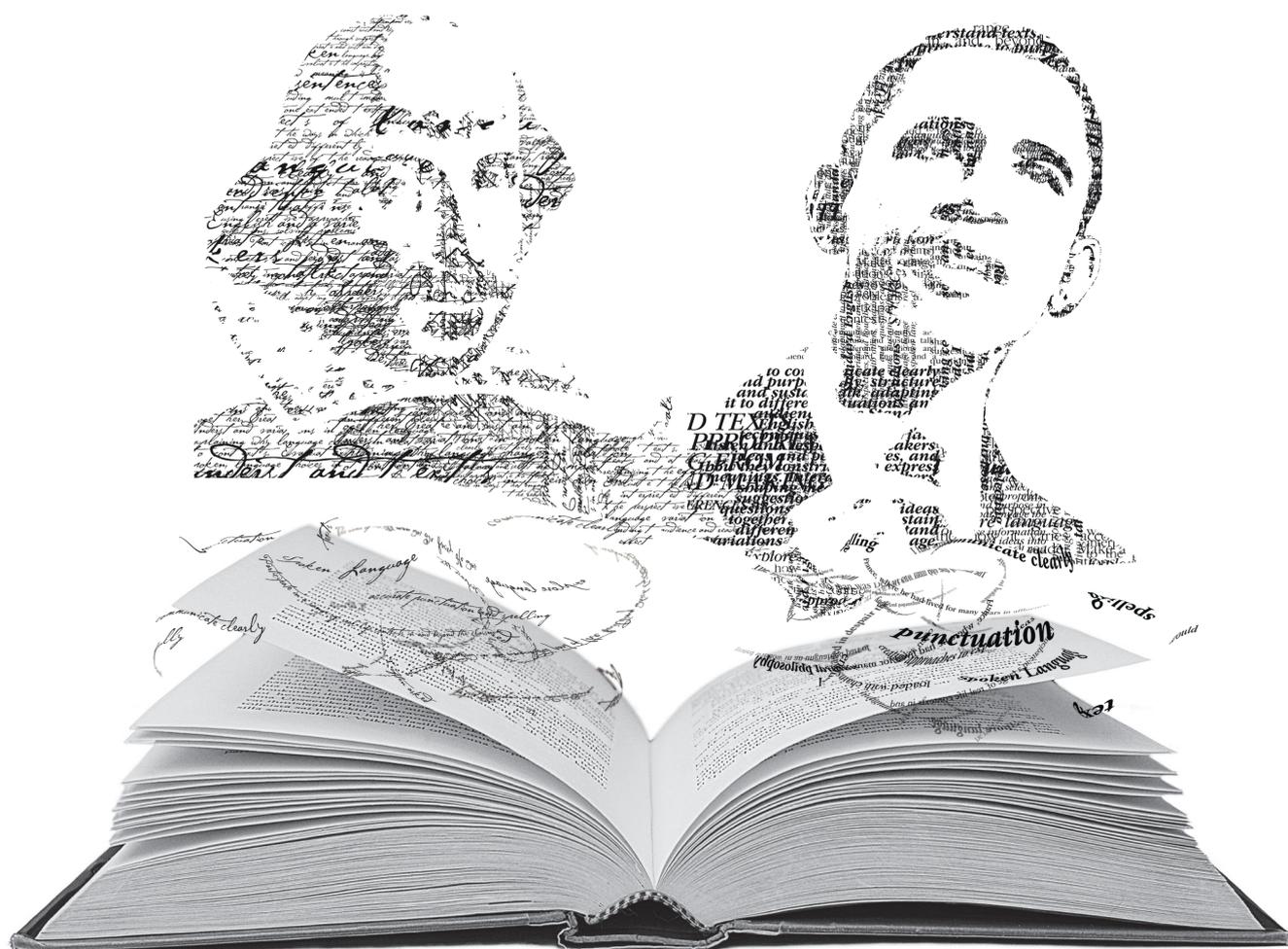


A LEVEL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE H069 H469

Further Guidance for Teachers

Unit F651 *The Dynamics of Speech*



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LISTENING

It is crucial that one does not take too long in introducing candidates to the art of concentrated listening and the task of noting down the specific features of particular speech styles. Modern technologies have made this a rather easier task than it once was. However, it is a task which does need careful control. It is suggested that this is best done in small groups with each group set a slightly different task to undertake. This will encourage sharing of ideas and reactions. It will discourage passive listening. The speeches should not be too long. Some sensitivity in selection is also required, until candidates have become more mature in their responses.

There can be problems in obtaining examples of younger children speaking. If this is the case, it is suggested that members of the class read passages aloud from past examination papers. This does give some idea of what language acquisition actually means, when a fluent young adult undertakes the task. It can help displace the error that young children talk only in 'simple language'. Or that 'children do not speak with correct grammar'. This is a useful point at which some basic theories of acquisition can be introduced.

Beyond the possible difficulty with live children's speech, the advent of digital media has provided an inexhaustible range of speech readily available for individual, group and class listening. Give every encouragement to students to find their own interesting examples and to practice mini transcriptions of very short extracts. At some stage it is important that students do listen to examples of RP (Received Pronunciation). If possible, students should also contrast more historical examples with modern examples. This is a very useful exercise in discussing how speech is not a static entity; but is something which changes over time. Examples of Estuary English are also useful in introducing a specific urban accent, which has exerted considerable influence in popular broadcast media. Examples of this form of speech are readily available on Reality Shows.

