2016 VCE English Language examination report

General comments

The 2016 English Language examination consisted of three sections. Section A had four questions and was worth a total of 15 marks. Section B, an analytical commentary, had one question worth a total of 30 marks. Students could choose one of three essay topics in Section C, which was worth 30 marks. There was one text in Section A and one text in Section B. Text 1, in Section A, was a transcript of a televised news breakfast program, consisting of 107 intonation units. Text 2, in Section B, was a newspaper column, consisting of 32 lines of text.

Section A was completed reasonably well, but students often missed out on marks by not using evidence from the text to support their answers. Engaging with the text and quoting evidence and line numbers is crucial to obtain high marks. Students must also be aware of the need to use specific metalanguage in this section of the examination; this was particularly important in Questions 3 and 4. It is vital that students take note of the mark allocation and amount of answer space given for each question and provide detailed answers accordingly; Question 4 (worth five marks) was worth more than the other questions in this section, and therefore students were required to write in substantial detail.

Section B required students to write an analytical commentary, and students were confident in this particular writing skill. Students were clearly aware of the need to establish the context, social purpose and register, and most managed to cover these features in an introductory paragraph. Once again, engagement with the text is of the utmost importance, and students are reminded to quote examples from the text regularly throughout their commentary.

Section C required students to choose one of three essay topics. Questions 7 and 8 were the most popular questions. Generally, most responses were well structured and adhered to essay-writing conventions (introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion). Students are reminded to draw on contemporary examples and current linguistic issues in their essays and not to merely rely on generic language theories or textbook examples. The higher-scoring essays drew on examples from politics, social media and the student's own linguistic environment to support the discussion. Students must be wary, however, of reproducing essays they've written during the year on similar topics; it is vital for students to read the stipulated essay question carefully and answer appropriately, paying attention to key words and referring to at least two subsystems in their response.

Advice to students

- This study requires a sound knowledge of grammar. Students must familiarise themselves with all aspects of metalanguage and grammar from the study design and practise responding to short-answer questions similar to those generally found in Section A of the examination. Section A typically exposes students' lack of grammatical and linguistic knowledge.
- Students must **engage** with the texts in Sections A and B – their answers to questions and their analytical commentaries should reflect the content of those particular texts, and should not simply be generic statements that could apply to any text of a similar nature.

- Students should pay attention to the mark allocation in Section A and provide more detailed, thorough responses for questions with higher mark allocations.
- In Section B, it is important to ascertain which stylistic and discourse features to prioritise, since it is impossible to address everything.
- The careful reading of a question, or essay topic, is vital if a student is to attain high marks. In Section C, students must ensure that their essay responses are relevant and on-topic. Irrespective of the quality of their writing, if a student's essay does not address the topic, they cannot attain high marks.
- Students should not write their essays based purely on the stimulus material provided. The stimulus must be referred to in some way in the essay, but writing a paragraph on each of the stimulus prompts and nothing else is to be discouraged.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what the answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Short-answer questions

This section consisted of Text 1 – a transcript of an ABC News Breakfast interview with the director and an actor from a theatre production, *Ladies in Black*.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	24	53	20	**1.9**

Most students were able to obtain some marks for this question, which required them to identify the purposes of the text and show how the register supported them. The reference to 'purposes' implied that there was more than one purpose to the text. For high marks, students needed to identify at least two purposes and link them to the register, which was relatively informal. A number of students recognised that the text also contained some formal features, and they were able to explain how they, too, supported the purposes.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

One purpose of this text is for SP to promote his show to likely listeners that may decide to go watch it. In order to show the 'Ladies in Black' performance in a positive light, SP uses an informal register with a conversational tone, evident in use of discourse markers "so like" (37) and "kind of" (42). Additionally, another purpose is to build solidarity between interlocutors. SP's use of self-deprecating humour "I always …. as anything" (37, 38) is symptomatic of the relaxed and informal register, which builds rapport with other speakers evidenced in (38, 39, 40) "@@@" – shared laughter.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	12	31	39	17	**1.6**

