AS/A LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE

UNDERSTANDING...

SPOKEN LANGUAGE

**Understanding Spoken Language**

When exploring spoken language, it is still important to use your grammatical knowledge to explore the linguistic features of speech rather than just reciting theories about spoken language, such as Grice.

**Key Features of Spoken Language**

Some aspects of spoken language you should be familiar with include (use the Glossary at the end of this booklet if there are here that you are unsure of):

* colloquialisms
* deixis
* discourse markers
* ellipsis
* elision
* hedging
* turn-taking
* prosodics
* non-fluency features
* non-standard grammar
* phatic language
* shared knowledge, etc.

Some genres of spoken language you may explore to cover include:

* advertisements
* commentaries
* formal/informal conversations
* interviews
* news broadcasts
* parliamentary broadcasts
* speeches
* vlogs
* sports commentaries.

Some spoken language concepts and issues you may choose to investigate include:

* politeness and face needs (Brown & Levinson and Leach)
* accommodation
* cooperative principle and conversational implicature (Grice).

**Activity 1**: Read the following transcripts—they are decontextualised, taken out of their original context so we do not have any contextual factors to help us interpret them. Make notes on the following in preparation for a class discussion.

1. Try to decide which speech genre each example represents. Find linguistic evidence to support your decision.
2. To show that you have engaged with the texts, write a 4-5 sentence overview making connections between them.
3. Suggest a possible context and provide evidence for your choice. You need to think about things such as the purpose, the tenor, whether the speech is public or private, the relationship between participants and the target audience, and the linguistic contextual factors (e.g. deixis, referencing, terms of address, implicature, presupposition).
4. How would information about physical contextual factors (e.g. time, place, occasion, shared knowledge, cultural references etc.) help you to understand these transcripts better?

**Drawing on your knowledge of the levels of language, analyse the spoken language of these texts.**

In your response, you must also consider relevant concepts and issues, and explore contextual factors.

**Key**

(.) micropause **definitely** emphatic stress

(1) timed pausereplàce lowered intonation  
 = smooth latching /sʌmɪnk/ phonemic transcription  
 // overlap *{laughs}*paralinguistic features

people::: stretched speech sound

**TEXT 1**

A this is the **entrance** to Marlborough Road (1) and St James’ Palace is on the   
 **left** (1) we’re looking now (2) through (1) the gates of Hyde Park (3) with the   
 (.) Wellington Museum on the left **there** (5) the carriage has (4) left (1) the   
 park itself (1) and now (1) **crosses** Hyde Park Corner (1) going **under** (.) the   
 Wellington Arch (26) the Duke of Wellington **himself** after whom this (1) arch   
 (.) is named (.) had a **memorable** (2) state funeral himself (3) in the streets of   
 London in **18** (.) 52 (4) still the flowers (2) rain before (1) the procession (.)   
 otherwise (3) everything is (1) **silent** and **still** (71) these **huge** wrought iron   
 gates on the arch (1) are usually **closed** they open (.) very **rarely** for a   
 special occasion like ⭡this⭡ (2) and the (.) cortege will come through here (.)   
 and then (2) turn to the left (1) and **start** on its journey (.) **down** Constitution   
 Hill (.) which will take it all the way along (1) the **side** (1) of the (1) huge   
 gardens of Buckingham Palace

**TEXT 2**

A but whichever garage you go to (.) motorists seem concerned about what’s   
 going in their tanks =  
B = there’s /sʌmɪnk/ wrong with the **fuel** (.) there’s **definitely** /sʌmɪnk/ wrong   
 with the fuel (2) hundred per /sen/ /meɪʔ/ (.) I’m /telɪnjə/ / ðæʔ/ now  
A one theory being investigated is excessive levels of **silicon** in batches of   
 unleaded petrol (.) sent out over the last few weeks (1) a key component in   
 the exhaust system of the oxygen centre (.) has **failed** because of the **tainted**   
 fuel (.) and it costs **two** **hundred** pounds to replàce

**TEXT 3**

A I filmed er Saving Private Ryan ⭡here⭡ and we also made Band of Brothers   
 (.) and ⭡**Andrew**⭡ was **in** (.) episode eight of Band of Brothers =  
 B = now you (.) were you involved in the production of that? I believe // you produced  
 A // I **directed** one   
 and I (1) **wrote** some of them and yes I produced (.) er **helped** to produce the whole   
 shebang =  
 B = indeed and what was it about **Andrew** that made you choose **him** in // comparison   
 A // oh nothing at   
 all I er (.) they cast him (.) I was at home I said who’s playing Jackson they said a guy   
 named Andrew said good enough for me =  
 B = that’s good enough for me *{audience laughter}* you’ve got er h. those **high**   
 expectations =  
 A = yeah

**TEXT 4**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **TEXT 1** | **TEXT 2** | **TEXT 3** | **TEXT 4** |
| Genre |  |  |  |  |
| Evidence |  |  |  |  |
| Context |  |  |  |  |
| Evidence |  |  |  |  |
| Public/Private |  |  |  |  |
| Purpose |  |  |  |  |
| Relationship |  |  |  |  |
| Missing contextual information |  |  |  |  |

A you /gʌnə/ go to **Aintree** next Friday?  
 B yeah excuse for all women to get dressed up   
 C /ən/ like wear a hat  
 B yeah it’s called **Ladies** Day for a reason /jnəʊ/ style /ən/ stuff is // important  
 A // mm  
 C I’m /lʊkɪn/ forward   
 B yeah like **see** all the clothes like // the h.  
 C // yeah /ən/ the big hats /ən/ /**əmeɪzɪn**/ hair // styles  
 B // the   
 hen parties   
 A I’m looking forward to the racing /kɒz/ I’ve **never** /bɪn/ // before  
 B // no way never /bɪn/ it’s crazy   
 the first time // so many p.  
 C // yeah so many people:: (.) the Best Dre::ssed (.) all the /**ʃaʊtɪn**/ it’s   
 // really  
 B // **really** /greɪʔ/ fun  
 A but is it too crowded? (.) I mean like can’t **move**   
 B nah it’s /greɪʔ/ really you’ll want to go back again  
 C **so** (.) /wɒtʃə/ wearing?

**Activity 2**: Next, read through the contextual information for each of these four texts below and then re-consider each text. How does the additional information shape your response? Did your reading change in the light of the contextual factors?

