *The Stanley Parable* instead decides to place the focus on narrative presentation and interactions between the narrator and the player, whilst also presenting questions of philosophy and the nature of gaming itself through meta-narrative means.

A smaller, original version of the game was first released in June 2011 by Davey Wreden. The game was then further developed, and a standalone version, with more story elements, was released in October 2013 by the development team "*Galactic Café*". This developed version was what I used in my investigation.

As I played through the game, I noted down certain quotes of the narrator from "scenes" that seemed to highlight key aspects of his character. These samples of data became representative of the population due to their relevance to the question being investigated.

I then divided the narrator's various shifts in language use into three separate phases, which in turn made up the subtitles of my analysis.

was
appropriate
terminology
for
methodology

Analysis

STARTING MOMENTS – THE STANDARD NARRATOR (PHASE 1)

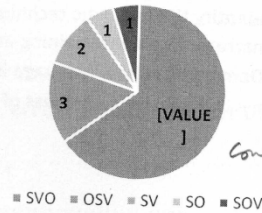
During the game's introduction, and as long as the player follows each of his commands, the narrator's language will be somewhat of an imitation of an oral narrative, telling the pre-set story of *The Stanley Parable*.

it would be better if there were considered separately.

SENTENCE/STORY STRUCTURE

Even from the narration accompanying the introductory cutscene¹ of the game, one can easily tell that the narrator aims to establish the **mode** of an **oral narrative**. This is quite noticeable when one observes the **sentence structures** throughout this introduction. Every single statement made throughout this narration holds a **declarative sentence style**, mostly following the standard English **typological system** of the "Subject-Verb-Object" (SVO) word order, as can be seen on the graph to the right. This is a common feature of most oral narratives.

SVO Positionings In The Introductory Narration



In addition to this, the story that the narrator presents to the player in these beginning scenes follows the first few of the "**31 Functions of Narrative Structure**" (Vladimir Propp); these being **absentation** ("all of his co-workers... were missing"), **interdiction** ("Stanley... entered the door on his left") and **violation of interdiction** (if Stanley enters the door on his right). This once again suggests that, during this phase of the narration, the narrator is trying to establish the set mode of an oral narrative, which in turn makes his character more interesting as he fails to do so.

Can data be classified as anything here?

FORMALITY

During these beginning periods, it is worth noting that the narrator retains a high degree of formality, as can be noted phonologically by his lack of shifts in tone, as well as by his maintenance of a slow and controlled speed of talking. This once again links back to the mode of scripted oral narratives, where the narrator always keeps a steady pace when speaking.

In addition to this, one could also note that the narrator's accent is that of **Received Pronunciation**, one that also implies a certain level of formality, especially to a large number of the game's audience who aren't accustomed to commonly hearing it.

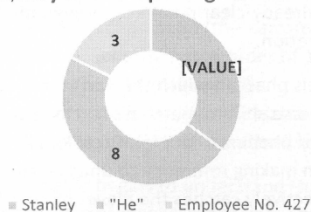
Finally, the narrator also utilises a very narrow lexicon, taking care to avoid any colloquialisms or lexis that could be interpreted as "casual" or "non-formal". By doing this, the narrator seems to hold some sort of high respect for himself and his narration. In the end, all of this formality seems to draw towards the idea that the narrator wishes for **divergence** from Stanley, and by extension, the player. This leads into my next point.

¹ Cutscenes are moments in a video game when the player has no control over the gameplay.

DIVERGENCE

It becomes immediately clear to players that, being the teller of Stanley's story, the narrator wishes to separate himself as much as he possibly can from Stanley/the player as well as from the events that are ongoing. He tries to achieve this through a variety of methods, the most noticeable of which

How The Narrator Addresses Stanley In The Opening Narration



is his utilisation of **personal pronouns** and the ways in which he addresses Stanley. Not once throughout this phase of language use does the narrator ever use the first or second person personal pronouns, demonstrating his will not to be involved directly with the story, as well as his wish not to interfere directly with Stanley.