Most students were able to correctly identify the proper nouns in this section of text, although some students confused them with pronouns. For full marks, students needed to identify the proper nouns (at least two, although many students found all six), engage with the text and discuss coherence using appropriate metalanguage.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

"Melbourne Theatre Company" (14) is a proper noun that impacts the coherence of the text as it falls under the conventions of theatre and musicals, being that the text is about theatre and musicals. The use of the proper noun "Sumner" (15) followed by "Ladies in Black" impacts the coherence of the text as it is logical ordering that list firstly where the show is playing (at the Sumner) and what the show is called (Ladies in Black) so that the audience can easily make sense of the details of the show.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	10	11	28	29	22	**2.4**

This question required students to discuss the function of two different discourse features within a given passage. Most students successfully identified features such as:

- the supportive use of laughter and overlapping speech (lines 62–69)
- pauses by BF (lines 54 and 55) and SP (line 43) to hold the floor while thinking of a response
- rising terminal by SP (lines 45–47) to hold the floor and keep rhythm
- discourse particles 'Now' by EA (line 51) to indicate taking the floor and a topic change
- EA's use of positive politeness in her pronunciation of 'excillint' to help keep the actor feeling comfortable and to increase the humour of the conversation
- use of stress throughout to provide emphasis and focus
- non-fluency features such as repairs and false starts to indicate spontaneous discussion.

As always, it is important for students to use metalanguage, engage with the text and not to simply provide a generic discussion of the features selected. It is also critical for questions such as this with higher mark allocations that students provide more detailed responses.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

"Three" (52) is an example of emphatic stress used by EA to emphasise the large achievement that it is for BF to be able to play three characters. This addresses BF's positive face by acknowledging his achievements, and promotes BF's image positively as a person with a lot of talent. The use of vocal effects such as laughter by PK and SP "@@@" (65-66) is used to maintain rapport with BF by showing that they find his comment on Australian accent funny which was achieved by BF through the insertion of the vowel 'o' in the lexeme 'right' to create 'roight', which is humorous to a general Australian audience because it's relatable. PK and SP's vocal effects thus maintain rapport with BF.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	9	19	27	25	15	**3**

This question was worth five marks and therefore required students to provide a detailed discussion of the discourse strategies used by EA in controlling the interview. To receive full

marks, students should have discussed at least two strategies in detail, providing examples to support those strategies. The higher-scoring responses used very specific metalanguage (e.g. 'interrogatives' rather than 'questions', or 'discourse particle' rather than 'word') and showed a level of engagement with the text. High-scoring responses also noted EA's role as the dominant interviewer in this text and the way she controlled not only the topic management, but the turn-taking. Examples of discourse strategies included:

- EA works as the topic manager by introducing her guests to the viewing audience and contextualising the interview in lines 1 to 4, which she concludes with a welcome and rising intonation to indicate her intention to relinquish the floor
- EA continues to be the primary topic manager as she poses interrogatives to the interviewees. She requests information from SP on lines 10–11 and poses a direct interrogative to him on line 26
- EA includes the other interviewee by putting a direct question to BF on line 52
- EA acts supportively with 'Pragmatic' on line 31 and laughter on lines 38 and 107
- EA is further supportive through her use of positive politeness with gentle teasing when discussing BF's accent both in real life and in the play
- EA further demonstrates her supportive role through her comment about her parents at the conclusion of the interview
- EA demonstrates her professionalism through demonstrating prior knowledge of the play in her question to BF on line 52
- EA controls the direction of the interview overall, but permits some questioning and comment from her co-host PK.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

EA uses numerous interrogatives, such as "Why did you…" (26) and the imperative "give us…" (10-11) in order to control turn-taking, with the interrogatives eliciting responses from guests and the imperative directing SP as to what topic he should talk about, and these support the informative purpose of the text by allowing for a structured interview. She also uses discourse particles to aid topic shifts, such as "now" (51) and "so" (61), and this once again aids the informative and promotional purposes of the discourse by allowing her to cover numerous topics to give the audience a broad understanding of the play. Her use of the vocative "Bobby" (51) allows her to shift the focus of the interview from SP to BF, to once again aid the informative purpose by providing another person's perspective on the play.

