If you are taking GCSE English Language, you will study spoken language. Spoken language is the basis for so much of our communication – rarely in your whole life will a day pass without you actually speaking to someone. How you and others use speech, and how speech varies according to different circumstances, can help you to think about what you want to say to people, and what they are saying to you.

**How will I be assessed?**
Your work will be assessed through one written assignment of between 800–1000 words, which must be written under controlled conditions. You do not necessarily have to write a traditional essay in this assignment, although you are certainly allowed to do so. Instead, though, you could possibly write in forms such as:

- a report (similar perhaps to the way you write in science)
- a piece of journalism
- a review
- any other form, so long as it suits the purpose of your assignment.

**What will I be assessed on?**
This piece of work will count for 10% of your overall marks for GCSE English Language. Your work will be assessed on the following two Assessment Objectives.

- Understand variations in spoken language, explaining why language changes in relation to contexts.
- Evaluate the impact of spoken language choices in your own and others’ use.

**Section C**

**Studying spoken language**

What do spoken language tasks look like?
There are three broad areas of Spoken Language Study which you could write about. These are outlined below. For your assignment you have to choose – with the help of your teacher – one of the three areas to investigate and write about. However, you could study all three before you decide which one to focus on.

**Social attitudes to spoken language**
In this area you should consider the ways in which your own and others’ talk is used and judged. For example, these are just some of the things you could look at:

- your own language use now and how it varies depending on different situations – for example, how your language changes when speaking to different people (such as your friends as opposed to your parents)
- how speech can give you the sense of belonging to a group – for example a regional group, an age group, an interest group, or an ethnic group (note that this unit is not just about spoken English, it is about spoken language in general. This means that you can talk about speaking other languages too)
- how speech is an area of public interest – for example how local speech can sometimes be ridiculed and sometimes celebrated.

**Spoken genres**
By genres we mean types of speech such as interviews, news reports, school assemblies and so on. So in this area you could investigate genres such as:

- genres you might come across in everyday life, such as school assemblies, lessons, workplace briefings
- media genres such as interviews, news reports, weather forecasts
- TV drama genres where spoken language is ‘represented’ – such as in soap operas, hospital dramas, crime shows, ‘reality’ shows and so on.

**Multi-modal talk**
You might think that talk is talk and writing is writing, but in recent years new genres have emerged which have elements of both. Many of these genres come from new technology, but lots of communication these days has a conversational feel to it. In this area you might look at things like:

- text messaging and some of its methods and rules
- instant messaging
- the use of social networking sites
- news stories about the use of such new technology.
Studying spoken language

Investigating data

What is data?

Data is a word used in science as much as in English. It is information and evidence that is collected so that it can be examined, and then conclusions drawn from it. For the Spoken Language Study you will need to be able to gather and analyse data. There are many types of data you could collect and many ways to collect it. Here are some ideas:

- make a recording of people talking
- make a recording and then transcribe part of it
- conduct a questionnaire and/or survey
- collect newspaper or magazine articles
- use digital data from your phone, such as a text message conversation
- print out a chatlog or a screenshot from your computer

Making your own recordings

Recording live conversation can open up all sorts of interesting options for your assignment. It is best to record a conversation that has some shape and purpose to it, and which has a clear context. For example, a family discussion round a table, a seated conversation about a current debate, an interview and a classroom-based discussion should all provide useful data if recorded.

You can also simply record a television or radio programme, and then choose a specific part to focus on.

Making a transcript

A transcript is a written down version of the talk you have recorded. Once you have made a recording, you need to be able to use it to analyse the talk involved. For this reason, it can be very useful to have transcribed the talk. Transcriptions often include keys or symbols just like a map does. These help the reader understand what happened in the conversation – for example, any pauses in the speech or overlaps (when people speak at the same time). There are no strict rules to these keys - the main thing is to make your key clear and easy to use by another person.

Examiner tip

Ideally you will use original data for your spoken language assignment – data that you have collected yourself. Collecting good original data will improve your chances of gaining a higher mark.

Activity 1

Try making your own recording now as a trial run. For example, you could record a class debate or a family discussion. Make sure you follow all of the Examiner tips opposite when carrying out your recording.

