GCE English Language and Literature

ELLB3 Unit 3

Talk in Life and Literature
Assessment Focus

• AO1: select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and literary study, using appropriate terminology and coherent written expression

• AO2: demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in a range of spoken and written texts.
Assessment Focus

• **AO3**: use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors in their production and reception.

• **AO4**: demonstrate expertise and creativity in using language appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences, drawing on insights from linguistic and literary studies.
A Framework for analysing talk in life and literature.

• 1. Contextual features: situational factors; status and relationships; discourse conventions (the structure of the talk); purposes.

• 2. Interactional features: turn-taking, pauses, talk as action, agenda setting in conversation, modes of address.

• Lexico-grammatical features: type of utterance; figurative language; rhetorical strategies

• Phonological/graphological features: intonation, word stress, tone of voice, accent, pace, volume, typography.
The purpose of talk: what TRIPE

• You should try to identify the actual purpose of the talk from the outset. Here is an acronym to help:

• T – transactional: exchanges where there is some negotiation (asking for directions)

• R – referential: providing information (giving details of an event)

• I – interactional: social exchanges

• P – phatic: small talk, devoid of serious content

• E – Expressive: conveying or describing feelings.
Other purposes

• Performative: actually doing the purpose of the talk (making a confession, introducing people).

• Expository: when something is clearly explained

• Collaborative: when the talk is co-operative and the different utterances are working together in some way.
Activity

• For each of the eight purpose of talk defined above, write down two situations and then create a few spontaneous lines of conversation to illustrate them.
Analysing spontaneous talk: the structure of the conversation

• **Beginning a conversation:** openings tend to follow a similar pattern:
  - Greetings:...good morning/hi!
  - Pseudo apologies..excuse me / sorry to bother you
  - Introductions...John this is Rachel
  - Self-introduction..hello, I am your new neighbour
  - Exclamation,...Wow, did you see that?
Keeping the conversation going.

• Once a conversation is underway, a system of turn taking operates whereby different speakers take or attempt to take the floor. A new speaker who has the floor can do any of the following:
  • select a new speaker
  • Give clues that they are coming to the end of their turn and so allow self-selection by a new speaker (this may give rise to two or more speakers trying to take control simultaneously).
  • Continue to hold the floor
Clues that a speaker is finishing their turn.

- Raising or falling intonation at the end of an utterance
- Drawl on final clause of utterence
- Socioeccentric sequences: tag questions
- Drop in pitch or loudness
- Eye, hand and body movement

N.B. Two or more of these clues may occur together
Types of turn taking or ‘speaker switch’

1. Smooth speaker switch: turns are exhausted without any simultaneous speech. This can happen in any conversation.

2. Simple interruption: the new speaker cuts into the current speaker’s turn and takes over the floor.

3. Overlap: the new speaker anticipates the current speaker ending their turn and begins too soon.

4. Butting in: the new speaker cuts into the current speaker’s turn but the current speaker retains the floor.
Holding the floor

• No turn-yielding clues: you are determined to carry on.
• Filled pauses (fillers): ah, um, er
• Discourse markers to indicate that a long piece of speech will follow: I’d like to make three points....
• Being encouraged to hold the floor despite being given turn – yielding clues. Responding to ‘back-channelling’ from other speakers: expressions like: yeah, mm, I see; or, tag questions: Have you, Did she, Is it. Or, evaluative comments: really, it must have been awful.....
Topic change and markers of topic change

• Topics and their development or change depend upon the purpose of the discourse.
  • Markers:
  • Lexical openers: by the way, talking of that...
  • Lexical closers: anyway, so there you are, or summarising a topic
  • Change in intonation: new topics will be introduced with a rise; topics will be closed with a fall.
Activity

1. Write out any conversation between 2/3 people that demonstrates beginnings, endings and keeping conversations going. Try to include types of turn taking, holding the floor and, topic changes.

• Between 2 school friends
• Parents and child
• Shop keeper/ customer.