Section B – Analytical commentary

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	0	1	1	2	3	5	8	14	17	16	13	9	6	3	1	**9.2**

Students are reminded that they must write their analytical commentary on the correct text, as there were a few students who wrote their commentary on Text 1 and they could not be credited with any marks for this section.

Text 2 was a column from the 'Money' section of *The Sunday Age* newspaper, the third in a series of stories for people starting to manage their financial future. This piece concerned giving advice on how to save for a first big overseas trip.

Features of the text included:

- The lexis from the semantic field of finance is indicative of the article appearing in the 'Money' section of *The Sunday Age* newspaper.

- Given the audience of the average reader of *The Sunday Age*, sophisticated lexis such as 'discretionary' and 'anticipation' are relevant for the context. This raises the formality of the text somewhat.
- The inclusion of expert opinions further reflects the locale of the text and conveys a serious tone to the piece as is expected of an article in *The Sunday Age.*
- The primary purpose is to advise/direct readers how to save for their 'first big trip' (line 2), and this is supported by travel-specific lexis and lexis from the field of finance.
- The secondary purpose is to entertain (or stimulate the reader's interest and connect with the audience), which is supported mostly by the relative informality of the text. This is demonstrated through the predominant use of the second person 'you' and the direct questions to the reader; for example, 'To work, or not?' (line 22). Informality is further indicated by lexis such as 'flit' (line 23) and 'flitting' (line 10), and phrases such as 'wind up' (line 5), 'great unknown' (line 4), 'extremely awesome' (line 26), 'hankering to pull pints' (24), 'temp' (line 24) and 'on the cheap' (line 10)
- Listing is used throughout to aid cohesion in the text and enhances in the informational nature of the text.
- The discourse feature of directly questioning the reader – 'Will you be…?' (line 9), 'Will you go…?' (line 19) – involves the reader in the text and aids the text's purpose of providing guidance to the reader.
- Inference is required to achieve complete coherence. For example, 'five-star' (line 17), 'couch surfing' (line 18), 'Airbnb' (line 18), 'pull pints' (line 24) and 'footy' (line 31).
- There is a prevalence of positively connoted lexis: 'thrill' (line 3), 'anticipation' (line 3), 'grand adventure' (lines 6 and 7), 'sipping cocktails' (line 9) and 'extremely awesome' (line 26).

Many students wrote extensively on the text and provided a good discussion of the social purpose, context and register. They successfully identified a number of stylistic and discourse features for analysis, although not always the most relevant ones. Students are reminded to consider the text they are presented with and establish the most salient features for analysis. Lexical features should not be overlooked in any text, particularly a written one. Students need to closely analyse key linguistic features and link them to the social purpose, context and register, and they should engage fully with the text by quoting examples rather than just listing line numbers. The higher-scoring commentaries came alive with their multiple references to the text and demonstrated a real understanding of the 'flavour' of the text.

The following is an example of a high-scoring analytical commentary.

The field of the text revolves around the finances involved in undertaking overseas trips, while the main function is to inform inexperienced travellers of the things they need to consider before travelling in order to save money. Although the text is a written column published in the Age, the register of the text is moderately informal which reflects the author's social purpose of establishing rapport with her audience. Larissa Ham, the author, also demonstrates an interest in portraying herself as a reliable and knowledgeable source of information, and this appears to be her secondary social purpose.