Activity 2

Now look at the transcript opposite which shows what was actually said in the interview. What are the main differences between the two versions? Before you answer this, consider the following:

a Try reading both versions aloud. What do you notice about the difference in how the two flow?

b Do you think English is Fabio Capello’s first language?

c Why do you think Capello uses pauses and other fillers (words or sounds to fill some time), such as ‘‘::‘‘ and ‘‘erm’’?

Below is an extract from an interview with the England football manager Fabio Capello after England had lost 1–0 in a friendly against Brazil. This was how the interview was reported in a written account of the game.

England manager Fabio Capello said ‘We played the best team in the world. Still, I learned some things. I understand the value of some players against this sort of team better now – but I will not single out players.’

Key:

- (1) = pause in number of seconds
- (.) = pause in less than one second
- :: = a sound that is stretched out

Interviewer: Fabio you’ll be disappointed with the scoreline (.) what about the performance

Capello: yes (1) ::: we played against Brazil erm they was the best eleven for Brazil (2) the players that played the first alf was good enough

Interviewer: because you were missing so many players (1) so many senior players this evening (.) what were you actually expecting from the team that you played (Italian translation of question heard in background)

Capello: no no no yes (1) for me for me it is it was interesting to er see the value of er:: to check the performance of some players (.) and I happy because some players play erm:: very well and for the future will be good for me

Interviewer: who caught your eye (Italian translation of question heard in background)

Capello: no (1) no no er I not speak about one single player

GradeStudio

Examining data

This lesson will help you to:
- gather your own data
- analyse and evaluate data on spoken language.

GradeStudio

Examiner tip

- Ideally you will use original data for your spoken language assignment – data that you have collected yourself. Collecting good original data will improve your chances of gaining a higher mark.

GradeStudio

Examiner tips

If making your own recording of live conversation:

- Don’t try to involve too many people in the conversation.
- Check that all equipment is working before you start.
- Get permission from the people taking part – you cannot secretly record people as it is against the law!
- Once you have collected a good piece of data, make sure that you copy it, and keep the copy in a safe place.
Activity 3

Read the paragraph below, which provides you with some further context about Fabio Capello.

Fabio Capello is a highly successful football manager, who now manages the England team. An Italian, he spoke virtually no English until taking over the team two years previously. In addition to speaking English, here he is under the added pressure of responding to a defeat, and of not wanting to identify players who played poorly.

Now look in more detail at the transcript on page 117 and write an analysis of it. Consider the following questions when writing your analysis.

1. Look at what the interviewer says. What do you notice about the questions he asks and how he asks them?
2. What are the main features of the way in which Capello speaks?
3. Thinking of the overall context you have been given here, how does Capello show a lot of skill in this interview? Think about whether he actually answers the questions being asked.

To help you answer these questions, here is a response to question 1 that might give you some ideas. The Check your answer box below should help with questions 2 and 3.

Check your answer

Look at your answer to question 2.

- Did you notice Capello’s use of fillers such as ‘erm’ and repetition?
- Did you notice the use of some non-standard expressions, such as ‘I happy’ and ‘They was’?
- Did you pick up on Capello’s Italian accent from reading the transcript, even though there is no sound recording?

Look at your answer to question 3.

- Did you notice how Capello manages to make defeat sound quite positive?
- Did you pick up on how Capello does not really answer the questions?
- Did you think about how, perhaps because of his ‘performance’ of being a second language speaker, he is not given a hard time by the interviewer in the way many managers are?

The interviewer does two things before he even asks a question. First, he addresses Capello by his first name, Fabio, and then makes a statement rather than asking a question. He assumes, probably fairly, that Capello will be disappointed to lose when he says ‘you’ll be disappointed with the scoreline’. This helps the interviewer to establish his own presence in the conversation and to be seen as an equal, even though Capello is actually far more important.

His second question is carefully and clearly worded, but again contains an assumption, perhaps this time that Capello expected to lose.

The final question is frequently asked of managers, trying to get them to name individual players who played well or badly, but the metaphor ‘caught your eye’ is much more difficult for a second language speaker than the plain language used in the second question.