In the introductory narration, he refers to Stanley using three different titles; the third person "he", his name "Stanley" and, occasionally, the unusually distant "Employee

No. 427", which could be an even greater attempt to distance himself from Stanley. One could even suggest that his attempts at divergence seem to be in order to achieve a reverse effect to that observed in the **"Acts of Identity" model** (LePage & Tabouret-Keller); he could be attempting to completely detach himself from Stanley so that he himself is not affected in any way by the story.

could calculate this

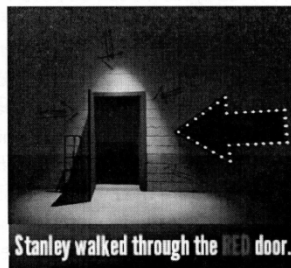
interesting but could be expanded on.

TRANSFORMATION – THE STRUGGLING NARRATOR (PHASE 2)

As players begin acting against the narrator's pre-determined story, he may begin to grow irritated, an emotion that is gradually reflected in his language. Since only 1 of the various 18 endings² involves the narrator actually succeeding in fully telling his story, it is rather unlikely that the player will not encounter this phase. However, this phase mainly seems to serve as a transition between Phase 1 and Phase 3, and is thus rather short in length and provides very little source material.

GRAPHOLOGY

Video game journalist Mike Sakey once stated in an article that "much of film's critical language can be transplanted without alteration into the world of gaming" and this includes the graphological aspects found in cinematography, extending even to considerably minor details such as **subtitles**. In *The Stanley Parable*, as the player begins acting against the narrator's wishes, he begins to introduce **visual aids** to get his point clearer; also hinting towards his growing frustration. These aids even include changing the subtitle "Stanley walked through the red door" by making the word "red" all-caps and colouring it deep-red. Not only does this representation of "RED" show the narrator's growing frustration with the player, but the actual use of the colour red (being a symbol of anger) could be seen as a subtle **intensifier** of it.



² *The Stanley Parable* has 18 different endings that can be achieved by following different paths.

PHONOLOGY

Ok - but this should be indicated on your transcript.

With the narrator growing more agitated, his phonology naturally shifts to reflect this. His **tempo** of speaking begins growing more rapid and less controlled, a clear sign of growing irritation. Similarly, his **pitch** of speaking grows slightly higher, a common symptom of anger or nervousness. In addition to this, the narrator begins adding clear **stress** on certain points, such as the word "red" in the previously given example, as though attempting to get the already-clear point across even more clearly to the player; yet another sign of his increasing frustration.

It is also worth noting that there are certain points during this phase in which the narrator will make short sarcastic quips at Stanley, where his phonology would also shift to match his sarcastic tone, especially noticeable with his constant elongation of the /əʊ/ phoneme couplet. Occasionally players may even notice a slight, absurd shift in his **lexicon**, with him making reference to unusual **semantic fields** such as "drugs". This unusual shift in language use effectively catches the player of guard, and makes the narrator far more entertaining through his blunt use of humour and sarcasm.

Should be dealt with separately.

COLLAPSE – THE BROKEN NARRATOR (PHASE 3)

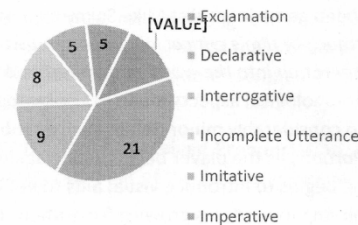
If the player continues pushing against the narrator's wishes, the narrator will eventually snap, dropping the guise of narration to talk directly with Stanley, and sometimes even the player controlling Stanley. It is generally this phase that is seen to make the narrator into such an interesting and engaging character, as he is no longer shaping his language through the mode of oral narration.

SENTENCE TYPE

interesting point

As the narrator breaks away from the mode of an oral narrative, he immediately shifts to the much more **direct and casual mode of spoken language**. This leads to the narrator's utilisation of a much **wider variety of sentence types** (as can be observed through this chart describing the different sentence types used by the narrator during *The Explosion Ending*³) as opposed to Phase 1, where the narrator limited himself to the sole usage of declarative sentences. Declarative sentences are still the most common sentence type found in this part of the narration, yet this is only to be expected, as declaratives are the most common sentence type used in the English Language. It is also worth noting that 18 of these sentences included some form of **elision** in them, a common trope of casual, spoken language. This in turn makes the narrator more relatable to the player, as he seems to bring himself closer to them through his use of a more familiar language style, almost as if he is attempting to **converge** with the player to try and get them to listen to him. This leads into the next topic.