The text's function and social purpose is best supported by Ham's lexical and syntactic choices. Ham employs the modal verb "will" in the phrase "will have a huge impact on your budget" (line 12) in order convey her certainty on the matter, assisting her in reinforcing her authority on the issue. Similarly, she employs the strong modal phrase "need to know" (line 6) to suggest that the reader has an obligation to take into account their financial situations before travelling, thereby allowing her to assert the strength of her opinion. Ham frequently uses imperatives such as "don't even think about funding the trip…" (line 27) to further present herself as one who has experience in such matters, encouraging the audience to consider her advice reasonable, linking back to her desire to establish her credibility and expertise as a columnist. In terms of the informative function, Ham employs the modal verb "can" in line 22 to convey information based on possibility, highlighting the benefits of working overseas. Ham frequently relies on listing as a

technique in order to package information concisely and efficiently, as demonstrated by the phrase "camping, five-star, hostels, cheap guesthouses, couch surfing, Airbnb" in line 17/18, which allows her to elaborate on the various accommodation options available to her readers. Furthermore, Ham uses the modal verb "should" in line 16 to suggest to her audience that accommodation is something they have a responsibility to consider, thereby linking back to the informative and advisory function of the text.

The moderately informal register of the text can be linked to Ham's social purpose of establishing rapport with her audience, and is best demonstrated by her lexical and syntactic choice. Ham employs the personal pronoun "you" in line 5 to create the impression that she is addressing her readers directly, thereby minimising the social distance between herself and her audience so that they will view her as someone trustworthy who understands their financial concerns. Her frequent use of interrogatives such as "will you be sipping cocktails in Monaco…" (line 9) further serves to enhance the conversational tone of the column, challenging her audience to consider the various factors involved in travelling. The informal register is further supported by Ham's use of the intensifier "extremely awesome" in line 26, which allows her to establish a casual, conversational tone within her piece. However, Ham's use of elevated lexis such as "discretionary spending" and her adherence to standard grammatical conventions, as demonstrated by the clause "you don't have to necessarily know where you'll wind up, or who you'll meet along the way" (line 5) reflects the situational context, since articles in The Age are expected to uphold language norms so as not to negatively impact the reputation of the newspaper.

Coherence and cohesion are essential when constructing written informative texts such as this one. The information is ordered according to the topic under discussion, for instance, "accommodation and transport" is bolded to act as a sub-heading, allowing Ham to achieve a coherent text. The use of hyponyms such as "buses" and "taxis" links to the field of transport, contributing to the text's cohesion. Similarly, the repetition of "cheap", "prices" and "budget" serve to reinforce the semantic field of financial planning, creating consistency across the text. The use of anaphoric reference in line 10, where "it" is used to replace "trip", allows Ham to avoid unnecessary repetition, creating close links to her previous question. All of these examples allow Ham to achieve a cohesive and coherent text that is not confusing to her readers, further linking to the informative function of the text.

Section C – Essay

Question chosen	none	6	7	8
%	1	22	39	38

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	0	1	1	1	3	7	11	16	16	13	12	8	6	3	1	**9.1**

Students are reminded that it is imperative to read the essay topic carefully and to write an essay that **closely** addresses the topic. A number of students wrote essays that were loosely linked to their chosen essay topic but that did not accurately reflect the wording of the question. For instance, many students wrote about jargon (Question 6) but did not pay attention to the real focus of the question, which concerned those people who are critical of jargon and not appreciative of its vital role in communication. Students who wrote essays that were not on-topic missed out on marks. It is important that students be able to 'draw on contemporary discussions and debate about language' as in the assessment criteria for this examination, and the essay is their opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of such issues.

High-scoring students:

- kept to the topic and referred to some of the stimulus material
- wrote well-structured essays with an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion
- included contemporary examples from 2016 media
- used metalanguage accurately and referred to at least two subsystems
- managed their time effectively and wrote a complete essay.

Question 6

This question required a balanced evaluation of the pros and cons of the use of jargon, and an understanding that although the word has negative connotations, there is a positive side to the use of jargon in our lives. High-scoring responses included examples from various domains (not simply the medical, legal and sociological fields referred to in the stimulus) and included discussion of contemporary references and examples from 2016. Low-scoring responses tended to be very generic and stuck resolutely to the stimulus material.

