The newest and potentially most exciting area of the new GCSE specifications is the Studying Spoken Language section of the Controlled Assessment for GCSE English Language.

The focus of this unit is investigative, asking candidates to explore their own spoken language and/or that of others, including perhaps spoken language in media and technologies such as internet messaging services. Sample Controlled Assessment tasks are available online so that you can see the type of tasks that will be set. All of the tasks are fairly open-ended so that you can help individual students tailor their research to suit their interests and the type of data available to them. One of the teachers who has done a trial of the new unit said, ‘the tasks were greeted with enthusiasm and the ability to connect what we were exploring to the wider context. The tasks lead to independent study which meant there was a good deal of ownership for the students.’

Teachers who have trialled the unit have given us some very useful feedback on which we can base further support. One important point is that giving enough time and thought to the initial data collection pays dividends in terms of the level of analysis which students can carry out.

The script and commentary on the following pages are examples of the further resources you can see online at http://web.aqa.org.uk/englishLangA These are provided to demonstrate ways of approaching this exciting new unit. We are very grateful to those schools who trialled ideas and provided us with this material. Comments made about the students' work are in no way intended as a criticism. Teachers and students were trying out ideas and were working without the structured advice that is now being put in place. Resources and further exemplar material will continue to build up throughout the autumn term.
The following candidate is responding to the task ‘Investigate speech that is particular to an occupation’ which comes under the topic area of Social attitudes to spoken language. The candidate has transcribed a recording of her father dictating minutes of a meeting.

**Transcript**

My Dad: Occupation – Banker

Talking minutes of a meeting into a Dictaphone for his secretary to record down later.

Elaine, meeting of minutes sorry minutes of meeting. Present


new paragraph.

Arising from this CB gave an update on the potential loss arising from a delayed execution of a sale of units in a hedge fund full stop are reviewing the transaction to make sure that we’ve complied with our standard customs and practices in relation to security settlement and custody full stop. They should be reverting to us soon in relation to this but first impressions are that we’ve complied with our normal practices full stop. The actual loss has not been quantified yet as the final evaluation of the fund for the end of the year is still being worked on – AP mentioned that side pockets may be in place full stop. The general feeling however was that the loss will not be very material in effect it is not even clear that a loss will accrue at full stop. New paragraph

Separation progress report new paragraph

AP confirmed that visited the branch early in the week to go through the DNB and our business case applications full stop.
Exploring Spoken English Analytical Task

The way in which we speak has developed noticeably from the way in which we write so much so that it has become almost another language entirely. In this essay, I will be analysing the way in which one person speaks in a certain environment and exploring why he does so.

I have chosen to study the vocabulary that my father uses at his workplace, as I have grown fascinated by it. As a banker, frequently speaks and write words coated in jargonisation and it amazes me how someone who is so involved in my life can use a language everyday which I can barely interpret.

The first, and possibly most related, aspect of this transcript is jargon. In the text, many words are used which involve the way in which the business world works, such as “hedge fund” and “side pocket”. The reason for these phrases is that they are usual, everyday phrases for somebody who has had a long career in banking, as is vocabulary such as “mentor” and “lesson three” for school children. My father speaks the language of a Banker, as he is one and spends the majority of the day in that specific environment. On the contrary, whilst at home, these phrases are scarcely said. The change of environment has an automatic impact.

Following this comes the sociolect. Similar to the manner in which mechanics would speak amongst one another, or maybe a sportsman, the office has unique discussion topics. “Delayed execution” and “business case applications” are perfect examples of this. Personally, I can not be sure what these words mean, due to never having heard them when I am present with my father. He, as shown, regularly says them around colleagues and clients.

This manner of speech has a certain essence of authority. Words such as “we’ve...us...our” give the impression that he is in the position to be able to speak about the bank in a way that sounds like he is in charge. I do not consider that he does this on purpose, taking advantage of his position, but that the authority that any valuable boss needs to have has automatically become a part of his speech.

Connected to this are the instructions given. The authority that he has acquired reflects the way he intends the minutes to look. “Full stop...comma...dash...new paragraph” are all phrases which supply his secretary with the correct structure of the paper, not allowing any pragmatics to occur. “AP” and “CB” etc... are used as initials of the present people, a short hand way of stating their names. The reason behind this is to direct how he wishes the product to be, rather than displaying ‘bossiness’ or using his power in an unnecessary or arrogant way.

As my Father’s occupation is important to his clients, the must feel that they can trust him completely. The complexities of his words need to be of a certain rank. “Arising from this...In relation to” are not sentiments used by him when I am present, as he switches into his ‘home’ made-of speaking. This is due to the importance of who he is speaking to. I do not mean by this how important they are to my Father personally, but how they will react if a low complexity of words is not obtained from him. People, who have placed trust in my Father, especially when dealing with money, expect him to speak in a suitable manner.

I have learnt, from my analysis, that the way different people speak is greatly influenced by the environment they are in, the reason why they are there and who is present with them. I have seen that a mixture of five factors make up my father’s words, each with a reason behind them. People use the English language in their own, unique way, idiolects evolving, without really being aware of it. New words and phrases are forming as time passes and new dialects are created. The irony is that we all write in the same language, yet speak a variation of it that others many not understand. It will be interestig to see how the contrast between written and spoken English develops as more years pass and generations continue to mutate the English language.
Principal Moderator's commentary

This is in the general area of the language of occupation. The task, if there is one, is very general, and then the student says she will study the vocabulary her father uses. A much better task would have been to focus on the genre of the speech here, which is highly specific – the dictation of minutes. Jargon is not quite the right word for occupation specific vocabulary, but there is good understanding of the ways the father speaks differently according to work or domestic context. She also makes a good point about power.

She shows awareness of the highly specific speech event taking place here, but as suggested above there is scope for more. She is aware of the different audience(s) her father has here.

The reference to five factors is unclear and the conclusion is very general, not adding much to what has gone before.

This is very interesting data, and perhaps more could have been made of it.

In all three strands of the mark scheme the candidate is operating in Band 4, although the third strand is slightly less relevant here than in other tasks. A mark of 15 is awarded.