2. On your script annotate the points at which you have used some of the theories.

3. Report back to the class
Who seems to lead the talk?

Key question

• Who seems to lead the talk?

• Who says what gets talked about?

• Who talks most?

Explanation

• Adjacency pairs: look closely as the talk moves from speaker to speaker. Is the pattern obvious?

• Who sets the agenda is a sign of status and dominance. Who leads the topic management?

• A key question – the dominant person does not always say the most.
Who seems to lead the talk? (2)

Key question
• Who interrupts/backs down?
• Who gets to comment on what people say?
• What are people trying to do to other speakers? What do people really mean?

Explanation
• Low status/intimidated/affected by dominance.
• Status in a situation: teachers, police, managers – dominant people.
• Pragmatics: what we really mean and intend with our speech. e.g. ‘Nice weather today.’ Are we really interested in the weather?
Features of spoken language

• See handouts: quiz, the grammar of speech, the buzz words to use for speech analysis.

• Activity:
Take a selection of the words/terms used in speech analysis and create your own example bank, creating snippets of conversation with annotations. Use adjacency pairs.
The power of talk: its infinite purposes

• Below is a list of some of the purposes of talk:
  To comfort, to greet, to lie, to persuade, to inform, to instruct, to warn, to gossip, to encourage, to announce, to impress, to annoy, to suggest, to argue, to perform, to undermine, to criticise, to answer, to object.
  These are but a few. Activity: using an adjacency pair, illustrate practical examples of some of these purposes.
Transcriptions and context

• Transcriptions are a method of writing down exactly what is said in a systematic way.
• The context is the social circumstance and situation in which speech takes place; it influences the nature of what is said and how it is communicated.
• Activity: imagine 3 completely different contexts involving 2 people. Write out a transcript of a few lines and then ( after discussion in class ) identify what information you intended each person to give in the particular situation. The identify the function of each piece of speech.
Everyday conversation: activity

• Everyday conversation we assume to be interaction that is spontaneous, private, equal, perhaps trivial and, usually polite. However, it can be planned, unequal, conflicting and, wider reaching. In the list below write down examples of conversation from:

  • The most private to the most public
  • Spontaneous to prepared
  • Equal in status to wide difference in power
  • Trivial topic/purpose to significant topic
  • Polite concensus to conflict and hostility.
Activity: Everyday Conversation

• Write down 5 conventions/rules of conversation.
• As a group see if you can increase this to 8
• List the factors that have determined decisions.
• What factors need to be considered when deciding on your conventions.
Utterances

• Conversations between participants can be classified in a number of ways, depending upon the context. They can include the following:

• Interactional utterances: conversations involving two or more participants.

• Constative: propositions linked to the real world can be analysed for truthfulness.

EG: It was a sunny day on Sunday.     Cont...
Utterances continued

- Phatic: the exchange of pleasantries/small talk; socially and linguistically vacuous.
- Expressive: to express feelings and emotions
- Referential: utterances based upon truth – usually in educational context.
- Performative: utterances that accompany an event: I sentence you to...; I take this woman to be my bride...
- Rhetorical utterances: (see devices used in speeches; usually scripted).
Activity: Complete the table below

- Utterance type: example context
- Constative:
- Phatic:
-Expressive:
- Referential:
- Directive:
- Performative:
- Rhetorical:
Turn taking activities

1. George and Gordon
2. Darren and Nick
3. JPs and Brotherton
4. Millionaire
5. Initiating turns (interrogatives etc)
6. Types of exchange: adjacency pairs
Back-channel behaviour

• In spontaneous speech, a listener can indicate that they want the speaker to continue by uttering short encouraging sounds or words, such as ‘yeah...mmm...oh...right’. This is known as back-channel behaviour. The linguist Gardener outlined seven different contributions that are common in spontaneous talk:
Back-channel types

