2022 VCE English as an Additional Language (NHT) external assessment report

General comments

This examination consisted of three sections: Section A required responses to two aural texts, Section B required an extended response to one text, and Section C required the completion of two tasks in response to unseen material. Assessment of the extended responses in Sections B and C was holistic, using the published assessment criteria. Assessors related student performance directly to these criteria, and their judgements were assisted by the use of a set of descriptors.

Most extended responses showed good understanding of the task requirements, in particular by using an appropriate structure to deliver a relevant response. Responses that scored highly demonstrated strong writing skills, which conveyed meaning with clarity and fluency. The assessment criteria, the descriptors and the sample examination are published on the VCAA website. Assessment of the short-answer responses in Sections A and C is discussed later in this report.

Almost all students completed the three sections of the examination. Preparing well for Sections A and C requires developing skills that will be applied to unseen task material. In Section B, although it is necessary to have a close knowledge of the text, students should use only material that is relevant to the question.

Students’ interpretations and ideas in response to the topic are awarded marks as per the assessment descriptors.

Specific information

Section A – Listening to texts

Students were required to give responses based on their comprehension of two unfamiliar spoken texts. For each text, students were supplied with brief written background information. The first text was a discussion between two classmates about buying a present for their teacher, who is going to have a baby. The two classmates had offered to go to the shops and choose the present. The second text was a podcast from the Museum of Agriculture’s website. In the podcast the new director, who is the youngest person to hold this position, introduces herself to the community and talks about her new role. Questions covered literal and inferred meaning and addressed the key knowledge and skills from the study design. Each text was played twice and many students made effective use of the note-taking space provided beside the questions.

Some aspects of spoken language were challenging for students. Students need familiarity with a range of spoken language features, including tone and delivery. Exposure to a wide variety of spoken texts using Standard Australian English will assist. Students need to develop their critical listening skills both inside and outside the classroom on an ongoing, everyday basis. They are encouraged to listen to anything, in English, that interests them; current affairs, news, documentaries and podcasts can all be useful. Students should listen for the added effects of emphasis, pauses, sighs, hesitations, and so on. Students are expected to be familiar with the terminology used in the key knowledge and skills for the listening task. Students are encouraged to use the key words in the questions as a focus for their listening. Short-answer questions require concise and precise answers. Responses that demonstrated understanding provided what was asked for without including extraneous information. Expression skills need to be sufficiently controlled to convey meaning accurately.

Text 1

Question 1a.

A correct response identified any two of the following ideas.

* They don’t know the baby.
* They only know the teacher.
* The baby doesn’t know them.

‘It seems silly’ was not a correct response.

Question 1b.

A correct response identified any two of the following ideas.

* It helps the parents to care for or look after the baby.
* It is like buying the present for the parents.
* It saves the parents money / the parents don’t have to buy all the baby things.

Question 1c.

A correct response identified one of the following examples of language use.

* Language recognising the teacher’s expertise (e.g. she is a great/fantastic teacher).
* Language expressing positive feelings or using high modality (e.g. she really listens to you and is always positive about our ideas).

A correct response identified one of the following examples of delivery.

* Upbeat, enthusiastic tone: ‘Well, she is a great teacher’.
* Pace: slowly says ‘really listens to you’.
* Expressed with emphasis: ‘great teacher’, ‘always positive’.

The question asked for examples of Jen’s language, so comments made by Bill (e.g. ‘I like her’) were incorrect.

Question 1d.

Correct responses were:

* a teddy bear
* a giant teddy bear.

‘The size of a gorilla’, or ‘is very large’ were optional embellishments on the main idea, not correct answers by themselves.

Question 1e.

A correct response gave the following reasons.

* He wants the teacher to remember them / the Year 12 class (which she’ll do in the future).
* He wants to show the teacher how much they appreciate her help/teaching (expressing his gratitude for her past help).

Question 1f.

Relevant responses were:

* because the teacher loves reading books
* because she will want to read to the baby.

Text 2

Question 2a.

