

Candidate Style Answers

OCR GCSE English Language J355

A652 Section B Spoken Language Study – Controlled Assessment Task

This Support Material booklet is designed to accompany the OCR GCSE English Language specification for teaching from September 2010.

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Introduction

OCR has produced these candidate style answers to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCSE specifications and to bridge the gap between new specification release and availability of exemplar candidate work.

This content has been produced by subject experts, with the input of Chairs of Examiners, to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a “good” or “excellent” response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions.

As these responses have not been through full moderation and do not replicate student work, they have not been graded and are instead, banded “middle” or “high” to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

Candidate A

Study of Eddie Izzard comedy segment and Jonathan Ross interview

In this study I will be analysing the way Eddie Izzard speaks in different situations. First of all I will be studying how he speaks in a recent interview with Jonathan Ross about his charity marathons and secondly I will be looking at a segment from one of his many comedy sketches, filmed quite a few years ago.

There are some differences between the two situations Eddie Izzard is in. In his comedy sketch he is just speaking directly to the live audience and TV audience. In the interview he is having a conversation with Jonathan Ross in front of a live audience and he knows it will be shown on TV. So the second situation is a bit more complicated for him because it's Jonathan Ross's show and he is meant to be in control. Jonathan Ross is also quite a funny guy and two comedians having a conversation in front of an audience is going to be competitive!

There are some similarities in the way Eddie Izzard speaks in the two situations. The first similarity is the way he uses vivid hand movements and gestures when he speaks. In the interview when he describes his running for charity he keeps rolling his arms around as if to show how tough it was. He even points to his Sport Relief badge on his jacket to show how enthusiastic he is about it. In the comedy segment he is describing playing different musical instruments and he keeps miming playing them, which makes the audience laugh. I think Eddie Izzard uses physical movement to create rapport with the audience as they show how keen he is to impress them.

The other similarity is the way Eddie Izzard starts to say something which sounds serious, but then he hesitates and says something silly which makes people laugh. He exaggerates the pause and drags the word out as if to let the audience in on the joke. In his comedy segment he says, 'This song has been arranged with (serious voice) uhh nooo real care (audience laughs)'. In the Jonathan Ross interview he is asked what he will do next after running all the marathons. He says, 'Well I'm building a rocket (pause) out of matchsticks (pause – audience laughs) to go to Mars (laughter increases) and uhhhh...I don't know...' He does this to show he is making it up off the top of his head.

One of the main differences between the two pieces of speech is that Eddie Izzard is much more serious in the interview with Jonathan Ross as he is talking about raising money for charity. He is much more formal at the start of the interview when he is explaining what it was like to run the marathons. He uses a lot of figures and talks about how his body reacted during the marathons, 'over 1100 miles' 'You actually build muscle ... the body holds on to certain things ...'. He has such a serious tone and uses the power of three to show how hard it was for him, 'it's too much, it's too heavy, it's 26.5 miles a day'. It's tricky for him because he is trying to be serious and funny at the same time as he is known as a comedian.

In his comedy segment Eddie Izzard is just joking all the way through. He takes on the voices of different characters when he's talking about the musical instruments. He puts on the voice of a parent telling their child they have to learn and then he acts like the child who isn't interested. He also puts on a Scottish accent when speaking as a teacher called Mrs Breadcrumb. This is

observational comedy and the audience find this funny because it might remind them of their own lives in some way. He is also able to swear and talk about sex because it is an adult audience and shown late at night. On Jonathan Ross it is shown on the BBC and even though it is late the BBC are quite strict as there may be families watching, so Eddie Izzard doesn't swear at all.

In his comedy segment Eddie Izzard uses more creative language. He describes himself playing the clarinet as being 'like a foghorn being dragged through a place where foghorns shouldn't be dragged' and playing the oboe as being 'like trying to blow into a weasel'. Both of these descriptions amuse the audience.

The structure of the two situations is also very different. In his comedy segment Eddie Izzard is telling a story about how kids just want to break things with hammers, but parents want them to play instruments. By the end though the parents hear how bad the noise is from the instruments and offer to give the kids hammers to break them, so the story has a cycle. In the Jonathan Ross interview Eddie Izzard starts off talking about his running and the charity Sport Relief. Most of the time is taken up with this. At the end though he is more funny when he mentions what he will do next and how he doesn't want anyone following him on his holiday. The structure of the interview is mainly controlled by Jonathan Ross, but Eddie Izzard seems happy to go along with it.

Overall I think that Eddie Izzard creates more rapport with the audience in his comedy segment because he is funnier and speaks through the whole thing, but the audience on Jonathan Ross also like him because of what he has achieved and because he doesn't take himself too seriously.

If you want to have a look at the pieces referenced in this response, please visit the web links below:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcYd3w3iAPE>

<http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=8171117>

Commentary

The candidate shows understanding and some insight when discussing the way Eddie Izzard speaks in different contexts. The candidate is able to highlight the main similarities and differences in speech and relate this to the context with good supporting examples. Therefore this would seem to be a perfectly good illustration of something which would gain a strong middle range mark.