**Contextual Information TEXTS 1-4**

**TEXT 1 BBC Television commentary, David Dimbleby (1997)**

This is an extract from the commentary for Princess Diana’s funeral on 6th September, 1997. She was the first wife of Prince Charles and was well-known for her charity work. She was divorced in 1996 and was fatally injured in a car crash in Paris on the 31st August, 1997. Her coffin was carried on a gun carriage through London from Kensington Palace, along the south side of Hyde Park, past the Albert Memorial, beneath Wellington Arch to Constitution Hill and the Mall, where Buckingham Palace is situated. From there, the funeral cortege went on to Westminster Abbey for the official ceremony. The event was not a state funeral, but a royal ceremonial funeral. More than a million people lined the streets to watch the cortege pass.

**TEXT 2 BBC News Channel news item (2007)**

This is a report about a problem with contaminated petrol sold at a number of supermarket petrol stations in South East England in February 2007. Motorists had problems with their cars breaking down and tests on the fuel found that it had traces of silicon. The contamination was thought to have damaged a sensor in the exhaust, which then cut the power to prevent long-term damage to the engine. While silicon products are used in diesel fuel, even very small quantities can cause serious problems in petrol engines.

**TEXT 3** **Interview with Tom Hanks, ‘Friday Night with Jonathan Ross’ (2008)**

This is an extract from an interview in which Tom Hanks talked about his new film ‘Charlie Wilson’s War’. Before they discussed the film, Ross asked Hanks about his visits to the UK for previous projects such as the Spielberg film ’Saving Private Ryan’ and the HBO television miniseries ‘Band of Brothers’. Andrew Lee Potts was another of Ross’ guests. While Hanks’ interview took place, Potts was waiting in the green room for his appearance later in the show. He appeared in the role of Private Eugene Jackson in ‘Band of Brothers’ (Episode 8).

**TEXT 4 Informal conversation between friends (2015)**

The focus of this conversation between a group of friends is Ladies Day, which takes place on the Friday before the Grand National horse race at Aintree, Liverpool. The event is renowned as much for the display of top fashion as for the horse racing. Newspaper coverage is extensive. It tends to highlight the attendance of celebrities, to comment on fashion trends and the wild behaviour of some racegoers, and to include numerous photographs of the memorable outfits.

**Activity 3**: Now you know the contexts for each of these texts, make a list of examples of the relevant spoken language features. Aim to get five for each text.

**TEXT 1**

1. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
2. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
3. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
4. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
5. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**TEXT 2**

1. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
2. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
3. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
4. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
5. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**TEXT 3**

1. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
2. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
3. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
4. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
5. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**TEXT 4**

1. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
2. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
3. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
4. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
5. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Here are some of the spoken language features you could have identified in each text:

**TEXT 1 Commentary**

1. **Subject specific lexis**: place – *Hyde Park*, *London*, *Constitution Hill*, *Buckingham Palace*; funeral—*funeral*, *procession*, *cortege* (nouns).
2. **Proper nouns**: location—*Marlborough Road*, *Constitution Hill*; famous landmarks—*St James’ Palace*, *Wellington Arch*, *Hyde Park Corner*, *Buckingham Palace.*
3. **Concrete nouns**: architectural—*gates*, *park*, *arch*; linked to funeral—*flowers*, *carriage*.
4. **Modifiers**: used sparsely—*memorable*, *huge* (attributive) *silent*, *still* l. 8 (predicative); *very rarely* (adverb phrase)—all with emphatic stress.
5. **Locational language**: deixis—*this* (demonstrative pronoun), *now*, *still* l.7 (time adverbs), *there, here* (place adverbs); adverbials—*on the left*, *through the gates* …, *under the Wellington Arch*, *down Constitution Hill*, *along the side of* … (all prepositional phrases).
6. **First person plural pronoun** *we* (engaging viewers).
7. **Verb phrases**: *is*, *crosses*, *are* (present tense for current events); *’re looking (*present progressive for on going action); *will come* (modal indicating future event); *has left* (present perfect for event in past with ongoing relevance); *had* (past tense for completed events); *is named* (passive to emphasise object).
8. **Relative clauses** providing extra information: *after whom this Arch is named …* (formal—use of object form *whom* + avoiding preposition at the end of the clause); *which will take it*…
9. Many **simple** (*we’re looking now … there*) and **compound** (*is … and … is*; *has left … and … crosses*) utterances.
10. **Metaphor** (reflecting individuality of the speaker): *the flowers (2) rain …*

**TEXT 2 Television news**

1. **Initial position conjunction** (*But*): representing continuation of a topic in a new direction; falling intonation on non-finite verb to mark end of topic (*replàce*).
2. **Subject specific lexis**: nouns—*garage*, *motorists*, *tanks*, *fuel*, *unleaded petrol*, *exhaust system* (focus of topic).
3. **Tenor**: formality of Speaker A with polysyllabic lexis—*investigated* (past participle), *excessive* (adjective), *component*, *silicon* (nouns), *tainted* (verb modifier); informal pronunciation of Speaker B—/*sen*/, /*sʌmɪnk*/ (elision); /*meɪ*ʔ/, / *ðæ*ʔ/ (glottal stop); /*telɪnjə*/ (elision/reduction).
4. **Second person pronoun** (generic you) used to represent an unspecified person (cf formal ‘one’)*.*
5. **Contractions**: typical of spoken language (particularly informal)—*what’s, there’s*.
6. **Informal vocative**: /meɪʔ/.
7. **Informal idiom**: *hundred per* /*sen*/, *I’m /telɪnjə/* (Speaker B)
8. **Modifiers**: linked to Speaker B’s evaluation of the situation—repetition of adjective *wrong* (emphatic), adverb of probablity (disjunct) *definitely* (with emphatic stress); Speaker A’s factual description of situation—adjective *excessive* (negative in this context); enumerator *two hundred* (with emphatic stress); Speaker A’s evaluation—adjective *concerned*.
9. **Verb phrases**: present tense *go, ’s, costs* (current situation); passive *being investigated* (subject unimportant); past tense *sent out* (establishes time scale of event i.e. event in past which led to curent state of affairs).
10. **Distinctive lexical choice**: verb modifier *tainted* (figurative cf contaminated/polluted).