Relevant points included:

- All professions and jobs require the use of jargon to some extent.
- The advantages of such terminology are obvious: accuracy and precision of expression, succinct definition of relevant terms and economy of expression.
- There is also a feeling of shared identity with the fellow users of the selected jargon in belonging to the same group. This can be found in sports, hobbies and pastimes. Use of jargon here provides a valuable shortcut in communicating with members of the group as well as reinforcing group membership and belonging.
- The use of appropriate jargon has both social and professional advantages for the user. A command of the jargon in a particular field, whether medical, legal or anything else, implies an expertise in the speaker/writer.
- The use of jargon can create a feeling of exclusion, particularly when the speaker or writer is deliberately aiming to confuse.
- Jargon is often used to hide reality, particularly in politics, the military and advertising. It is a common feature of doublespeak and bureaucratese.
- People like to be part of the 'in' group and use jargon as a badge of membership. This can result in the exclusion of others who do not belong to that group.
- Jargon is often used as a means of avoiding an issue by falling back on the use of well-oiled phrases and expressions.
- Misunderstandings, both intended and unintended, can occur.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Jargon plays a pivotal role in Australian society by enabling precision and decisiveness in communication. Members of the in-group who understand such jargonistic terminology believe it 'facilitates successful communication', however those who don't belong and who are outsiders claim it 'erects quite successful communication barriers' (Kate Burridge). Our perception and appreciation of jargon thus is dependent upon whether we are affiliated with the group or not.

When Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull was talking about state income taxes on Radio National earlier this year and uttered about the 'vertical fiscal imbalance', many Australians from the general public were critical of this language use as 'Unless you're a member of a clique, it's gibberish' (Steven Pinker). Among fellow politicians and members of the public familiar with political and financial jargon, this language allows for the effective communication of ideas in a lexically condensed way. However those who did not comprehend what was being uttered were swift to take to social media and lambaste the PM's use of 'language that is too hard for the average Aussie to understand', as comedian Lehmo asserts. When I'm talking about Biology terminology with my fellow Biology classmates, jargon allows for correctness, precision and accuracy in a subject specific domain. For example, 'The neurotransmitter crossed the synapse

by diffusion and binded to a post-synaptic neuron' allows for efficient, accurate language to describe exactly what is occurring. When my friends are listening to this description the reaction received is generally negative because they cannot comprehend what is being spoken. Thus it is very difficult for them to appreciate the vital role it plays in creating effective communication.

Jargon and political doublespeak are often termed as 'evils' (stimulus e)) for being incomprehensible and difficult to understand. This feature of jargon can be consciously employed by a speaker to purposely exclude or obfuscate a situation. … The agentless passive construction is intentionally vague as it fails to indicate what ramifications will be in place and who will be responsible. Jargon such as this and that used by sociologists in America to describe love (as the "cognitive-affective state characterised by intrusive and obsessive fantasizing…') do not facilitate successful communication as ordinary lay people to which the language is aimed cannot understand the 'obscure and often pretentious language marked by a roundabout way of expression' (David Crystal). This was also the case when the Australian Bureau of Statistics accounted the 2016 Census meltdown to a 'Denial of Services (DOS) Attack'. Also an acronym, the use of jargon was denounced by society for baffling the general public about what the exact situation was – that is the Bureau shut down the website for fear of being hacked. Australian society was unappreciative of the way in which jargon was used as they were not adequately informed of the problem at hand. Whilst jargon plays a vital role in creating in-group solidarity, promoting intimacy and solidarity, the contexts in which it appears and the audience to which it is presented help determine whether jargon's use is appreciated by critics.

Sometimes within the in-group, where jargon is designed to facilitate successful communication by providing accuracy, brevity or specificity, it is misunderstood and its role becomes questionable. This is evidenced in stimulus c where abbreviations compiled and created by GP's for brevity and as a way of strengthening in-group bonds were found to be misunderstood and misinterpreted by 'more than a quarter of the GPs surveyed'. Jargon's 'vital role in communication' can be seen as negligible if members of the in-group cannot even understand what is being uttered. Critics have premise to be dismissive of jargon in such instances.