GradeStudio

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Social attitudes to spoken language

Social attitudes are views and opinions that are held by groups of people rather than just individuals. Although it may seem wrong to judge people by the way they speak, it does seem to happen.

Dialect and accent

The terms dialect and accent often crop up when looking at social attitudes to language. **Dialect** refers to the actual words and vocabulary that a particular group use. **Accent** refers to the way in which a particular group speaks – the particular sounds.

**Activity 1**

Think about your own dialect and accent.

1. Write down any words you sometimes use that you would not necessarily expect to find in a school dictionary.
2. Do you pronounce any words or sounds in a particular way that is different from how others might say it?
3. What about accents and dialects other than yours? Can you think of regions that have particularly strong dialects and/or accents? Make a list. Then think what your immediate reaction is when you hear this accent or dialect.

**Activity 2**

Read the article opposite about how different people respond to different accents.

1. Identify the three different types of groups whose accents are mentioned here. This doesn’t just mean where they are from – groups could be people of the same age or with similar backgrounds.
2. Who did the survey and why did they do it? What do we not know about the survey?
3. Think back to the work you did in Activity 1. Do you feel strongly about different accents?

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**Examiner tips**

As well as dialect and accent, it is useful to know what the following terms mean:

- **Standard English**: A formal variety of spoken English which is generally taken to be free of regional characteristics in its words and grammar.
- **Received Pronunciation (RP)**: A regionally neutral accent, often associated with the educated, the upper classes and so-called important institutions such as the universities of Cambridge and Oxford.

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**GradeStudio**

**Check your answer**

- Did you identify the three different kinds of groups mentioned?
- Did you identify who carried out the survey and what the purpose was?
- Did you work out that the article does not tell the reader what the research methods were – who they asked, what questions and so on?
Social attitudes to spoken language

Using a questionnaire

Another way of gathering data is by doing a questionnaire. Questionnaires are similar to surveys but usually require brief answers. There can be real advantages in using them:

- They can be sent and returned by post, so allowing for a wider range of responses.
- They can lead to statistical data which can then be presented in tables and graphs.

Doing a survey

One way to produce an assignment for this part of Unit 3 is to conduct a survey to find out about peoples’ attitudes to spoken language. We have already seen from the article on page 121 that asking people about regional talk can bring interesting results. So can asking people about the ways in which different age groups speak. Here are some possible topics that you could do surveys on.

Once you have come up with a good topic, you then need to think of a method that will give you enough data to work on when you are in the Controlled Assessment situation.

Survey methods

When thinking about carrying out a survey, there are certain things you need to be clear about from the start.

- **Who are you going to ask?** – for example, people from a particular age group, gender or social background.
- **What are you going to ask them?** – you need to ask questions which people can answer in detail. For example, just asking someone if they like the Geordie accent might not get much of a response beyond ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Playing them a brief recording of Ant and Dec in the jungle, on the other hand, and then asking about them as presenters could get much more.
- **How will you record what they say?** – there are various ways to record responses, including making notes at the time, making sound recordings, or even asking your respondents to write things down for you.

Examiner tips

- Be realistic about how many people you can ask, in what is a small study. Choosing three or four people could be enough, especially if they have plenty to say.

Activity 3

Take one of the examples of possible survey topics from the speech bubbles above and imagine you were going to carry out an actual survey. For that topic, answer the three key questions above – the who, what and how.

Activity 4

Devise a questionnaire to find out what dialect words are used by your extended family.

Remember, dialect words are words used by groups of people with something in common such as:

- their region (which can also include other countries)
- their age
- their gender
- their social background.

An example would be that some Geordies use the word ‘neb’ for ‘nose’ and some people from Yorkshire say ‘spice’ for sweets.

To get you started, here are some common words, in their standard form, which tend to have other varieties. An example is given for each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard form</th>
<th>Example of a dialect version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Daddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby</td>
<td>Bairn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clever</td>
<td>Smarty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superb</td>
<td>Mint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To tell tales</td>
<td>Grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful</td>
<td>Lush</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examiner tips

- There are various ways to ask questions. In this questionnaire you could:
  - give people the dialect word and ask them to say what it means
  - give people the standard word and ask for a dialect version
  - ask people if they actually use dialect versions as well as know them.
Writing up

Under Controlled Assessment you will need to get all your data together, ready to complete your assignment.

