2018 VCE English as an Additional Language (EAL) (NHT) examination report

General comments

The 2018 English as an Additional Language (EAL) (NHT) 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 extended responses in Sections B and C was holistic, using the published assessment criteria. Assessors related student performance directly to these criteria, and their judgments were assisted by the use of a set of descriptors. Teachers and students should be aware of the assessment criteria, the descriptors and the sample examination, which are published on the VCAA website.

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 an interview on a regular radio program about collectibles, 'What's your hobby?'. The second was a video chat conversation between cousins who now live in different hemispheres. There was a mix of question types with varying degrees of challenge. Questions covered literal and inferred meaning and addressed the key knowledge and skills in the Study Design. Students are advised to make effective use of the note-taking space provided beside the questions.

Identifying tone and delivery is challenging for students and emphasis on this is needed. Exposure to a wide variety of spoken texts using Standard Australian English will assist. Students need to develop their critical listening skills both in and outside of the classroom. 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 effect of emphasis, pauses, sighs, hesitations, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with the terminology used in the key knowledge and skills for this 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.

- The Beatles were his mother's favourite rock band.
- He's a musician.

Question 1b.

Correct responses included the idea of the pleasure and emotions connected to 'thrill' and either:

- searching for items for his collection
- finding something he's been looking for for a long time.

Question 1ci.

The correct answer was 'emotional reasons'. Answers that only gave examples were incorrect.

Question 1cii.

- Her old comic books are gathering dust.
- She only collected as a child.

Question 1d.

An item in a collection is in 'mint condition' if it is like new.

Question 1e.

Correct responses gave two words that were positive or affirming, e.g. 'close', 'friendly', 'familiar', 'relaxed', 'sociable', 'warm', 'gracious'.

Question 1f.

Any two of:

- The chance to shop globally and locally.
- The ability to buy, swap or sell online.
- Being able to connect with other people who collect Beatles records.

Text 2
Question 2a.

Any one of:

- beautiful white countryside
- everything seems quieter
- everything is less rushed.

Question 2b.

The question had three aspects. Correct responses included an example from each of the following lists:

Example of persuasion	Example of language	Example of delivery
- he states that because the weather is better, you can do many outdoor activities - he reminds her of their shared past enjoyment of summer - repetition of words associated with nostalgia	- direct address: 'You remember, Rosa …' - use of inclusive pronoun 'we' - listing to add weight to his ideas: 'tennis, cricket, cycling, rowing …' - repetition: 'You remember ...', 'Remember too, …', 'Remember all the great activities we enjoyed …'	- changes in pace and emphasis: speaks faster and excitedly initially then slowing to emphasise specific advantages of summer - use of positive tone of voice - enthusiasm in relating why he prefers summer; he paints a positive image of the season and the activities

Question 2c.

	Maximum temperature
Ben	32°
Rosa	6°

Question 2d.

Correct responses used a word or phrase that carried the connotation of 'sure'. Any one of the following was correct:

- absolutely
- convinced
- absolutely convinced.

Question 2e.

- lack of vitamin D
- not enough sunshine in winter

Question 2f.

friendly and affectionate

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.

All responses were to *All About Eve.* Both topics on this text provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills.

High-scoring responses 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. Some included effective discussion about the expectations of the 1950s. Responses to the first topic indicated that students were familiar with the ideas around Eve and evil, so they were able to write about her actions with a moral framework to reach a decision on whether she was evil. Most responses said she was but many looked beyond this and wrote sympathetically about her extenuating circumstances.

Many responses to the second topic wrote about all characters, not just Eve, and responded insightfully to 'seems'. Lower-scoring responses did not address this element and only concluded that the film had a happy ending.

Higher-scoring responses were structured, well developed and sustained and demonstrated command of sufficient relevant vocabulary to communicate ideas meaningfully.

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/tells 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?', 'to what extent', etc.

Section C – Analysis of language use

The task material consisted of two pieces about the way robots could change our lives. The topic, language, length and style of the pieces were appropriate for the tasks, and offered opportunities for students at all levels to demonstrate their skills. Two differing opinions were clearly expressed. The first was a newspaper article that expressed concern about the ways in which robots were already threatening our society. The second, a letter in reply to the article, dismissed it as 'exaggerated, frightening nonsense'. The article was accompanied by a visual depicting a humanoid robot.

Question 1

This question assessed comprehension of the task material, and answers needed to be precise to demonstrate comprehension..

Question 1a.

- Workers will be retrained.
- New jobs will be created.

Question 1b.

- Human labour is more expensive or robots will provide a cheaper labour force.
- Robots could do a better job.

Question 1c.

Correct responses included any two of the following pairs of aligning answers:

John's views about what robots cannot do	Ashley's responses
love or nurture	Robots allow parents to have more quality time with their children.
hug	Robots allow people to have a real conversation with their partner.
understand emotion	Humans need to be more rational.

Question 1d.

Correct responses included words conveying the following ideas:

- John is frightened by the power of robots to retain and share our private information. Or, the power of software to track our lives is threatening.
- Ashley minimises the threat by trivialising the information that might be accessed, e.g. 'online shopping history'. Ashley is sceptical about whether there is a real threat.

Question 2

In this question, students were able to use any of the task material to analyse how language, the use of argument and visual features were used in an attempt to persuade. The highest-scoring responses recognised that there are many things that writers do when they seek to influence a reader. In particular, these responses identified how writers will exaggerate and use emotive appeals to get a reader's attention. Students were expected to find connections between the text and the visuals. The expected qualities for scoring clearly indicate that to score 6 or more marks students need to show some understanding of how visual material is used to persuade in the context presented.

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. The highest-scoring responses analysed argument use and language in an integrated way. Some responses used a comparative approach that analysed arguments and counter arguments from both texts in the same paragraph. While the highest-scoring analyses attempted to explore the implications of the visual most were just descriptive, referring to 'cold eyes', 'being in charge' or the significance of the clipboard.

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 has been done in the task material provided.

Features of strong high-scoring responses included:

- a clear understanding of the context of the writing and the points of view expressed in the pieces
- discussion of how language, the visual and the use of argument worked together in the task material
- an exploration of the implications of specific language choices; for example, 'science fiction novel come to life', 'so threatening', 'humans are going out of fashion', 'exaggerated, frightening nonsense', 'we need to be rational', 'let's look at some facts'
- an ability to use a range of vocabulary and the structures of English to communicate clearly.