• Continuers hand the floor back to the last speaker.
• Acknowledgers express agreement with or understanding of the previous turn (yeah)
• Assessments express some form of appreciation of what has just been said (how wonderful)
• Newsmarkers mark the speaker’s turn as news (really, is it?)
• Questions indicate interest or seek to correct misunderstanding
• Collaborative completions finish another’s utterance
• Non-verbal vocalisations (laughter, sighs, frowns).
Activity

• Write out a few lines of conversation that show back-channel behaviour and try to identify what the listener’s contribution is.
Topic Changes

• Another factor to consider when looking at turn taking is the fact that conversations usually swing from one topic to another. Phrases like: by the way...that reminds me....talking of....anyway, are used as framing moves.

• In spontaneous talk it is important to determine who establishes the topic of conversation/topic. This is referred to as agenda setting. Changing the subject is a way of avoiding a topic.

• Activity Cloud Nine.
Situational factors

• Activities:
• Millionaire
• Educating Rita
• A and D phone conversation
Speech as Action Theory

• Sometimes in spontaneous speech, the words spoken form part of a role, a ritual or an active situation.
• Activity: from the list on this slide and the next, decide what type of action is represented and what other types of words/phrases are common to that genre.

1. I name this ship...
2. We are gathered here today to celebrate...
3. Lords, ladies and gentlemen...
4. You have the right to remain silent...
5. Have you heard the one about...
6. Right, settle down. Today we’re going to...
7. I’m afraid I can’t take your call at the moment...
Continued

8. Hello, were you looking for anything...
9. Mr Speaker, I must protest...
10. Space, the final frontier..
11. Eyes down for a full house...
12. We apologise for the late arrival..
13. Listen, a really weird thing happened to me last week...

Can you add any other rituals or speech acts?
Idiolect scheme and extended activities

• Idiolect and sociolect: attitudes and detailed analysis
• Taboo words
• Dialect variations
• Powerless language
• Activities Sam and Chris/John and Carol
Principles of conversations

• Sheets: Grice and co-operation theories and activities: Mr Iqbal and Beverly and Lawrence.
• Politeness theories.

• Modes of address

• Speech act theory/pragmatics
• Gender issues
Grice’s Maxims of Conversation: The Co-operative Principle

• Quantity: give the right information: make your contribution as informative as appropriate; do not make your contribution more informative than is appropriate.

• Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true: do not state what you believe to be false; do not say anything for which you have inadequate evidence.

• Relation: be relevant.

• Manner: be clear: avoid obscurity of expression; avoid ambiguity; be brief; be orderly.
The Politeness Principle

• Tact: minimise the cost to others, maximise the benefit to others.
• Generosity: minimise the benefit to yourself.
• Approbation: maximise praise of the other.
• Modesty: minimise praise of yourself.
• Agreement: maximise agreement.
• Sympathy: maximise sympathy between self and another.
Activity

• Analysis of transcripts illustrating the politeness principle and Grice’s maxims
• Develop transcripts that illustrate the theories and then, develop scripts that ‘float’ the maxims.
Idiolect/Sociolect

• See powerpoint on A2 Idiolect and Sociolect
• Use Occupational Sociolect extracts from 3 chefs: Jamie Oliver, Delia and Nigella. Develop by analysing others from U tube.

• Test students again for all terminology.
• Analysing Lauren scripts: extracts and U tube.
• Analysing Educating Rita: see film.
Development of Idiolect/Sociolect

• There are detailed activities on idiolect/sociolect and occupational sociolect.
• See sheet A – G with a range of examples, close reading tasks and extension tasks where students have to create their own transcripts.
Talk in Literature: reviewing the framework for analysis.

To analyse talk in literature it is essential to be aware of a framework for support. In the examination, the question will expect you to compare an extract from ‘talk in life’. This will include comparisons of: the significance of the context and situation, the purposes of talk and the attitudes and values conveyed. You will be analysing the differences and similarities.