Let’s assume you have had ten replies to your questionnaire from Activity 4. First you need to decide which bits of data you find most interesting. Then you can pull that information out and present it in an easy-to-understand format. For example, you could show the number of variations on certain words (as shown in the graph on the left), or the number of old people who use a dialect term set against young people (the graph on the right).

Analysing data

You will certainly gain some marks for the way you present your data, but to really impress you need to attempt to give possible analysis too. Nobody wants you to make outrageous claims from your evidence, but you do need to consider some possibilities. For example, if all old people used a dialect word, but only some younger people, why might this be so? Because the younger people have moved around the country more? Because dialects, like all language, change over time?

Student A

My data seems to suggest that young people are more common users of dialect words than older people are. This might be too general a statement to make though. The findings might be because, for example, the word ‘mint’ has a young feel to it – it would sound odd if it was used by an old person. Also, with other words there were examples where the opposite applied and old people were more common users of a certain word than young people were so really it depends on the word.

Student B

My data seems to suggest that young people are more common users of dialect words than older people are. This might be too general a statement to make though. The findings might be because, for example, the word ‘mint’ has a young feel to it – it would sound odd if it was used by an old person. Also, with other words there were examples where the opposite applied and old people were more common users of a certain word than young people were so really it depends on the word.

Activity 5

Look at the data you gathered from your questionnaire in Activity 4. Focus in on one particular part of that data and write a paragraph explaining and analysing what it shows you about language use.

Think about:
- what your data shows you
- how to interpret the data
- whether your data may possibly show something about spoken language in a wider sense.

The Grade Studio answers on page 125 will help you understand how you could structure your response.

Grade Studio

Here are two student answers to the activity on page 124. Read the answers together with the examiner comments.

- **Student A**
  - My data shows that more young people knew dialect words for ‘clever’ and ‘mint’ than old people. 5 young people used mint but no old people used or knew this word. This proves beyond doubt that old people do not use dialect words as much as young people do. This is a bit of a surprise as I thought old people would use more dialect words but my research shows the opposite is true.

- **Student B**
  - My data seems to suggest that young people are more common users of dialect words than older people are. This might be too general a statement to make though. The findings might be because, for example, the word ‘mint’ has a young feel to it – it would sound odd if it was used by an old person. Also, with other words there were examples where the opposite applied and old people were more common users of a certain word than young people were so really it depends on the word.

Examiner comments:

- Student A: This student is thoughtful, and recognises that the chosen dialect word may be to do with age rather than region — so it would be obvious that old people would not use a word that has come into use more recently.

- Student B: This student is thoughtful, and recognises that the chosen dialect word may be to do with age rather than region — so it would be obvious that old people would not use a word that has come into use more recently.

To improve your grade when analysing data like this, you need to take account of the data’s limitations as well as what it shows. The study of language does not lead to definite answers and conclusions. So, don’t jump to massive conclusions based on relatively little evidence. Student A is guilty of doing this when he mistakenly writes that the data ‘proves beyond doubt’ his point. Instead suggest possible interpretations and even ideas for possible further data collection. This is shown in Student B’s answer.
**Section C Spoken Language Study**

**Features of spoken genres**

If a text belongs to a particular spoken genre, this usually means it has certain rules and features. For example, in the interview genre you would always expect to see the following two features:

- one or more person(s) asking the questions (the interviewer)
- one or more person(s) replying to those questions (the interviewee).

**What is meant by ‘spoken genres’?**

There are many different genres of spoken language that you could write about for your assignment. In this case, ‘genre’ means the type of speech or text. For example, the following are all examples of spoken genres:

- school assembly
- school lesson
- public speech
- news report
- TV shows where spoken language is ‘represented’.

The list could go on and on, and within each genre it is possible to identify sub-genres.

**Examining spoken genres**

**Activity 1**

Think about the interview genre. Make a list of as many different types of interview as you can think of.