**TEXT 3 Celebrity interview**

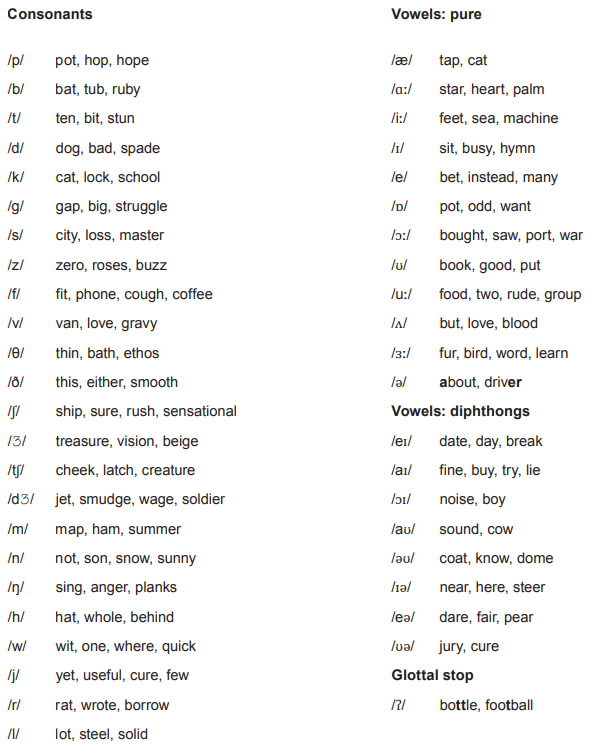
1. **Pronouns**: Speaker A uses first person singular *I*  and inclusive plural *we* (speaking about personal experience); Speaker B uses second person *you* (direct address).
2. **Proper nouns**: names of films/TV programmes—*Saving Private Ryan, Band of Brothers*; first names—*Andrew* (actor), *Jackson* (character).
3. *Subject specific*: *filmed, produced, directed* (verbs), *episode, production* (nouns).
4. **Verb phrases**: *filmed, made, involved* (past tense—commenting on past events linked to main speaker); *’s* (present tense quoted clause i.e. direct speech—recounting conversation with no pauses to mark the end of utterances).
5. **Discourse markers**: adverb *now* (marking conscious development of topic).
6. **Grammatical mood**: *were you involved …, what was it about* … (interrogatives—directing topic); *I directed … and yes I produced* … (declaratives—providing answers) = complete adjacency pairs.
7. **Affirmation**: *yeah*; *yes* (informal adverb)*; indeed* (disjunct—pragmatic marker, quite formal = emphatic agreement).
8. **Comment clause**: *I believe* (tentative, hedging).
9. **Distinctive**: *the whole shebang* (noun phrase)—idiomatic; *good enough for me* (noun phrase)—understatement (repeated by Speaker B for humorous effect + audience response i.e. paralinguistic feature).
10. **Utterance types**: many compound—*I*  *filmed … and we also made … and Andrew was …, I directed … and I wrote … and I produced* (polysyndeton – extending turn); elliptical—*said good enough for me.*

**TEXT 4 Informal conversation**

1. **Subject specific lexis**: *Aintree, Ladies Day, Best Dressed* (proper nouns); *hat, clothes, hair styles* (concrete nouns); *racing* (verbal noun)
2. **Discourse marker**: *so* (interjection) to introduce new topic
3. **Time adverbials**: *next Friday* (noun phrase); *before, never*, *again* (time adverbs)
4. **Tenor**: informal e.g. /*gʌnə*/*,* /*əmeɪzɪn*/, /*wɒtʃə*/, *it’s, can’t* (elision); *yeah,* /*kɒz*/, *nah* (informal pronunciation); /*greɪ*ʔ/ (glottal stop); /*ən*/, /*jənəʊ*/ (reduction + elision).
5. **Informal lexis**: *stuff* (noun) = general reference, placeholder; *like* (filler); *no way* (idiom); *crazy* (modifier—predicative adjective).
6. **Affirmation**: *yeah*; *nah* (informal adverbs); *never /bɪn/, so many people* (reinforcing repetition, mirroring), *mm* (non-verbal interjection); *excuse for all women to get dressed up || /ən/ like wear a hat* (completing each other’s utterances)
7. **Grammatical mood**: mainly declarative, but Speaker uses interrogatives to seek informatione.g. *you /gʌnə/ go to Aintree next Friday?* *is it too crowded?*
8. **Listing** (reflecting enthusiasm) e.g. *the big hats /ən/ /əmeɪzɪn/ hair // styles, so many people::: (.) the Best Dre::ssed (.) all the /ʃaʊtɪn* (asyndetic).
9. **Utterance type**: lots of elliptical structures e.g. *you /gʌnə/ go to Aintree next Friday?* (primary auxiliary omitted), *see all the clothes* (subject omitted), *I’m /lʊkɪn/ forward* (object omitted from transitive verb).
10. **Comment clauses** e.g. /*jnəʊ*/, I *mean*

**Exploring Phonetics, Phonology and Prosodics**

As part of your study of spoken English you will need to familiarise yourself with the phonemic symbols used to reflect non-standard pronunciations. The list of those used for English is below.



**Activity 4**: Look at the table below. In informal speech, the high frequency words, phrases and expressions in the middle column are often pronounced in a distinctive way. In the final column, use phonemic symbols to record the informal pronunciation as it would appear in a transcript. One example is given for you. Answers are page 15, so don’t cheat!

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **INFORMAL PRONUNCIATION** | **STANDARD FORM** | **PHONEMIC TRANSCRIPTION** |
| ain’t | am not / are not | /eɪnt/ |
| cos | because |  |
| coulda / could of | could have |  |
| didja | did you |  |
| dunno | don’t know |  |
| doncha | don’t you |  |
| d’ya | do you |  |
| gimme | give me |  |
| gonna | going to |  |
| gotta / gorra | got to |  |
| gotcha | got you |  |
| hafta | have to |  |
| how’dju do | how do you do? |  |
| playin’ | reduced -*ing* verb suffix |  |
| innit | isn’t it |  |
| kinda | kind of |  |
| lotta / lorra | lot of |  |
| lemme | let me |  |
| musta / must of | must have |  |
| oughta | ought to |  |
| outta | out of |  |
| pr’aps | perhaps |  |
| probly | probably |  |
| shoulda / should of | should have |  |
| sorta | sort of |  |
| s’pose | suppose |  |
| wanna | want a / want to |  |
| whassup | what is up? |  |
| woulda / would of | would have |  |
| would’ya | would you |  |
| yeah | yes |  |
| y’know | you know |  |

In speech, we often use fillers (non-fluency features) and interjections (expressing emotional responses).