Jargon possesses an integral role in allowing the proficient communication of ideas in a way that enables accuracy and precision. However this important aspect is often overlooked by Australian society as they have been at the receiving end of jargonistic terminology and doublespeak that is purposely used to manipulate and obfuscate the truth.

Question 7

This topic required students to consider how digital communication is changing the way language is used today in Australia. Higher-scoring responses to this question looked more broadly at language use and considered the social implications of digital communication and its impact on our lives. Low-scoring responses tended to focus on simplistic notions about emoji use and did not explore the topic in great depth.

Relevant points included:

- Emojis are actively used in digital communication not only to convey feelings or emotions but also to replace words and be visual representations of comment or opinion.
- The Oxford Dictionary named the emoji 'Face with Tears of Joy' its 2015 Word of the Year. Oxford noted that emojis are being used more frequently and are having an impact on popular culture.
- The speed and informality of SMS and social media leads to shorter sentences and paragraphs and a lack of depth of ideas.
- There is a trivialisation of content ('like' on Facebook) and the ability to reach a wide audience.
- Digital communication makes use of punctuation in new and interesting ways, such as the hashtag as a marker of solidarity and activism.

- Digital communication can foster a sense of in-group solidarity but equally can pose barriers or seem phoney.

The following essay is a high-scoring response.

As a result of technological development, Australians have become more dependent on instant messaging and other digital mediums of communication, and this has created a variety of changes to the way we use language.

The nature of digital communication is partially responsible for the blurring distinction between the spoken and written modes; features once used extensively in spoken contexts are now being appropriated for use in the written mode, and vice versa. Since online communication mediums such as instant messaging are now used by the majority of the population for everyday purposes, facilitating informal conversations between friends of a close social distance, our language use has inevitably changed as a result. Elision and assimilation such as 'dya' and 'wanna' are now being imitated in written discourse for efficiency, but also to create an informal register that minimises social distance between interlocutors. Voiced fillers such as 'um' and 'err' are also used to 'hold' the floor, providing the user time to formulate an appropriate response, as well as to signal to the other interlocutors to wait for a reply. Discourse particles have also been introduced to the written mode; for instance, 'okay so the other day…' is used to initiate topic shifts, while 'but yeah I don't think…' is often used to minimise the force behind a statement. Similarly, abbreviations such as 'irl' (in real life) and shortenings such as 'soz' (sorry) and 'diss' (disrespect) are often heard in spoken contexts due to the popularity of instant messaging, especially amongst teenagers, who employ such features in order to be perceived as relevant and relatable to their peers. All of these examples demonstrate the impact digital communication has had on the spoken and written modes.

*Due to Australia's increasing dependence on technology and instant messaging, our language has changed in order to address the limitations of online communication. For instance, the reliance on ellipsis in social media posts such as the tweet 'didn't know ya had Twitter, was searching for friends lol' can be explained by the 140 character restrictions enforced on Twitter. Similarly, the 'colourful faces and images infiltrating text messages' play an integral role in online communication, as emojis are able to 'fill in the emotional blanks', providing a concise and efficient means of conveying and recreating complex emotions without the need for words. Similarly, the inability to convey prosodic and paralinguistic cues has been resolved by the development of non-Standard orthographic conventions. For instance, asterisks can be used to indicate a certain tone such as the phrase '*cough cough*' which implies a tone of sarcasm and irony, and can also be used to denote an action ('*facepalm*'). The forward slash is typically used for emphasis ('no /kidding/'), while the period can be used to signal frustration or aggression ('worst.day.ever.'). The use of phrases such as 'haha' for laughter, 'hehe' for sheepish laughter and 'keke' for sadistic laughter also demonstrate the way in which instant messaging has led to linguistic change in order to convey vocal effects and enhance informal spoken discourse. Thus, it can be said that digital communication has invariably led to changes in the way we use language in Australia.*