- We have already seen one example with the Fabio Capello interview on page 117, so your list could begin with ‘post-match interview with manager’, which then might lead to ‘post-match interview with player’ and so on.

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**Activity 2**

Look at the list of spoken genres in the table below. What features would you always expect to see in each genre? Copy and complete the table. When doing this, think about:

- particular people or groups of people who must always be present in this genre
- where the spoken genre takes place
- a typical language feature that might appear in this spoken genre.

An example has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken genre</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace meetings</td>
<td>a forecaster; a TV audience; a studio with weather maps; language that refers to weather, climate and predictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School assembly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity interview on TV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Contexts**

The main features of a spoken genre often remain the same. For example, an interview will always consist of someone who asks questions and someone who answers them. Where there might be variations within a spoken genre is when you start to consider the different contexts. For example, look at the different contexts for an interview below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A celebrity interview on TV</td>
<td>Because this is a celebrity interview on TV, the main purpose for both the interviewer and interviewee is to entertain and interest the viewer. It’s likely that the approach would be quite informal and the questions very friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A job interview</td>
<td>In this context, there is a job at stake. The interviewer’s main purpose is to find out information and judge personality – whether the candidate is suitable for the job. The interviewer’s main purpose is to impress the interviewee. It’s likely that the atmosphere will be formal and the questions quite searching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity 3**

Take any two of the different interview sub-genres mentioned on page 126 and think about how they are different from each other. You could start with, for example, a TV interview with a politician and a police interview with a criminal. Think about how they might differ in terms of:

- their purpose
- the people involved
- the potential audience for the interview.
If you choose to do your assignment on spoken genres, you could look at a transcript of something such as an interview and explore areas such as:

- the level of formality
- how questions are asked
- how questions are answered.

Opposite is a transcript of an interview between an adult researcher (R) and a student (S). The student attends a school in York. The researcher is making a short documentary film about some of the features of the York accent. Read the interview, using the key to try and recreate how it might have actually sounded. Then answer the following questions:

1. Is this a formal or informal interview? How can you tell?
2. What do you notice about the questions being asked? The researcher’s opening question is quite tentative. Why is this, and how does his style of questioning change as the interview goes on?
3. Interviews are often written down as records of what was said, for later reference. Write an official record of this interview. What do you notice? What kind of text does it remind you of?

**Key**

R = researcher
S = student

(1) = length of pause in seconds
[ ] = when two people speak at the same time
O::: = the long vowel sound made by natives of York
? = the rising intonation that signals a question being asked

R: cccan you tell me then what some of the different features of your York accent are (1)? Is it possible for you to describe them to an outsider?
S: erm (1) er (1) it’s it’s like really strong and you can tell I’m from York and it’s it’s the way I say things like I’ll say Yo::rk and others like I’ll obviously emphasise the O in that and other people will say it differently but I can’t really say that (1)
R: so would you spot an outsider?
S: yes
R: like me |
S: yes |
R: saying York |
S: yes |
R: instantly?? |
S: yes |
R: would you?
S: yes |
R: and you can tell if someone is a native of Yo::rk |
S: (laughs)
R: is that right |
S: (laughs) |
R: by the way by the way they would say it |
S: yes

**Activity 4**

Represented conversation

Another area you could explore in your assignment is scripted or ‘represented’ conversation. These are found in TV and radio dramas, as well as novels, short stories and other texts. It is called ‘represented conversation’, because it imitates the ways people speak to each other, rather than being an example of natural or real conversation.

Talk that is written to be performed is, on the page, much neater and tidier than actual talk. There are a number of reasons for this, not least the fact that scripts are written for audiences to understand.

The audience

When we watch drama, or read a novel, the conversation takes place for us – the audience – not for those who are in the drama. Sometimes the audience might know more than the characters – for example, that one character is secretly in love with another. Sometimes the audience knows less than a character – for example, a detective might typically know more than he or she lets on.

For your Controlled Assessment, you could look at an example of scripted conversation and explore some of its features. The activity below helps you get started on this area.

Look at this brief clip from a soap opera and answer the following questions:

1. What does the audience know that the character(s) do not?
2. How do you think pictures and actions in this script contribute to the overall drama? What effect do they have?
3. How do you react to this scene? Is it funny, sad or something else? Explain your reasons.
4. What similarities and differences does it have with real-life talk? You could compare it to the transcripts you’ve seen earlier in this section.