Use **phonemic symbols** to record the pronunciation of these linguistic features as they would appear in a transcript. You’ll find the answers on page 16, so don’t peek!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **FILLERS** (non-verbal) | **PHONEMIC TRANSCRIPTION** |
| er |  |
| errr |  |
| uh |  |
| um |  |
| ummm |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **INTERJECTIONS** (non-verbal) | **PHONEMIC TRANSCRIPTION** |
| ah |  |
| ahhh |  |
| oh |  |
| oooh |  |

How many did you get right? Practise saying these out loud so you get used to hearing the sounds each phonemic symbol makes. These are all high frequency words in informal speech so try to remember as many as you can to save yourself time in the exam.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **INFORMAL PRONUNCIATION** | **STANDARD FORM** | **PHONEMIC TRANSCRIPTION** |
| ain’t | am not / are not | /eɪnt/ |
| cos | because | /kɒz/ |
| coulda / could of | could have | /kʊdə/ /kʊdɒv/ |
| didja | did you | /dɪdʒə/ |
| dunno | don’t know | /dʌnəʊ / |
| doncha | don’t you | /dəʊntʃə/ |
| d’ya | do you | /dʒə/ |
| gimme | give me | /gɪmiː/ |
| gonna | going to | /gʌnə/ |
| gotta / gorra | got to | /gɒtə/ or /gɒʔə/ /gɒrə/ |
| gotcha | got you | /gɒtʃə/ |
| hafta | have to | /hæftə/ |
| how’dju do | how do you do? | /haʊdʒduː/ |
| playin’ | reduced -*ing* verb suffix | /pleɪɪn/ |
| innit | isn’t it | /ɪnɪt/ or /ɪnɪʔ/ |
| kinda | kind of | /kaɪndə/ |
| lotta / lorra | lot of | /lɒtə/ or /lɒʔə/ /lɒrə/ |
| lemme | let me | /lemiː/ |
| musta / must of | must have | /mʌstə/ /mʌstɒv/ |
| oughta | ought to | /ɔːtə/ |
| outta | out of | /aʊtə/ or /aʊʔə / |
| pr’aps | perhaps | /pəræps/ or /præps/ |
| probly | probably | /prɒbliː/ |
| shoulda / should of | should have | /ʃʊdə/ /ʃʊdɒv/ |
| sorta | sort of | /sɔːtə/ |
| s’pose | suppose | /spəʊz/ |
| wanna | want a / want to | /wɒnə/ |
| whassup | what is up? | /wɒsʌp/ |
| woulda / would of | would have | /wʊdə/ /wʊdɒv/ |
| would’ya | would you | /wʊdʒə/ |
| yeah | yes | /jeə/ |
| y’know | you know | /jənəʊ/ |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **FILLERS** (non-verbal) | **PHONEMIC TRANSCRIPTION** |
| er | /ɜː/ |
| errr | /ɜː:::/ |
| uh | /ʌ/ |
| um | /ʌm/ |
| ummm | /ʌ:::m/ |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **INTERJECTIONS** (non-verbal) | **PHONEMIC TRANSCRIPTION** |
| ah | /æ/ |
| ahhh | /ɑː:::/ |
| oh | /əʊ/ |
| oooh | /uː:::/ |

**Activity 5:** a) Identify the phonetic, phonological and prosodic features of the extracts below. Where non-standard spelling has been used to reflect the sound of words, re-write these using the phonemic symbols. Where phonemic symbols have been used, re-write the words using the standard alphabet.

**Text 1** **Reading scheme book**

Fat Rat is on a mat. He has a red hat. Fat Rat sees a cat. “I don’t like cats”, shouts Fat Rat. Fat Rat sees a bat. “I like bats”, shouts Fat Rat. “I want to pat the bat,” says Fat Rat.

**Text 2** ***Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens**

‘Your servant, Sir, said Joe, ‘which I hope as you and Pip … I meantersay, you two gentlemen – which I hope as you get your elths in this close spot? For the present may be a werry good inn, according to London opininons,’ said Joe, confidentially, ‘and I believe its character do stand it; but I wouldn’t keep a pig in it myself – not in the case that I wished him to fatten wholesome and to eat with a meller flavour on him.’ …

‘Do you take tea, or coffee, Mr Gargery?’ asked Herbert, who always presided of a morning.

‘Thankee, Sir,’ said Joe , stiff from head to foot, ‘I’ll take whichever is most agreeable to yourself.’

‘What do you say to coffee?’

‘Thankee, Sir,’ returned Joe, evidently dispirited by the proposal, ’since you are so kind as make chice of coffee, I will not run contariry to your own opinions. But don’t you never find it a little ‘eating?’ …

‘Have you seen anything of London, yet?’

‘Why, yes, Sir,’ said Joe, ‘me and Wopsle went off straight to look at the Blacking Ware’us. But we didn’t find that it come up to its likeness in the red bill at the shop doors; which I meantersay,’ added Joe, in an explanatory manner, ‘as it is there drawd too architectooralooral.’