The distanced and anonymous nature of most social media platforms has also contributed to widespread linguistic innovation, as users attempt to establish a sense of belonging with different online communities by employing the slang used by particular social groups. For instance, Instagram users have created a number of neologisms to describe various photo-sharing activities, such as the initialism 'TBT' for 'throw-back Thursday', as well as to foster a sense of solidarity with other users with similar interests, as demonstrated by the blends 'fitfam' and 'fitspo', which are often used extensively among the health and fitness community on Instagram. The importance of esoteric terms in establishing in-group membership is also evident on Tumblr, a micro-blogging platform favoured by hard-core fans of popular culture, where users have developed an extensive lexicon of jargon to communicate with fellow bloggers, consolidate friendships and reinforce identity and interests. These phrases include 'fandom', 'shipping' and 'OTP' (one true pairing), which are used almost extensively within Tumblr to create greater in-group cohesion; despite the anonymity of blogging, inside jokes

such as 'precious cinnamon roll' (used to refer to something that needs to be protected) and '4D' (used to describe a person who lives in their own world) allow bloggers to facilitate positive interaction with others, as these phrases require inference to understand and appreciate, thereby enhancing and affirming relationships.

Social media users also share a common interest in manipulating their language to construct a particular online identity, and this is demonstrated by the increasing use of GIFs to portray a humorous and personable image. ... In this way, since digital communication often does not rely on face-to-face interaction, social media users have invented a variety of neologisms to construct a particular online identity, allowing them to build and maintain rapport with other social media users.

As David Crystal observes, we are a 'multimodal generation', thus, our increasing dependence on digital communication methods has led to widespread linguistic innovation in contemporary Australia.

Question 8

This question required students to discuss whether variation from the standard is more acceptable in speaking rather than in writing. Many students struggled with the notion of 'the standard' and confused it with standards in general. Students are reminded that Standard English does not necessarily mean 'formal English'; there is in fact a continuum of formality within Standard English. Higher-scoring responses to this question recognised that context plays a crucial role in determining the acceptability of variation from the standard, and that our attitude towards variation can also stem from personal biases and affiliations to social and cultural groups.

Relevant points included:

- There are differences between written and spoken language that make them suitable for a variety of different purposes and audiences. This means that variation from the standard in both writing and speaking is appropriate according to the **context**.
- Prompt **b.** may suggest that variation in spoken language is becoming more acceptable within modern Australian society. Examples from Aboriginal and other ethnic varieties demonstrate that it is acceptable to use these varieties within particular social groups.
- Prompts **c.** and **d.** both demonstrate that people have strong opinions about any changes from the standard, which leads to a lowering of standards in spoken and written Australian English.
- It is acceptable to use non-standard Australian English in written texts for a particular purpose, particularly online and in social media platforms.
- There are more formal situations, such as speeches and interviews, when standard Australian English is more appropriate.
- Variations in spoken language can be more acceptable as there is the possibility for immediate feedback to clarify meaning.
- Prompt **a.** explains that it is more difficult to obtain uniformity within spoken language because of phonetic and lexical variations.

The following is an example of a mid- to high-range response.

In contemporary Australian society, variation from the standard tends to be accepted more in speaking than in writing given the context it is used in. In writing, as clarity and overall coherence of the message is often vital, Standard Australian English (SAE) is most often used. In informal situations such as conversations between family and friends the use of a variety of AE other than the standard is often expected. While in formal contexts and in the delivery of news the use of SAE is preferred as it is deemed more acceptable in this situation. "The standard is only used by the average Australian 1-2% of their life" (Susan Butler).