**Activity 5**

**Story so far:** the audience knows that Glen is keen to ask out Shelley, and that Shelley does not want to go out with him, but does not want to hurt him either.

Scene 12: Long shot of school canteen. Cut to Glen opposite Shelley at long table. Long pause with other conversation in background.

Glen: um um don’t suppose you’d like to go to town Saturday (pause)
Shelley: oh oh sorry can’t
Glen: Why not?
Shelley: I’m going away with my parents (laughs)
Glen: Where to?
Shelley: (pause → close up of Shelley thinking hard. Cut to food being eaten next to her → a pizza)
Glen: um Italy
Shelley: Italy? Just for a week-end? What are you doing there?
Glen: um my Mum’s doing a cookery course for two days.
Shelley: (puzzled) Ooh
**Spoken genres**

**Check your answer**

1. What persuasive methods does Mr Brown use here?
2. How can you tell this is a written version of speech, rather than an actual transcript of what he said?

**Speeches**

Another area that could provide good data to study for your assignment is the political speech. While there is no spoken interaction between people, as there is in an interview, when the speech is delivered it is important for the speaker to get some sort of response from the audience. More often than not, the main purpose of a political speech is to persuade the audience.

In the speech below, Prime Minister Gordon Brown talked about liberty and freedom.

**Activity B**

1. What persuasive methods does Mr Brown use here?
2. How can you tell this is a written version of speech, rather than an actual transcript of what he said?

I want to talk today about liberty – what it means for Britain, for our British identity and in particular what it means in the 21st century for the relationship between the private individual and the public realm.

I want to explore how together we can write a new chapter in our country’s story of liberty – and do so in a world where, as in each generation, traditional questions about the freedoms and responsibilities of the individual re-emerge but also where new issues of terrorism and security, the internet and modern technology are opening new frontiers in both our lives and our liberties.

Addressing these issues is a challenge for all who believe in liberty, regardless of political party. Men and women are Conservative or Labour, Liberal Democrat or of some other party – or of no political allegiance. But we are first of all citizens of our country with a shared history and a common destiny.

And I believe that together we can chart a better way forward. In particular, I believe that by applying our enduring ideals to new challenges we can start immediately to make changes in our constitution and laws to safeguard and extend the liberties of our citizens:

- respecting and extending freedom of assembly, new rights for the public expression of dissent;
- respecting freedom to organise and petition, new freedoms that guarantee the independence of non-governmental organisations;
- respecting freedoms for our press, the removal of barriers to investigative journalism;
- respecting the public right to know, new rights to access public information where previously it has been withheld;
- respecting privacy in the home, new rights against arbitrary intrusion;
- in a world of new technology, new rights to protect your private information;
- and respecting the need for freedom from arbitrary treatment, new provision for independent judicial scrutiny and open parliamentary oversight.

Renewing for our time our commitment to freedom and contributing to a new British constitutional settlement for our generation.

**GradeStudio**

Here are two extracts from student answers to the activity on page 130. Read the answers together with the examiner comments.

**Student A**

**Activity B**

1. What persuasive methods does Mr Brown use here?
2. How can you tell this is a written version of speech, rather than an actual transcript of what he said?

**D grade answer**

This text persuade you because it uses long words and long sentences. It says that we should all respect each other and that it doesn’t matter who you vote for, we are all British together. The bullet points make a long list that make this speech easy to read.

**Examiner comment**

This student has not really thought very much about the fact that this is a speech, and that it is intended to be spoken aloud. The student very much responds as though this is yet another piece of work based on a written text, rather than thinking about how this could be spoken. This student has not yet reached grade C; it is heading towards a grade D.

**Student B**

**Activity B**

1. What persuasive methods does Mr Brown use here?
2. How can you tell this is a written version of speech, rather than an actual transcript of what he said?

