



2011 Languages: Auslan GA 3: Interactive sign examination

Interactive Sign Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2011 students generally signed well in the interactive sign examination. Well-prepared students were able to communicate with confidence and advance the exchange effectively with the assessors. Most students demonstrated fluency and observance of the rules of conversational discourse. Conversely, students who were less well prepared found the task more difficult.

It is important that students are familiar with both the specific requirements of the task and the language associated with it. Students should familiarise themselves with the *VCE Auslan Study Design* for the grammar and language requirements appropriate for this level. Students should be able to use the set grammar as stipulated in the study design in order to effectively meet the criteria for this assessment.

Although most students were able to demonstrate both formal and informal language skills, there were some who used informal speech for their presentation. Students who did not prepare had the greatest difficulty in changing from the informal conversation to the formal presentation.

Students who struggled with some signs often used fingerspelling to overcome difficulties in communication.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Section 1 – Conversation and Discussion

Students are required to converse about their personal world (including family, school, future aspirations, hobbies, interests, work and holidays).

Students who performed very well in this section were thoroughly prepared and able to link well with the assessors. These students:

- needed minimal support to communicate their ideas and information related to their personal world
- presented an excellent range of information, opinions and ideas in a clear and logical manner, using reasons and examples to advance to the conversation
- were able to demonstrate an excellent range of vocabulary and grammar that was appropriate to the context and task.

On the other hand, students who had not prepared well lacked the skills needed to adequately meet the criteria for this examination. These students:

- lacked preparation
- were not able to link with the assessor and relied on rote-learned information for their conversation
- could not advance the conversation when interrupted by the assessor
- did not know basic signs for general conversation and were unable to respond meaningfully or correctly to simple questions and repeated questions
- experienced difficulty in clarifying or elaborating on opinions and ideas
- needed frequent support from the assessor
- displayed a limited range of structures and vocabulary
- gave answers that were too short, and were unable to expand on information beyond a simple, short signing sequence
- used incorrect sign formation in one or more aspects; for example, hand shape and orientation
- frequently used fingerspelling inappropriately as a substitute for common signs.

Students need to be reminded:

- to sign their student number in Auslan
- to sign their student number as soon as they are seated
- not to sign their name/surname or the name of their school
- not to reveal their name, names of family members or teachers, or the name of the school they attend



- not to ask the assessor questions about his or her family
- not to overuse rhetorical questions
- to familiarise themselves with all components of the examination and the criteria used for assessment
- to use the correct form of address when signing with the assessor at the start of the exam and when leaving at the end of the exam.

Students should:

- know how to use 'enumeration' correctly when listing family members (phonologically incorrect use of movement)
- know common fingerspelled words such as 'so', 'do', 'but', 'too', 'it', etc. as this is part of the Auslan vocabulary
- not look at marking assessors when signing
- interact only with the assessor performing the exam
- know the correct fingerspelling orientation.

Students who did not perform well:

- had problems in reading/understanding the assessor's question 'What-do?'. They struggled to understand the fingerspelled sign for 'do' and asked several times for it to be repeated
- had difficulty signing 'age' numbers. Most were not clearly defined
- had difficulty understanding the assessor's fingerspelling orientation
- had problems with read-back in fingerspelling
- had problems linking with the assessor
- lacked preparation
- had difficulty clarifying or elaborating on opinions and ideas and needed frequent support from the assessor
- used a limited range of structures and vocabulary
- had clearly rote-learned answers to some questions and this negated the development of a true conversation
- used a restricted and stilted vocabulary based on signs with a single word for sign translation.
- overused nodding
- didn't use space appropriately when signing a variety of numbers.

Section 2 – Presentation and Response

Students are given three minutes to clearly and briefly introduce the presentation. Some students assumed that they would be allowed to present an extended monologue of their topic and were surprised when assessor interacted with them.

Students may support the Presentation (three minutes) and Response (five minutes) with objects such as photographs, diagrams and maps. Notes and cue cards are not permitted.

The choice of topic for some students seems to be an issue. Topics need to be researched to allow for broad discussion, but should not be too difficult in content and vocabulary requirements. Groups of students tended to present the same informal topic; for example, the weekend. Presentations were often too short and informal, and were not real topics. Students who devoted adequate time to their topic were able to effectively support and elaborate on their ideas, information and opinions while referring to the topic studied.

A topic that worked well for the presentation was how to use a camera. However, most students relied too heavily on previous knowledge and showed little if any evidence of research or detailed knowledge. The less successful students often simply talked about themselves, or a hobby or sport, and their responses were often unstructured and lacked focus. Students should not cover the same material that may be covered in the Conversation.