I really believed Joe would have prolonged the word … into a perfect Chorus, but for his attention being providentially attracted by his hat …

**Text 3 Transcript of an interview**

**Key**

(.) micropause

(1) timed pause (in seconds)

(.h) pause with an intake of breath

// overlapping speech

= smooth latch on

{*laughs*} paralinguistic features

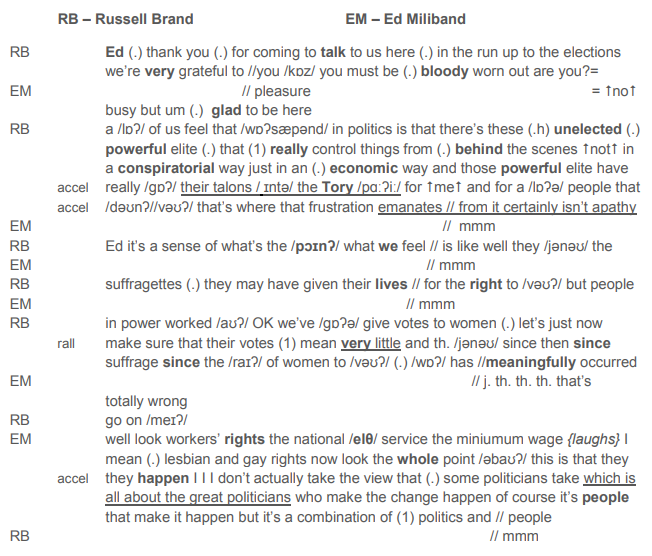
**bad** emphatic stress

🡩funny🡩 raised pitch

accel speech that is getting faster (underlined)

rall speech that is getting slower (underlined)

/kɒz/ phonemic transcription reflecting pronunciation



b) To show that you have engaged with the texts, write a 4 or 5 sentence overview making connections between them.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

c) Annotate the texts using appropriate terms and make notes below on:

* + the purpose
  + the intended audience
  + the effects created by the phonetic, phonological and prosodic features.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

d) How effective is the use of phonetic, phonemic and prosodic features in the texts? Explore the links between the choices made by the writers/speakers and how these choices affect meaning.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

**Activity 6:**

The two texts printed on pages 22 and 23 are extracts from BBC television commentaries for formal state occasions. Read through them and answer the questions that follow.

**Text A** is an extract from the BBC coverage of the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant on 3rd June 2012. To celebrate the Queen’s 60 years on the throne, a parade of 1000 boats travelled along the Thames from Albert Bridge to Tower Bridge. The belfry (a boat carrying eight bells specially made for the occasion) led the procession and the Queen was on the Royal Barge with members of the Royal Family. The commentators are Matt Baker and Sophie Raworth, and they are joined by the historian Dr Anna Whitelock. There was a lot of criticism of the coverage with numerous complaints made to the BBC.

**Text B** is an extract from the State Opening of Parliament broadcast on 8th May 2013. This ceremonial event marks the beginning of a new parliamentary year. The Queen leads the Royal Procession through the Royal Gallery to the chamber of the House of Lords. An official known as Black Rod is sent to summon the Members of Parliament from the House of Commons to come and listen to the Queen’s Speech. In a ritual which dates back to the seventeenth century, the doors to the House of Commons are shut in Black Rod’s face, symbolising the Commons’ right to be independent from the monarchy. The commentator is Huw Edwards.

**KEY TO TRANSCRIPTIONS**

(.) micropause

(15) timed pause (in seconds)

(.h) pause with intake of breath

ca. incomplete word

*{laughs}* paralinguistic features

**way** emphatic stress

st. incomplete word

colou:::rs stretched or prolonged speech

// overlapping speech

= smooth latch on

RAINS increased volume

kQueen’s rising intonation

mLords falling intonation

hbelfryh raised pitch

isimpi lowered pitch

accel speech that is getting faster (underlined)

rall speech that is getting slower (underlined)

/kaɪndə/ phonemic transcription reflecting pronunciation

Some question marks have been included to aid greater clarity.

**TEXT A: Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Pageant** (edited)

**MB: Matt Baker SR: Sophie Raworth AW: Dr Anna Whitelock**

MB we’ve been waiting for some **time** (2) as have this very **expectant** crowd just below *{laughs}*

accel the kstudio and **suddenly** this k**wave** of energy approaches and (2) the hbelfryh it it’s **literally** just like a **floating** **cathedral** I mean (.) the **sound** is just i**magical**i

SR Anna /jə nəʊ/ (.) put this in /jə nəʊ/ in his. in history terms this is this is a kpeople ca. kpeople’s pageant **now** isn’t it // I mean

AW // that’s **my** line (.) it’s the k**people’s** pageant (.) it **is** the

kpeople’s pageant I mean it it’s it’s the kQueen’s pageant of **course** but k**look** at it I mean

accel it’s the k**people’s** pageant k **people** on the river (1) k**people** at the sides (1) cheering (.) I mean /jə nəʊ/ the kQueen the k**pride** which she’s ˈ/gənə/ (.) /jə nəʊ/ look out over (1) the **river** see everybody mwaving I mean klook at all the **cameras** I mean /jə nəʊ/

SR iI just spotted my seventy year old kdad out therei

MB have // you k**really**?

AW // Sophie’s **dad’s** out there =

SR = h**yay**h (1) he’s h**made**h it he’s // h**made**h it

AW // it’s hincredibleh (3) isn’t that h**wonderful**h

MB the k**colour** just hits you doesn’t kit?

AW I mean it’s /kaɪndə/ [unclear] brought to life all the colou:::rs (3) and it’s just **so** kdemocratic (.)

accel of course we’ve got the Queen in the middle of but look at it surrounded by people and even the **RAINS** now here it’s **so** // British

SR // the Royal **Barge** will be here any moment

AW look at all this and even (.) look at all the **cheering** crowds and it doesn’t get much **better**

accel than this this is what the Queen’s reign has been building towards I think /jə nəʊ/

MB surely this must be well **one** of the biggest honours if not **the** biggest honour that she’s /kaɪndə/ ever **witnessed** to see in front // of her

AW // yeah (1) absolutely I mean and of course there must

accel be a sense of trepidation /jə nəʊ/ what’s it going to be klike? **how** are people going to kreact? // how

SR // and do you know she hasn’t sat **down** she’s standing there and we’re // watching her

AW // but she’s I mean I’ve never seen

SR **standing** there she has **not** sat down 86 years old and she looks like she’s just having a h**WONDERFUL**h time =

AW = yeah the Royals are just so kanimated they’re actually they’re genuinely k**engaged** and

accel k**enjoying** it an. she’s not going through the motions she’s k**LOVING** it =

SR = right well listen as the belfry (.) reaches **just** reaching the /eə/ Tower kBridge there and an incredible sight isn’t H // MS Belfast (3) all that

MB // MS Belfast

AW isome tired rowers out therei

MB well now this is almost their /kaɪndə/ finish point I guess the **end** is in ksight

SR k**AMAZING** job (1) k**amazing** job that they have done and the Royal Barge will be in sight **here shortly** there it is (2) the manpowered

accel section (2) coming past HMS Belfast (3) and you have to **remember** those rowers they have been out there probably since about 10 o’clock this morning they’ve been on their boats