**E grade answer**

This speech uses a lot of repetition, so words like ‘Britain’ and ‘respecting’ are really important, especially if they were emphasised when they were spoken aloud. Mr Brown mentions himself a great deal and also mentions us the audience, so connecting us with what he is saying. This is therefore trying to persuade us. The long list of bullet points is a typical feature of a written text, and when spoken would not be obvious.

**Examiner comment**

This student has a better understanding of the fact that this is a speech, and indicates some of the key features of persuasion, such as repetition and use of pronouns. There is no real overview of what is happening here, though, so without any context the quality of the response is limited. There is probably just enough here for grade C.

When writing about formal speeches such as this one, it is best to start by providing the context of the speech, such as who is talking to whom, and why, where and when. Then it helps if you can imagine hearing the speech and consider what it would sound like. Remember too that many web sites let you hear the speech as well as read it. Student A has not thought about the speech as a spoken text – a common mistake. Student B’s answer is better as she has analysed the speech as a spoken text.
Multi-modal talk

What is multi-modal talk?

Traditionally language has been separated into speech and writing. New technologies mean this distinction is becoming more blurred. For example, when people ‘chat’ online, it could be said they are writing a form of talk. This kind of communication is an example of multi-modal talk – communication which has many of the qualities of talk, but is not actually spoken.

This section will focus on texting as a form of multi-modal talk, but there are of course many other examples that you could look at, such as instant messaging, social networking sites, emails and so on.

1. Make a list of all the things we do when we talk to friends and family.
   Think about the following when you make your list:
   - The purpose of the talk – why is the conversation taking place and for what reason?
   - How we sound – what we say and how we say it.
   - Non-verbal communication – how do we use sounds and body language as a speaker or listener?

2. Compare your list with the one below. Are there any you missed out? Are there any you came up with not included below?

   Possible purposes of talk:
   - to entertain – e.g. tell stories, jokes, gossip
   - to make social plans
   - to argue with someone
   - to persuade someone

   How we sound:
   - using informal language and slang
   - at different tempos – quickly or slowly
   - at different volumes – loudly or quietly
   - placing emphasis on particular words

   Non-verbal communication:
   - making expressive noises to show agreement/disagreement and other emotions
   - nodding to show agreement
   - smiling or laughing to show you find something funny
   - using other hand and face expressions to add effect to your talk

Texting shares many of the same purposes and features of talk that you identified in Activity 1. For example, people often text to share gossip or to arrange a meet-up. Likewise, people often text using the same informal language that they would actually speak in. People also show emotion and even body language through creative use of the text system.

Activity 2

Below are some text messages sent by students in one class. Read the messages.

For each one, see if you can say:
- Whether it is the opening to a series of messages or a reply to a message already sent.
- What the purpose(s) of the message is.

Now look at the work you did in Activity 1. Look at your own answers as well as the list provided. What do you notice about the similarities between texting and spoken language?

Think about:
- the purposes of both
- the level of formality of both
- what features texting uses in order to imitate some of the non-verbal features of spoken language.

Grade Studio

Check your answer

Look at your answer to Activity 2.
- Did you notice the shared purposes of spoken language and texting – for example, to make social plans, to request information, to gossip and so on?
- Did you notice how the language in texting is on the whole very informal – much like the language we use when we actually speak to someone?
- Did you notice how some of the text messages use emoticons and other methods to indicate non-verbal sounds and gestures?
Multi-modal talk

Section C Spoken Language Study

Collecting and analysing text data

There are many ways to analyse text message data. Conveniently, all the data you might need could be on your own mobile phone – looking at a string of sent and received messages can work especially well! You could look at:

- texts that are similar in purpose, such as informational texts
- how one person uses texts – their texting ‘idiolect’ (the speech habits of a particular person)
- length of texts and whether predictive texts are longer than non-predictive
- methods people use to be brief when texting
- spelling and the use of symbolism in texts.

 Sounds and emotions in texting

We saw earlier that texting is a form of talk, so it needs to express sounds and emotions as well as actual words. This is all part of the multi-modal nature of text messaging.

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- spelling and the use of symbolism in texts.

Activity 3

In this activity you will look at spelling and symbolism in texts. Text messaging is often criticised for its poor spelling. Another way of looking at this is to say that texters know precisely what they are doing and are in fact being creative with language – in the way poets are.