In the written mode SAE is often preferred as it often preserves clarity. Standard Australian English is the variety with overt prestige and is codified in dictionary such as the Macquarie

Dictionary. It is also associated with standard grammar constructions such as the use of the auxiliary verb in "I have been walking". "The Standard is the variety with an Army and a Navy" (Susan Butler). This implicitly refers to the prescriptivists who desire the use of the traditional standard in the written mode. The Standard variety is often the first variety to be taught to children in school and is often used when writing essays and other academic works. As the clarity and coherence is vital in being able to mark and grade an exam, teachers often discourage the use of non-standard such as the use of the discourse marker 'like' in essays such as "The French revolution was like disastrous" and the lack of punctuation in sentences such as "[You] couldve done that homework yesterday instead of today." In this example the ellipsis of the subject 'you' creates ambiguity and so decreases the overall coherence of a student's response. The use of standard Australian English is also vital in the workplace. Doctors rely on SAE to efficiently deliver the right medication to their patients. If the message had any lack of specificity and clarity such as the written notice "Administer saline to this patient", this could prove fatal if the message isn't understood by the patient. In the written context, SAE is more acceptable and encouraged as it allows for clarity in information.

"The spoken language is much less uniform, with variation occurring at all levels" (Kate Burridge and Jean Mulder). In informal contexts such as conversations with family and friends the use of another variety is often more accepted than SAE. In our studyroom at school, the teenspeak neologisms "mun" (man bun), "zung" and "plonker" are often used in spontaneous conversation amongst ourselves. This use of the non-standard variety is deemed acceptable as it allows my friends and I to reflect our identity as teens and to create in-group solidarity which in-turn reinforce social rapport amongst ourselves. Similarly, the use of ethnolects is not to be seen as standard, "but it is still distinctly Australian" (Stimulus two). In the Australian-Sinhalese community the borrowed Sinhalese slang "muchun" is used in conjunction with the typically Australian colloquialism "mate". This is because when amongst other Australian-Sinhalese speakers, the use of this borrowed lexeme allows them to express a more intimate and close relationship which mate does not fully encompass. The use of this ethnolect allows for create a sign of membership to this community while also adding more variety in nuances to Australian English. The introduction of the ethnolect NITV is also an example in which attitudes in changing national identity promotes a greater acceptance of Australian Aboriginal English (AAE). AAE is associated with the use of the past tense marker "bin" such as "we bin fishing" and the semantically shifted borrowed lexemes "to dust" (to overtake) and "aunt" (a respected elderly female in the community). On the NITV channel, the non-standard interrogative "you a salt-wata fella ay?" is used by a news reporter when interviewing a surfer. The use of AAE in the informal situational context serve to reflect this identity as a member of the Indigenous community in Australia. This reflection of identity is also the reason why AAE rose in covert prestige amongst the majority of AAE speakers. The varieties of the standard are often much more acceptable in the spoken informal context.

When in formal situations such as in news and politics, the Standard AE is often more accepted as it preserves clarity. As humans do not usually speak using SAE, these speeches are often scripted and planned. In the channel 7 coverage of the Olympics this year, the importance of clarity was apparent when describing the moment between Usain Bolt and the Canadian sprinter. In order to full encapsulate this moment the reporter used the SAE sentence "It was a beautiful moment of acknowledgment and mateship between two competitors". As this news needed to be coherent and clear in order to be understood by the General Australian public the standard is often preferred in this case. At formal events such as the prime minister's acceptance speech at Parliament, the Standard is seen as more acceptable as the societal attitude towards this variety is that it has formal connotations. In his speech Turnbull uses the standard construction "I believe we can move forward together as a nation". This aids in informing the public while also maintaining the clarity in his message. In formal situational contexts, the standard variety is often preferred as it is the most understood and so aids coherence.

Contemporary Australia relies on a range of varieties in order to fulfil their specific needs. In written texts such as essays and doctor's prescriptions, the Standard is preferred as it allows for

the preservation of clarity. This is also the case with formal spoken discourse. In informal spoken discourse, the other varieties of AE are often preferred as it allows for the expression of identities. As linguist Hugh Lunn states, "We are the words we use and the words we use tell the world who we are."