MB I mean it’s k**everything** I mean it’s simp. I mean I know it sounds **silly** to say this but anything even like k**toilet breaks** and stuff like // that /jə nəʊ/

AW // that’s a big consideration (3) I mean =

SR = I don’t think we’re /gənə/ go to that one

MB /jeə/ /jeə/ *{laughs}*

AW what do you kdo? *{laughs}* there might be indiscrete moments we might capture

MB you just row cross-legged

**TEXT B: State Opening of Parliament**

**HE: Huw Edwards QE: Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II**

HE let’s go back to the Royal Gallery for the Procession in **State** (15) the **Queen** and the Duke of kEdinburgh followed by the **Pages** of Honour

rall Hugo k**Bertie** the Honourable Charles Armstrong-k**Jones** Viscount k**Aithrie** and (.) Arthur m**Chatto** (2) been chosen for this (.) honour today (2) followed by Ladies in kWaiting and k**there** we have (3) first time in seventeen years (.) Prince of **Wales** attending the State Opening (0.5) and for the first time kever the Duchess of **Cornwall** attending (.) the State Opening of mParliament (14) Sword of k**State[[1]](#footnote-1)**

(1) carried by Admiral the Lord **Boyce** (.) Cap of k**Maintenance[[2]](#footnote-2)** (.) by (1) the Lord k**Hill** (12) as they head towards the Prince’s Chamber (.)iwhich is the **ante**-room if

rall you likei just before (.) they enter the **Chamber** of the House of mLords (5) Chiefs of /eə/ (2) the **Defence** kForces the Vice-Chief of the Defence kStaff (.) General **Sir** Nicholas k**Houghton** (2) Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen k**Dalton** (1) Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sir George kZambellas an. Commander Land Forces Lieutenant General A. Adrian m**Bradshaw** (4) into the **Chamber** (.) of the House of mLords (3) Queen (2) and the Duke (0.5) will take their places on the pair of k**thrones** (2) Queen will then (1) invite everyone (2) to be seated (1) and then she will give the

rall signal for (1) Black Rod (.) to be sent (.) to the (.) House of mCommons (8)

QE My Lords pray be mseated (15)

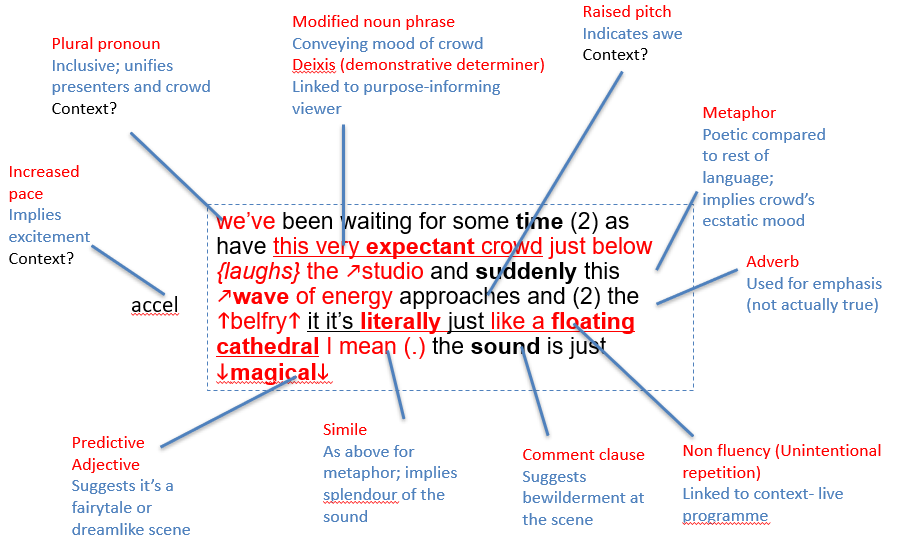
HE signal is **given** (1) by the Marquis of kCholmondeley (2) Black Rod has (.) **received** the ksignal (2) h**great**h view there **right** along from the Central Lobby **right** down to the (.) **throne** of the (.) House of Lords (5) as Black Rod makes his way (2) this (.) short (.) stretch of corridor into the (.) Members’ Lobby of the House of kCommons

rall and this is where (.) he was describing to me e. **earlier** on (2) what the /eə/ (4) what the precise nature of the (1) **duty** was and what it m**symbolised** (4) and explaining **his** combination of duties too the fact that (1) he takes (0.5) great k**pride** (.) of course (.) in his role (2) in the ceremonial (.) because (.) as Nick[[3]](#footnote-3) was explaining (.)

rall this is a great **display** of (2) the k**authority** and sovereignty of the Commons (1) but also of course in his (.) **daily** kwork which is to look after (.) very important (2) area of security in **his** part of the Palace of Westminster which is the (.) House of mLords (2) a a **little** delay because I’m told that (1) we may be **sligh::tly** ahead of mschedule (2) this is **very** unusual I have to say because Black Rod normally makes his way **straight** down to the House of Commons but (1) I **suspect** it’s because (.) prayers have not quite finished or maybe (2) they (.) took a little longer than they (.) should have done in the (0.5) House of Commons **but** (0.5) Black Rod will not **appreciate** the m**wait** (3) /əm/ (1) but there we are he’s on his k**way** (8) so he’s on his k**way** (2) ready to be (1) **confronted** with (1) **closed** doors at the House of Commons and he’ll knock (.) and ask to (1) gain madmission

Before you start writing your essay on these two transcripts, practise your close analysis on the selected extracts from these texts.

Here is an example of the kind of close analysis using the first utterance of Text A. Being able to comment in detail on spoken language features can lead to high-scoring essays:



Now annotate the extracts, 1-6, taken from Text A and Text B on the following pages in a similar way, making notes:

* using accurate terminology
* on the effects created by each spoken language features
* on the effects created by the grammatical/lexical choices
* considering the contextual factors.

**Extract 1**

SR iI just spotted my seventy year old kdad out therei

MB have // you k**really**?