1. Look again at the text messages on page 133.
   Can you find any patterns to the way texters spell?
   Think about the following when answering this question:
   - How many words are spelt correctly and how many are not?
   - How are symbols used by texters to create words?

Texting controversy

Texting, and other forms of new communication, are often the subject of news stories. Many of these are negative, ranging from damage done to people’s health and intelligence, to people being sacked or dumped by text. Sometimes there are good news stories involving multi-modal talk, such as miraculous surgery done by a complete novice under texted instructions from a surgeon.

Activity 4

Look at the three text messages below. What techniques do they use to suggest how words might be said and how the sender is feeling?

Activity 5

1. Search the internet for news stories involving multi-modal talk and make a collection of headlines. Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of texting mentioned in these articles.

2. Now read the ‘How predictive texting takes its toll on the brain’ article on page 136 and answer the following questions:
   a. What statements are made about texting and its effects?
   b. What evidence is used?
   c. What people are named and quoted as further evidence?
   d. Does the article say anything positive about texting?
   e. What do you think about the claims the article makes?

   You could look at the sample answers on page 137 for examples of how other students approached this question.

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How predictive texting takes its toll on a child’s brain

By Caroline Grant

Predictive text messaging changes the way children’s brains work and makes them more likely to make mistakes generally, a study has found.

Scientists say the system, which involves pressing one key per letter before the phone works out what word the user wants to type, trains young people to be fast but inaccurate.

They claim this makes them prone to impulsive and thoughtless behaviour in everyday life. Modern mobile phones come with a built-in dictionary which enables them to predict what word a user wants from only a few key presses.

Each key represents three letters. It differs from an older system in which users had to hit keys several times per letter, for example pressing the 5 key three times for the letter L.

But it can lead to embarrassing miscommunications because some words use the same keys. For example, it is easy to end up asking a friend out for a quick riot (pint) or telling them about being stuck in a Steve (queue).

The study compared the mobile phone use of children aged between 11 and 14 with the results of IQ-style tests they took on computers. A quarter of the children made more than 15 calls a week and a quarter wrote more than 20 text messages a week.

Professor Michael Abramson, an epidemiologist who carried out the research, said: ‘The children who used their phones a lot were faster on some of the tests but were less accurate. We suspect that using mobile phones a lot, particularly tools like predictive text, is behind this.’

‘Their brains are still developing so if there are effects then potentially they could impact down the line, especially given that the exposure is now almost universal. The use of mobile phones is changing the way children learn and push them to become more impulsive in the way they behave.’ He added that the effects could have dangerous repercussions for a whole generation.

Experts concerned about the possible impact of mobile phone radiation on developing brains say that parents should be wary of allowing their children to use mobile phones too much.

But the researchers said the amount of radiation transmitted when texting is a mere 0.03 per cent of that transmitted during voice calls, suggesting radiation is not to blame for the brain effects.

Instead, Professor Abramson, from Monash University, Melbourne, believes functions such as predictive texting pose more of a risk for those whose brains are still developing.

‘We don’t think mobile phones are frying their brains,’ he said. ‘If you’re used to operating in that environment and entering a couple of letters and getting the word you want, you expect everything to be like that.’

The study, which is published in the journal Bioelectromagnetics, will now be extended to look at the impact of mobile phone use on primary school children. Previous research has shown that predictive texting makes people sloppier when it comes to spelling, with many flummoxed by words such as “questionnaire, accommodate and definitely.”

But it is so popular that some of the mistakes that regularly crop up due to words sharing the same keys have been turned into a slang language by teenagers. They can be heard describing something as ‘book’ when they mean it is ‘cool’, for example. If a mobile phone predicts the wrong word, the user can scroll through a list of alternatives.

In 2007, a total of 57 billion text messages were sent in the UK, with 6 billion of these sent in December alone.

This article makes a number of claims about predictive texting, which have been based upon an experiment with phones and IQ tests. It says that children who use predictive text a lot spell poorly, rush into things and more generally make mistakes. The findings are based on the work of an Australian professor of diseases. Personally I use predictive texting a lot myself, and it does not seem to have affected me in the way he says – but it might affect others that way.