

GCE

Edexcel GCE

English Language (8178)

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Winter 2005

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Examiners' Report

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## Unit 6371 - Textual Commentary

Winter 2005

### General Comments

The Textual Commentary unit assesses candidates' skill in distinguishing, describing and interpreting variation in the meanings and forms of spoken and written language according to context. There was true engagement with the texts, the speech transcripts in particular. Q2 was the preferred question, but it was clear that the material offered for exploration was accessible and enabled candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of language in context.

A wide range of linguistic terminology was utilised accurately by higher band candidates although even in the lower bands candidates seemed comfortable with new key terminology. There is still some confusion exhibited when distinguishing between elision and ellipsis, false start and self-correction and indeed confusion over speakers and their relationships.

## Question 1

Candidates responded to the informal conversation in various ways. Some candidates tended to focus on the dominance issue and who was 'in control'. Others focussed on the roles of the children in the family discussion. Focussing on 'roles' in this conversation often led weaker candidates to label speakers in a judgemental way; assumed roles were then justified with misinterpretations of some of the language features in this context. Higher band responses explored the relationships via the spoken language features displayed and consequently were able to portray a much more accurate picture.

The lack of graphological features in Text B meant candidates had to focus more on the other frameworks and this led to consistent exploration and clear interpretation. Some weaker candidates struggled with the context of the piece, becoming preoccupied with a discussion of the text's audience, purpose and even subject content. Higher band answers produced confident analysis of lexical and grammatical features identifying a wide range of features and demonstrating an understanding of their use regarding audience and purpose.

## Question 2

This was the more popular of the two questions possibly because candidates felt they could engage with the topic of 'Big Brother' in the spoken transcript and possibly because Text B had a number of graphological features that candidates could describe.

Lower band candidates again tended to focus on the roles of the speakers; the dominance 'issue' which then led on to the gender issue. Unfortunately a focus on both of these areas led candidates away from fully developing their exploration of the spoken language features that existed regardless of gender and/or 'innocent' features were misinterpreted because of the gender/dominance fixation. Certain features such as minimal responses need to be explored with more care. Short utterances need to be read in context as too many candidates were disregarding finer detail such as features having a dual role eg 'mmm' working as a back channel as well as a filler.

Many candidates are still spending a large amount of their analysis of spoken English concentrating on the theories of Grice and Lakoff. This often led to many candidates moving away from a linguistic analysis.

Candidates need to be fully aware of who the audience is regarding spontaneous speech. Too many candidates refer to the readers as the audience thus negating the evidence that they are providing to justify that it is a piece of spontaneous speech. For Text A the word 'audience' is synonymous with participant.

More able candidates could contextualise the material well. They were able to comment on the nature of teenage/peer conversation and the relevant features that would occur in that kind of situation. This often led to some detailed exploration and thoughtful interpretation.

The graphological features of Text B often led to lower band candidates focussing on this with additional generalised comments on lexis and grammar, often without sufficient exemplification. Other general comments described what was not there which works well if compared with Text A, but provides an empty comment if not used in a comparison. Sweeping statements such as 'there is no engagement with the audience because there are no pronouns' highlighted a lack of close reading and a tendency to make rash assumptions. This could be a time issue as Text B responses were often much shorter in length in comparison with Text A.

Higher band answers were able to comment on all of the relevant frameworks with illustration to demonstrate a secure understanding of context. Again the finer detail of the piece was extracted eg the subject specific language of 1) buildings and 2) rules and regulations, and clear exemplification provided.

## Statistics

### Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Unit/Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Mean Mark	Standard Deviation	% Contribution to Award
Unit 1	50	27.6	8.4	100

### Unit 1 Textual Commentary (764 candidates)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	37	32	27	22	18
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

### Advanced Subsidiary award

Provisional statistics for the award (21 candidates)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	15.4	38.5	53.8	84.6	100.0

### Advanced award

Provisional statistics for the award (1 candidate)

	A	B	C	D	E
Cumulative %	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced UMS grade boundaries

	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Advanced Subsidiary	300	240	210	180	150	120
Advanced	600	480	420	360	300	240

### Notes

**Maximum Mark (Raw):** the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

**Boundary mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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