AW // Sophie’s **dad’s** out there =

SR = h**yay**h (1) he’s h**made**h it he’s // h**made**h it

AW // it’s hincredibleh (3) isn’t that h**wonderful**h

**Extract 2**

AW = yeah the Royals are just so kanimated they’re actually they’re genuinely k**engaged** and

accel k**enjoying** it an. she’s not going through the motions she’s k**LOVING** it =

SR = right well listen as the belfry (.) reaches **just** reaching the /eə/ Tower kBridge there and an incredible sight isn’t H // MS Belfast (3) all that

MB // MS Belfast

**Extract 3**

MB I mean it’s k**everything** I mean it’s simp. I mean I know it sounds **silly** to say this but anything even like k**toilet breaks** and stuff like // that /jə nəʊ/

AW // that’s a big consideration (3) I mean =

SR = I don’t think we’re /gənə/ go to that one

MB /jeə/ /jeə/ *{laughs}*

**Extract 4**

HE let’s go back to the Royal Gallery for the Procession in **State** (15) the **Queen** and the Duke of kEdinburgh followed by the **Pages** of Honour

rall Hugo k**Bertie** the Honourable Charles Armstrong-k**Jones** Viscount k**Aithrie** and (.) Arthur m**Chatto** (2) been chosen for this (.) honour today (2) followed by Ladies in kWaiting and k**there** we have (3) first time in seventeen years (.)

**Extract 5**

HE signal is **given** (1) by the Marquis of kCholmondeley (2) Black Rod has (.) **received** the ksignal (2) h**great**h view there **right** along from the Central Lobby **right** down to the (.) **throne** of the (.) House of Lords (5) as Black Rod makes his way (2) this (.) short (.) stretch of corridor into the (.) Members’ Lobby of the House of kCommons

**Extract 6**

rall because (.) as Nick was explaining (.) this is a great **display** of (2) the k**authority** and sovereignty of the Commons (1) but also of course in his (.) **daily** kwork which is to look after (.) very important (2) area of security in **his** part of the Palace of Westminster which is the (.) House of mLords (2) a a **little** delay because I’m told that (1) we may be **sligh::tly** ahead of mschedule (2) this is **very** unusual I have to say

Using your extract notes and annotations of the rest of Text A and Text B, you should now be ready to practise an essay response.

|  |
| --- |
| **Drawing on your knowledge of the levels of language, analyse the spoken language of these texts as examples of television commentaries.**  **As well as addressing the key features of spoken language, you should include some consideration of the context, the tenor, and the linguistic choices of the commentators.**  In your response you must also:   * consider relevant concepts and issues * explore contextual factors. |

Here are some of the aspects of particular significance from the texts that you could have discussed in your essay. Were there any that you missed?

**Overview**:

* + Tenor (levels of formality and informality; terms of address)
  + Subject matter
  + Level of fluency – in particular, the non-fluency features of Text A
  + Normal non-fluency features (limited examples in Text B)
  + The use of emphatic stress (frequency; word class)
  + Interaction and back-channel monitoring features in Text A (affirmation; reinforcement)
  + Turn-taking in Text A (length of turns; interruptions; smooth latching)
  + Pauses: these suggest that Text B is delivered at a slower pace
  + Linguistic differences (professional/expert participants)
  + Use of lexis: subject specific; high/low frequency; formal/informal; colloquial (particularly Text A)
  + Grammatical structures: how close to the written or spoken mode
  + Level of complexity of the syntax
  + Verb phrases (tense/aspect, voice)
  + Ellipsis and elision
  + Deictic features
  + Examples of patterning
  + How far typical of formal state commentaries (e.g. content; pre-scripting/ preparation; formality of tone etc.)

Reflecting on this list, what three things could you focus on next time to produce a better essay?

1. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

2. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

3. ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

**Principal Examiner’s Top Tips: Analysing Spoken Language**

**Getting started: reading the question and contextual information**

* underline the **genre**(s) of the transcripts and think about the key features. Your background knowledge will help you decide which features to look for—you don’t need to write these expectations down in your introduction
* underline key information about the **background** of each transcript—it may help you develop points
* underline the **focus** of the question.

**First read-through: identifying the broad principles**

As you read, you need to think about:

* the **register** e.g. level of formality/informality (tenor), subject matter (field)
* the **participants** e.g. age, gender, social status, relationship, expert/amateur, professional/members of the public, etc.
* their relationship with the **target audience** e.g. direct/indirect, familiar/formal/ somewhere in-between/changing, distant/immediate, primary/secondary
* their **role** e.g. create social bond, provide information, explain, interpret, entertain, persuade, argue etc.
* where **turns** begin and end e.g. length, latching, overlaps, interruptions, back channel affirmation etc. Read carefully—don’t be misled by words at the start of a line which continue an utterance from a previous line after an overlap.

**Close reading: annotating the texts**

Re-read the transcripts. Underline important features and jot notes in the margin. This will help you to find examples quickly when you write your essay. Look for:

* **prosodic features** used to enhance meaning e.g. emphatic stress; stretched sounds; changes in intonation, pitch, volume, pace (including use of micro/timed pauses)
* the presence or absence of **non-fluency features** e.g. fillers, unintentional repetition, hesitation, false starts
* genre-specific use of **word classes** e.g. proper nouns/honorifics/vocatives for terms of address/names; concrete nouns to create a sense of place; abstract nouns to reflect; pronouns/determiners for self-/other-references; modifiers to describe mood/POV; dynamic verbs to describe activity/processes; adverb/pronouns for deictic references; interjections for expressions of emotion, greetings, curses, politeness markers etc.
* **interesting** or **unusual** words, expressions or pronunciations e.g. idiosyncrasies, colloquialisms, slang, neologisms, creative personal choices, informalities (e.g. elision, clipping, reduction)
* **verb phrases** e.g. grammatical mood, tense, aspect, modality, passive voice
* interesting **utterance types** to engage the immediate/wider audience e.g. simple, using subordination, minor, incomplete, elliptical.

**Answering the question: fitting the pieces together**

Always spend a little time thinking about how you are going to approach the task. Use an appropriate, formal style and try to check that your writing is technically accurate.

**1. PLANNING**

* briefly jot down the **main areas** you wish to cover
* decide how you are going to **structure** your response. You can use any approach:
  + overview; discuss Text A; discuss Text B; conclusion
  + overview; participants and their relationships; presentation of the topic; distinctive language features relevant to the focus of the question; engagement of the audience through spoken features; conclusion
  + your own version—try experimenting … different transcripts may give you different ideas …
* think about **timing**—you don’t need to write equal amounts on each text, but if you spend too long on one it will affect the overall quality of your response.