Candidate B

Study of Barack Obama's victory speech/Letterman interview

In this study I will be analysing the speech of Barack Obama in two different contexts. The first is his victory acceptance speech made on November 4th 2008 and the second is an extract from an interview he had with David Letterman on the tonight show on _____. These situations depict Obama speaking in both a formal and less formal situation. It is interesting that despite this, it does not necessarily mean that he will follow the conventions that are expected within each context. However, one must acknowledge that the improvised nature of his interview with David Letterman will undoubtedly create a less formal register. It is also worth noting that Obama was not President, but Senator at the time of the interview, which may also have had an impact.

Barack Obama creates rapport with his audience during his victory acceptance speech in a multitude of ways. In terms of structure, he opens his speech by directly addressing those in front of him, 'Hello Chicago!' This creates an instant link with those before him. He then goes on to address those who may have doubted his chance at victory and immediately follows this by thanking 'the lines' of voters who have brought him to victory. This personal approach would engage the audience and make them feel directly involved in his success.

Obama goes on to thank colleagues, some of whom he calls 'partner', again alluding to a close union and kinship, before finally thanking his family. I think the order in which he thanks people demonstrates how grateful he is to the American people for making him president, as he is sure to thank them first of all. The intimate way in which he thanks 'the love of my life' his wife would make the audience feel that he allowing them into his world by disclosing his feelings about his family members so openly. These sincere thanks to a variety of sources make him appear humble and not over-confident. However, he still displays confidence in the way he makes definite and unifying assertions – 'We are, and always will be, the United States of America'. Obama also discloses intimate details about his family during his interview with David Letterman; he seems keen to emphasise the 'normality' of his upbringing. 'They got points for that' he says of his mom and grandma for taking him to Disneyland and the audience obliges with expected amusement.

In his victory acceptance speech, Obama's references to everyday places and situations also make his audience feel more connected with him. His use of phrases such as 'on the streets', 'on the train home', 'in the back yards' and 'living rooms' demonstrate how even though he is President, he is also one of them. However, to lend his speech a weight of authenticity there are also references to familiar patriotic symbols to stir up the emotions of the audience – when discussing the humble roots of his campaign, Obama echoes the Gettysburg address – an address deeply embedded in the heart of American culture, he says, 'a government of the people, by the people, and for the people has not perished from the Earth'. He also directly quotes the much revered President Lincoln, again making the audience feel that he is of 'true American' stock.

Obama's tendency to reference the familiar is also reflected in his interview with Letterman when he mentions 'Mickey Mouse', again to the amusement of the audience. Obama seems to revel in sending up his normalcy and enjoys the amusement this brings. He also does this by using colloquial language, 'it's Disneyland, man' and 'We went and kind of looked around and ...' This contrasts greatly with Obama's sophisticated use of language in his victory speech, where he

employs various techniques to engage his (public/political) audience. Here he is doing the opposite of that but for the same purpose – to engage the (public/entertainment) audience.

In his victory speech Obama also employs more obvious devices such as the power of three, alliteration and repetition to convince the audience of the sincerity and determination of his message – ‘I congratulate him; I congratulate Governor Palin for all that they’ve achieved. And I look forward to working with them to renew this nation’s promise ...’ The use of personal pronouns are also a crucial part of his speech when it comes to creating rapport with the audience. At the start Obama refers to himself and the people as ‘we’ and ‘us’ to create unity. He then shifts to ‘I’ when discussing his own colleagues and family. Interestingly, he then addresses the audience directly, stating that the victory ‘belongs to you’. This would undoubtedly endear him to the audience. When he moves back into discussing the troubles ahead he shifts back to ‘we’ – ‘as we stand here tonight ... there are brave Americans waking up in the deserts of Iraq ... to risk their lives for us’, which continues to create a sense of unity.

Obama relies heavily on the use of powerful visual imagery and metaphor in his victory speech from the start. Early on he refers to the American people’s ability to bend the ‘arc of history’. This image would create a powerful impact as it demonstrates how he believes that it is the people who have the power to change things and his victory proves this. Later on he refers to his campaign as a physical entity and talks about it being ‘built by working men and women’, growing ‘strength from the young people’ ‘and not so young people’. This metaphor is called upon and extended later in the speech when he refers to ‘remaking this nation ... block by block, brick by brick ...’ Once again this imagery would serve to make the American public feel physically involved in their country’s revival and continuity of the image sends the subtler message that Obama has a clear and consistent vision for America.

Overall, it is clear that Barack Obama has employed a variety of techniques in his victory speech to fill America with confidence that he is the right person to take them forward and that he has the best interests of everyone at heart. His precise and refined use of language is crafted for this purpose and he is word perfect. The opposite is true of his interview with Letterman, where he happily drops natural speech markers into his responses, possibly in an attempt to seem as natural and relaxed as possible. His frequent use of the tag question ‘you know’ betrays his constant desire to connect with the audience and it is clear from their response that he does this successfully.

Commentary

This is an original and perceptive response which attempts to cover the spoken language of a public figure in more than one context. There is awareness that each context has a different audience, which in turn affects the speaker’s approach. There is in-depth analysis of the primary text (the victory speech), with the secondary text used to support this analysis. The candidate is able to highlight and scrutinize a variety of linguistic techniques used in each text. A good higher response.