Sentence Types Used By The Narrator during *The Explosion Ending*



³ Concluding *The Explosion Ending*, the narrator gives an extended monologue over a bomb timer slowly ticking down. His language use falls under "Phase 3" for the entirety of this monologue.

Word Count: 1640

6

TENOR

During phases 1 and 2, the narrator strived to maintain a strong, coherent **addresser-addressee relationship**, establishing himself as being in a higher position of power by dominating the conversation (as the player cannot speak), and adhering to the elements of "**the production of interaction**" (Anthony Giddens), where interaction:

reference
for this?

1. Must be meaningful (the narrator's telling of a story)
2. Must reflect the moral order of a society (the narrator alone, being in charge of the story, holds the power to speak)
3. Reflects the operation of relations of power in a society (the narrator holds more power over the interaction than the listener)

Yet the narrator begins to understand that his attempts at divergence, to establish himself as being in a higher state of power, are failing. Thus, he instead ends up attempting to converge with the player, so as to make him/her understand him clearer. By doing this though, the narrator directly contradicts the aforementioned elements of "the production of interaction", presenting a societal order in which the narrator and listener are both far more equal in power. It is this that makes his character so engaging for players; through language, he abandons the societal role which he originally aimed to maintain.

He does this by directly addressing both Stanley and the player through his use of the second person personal pronoun "you", as well as his reference to his own self with the first person "I", something that would never be expected from a standard narrator. He thus makes the tone of his speech seem rather conversational, getting the player directly more involved in both the story and the narrator's interesting character.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Stanley Parable* ended up presenting an incredibly interesting character with "the narrator". While at first he seemed to be imitating the language of the archetypal mode of oral narration, even providing a narrative that fit in with the "**31 Features of Narrative Structure**", (Vladimir Propp) it was **his shift in both mode and tenor**, and his gradual transformation into a far more direct and relatable character that made him so engaging. His key characteristics, and the way he carries out his role, really help to explore various linguistic concepts, such as that of **language and power** (Norman Fairclough) and **the production of interaction**. (Anthony Giddens) With the limited gameplay and graphical capabilities of the game⁴, it is clear that the main focus of *Galactic Café* when creating the game was placed on the narration, and this attention to linguistic detail paid off in making the narrator into an incredibly engaging and entertaining character.

interesting
ideas but
could
be better
supported
by the
data
employed.

⁴ Compared to most modern games on the market, the graphics of *The Stanley Parable* are considered to be "mediocre". In addition to this, the gameplay of *The Stanley Parable* is limited to only movement and the occasional button press.

Evaluation

Due to the game's immense amount of narration, and the extremely erratic nature of its narrative (with 18 vastly different endings) it can be concluded that the samples of narration that I chose can not be fully representative of the nature of *The Stanley Parable's* entire narrative. This being said, however, the samples I chose were deliberately selected as they were as close to an average representation of the various phases of the narrative as I could find. For further research, comparisons could be drawn between the narrative styles of the 18 different endings, in order to systematically categorise the narrator's full range of characterisation throughout the whole game.

✓
Averagen
of narration
shown.

In addition to this, a separate experiment could be conducted analysing Phase 3 of this experiment in more detail, such as going into the details of word order, colloquialisms and mean length of utterance, as it would provide for a much clearer insight into the more engaging and interesting areas of the narrator's character.

Bibliography

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power* (2nd Edition)

Giddens, A. (1976). *Functionalism: après la lutte*

Propp, V. (1928). *Morphology of the Folktale*

Sakey, M. – Quoted by Jackson, J. L. (2010). *The Incomplete Language of Gaming*

In this investigation the student has pursued his own interests into the way a computer game works. He has posed a research question relating to the way the narrator of the game uses language and has devised a methodology that will help him to answer the question.

The analysis is rigorous, and the aspects of language selected for analysis are relevant to the focus of the investigation. The student looks at sentence structure and sentence type in a way that will help him to answer his research question. He looks at narrative structure, formality, convergence and graphology, but the focus of the analysis remains on the initial research question.

This a fluent report, written appropriately and using an effective methodology devised by the candidate. Language theory is identified and used appropriately, and the conclusions are drawn clearly from the analysis. The student shows full awareness of the context of the language under investigation, and selects appropriate key constituents that are analysed with accuracy. The evaluation shows awareness of areas that the candidate could not cover, and suggests further developments for this investigation.

The student is in the top band for all Assessment Objectives.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