**2. OVERVIEW**

* write an **overview** that introduces the texts. You may like to include a brief discussion of some of the following:
  + genre
  + place of transmission
  + location
  + occasion
  + target audience
  + purpose
* avoid discussing your expectations—instead, focus on examples (accompanied by appropriate terminology) to support the broad points you make.

**3. DEVELOPING AN ARGUMENT**

* develop your **paragraphs** and avoid list-like sequences of very short ones
* make sure your **topic sentences** clearly show the focus of each paragraph. If you reference a particular concept (e.g. emphatic stress) or language feature (e.g. the use of declaratives), link points to meaning or you will slip into feature spotting. To show your engagement with the genre and content of the transcript, choose topic sentences that focus on meaning
* provide **examples** to support each point you make
* demonstrate your **engagement** with the texts by referencing specific details.

**4. SUMMING UP**

* write a **conclusion**—avoid repeating points from your introductory overview and think about pragmatics, or any linguistic features or contextual factors that you haven’t yet addressed.

**KEY SPOKEN LANGUAGE TERMS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS GLOSSARY**

**TERM DESCRIPTION**

accelerando A term used to describe speech that is getting faster (marked *accel* on transcripts).

accommodation A term used to describe the changes people make to their speech, prosodic features and gestures in order to emphasise or minimise the differences between them.

adjacency pair A sequence of two connected utterances by different speakers one after the other. This may take a range of forms: question/answer; greetings; complaint/explanation or remedy; statement/affirmation; command/action etc. e.g. *Shut the window*. → *Sure*.

assimilation In phonology, the way in which the sounds of one word can change the sounds of neighbouring words in connected speech.

back channelling Interactive features such as minimal responses (e.g. *mm, yeah, ahh*) that demonstrate a participant is listening and paralinguistic features (e.g. laughter) that show affirmation, but which do not disrupt the speaker’s turn.

colloquialism An informal word, phrase or pronunciation, often associated with informal speech.

comment clause A commonly occurring clause in speech which adds a remark to another clause e.g. *I mean …, I think* …).

convergence A process in which two speakers adapt their language and pronunciation to reduce the difference between them.

deixis A term describing expressions that rely on the context for interpretation e.g. *there, over here, that high*.

discourse markers Words or phrases that stand outside the clause and acts as fillers, topic changers, hedges etc. e.g. *well, right, y’know, I mean, basically*.

divergence A process in which two speakers adapt their language and pronunciation to increase the difference between them.

elision The omission of sounds in connected speech.

emphatic stress Stress placed upon syllables or words in spoken discourse.

ellipsis The omission of part of a sentence that can be understood by the context. e.g. *The sprinter had broken the world record, Ø reached a new PB and Ø charmed the crowds*.

false start An utterance that is started, left incomplete, and then restarted with a different grammatical structure e.g. *and Si.. Glen Johnson*; *they are (.) it’s impossible; I felt that my (.) people were*.

filled pause A voiced hesitation in spoken language.

filler Words, usually with no semantic value, which are inserted into speech either from habit or to give a participant thinking time as they search for a word e.g. *er, um, ah*.

hedging The use of mitigating words or sounds to lessen the impact of an utterance e.g. *I think, I’m not an expert but …, somewhat, it’s possible that* …

hesitation The repetition of the initial sound of a letter e.g. *s. straight; th. um (.) the very obvious*.

implicature A term used to describe what a hearer infers from an utterance.

interactive Distinctive non-verbal utterances that affirm (e.g. *mm, yes*), show agreement (e.g. laughter), add reinforcement (e.g. echo utterances).

interruption The ending of one speaker’s turn by the intervention of another speaker, which may be a non-cooperative challenge, or may be the result of multiple participants with equal status in a conversation.

intonation The quality or tone of voice in speech, which can stay level, rise or fall.

latch-on A smooth link between different speakers in a spoken exchange.

liaison A process that changes the pronunciation of words at boundaries, usually inserting /r/.

monitoring features Expressions which allow a speaker to check that the hearer is still listening, has understood etc. e.g. *if you remember …, would you believe … , you know.*

normal non-fluency Commonly occurring features of spoken language such as hesitations and false starts which break up the flow of speech.

overlap Participants speak at the same time, but the dominant speaker’s turn is not ended—this can mark positive feedback where one speaker provides backchannel affirmation or support; the misjudgement of the end of a turn; or an additional point or comment on what is being said.

paralinguistics The study of non-verbal communication e.g. vocal effects (laughing, sighing), gesture, posture and facial expressions.

pauses Breaks in spoken language which can be minimal (micro pause), often marking the end of utterances, or timed (in seconds) e.g. *we’ll stop there (.) let’s try to (2) meet up later*.

phatic speech Words, phrases and clauses that have a social function e.g. *good morning; lovely day; thanks*.

phoneme The smallest unit of sound.

phonetics The study of spoken sounds and the way in which they are produced.

phonology The study of sounds in a particular language and the ways in which they are combined to create meaning.

pitch The level of a sound, which can be lowered or raised.

prosodic features The use of pitch, volume, pace and rhythm to draw attention to key features of spoken language.

rallentando A term used to describe speech that is getting slower (marked *rall* on transcripts).

self-correction A speaker’s repair to an utterance e.g. *bret-ta. (.) breathtaking; Steve (.) Sir Stephen*.

spontaneity markers Distinctive features of spoken language that mark speech as spontaneous and unscripted, including comment clauses, fillers, hesitations etc.

turn-taking The organisation of participants in a spoken interaction, where the turns may be equal or where one speaker may be dominant.

utterance A grammatical structure made up of one or more clauses, often preceded by a micro pause and followed by another pause or a change of speaker in spoken language (called a sentence in written language).

unintentional repetition The accidental repetition of a monosyllabic word in spoken language e.g. *they they’ve; we we we*.

1. *Sword of State*: a sword carried in front of the Queen as a symbol of royal power [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Cap of Maintenance:* a ceremonial [cap](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cap) of [crimson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimson) [velvet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Velvet) lined with [ermine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoat) carried in front of the Queen as a   
    symbol of royal power [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Nick*: Nick Robinson, the BBC Political Editor [↑](#footnote-ref-3)