You will be given this information on the paper.
The Framework: Part 1

- Contextual features: situation, status and relationships, discourse conventions, purposes. Before analysing how a particular conversation works, it is important to consider who is speaking; what type of talk they are involved in; the relationship of the speakers; and their purposes. All things related to purpose, audience and genre.
Interactional features: e.g.: turn-taking, pauses, talk as action, agenda setting in conversation, modes of address. This section deals with discourse – the stretches of language/sentences – examining the structure of the conversation, how turn-taking is managed by the speakers, consideration of what the speakers really mean by their utterances (pragmatics).
Part 3

- Lexico-grammatical features: type of utterances, figurative language, rhetorical strategies. This section deals with grammar and lexis (vocabulary). It examines the types of utterances used by the speakers (interrogatives, imperatives, declaratives, exclamations etc) and the type of vocabulary used, eg: slang, jargon, taboo words, figurative language, idiolect, sociolect etc.
Part 4

- Phonological and graphological features: intonation, word stress, tone of voice, accent, volume, typography. This helps to analyse how speech is conveyed by sounds and signals much about the speaker’s idiolect (social and regional background), their personality and mood. Remember that you will analysing a written representation of speech which can only provide some indications of sound by graphological features: italics, bold, bracket comments etc.
The above linguistic approaches were first applied to everyday talk (covered from the beginning of the course) but can equally be applied to literary representations of dialogue. We interpret literary dialogue using our awareness of the conventions of talk in life. However, a literary text may retain elements of spontaneity but we need to be aware that in fiction and drama and poetry dialogue is written according to a range of conventions. The context and purposes are different: dialogue plays a role in creating plot or drama as well as social purposes.
Unseen texts: make comments on:

- Differences between transcription and lit text
- Conventions and contexts of the talk
- Achievements of effects in literature
- Ways in which power, conflict and control are evident in both texts.
- Significant choices of lexis and grammar
- Any phonological aspects evidenced
- Way meanings are conveyed
- Attitudes and values and how they are conveyed.
Some literary detail

- Context, including: situation, character relationships, status of characters, stage in the text’s structure if known.
- Social and psychological aspects of the talk
- The ways writers transform everyday talk into art form.
- The roles given to characters, such as: provocative, reactive, collaborative.
- The differences in language use between speakers: who asks the questions? Who gives commands? Who insinuates?
- The ways in which features of speech convey character: prolixity (saying too much), taciturnity (saying too little), hesitancy, modes of address.
- Literary features: staging, character construction, figurative language, rhetorical devices
The following extracts are all taken from extracts of literature; each has a brief context given. At this stage you are not comparing it to a transcript of talk in life. You are simply familiarising yourself with how talk in literature is presented.

For each extract spend 10 – 15 minutes reading it closely and annotating. Then write carefully about it: how the talk is presented; the relationship between context, purpose and audience, the relationships between the characters and, the ways in which the speakers’ attitudes and values are conveyed. (the detail from the linguistic framework from slides 41 – 47).
Educating Rita

In this extract from the play by Willy Russell, set in a northern university, Frank is a middle-aged lecturer, and Rita his Open University student. She has just had an angry quarrel with her husband ‘Denni’, who despises her longing for an education. She is anxious to know what Frank thinks about her essay on Macbeth. Remember this is a drama extract and you may wish to comment upon dramatic effects.
Great Expectations

This is an extract from the early part of the novel where the young boy Pip – a poor boy, the brother of the local blacksmith’s wife – has been asked to ‘play’ at the mansion of the wealthy Miss Havisham, a strange recluse who was jilted at the alter by her fiance. Miss Havisham has brought up the orphan Estella – a beautiful young girl – to ‘break men’s hearts.’ Here Pip is met by the haughty Estella.
This play is about an ageing and increasingly unsuccessful salesman, Willy Loman, and his relationship with his equally unsuccessful sons, Biff and Happy. Here Biff describes his struggles to settle on a job and career.

The play was written in 1949 – a period in American history, just after World War 2 and characterised by the American Dream.

