VCE English Language 2016–2023

Study summary

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| **Please Note: This study summary comprises excerpts from the VCE English Language Study Design. The summary is not a substitute for the VCE Study Design. Users are advised to view the full accredited Study Design and other resources on the VCAA website.** |

Scope of study

The study of English Language enables students to understand the structures, features and discourses of written and spoken texts through the systematic and objective deconstruction of language in use.

VCE English Language builds on students’ previous learning about the conventions and codes used by speakers and writers of English. Informed by the discipline of linguistics, it provides students with metalinguistic tools to understand and analyse language use, variation and change. Students studying English Language understand that uses and interpretations of language are nuanced and complex, rather than a series of fixed conventions. Students explore how people use spoken and written English to communicate, to think and innovate, to construct identities, to build and interrogate attitudes and assumptions, and to create and disrupt social cohesion.

Rationale

The study of English Language enables students to further develop and refine their own skills in reading, writing, listening to and speaking English. Students learn about personal and public discourses in workplaces, fields of study, trades or social groups.

In this study students read widely to develop their analytical skills and understanding of linguistics. Students are expected to study a range of texts, including publications and public commentary about language in print and multimodal form. Students also observe and discuss contemporary language in use, as well as consider a range of historical and contemporary written and spoken texts.

Structure

The study is made up of four units.

Each unit contains two areas of study.

Metalanguage underpins the key knowledge and key skills in each of the four units. Students are required to understand and use the metalanguage contained in the unit and area of study introductions, the key knowledge and skills, and the metalanguage lists for Units 1 and 2, and Units 3 and 4.

Entry

There are no prerequisites for entry to Units 1, 2 and 3. Students must undertake Unit 3 prior to undertaking Unit 4. Units 1 to 4 are designed to a standard equivalent to the final two years of secondary education.

Unit 1: Language and communication

In this unit, students consider the way language is organised and explore the various functions of language and the nature of language as an elaborate system of signs. The relationship between speech and writing as the dominant modes of language and the impact of situational and cultural contexts on language choices are also considered. Students investigate children’s ability to acquire language, and the stages of language acquisition across a range of subsystems.

Unit 2: Language change

In this unit, students consider factors contributing to change over time in the English language and factors contributing to the spread of English. They explore texts from the past and from the present, considering how all subsystems of the language system are affected.

Students also consider how the global spread of English has led to a diversification of the language and to English now being used by more people as an additional or a foreign language than as a first language. Students consider the cultural repercussions of the spread of English and the various possibilities for the future of English.

Unit 3: Language variation and social purpose

In this unit students investigate English language in contemporary Australian social settings, along a continuum of informal and formal registers.

Students examine the stylistic features of formal and informal language in both spoken and written modes. Students learn how to describe the interrelationship between words, sentences and text as a means of exploring how texts construct message and meaning.

Students consider how texts are influenced by the situational and cultural contexts in which they occur. They learn how language can be indicative of relationships, power structures and purpose through the choice of a particular variety of language, and through the ways in which language varieties are used in processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Unit 4: Language variation and identity

In this unit students focus on the role of language in establishing and challenging different identities. Students examine both print and digital texts to consider the ways different identities are constructed.

Students explore how our sense of identity evolves in response to situations and experiences and is influenced by how we see ourselves and how others see us. Through our language we express ourselves as individuals and signal our membership of particular groups. Students explore how language can distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘them’, creating solidarity and reinforcing social distance.

Assessment

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on a decision that the student has demonstrated achievement of the set of outcomes specified for the unit. This decision will be based on the teacher’s assessment of the student’s performance on assessment tasks designated for the unit.

Levels of achievement

Units 1 and 2

Procedures for the assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision.

Units 3 and 4

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority will supervise the assessment of all students undertaking Units 3 and 4. In VCE English Language, students’ level of achievement will be determined by School-assessed Coursework and an end-of-year examination.

Percentage contributions to the study score in VCE English Language are as follows:

* Unit 3 School-assessed Coursework: 25 per cent
* Unit 4 School-assessed Coursework: 25 percent
* End-of-year examination: 50 per cent.