A relevant response reflected one of the following ideas.

She thinks the collections are good but:

* the displays aren’t adequate or modern enough
* she implies the display of items is old-fashioned
* she implies that the displays could be improved.

Question 2b.

A relevant response reflected one of the following ideas.

* He is the person who inspired her interest in history / he was a source of inspiration for her.
* He was the one who took her to visit museums, large or small.

‘His wide interests’ was not a correct response.

Question 2c.

Two relevant reasons reflected both the following ideas.

* Museums are about people: they tell the story of everyday activities of people / how they lived their lives.
* Museums are about learning: they teach us our history / help us learn from the past / help us to understand the present and future.

Question 2d.

The question asked for the ‘different opinions’ of her grandfather and grandmother. Relevant responses reflected one of the following opinions for each.

* Her grandfather:
* enjoyed visiting museums
* loved to imagine the people behind things
* was interested in everything from clothes to aeroplanes.
* Her grandmother:
* never wanted to visit museums
* wasn’t interested in the past
* was more excited by new technology.

Question 2e.

A relevant response reflected one of the following ideas.

* Her most important goal is to display items in a more interactive way.
* She wants to modernise the displays in the museum.

Relevant examples included:

* online exhibitions
* create interactive displays
* ways visitors could interact with experts.

Question 2f.

A relevant response reflected one of the following feelings:

* excited/excitement
* keen
* joyful
* enthusiastic
* pride (at being the youngest director).

Relevant examples of language use that showed her feelings included:

* ‘Our museum …’
* ‘I can’t wait to create …’
* ‘I know this is the reason why the museum has hired me, (proudly) Waveford’s youngest Museum Director’
* ‘I’m sure even my grandma would love …’.

Section B – Analytical interpretation of a text

Students were required to produce one piece of analytical or expository writing in response to one text. There were two topics for each of the selected texts. The descriptors used for assessment related to knowledge of the text, including consideration of its concepts and construction, the structure and relevance of the response, and writing skills – the control of the conventions of written English.

Students were generally well-prepared for this task, demonstrating good text knowledge, awareness of the use of film techniques and familiarity with how to structure a text response. Some were able to incorporate relevant quotes from the text. Most students attempted a structured response, which addressed the chosen essay question.

Responses that scored highly were characterised by a sharp focus on the key words in the topics, selective and considered use of the text, and ideas expressed with strong language skills. The first topic on *Rear Window* required students to explore the relationships of couples in the film and analyse the extent to which couples were trapped in their relationships. Most responses drew on several couples and were able to identify ways in which people were trapped in relationships as well as ways in which some were not. Responses drew on strong knowledge of the film and techniques used to portray these ideas.

The second question focused on the characters having limited ideas about their world and how this is suggested by Hitchcock in the film. Students used both their knowledge of the context of the film setting and the period in which it was set to explore how ‘limited ideas about their world’ emerge in the film and the impact of this on their decision-making.

Overall, responses that scored highly were structured and developed and demonstrated a command of sufficient relevant vocabulary to communicate ideas meaningfully. They also demonstrated sound understanding of the requirements of analytical writing. Responses that did not score well were more descriptive, demonstrating adequate knowledge of the text but not selectively connecting this to the key words in the topic.

The task was an analytical interpretation of a text. It is important for students to be familiar with the language used for analysis. Analytical writing can include description, such as facts or information, but its focus is on the relationships between pieces of information. It may include comparing and contrasting, or assessing. Consequently, students need to develop writing skills that will enable them to incorporate knowledge of the text into their analysis or exposition. Writing that simply describes what a character did rather than exploring why and how, and the effect of the behaviour relevant to the set topic, is a limited response. Students also need to be familiar with the variety of ways in which questions can be worded and understand the requirements of different task words, such as ‘discuss’, ‘do you agree?’ and ‘to what extent’.

