2020 VCE Dutch oral examination report

General comments

The Dutch oral examination assesses students’ knowledge and skills in using spoken language. The examination has two sections – a Conversation of approximately 7 minutes, during which students converse with the assessors about their personal world, and a Discussion of approximately 8 minutes.

Following the Conversation, the student will indicate to the assessor(s) the subtopic chosen for detailed study and, in no more than one minute, briefly introduce the main focus of their subtopic, alerting assessors to any objects brought to support the discussion. Suitable objects include photographs, maps or diagrams, and should include no text or very little text. The support material must have minimal writing, which includes only a heading, name or title.

The one-minute introduction should give assessors an indication of the area of discussion. The purpose is for students to briefly introduce their chosen subtopic; it is not an opportunity for students to list all their information or texts.

The focus of the Discussion is to explore aspects of the language and culture of communities in which Dutch is spoken, with the student being expected to make reference to the texts studied.

The choice of subtopic for the Detailed Study is very important. It should be an engaging topic that motivates students to become familiar with the content and vocabulary needed, and thus be more skilled at supporting and elaborating on information, ideas and opinions. It is important that students and teachers select materials for the Detailed Study carefully so that students are exposed to a variety of views. The type of texts used by students should vary in complexity and be in Dutch so that students can become aware of key vocabulary related to their subtopic. Students are reminded that they must be prepared to use language spontaneously in unrehearsed situations. Students should be able to draw on the texts they have studied and make links between the texts to support, expand on and explore opinions and ideas on the subtopic and different aspects of the texts. Students should be able to relate this to the Dutch-speaking community.

Students are not expected to be ‘experts’; they are expected to have learnt strategies in order to respond to unexpected questions. It would be valuable for students to learn phrases such as, ‘I have not studied this aspect of the topic, but I think …’, ‘I don’t know, but I feel …’ and ‘I am not sure about this question but I know …’

It should be noted that during the oral examination:

* students may be asked a variety of questions of varying levels of difficulty. Questions may also be asked in a different order from the one students anticipate
* assessors may interrupt students to ask questions during either section of the examination; this should be regarded as a normal process in a discussion
* assessors may also repeat or rephrase questions
* normal variation in assessor body language is acceptable.

Three criteria are used in assessing both the Conversation and the Discussion: communication, content and language. Details of the assessment criteria and descriptors are published on the VCAA website. It is important that all teachers and students be familiar with the criteria and descriptors, and that students use them as part of their examination preparation. This will help students to engage in a lively and interesting

exchange with assessors. Although there are similarities between the assessment criteria for the Conversation and Discussion sections of the examination, the criteria assess two very different aspects of performance. Students who are well prepared are generally able to demonstrate their abilities and proficiency in the language.

Specific information

Students achieved some very good results in the 2020 VCE Dutch oral examination. They seem to have prepared well for the examination and were aware of the need to use more complicated and sophisticated grammatical structures in their responses. Some students incorporated typical Dutch idiomatic usage into their conversation.

Some of the persistent problems with grammatical and syntactical structures included:

* the use of English words
* incorrect tenses
* incorrect gender with het and de
* incorrect use of vocabulary
* word order
* incorrect inflection of adjectives.

Students who scored highly used a wide range of vocabulary and some good repair strategies. Those who did not score well had insufficient vocabulary to draw upon, which adversely affected the flow of conversation and their general fluency.

Section 1 – Conversation

Students generally engaged in a lively conversation with the assessors. They maintained good eye contact and body language and seemed to be enjoying themselves. Students who scored highly replied fluently in Dutch and were able to answer more searching questions and expand on their answers.

Students at this level should learn and be able to correctly incorporate a few commonly used Dutch idioms into their conversation (e.g. een frisse neus halen, alles is koek en ei, over koetjes en kalfjes praten). Knowledge of idiomatic usage is an important part of using culturally appropriate language.

Section 2 – Discussion

High-scoring students demonstrated they had researched their selected subtopic thoroughly, using a wide range of oral and written text and expanding readily on their chosen subtopic. Lower scoring students had to be prompted numerous times to provide more detailed answers.

Most students were well prepared and demonstrated excellent knowledge of the chosen detailed subtopic. Lower performing students had to be prompted numerous times to provide more detailed answers.

It is vital for students to read widely and practise speaking Dutch as much as possible throughout the year. Students are encouraged to read Dutch news, watch Dutch DVDs and read Dutch books, as well as seek out online Dutch programs.