Exposure to such examples can lead into discussions about fashionable forms of speaking. For instance: Why is the Newcastle accent so highly esteemed, whilst that of Birmingham is regarded in a largely negative manner?

As the course begins to develop the class should have an introduction to the basic technical demands needed in analysing transcribed data. Give guidance and practice with terminology like: non fluency features; fillers; pauses; repairs; repetitions; adjacency pairs; overlaps. These are features which are highly likely to need comment on examination questions. Depending upon the abilities of candidates a very basic introduction to some of the following can be undertaken:

- A very elementary introduction to phonemic symbols (they are likely to appear on examination papers. However, candidates are NOT required to use them.). This work could include simple illustration of basic prosodic features in speech like intonation and stress.
- The differences between spontaneous and scripted speech.
- Basic discourse structure. This means the study of speech at clausal and sentence levels and the social conventions and constraints of such.
- Basic pragmatics. This means ways in which we communicate to include such features as: gender; age; social and professional standing; politically correct speech; broadcast speech.
- An introduction to basic theories of child language acquisition.

It is at these stages that the idea of getting candidates to write up their own glossaries can prove to have been very helpful; often providing invaluable sources when faced with examination preparation.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR CLASS/GROUP WORK

Any of the following suggestions can be adapted for the particular style of teaching; or to suit the available resources. They can be spread over more than one lesson, and can be used on more than one occasion. As far as possible, ensure the listeners do keep accurate record of what they have been asked to do. This is of great help in giving focus to any discussions which might ensue. It will also enhance the critical lexicon of the candidates.

The following is suitable for either section of the Specification. It requires a short recording to be played. This works very well with small groups:

Play a short recording. Students note down anything they can about the speakers. Then give them a list of basic technical features such as: fillers; non-fluency features; hedges; repetitions; adjacency pairs etc. Play recording again, asking them to feature spot any of the technical points listed. This is a useful activity to engage with throughout duration of the course. Teachers can add as many features as seem fit: dialect; colloquial; non-standard etc. This kind of practice helps to build up students' glossaries, as well as develop their confidence in applying the terminology accurately. It is very useful for revisionary work as well.

The following is very helpful in developing a positive response in listening to younger child speakers. If a recording is not available, resort to choosing readers for the various parts, as suggested earlier. This activity works well in small groups.

Candidates note down general features on first hearing. Then give them a basic list of technical features used in analysing child language. Examples could be: telegraphic stages; (wh) words; use of negatives; use of tenses; pronoun use; two word stages; fillers; omissions etc. Play recording again, asking listeners to spot some of the technical features listed. This, again, can be used as revision and reinforcement, as the course develops. Questions can be set about when children start to

develop conceptual approaches in speech and how such are verbally formulated. At what stage (if evident on the recording) do pragmatic aspects of speech show? If any work has been done on basic behavioural and other theories of language acquisition, ask what appears to be happening with the development of grammatical cohesion in the speech? This could include: use of adjectivals; use of personal pronouns; case endings; lexical development etc. This, also, is very important revisionary practice.

The following can be developed for work on Speech Varieties and Social Groups. Working in small groups is likely to be most productive for feedback and further discussion.

Play a recording of part of a specialist programme on television. Examples from cookery; travel; sport; fashion; makeovers; gardening are particularly good for a range of accents. Ask candidates to listen for any forms of speech and grammatical/lexical use which appear to them to deviate in lexical, grammatical or dialect form. This can help set up discussion about the social dimensions of spoken language. This can be a particularly helpful activity in applying basic phonemic terminology. This can enhance, also, candidates' knowledge of the nouns Descriptive and Prescriptive, when applied to the analysis of speech within specific social groupings. It can also lead to discussions about social groups and their socio-economic status. If the programme contains any form of regional speech, this might be valuable in discussing the position of such speech within the dominant power structure of London and the South East of the UK.

SUGGESTED KEY RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING AND LISTENING.

The most strongly recommended text for the course is **David Crystal: *Encyclopaedia of The English Language***. This could be supported by **Jean Aitchinson: *The Language Web***.

Candidates will need to acquire some basic knowledge about the theories and concepts appropriate to the subject of Language Acquisition. The most important theoretical work has probably come from **Piaget**, **Chomsky** and **Pinker**. In the case of these demanding authors, the best approach is to prepare some basic outline notes on the key aspects of their work. In Section B occupational language is addressed in the series of books produced by Routledge specifically for AS/A2 students. They have titles such as: ***The Language of Work***, ***The Language of Advertising*** etc., **N. Fairclough: *Language and Power*** could be used judiciously.

There is much material now being made available via digital and recorded sources. The important emphasis on applied listening skills has been raised already in this guide. The following has proved to be helpful in encouraging understanding of accentual and dialect variations: ***Voices of the UK Accents and Dialects of English***. This is available from the British Library online shop in London. If still in print: ***The Routes of English Series 2***, which was produced by BBC Radio 4, and published by BBC Educational Productions. There is a good section on the disc and accompanying booklet about Child Language at Play. There is also a section on the disc and the booklet concerning Language and Class.