- Significance of context and situation
- The functions and purposes of talk
- How attitudes and values are conveyed.
This is a passage from the novel by Mark Haddon, written in 2003. The narrator is Christopher, a fifteen year old boy with Asperger’s Syndrome, a kind of autism. He is exceptionally clever but has major problems relating to other people and is not street wise. In the extract he needs to buy a rail ticket to visit his mother in London.

- The significance of context and situation
- The functions of talk and narrative voice
- How attitudes and values are conveyed.
Comparing

Just to keep the exam demands in context it is worth looking at the parallel text for The Curious Incident.....

The talk in life extract is a transcribed extract from a conversation between a customer and a travel agent. The manager of the travel agency also contributes. The customer is checking on weekend flights and rail travel between London and Edinburgh.

Having looked independently at both extracts try to establish 10 points that could form the basis for a written comparison between talk in life and literature.
This is an extract from the novel by Patricia Highsmith, written in 1950.
This extracts narrates the meeting of two strangers, men on a train in America: Guy Haines and Charles Bruno.
Literary approaches and concepts.

Dialogue in literature may be written as more or less realistic, but it is essential to consider it in the light of its role in presenting themes, attitudes and ideas; character construction; the unfolding of a plot. It must be realised that there are conventions of poetry, prose and drama. The dialogue here is intended for the audience of readers and listeners who know that this dialogue plays a role in the unfolding narrative. The audience expects everything to be significant and thus attempts to interpret apparent irrelevancies that would be overlooked in spontaneous talk.
Rhetoric: interviews, speeches, ‘on the record’ talk

• Rhetorical questions: have the form of questions addressed to the audience, though the answer is not required, as it is assumed to be obvious. This helps establish a shared point of view between speaker and listeners.

• Balance phrases suggest a neat and memorable equivalence or a contrast between notions.

• Triplets (power of three/rule of three): provide a list of three related items, often suggesting a build up to a climax (sometimes a fourth is added for emphasis).

• Vocabulary: positive connotations are repeated; negative connotations are used against opponents.
Rhetorical devices: exemplar study

Visit [www.speaklikeapro.co.uk](http://www.speaklikeapro.co.uk) for detailed analysis of Rhetoric and public speaking.

When studying talk in literature it is noticeable that many features of spontaneous talk – pauses, repetitions, false starts, overlaps etc – are tidied up in novels and plays. Even turn taking is undertaken in an orderly way. However, it is important to note that the ultimate purpose of a text is not to be true to life; but to the integrity of the text itself and the interrelationship between the themes, the characters, the meaning and the plot itself. It is not important that the dialogue is realistic: it is important to analyse the purpose and effect of such realism in the overall context of the text.
Many writers use stylised forms of dialogue. This may be because the situations of the characters are to be seen not as real and individualised, but as archetypes (exemplars of a type of person). This can create a distance between the reader/audience and the text so the latter are not drawn into a suspension of disbelief – we are drawn to the writer’s intention/purpose. An appeal to the intellect rather than the emotion.
The role of dialogue in Literature.

- Make the audience believe the representations are real people
- Reveal aspects of character
- Give the audience more knowledge than the characters possess.
- Create a relationship between audience and character
- Relay information and imply a past which has relevance to the present
- Predict the rest of the action
- Move the action along
- Comment on the action
In prose, particularly, the writer can show how: thoughts are presented; feelings are described; how flashbacks can reveal aspects of the past; point of view can be suggested; authorial comments can be made; descriptions of surroundings can suggest mood; use language for a great variety of effects.
When you respond to the extracts of dialogue in the examination, you will need to decide for yourself which are the significant aspects of the dialogue and then use appropriate approaches in your analysis. You should begin by commenting on the wider aspects of discourse: the situational factors such as status and relationships of the participants, their purposes, and the discourse type and genre. The you can begin to analyse the ways in which the writer constructed these effects.
Examination practice

Examination papers from 2002 to 2011 are available for study. Notice carefully how the wording of questions changes over time.