Students should:

- choose topics they are familiar with
- choose topics they have researched thoroughly and that are appropriate for formal language
- avoid topics covered in the Conversation section
- use a wide range of linked, relevant information for their discussion
- have a beginning, middle and an end to their presentation
- ensure that their presentation is three minutes in length
- be prepared for questions that are linked to their topic



- maintain eye contact with the assessor interviewing as appropriate
- use classifiers, role shift and space where appropriate
- ensure that time is established appropriately
- demonstrate the use of inflection.

The use of classifiers, role shift, colloquialisms and the use of space were good.

Some students brought objects/materials to support their presentation but forgot to use it with the assessor. Students need to be able to cross-link their resources in order to give the discussion some depth. Material that can be well integrated to support the student's presentation should be used. It does not disadvantage the student if support material is not used.

Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, students performed well in the 2011 Auslan Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination.

The majority of students capably used the DVD and computer software.

Students should do only one recording of their work and ensure that the whole response has been recorded. They must make effective use of the 10 minutes of reading/viewing time in order to be fully aware of the requirements of each task. During the reading/viewing time they can access their dictionary if necessary. Students should practise effective dictionary skills during the year so that the dictionary becomes a valuable tool in the examination and not a hindrance. When reading/viewing the task questions, students should refer to the both the DVD and the hard copy of the exam paper to ensure that they have accurately understood the task.

Some students lacked the ability to provide succinct responses to the questions, instead giving responses that went beyond the required answers. Criteria 1 and 2 were often not clearly understood.

Students must:

- attend the practice session for this exam. It is extremely important to attend as it allows students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the equipment
- practise focusing the camera on themselves. They should be able to see themselves from head to waist and from one shoulder to the other
- always look into the camera when recording. Where the response is for only one person, they need to look into the camera. Where they are responding to a group of people they should move their head from side to side, showing that they are responding to a group rather than an individual
- ensure they have recorded a response. They must check both responses to see that they have recorded themselves
- watch the position of their hands. The palms should be facing inward towards the student's chest. They should check whether they can see themselves signing and the signs they are signing
- avoid wearing colourful (fluorescent colours) tops; grey, white, light grey or light blue is acceptable. Hair should be tied back. The assessor should be able to see the student's facial expressions at all times
- use their exam time wisely
- clearly indicate their student number, formal/informal and the draft number at the start of each draft
- avoid too many drafts
- answer the question but not repeat the resource presented
- check signs in the resources on the DVD if they are unsure of signs
- start their answer in an appropriate way, remembering that Auslan is a visual language. If students are stuck or are not sure how to start, they should imagine the scene visually.

Students:

- produced too many drafts. Usually the first draft is the best. Students who do more than two drafts seem to leave out information each time a draft is completed. Students are encouraged to focus on preparing the first draft, making sure they have all the right points before recording themselves
- were confused about the difference between formal and informal signing



- signed very short responses. Students should aim to produce a response in the time allocated in the study design
- overused signs that are culturally inappropriate
- used few current Auslan fillers
- voiced or mouthed English words during their responses instead of culturally deaf mouthing
- did not structure their response well
- had problems with clearly defined hand shapes and incorrect movements; some vocabulary was signed incorrectly (for example, dream, man, typing/typist, want, etc.)
- used signed English signs; for example, mother using 'three' hand shape
- used incorrect role-shifting and inappropriate body shifts
- use too many classifiers in some formal presentation that were more appropriate for informal signing
- did not use eye gaze and anaphoric indexing correctly
- did not sequence their ideas or information
- repeated the same ideas or signs in their responses.

Students need to:

- read the question carefully
- answer the question
- use the resources to answer the question
- understand key terms like 'explain', 'compare' and 'understand'
- look into the camera and maintain eye contact
- avoid repeating signs
- sign only their student number, followed by informal or formal and the draft number; for example, 99999999X-informal-draft 1
- structure their response with an introduction (which introduces the topic and the area covered), a middle (which demonstrates detailed knowledge/research of the subject) and a conclusion (which addresses the original presentation aim)
- avoid making cultural mistakes
- avoid using English grammar
- avoid linguistic errors.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section I: Watching and responding to informal signed texts

(the use of the term informal signed texts here refers to spontaneous communication, namely that which is not normally recorded)

Description of the task

Section I is designed primarily to assess the students' knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from informal signed texts. It is related to one or more of the prescribed themes.

Students observe an informal signed discourse, which was a DVD-recorded performance. The signed discourse was between five and seven minutes in length and was repeated three times. There was a two-minute pause between each performance, during which the student could take notes.