Section C – Analysis of language use

The task material was one piece of writing about the feeding of wild birds. Brief contextual background information was supplied. This background information is an important starting point for students because it identifies the audience and context of the task material. The task material was a social media page for residents, on the *Strapleton Community Voice* website. In it, the writer shared her experience in the park on a particular morning to explore the issue of feeding wild birds. The social media page was accompanied by two visuals linked to the writer’s ideas. The topic, language, length and style of the piece were appropriate for the tasks, and offered opportunities for students at all levels to demonstrate their skills.

Question 1

This question assessed comprehension of the task material and required precise answers that demonstrated clear understanding of the ideas in the task material.

Question 1a.

A relevant response was one of the following ideas, which reflected most people’s views about feeding wild birds.

* Everyone did it.
* It was acceptable.
* It was a normal part of family activities.
* It was a normal activity.

Relevant examples were:

* at home – her memories of her mother feeding birds
* at the beach – feeding seagulls
* in the city – people gave their lunch to the pigeons.

Question 1b.

A correct response reflected both of the following ideas.

* Birds benefit as we help them to survive/live.
* People benefit by feeling pleasure from connecting with the natural world / nature improves psychological wellbeing / it’s a healthy way to have relief from technology.

Responses that just gave synonyms for ‘mutually beneficial’, without contextual examples, were incorrect.

Question 1c.

Relevant reasons included:

* the wrong foods (e.g. salt, sugar, bread) in the wrong amounts can be dangerous for wild birds / do them harm
* it can cause bird population growth, which can upset the balance in nature
* rotting seeds and bread grow mould and may cause disease in birds / rotting food allows pests to thrive.

‘In some climates, some species of birds would not survive long, cold winters without help from humans’ was incorrect. This is not a reason why feeding wild birds is a problem. It is an acknowledgement of an exception.

Question 1d.

The help Daphne believed people needed to change their thinking was more education about feeding birds.

Relevant practical action she provided was one of:

* use seeds, oats, peas or corn
* provide a snack / a small amount / not a meal.

Question 1e.

There are two clues to the relevant answers in what Daphne writes:

* ‘with a deep breath for courage’ – suggests she was feeling a bit nervous, tentative, anxious, hesitant
* ‘all the factual information in my head’ – suggests she was feeling confident about her facts.

The response only required one of Daphne’s feelings. The connection to her words wasn’t required.

Question 2

In this question, students analysed how language, the use of argument and visual features in the task material were used in an attempt to persuade. Responses that scored highly recognised that there are many things writers do when they seek to influence a reader. Awareness of audience (in this case the readers of *Strapleton Community Voice* social media page) is critical to understanding the purpose of the writing and how the arguments and language choices in the task material were meant to influence this audience. Students were expected to find connections between the text and the visuals. The expected qualities for scoring clearly indicate that to score six marks or higher, students needed to show some understanding of how visual material is used to persuade in the context presented. One or both visuals could be used to do this.

There was a range of approaches in the responses to this question. Most responses tried to balance an analysis of argument with an analysis of language. Responses that scored highly analysed argument use and language in an integrated way. A few responses focused too much on summarising what the writer said without identifying the specific language used for the purpose of persuading the readers to accept the argument. Responses that scored highly comprehensively explored the ideas presented in the visuals and demonstrated the clear connections between the visuals and the ideas in the written text. Responses that did not score well only described the appearance of the visuals.

The challenge for students was to be able to use their theoretical knowledge of how writers or speakers use language persuasively to demonstrate accurately how this was done in the task material provided.

Features of responses that scored highly included:

* a clear understanding of the context and audience for the writing and the point of view expressed in the piece
* discussion of how language, the visuals and the use of argument worked together in the task material, in particular the irony around the image of the sign and the humour in the cartoon at the end
* an exploration of the implications of specific language choices, for example, ‘everyone everywhere / part of everyday life’, ‘extremely dangerous’, ‘totally ignoring’, ‘most people don’t realise’, ‘what should I do?’, ‘mutually beneficial’, ‘psychological wellbeing’ and ‘factual information’
* an ability to use a range of vocabulary and the structures of English to communicate clearly.