Students were expected to respond in Auslan to a set task; for example, responding to a message or an announcement. The length of the response should have been between two and three minutes. The task was available on a DVD in Auslan and written in English.

Some students:

- began with a statement of the task, which took up valuable signing time
- took on the wrong role play, instead just acting as themselves
- ignored the question
- did not use the information on the DVD
- produced a statement
- failed to engage the audience



- did not produce an appropriate informal introduction as required but began with a formal introduction
- failed to use the correct structure
- did not have an appropriate greeting/opening, body of discussion, closure of discussion/parting/arranging another meeting, etc.
- failed to look for the key words in order to structure their response; for example, explain and give reasons.

Task 1 – Informal

Informal Task

The students' task was to discuss with their brother or sister the importance of safety on the beach and in the water that they learnt from the lifesaver. The following points could have been included in the response:

- always swim between the red and yellow flags
- choose a reference point on the shore to avoid drifting
- always read the surf condition board
- if you think the conditions are too rough for you, don't go in the water
- always swim with a friend
- swim parallel to and not away from the shore
- only swim in well-lit areas so you can be seen if you get into trouble
- always leave the water immediately if requested to by a lifeguard
- if in difficulty, raise one hand in the air and wave.

Students needed to remember that their response was to a sibling and they should have clarified the age of the sibling by the nature of their sign and content of the conversation; for example, the information should have been presented in a way that was appropriate for the sibling's age. A discussion with a much younger sibling would be less sophisticated than if talking to a teenager.

Section II: Watching and responding to formal signed texts

(the use of the term formal here refers to a communicative act prepared prior to presentation)

Description

Section II is designed primarily to assess the students' knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from formally signed texts.

Students watched a pre-recorded formal signed discourse that was between three and five minutes in length. Students were required to produce a response in Auslan to the signed text. The task specified a purpose, context and audience. The length of the response should have been approximately three to four minutes.

Student responses had a similar pattern to the informal responses, although students generally understood the nature of formal discourse. Many students set up the introduction, main body and conclusion well.

Some students failed to extract, classify or reorganise the information, with only a minority of the students completing the task effectively. Some students failed to sufficiently reorganise and restructure the information presented, sometimes simply reproducing signing sequences from the DVD. Students also frequently reverted to informal signing.

Students are reminded to read the questions carefully as some took on the wrong role play while responding to the task. Others ignored the question by failing to identify and analyse the information on the DVD and to identify the task appropriately. This also resulted in confusion over the context and audience.

Capacity to convey information

Students often produced a statement and failed to engage in a discussion. Students had difficulty observing the appropriate cultural way to structure the response.

Students also showed lack of ability to structure the task correctly. They should have commenced with an informal greeting or opening, followed by the main body of discussion and concluding with a closure to the discussion and an appropriate informal parting.



Many students were unable to accurately extract and use the ideas presented on the DVD. The less successful students simply reiterated small sections of the DVD.

Accuracy and use of vocabulary and grammatical structures

The standard of student responses fell in the following areas: clearly defined hand shapes, incorrect movements and poor use of space. Some vocabulary was signed incorrectly, including vocabulary given to the students on the resources.

Too many classifiers were used in some formal presentations. Some students did not use 'referents' in space or anaphoric pronouns, especially in the informal task. Some students included a few signed English signs and inappropriate body shift occurred when body movements were too exaggerated.

Students still prefer to select language or ideas where a literal translation from English dominates the signing instead of using correct inflected Auslan. This is reflected in the depth and range of grammatical structures used.

Task 2 – Formal

Students who performed well gave a clear explanation as to when and why they wanted to take a gap year. They included information on what they wanted to do during that year.

The following is a possible answer for Task 2. Why take a gap year?

- allows a well-deserved break from education – a rest from studies, been at school for 12 years, from prep to year 12
- it looks good on your résumé
- gives you time to think about your future
- if going to university you come back refreshed after a break from studying
- can be an amazing experience, visiting fantastic places, making friends and returning home with stories to tell
- you are free, able to enjoy yourself and there is no stress
- the experience helps you to make decisions
- universities may think that students are more motivated and likely to work harder after they have returned from a gap year
- employers may think a person who has taken a gap year is more mature and organised than someone who hasn't
- work experience helps make decisions

What can you do in your gap year?

- volunteer work with variety of communities; for example, teach English, coach sport, community work, sport program or youth camp
- undertake paid work
- become involved in sport; for example, hiking
- learn a new skill; for example, a language or photography
- go on an around the world trip
- work overseas as a nanny and learn a language

When should you take a gap year?

- after Year 12, before starting university or work