2023 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 judgments were assisted by the use of a set of descriptors.

Most extended responses showed a 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 topic.

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 conversation between two people, who own different businesses, when they meet for the first time as they are moving into the building they will share. They discuss how to manage shared areas of the building. The second text was a discussion between two friends who have been organising an annual fun run in their local community for 20 years. They discuss the future organisation of the event. 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 how delivery supports language in conveying meaning. 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 1ai.

A correct response identified a business giving singing lessons.

Responses that identified ‘music’ were also accepted as correct.

Question 1aii.

A correct response identified that it will be too loud or noisy.

Responses that identified Mia’s preference for a quiet business were also accepted as correct.

Question 1b.

A correct response reflected one of the following ideas.

* Mia would like to sell enough books to need deliveries twice a week.
* Mia wants her business to be successful enough to need frequent deliveries.

Question 1c.

Correct responses were:

* Mia and Albie will clean the kitchen. It will be cleaned twice a week.
* Mia and/or Mia’s cleaner will clean the bathroom every day.

Correct responses needed to address who would do the cleaning and how often (i.e. frequency).

Question 1d.

Relevant examples of language use were:

* ‘I guess’ indicates he is unsure.
* ‘That sounds okay.’
* ‘Maybe’ / ‘Maybe we could give it a try and see if it works’.

‘How will we ensure that it’s kept clean enough?’ was an incorrect response. Albie makes this comment before the plan is discussed.

Relevant examples of delivery were:

* Slow delivery of ‘I guess’.
* He pauses when saying ‘That sounds okay’.
* He stresses ‘maybe’ when talking about trying out their plan.

Question 1e.

Correct responses identified one of:

* Albie will phone the owner / Albie will phone the owner about fixing the tap.
* Mia will remove the boxes / Mia will remove the boxes from the kitchen.

Text 2

Question 2a.

Relevant examples of language use in this context were:

* ‘Mary, you sound serious.’
* ‘Are you okay?’
* ‘Is there something wrong?’
* ‘Oh, that’s a relief!’

Question 2b.

A correct response reflected one of:

* It is such a popular community event.
* This year’s run was such a big success.
* This year’s run was better than ever.

Responses may have included: ‘Therefore, people will be enthusiastic / want to be involved.’

‘It is now too big’ was incorrect as this is why Mary wants to stop.

Question 2c.

Relevant responses reflected two of:

* They are an excellent team.
* They understand how their skills complement each other.
* They have made friends with many different groups in the community.

The response needed to be future-oriented rather than referencing past experience.

Question 2d.

A relevant response to Mary’s main concern reflected one of:

* New people might do a terrible job.
* It might be a disaster.

Specific examples for Mary’s concern were:

* What if there aren’t enough volunteers?
* They might fail to advertise in time (this would affect more than training so could be a separate possible answer).
* People don’t have enough time to train / people aren’t ready for the run.

Question 2ei.

Luke will not continue to organise the fun run.

Question 2eii.

A relevant response reflected two of:

* It would not be the same for him without Mary / without Mary’s involvement.
* It will help the fun run to continue into the future if others organise it.
* Luke has other activities he’d like to do / he’d like to participate in the fun run rather than organise it.

Section B – Analytical interpretation of a text

Students were required to produce one piece of analytical 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 knowledge of the text, 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 extent to which Jeff’s behaviour was motivated by fear. Responses to this topic drew on a range of material from the text, such as the impact of 1950s gender stereotypes, the sense of being watched and fear of false accusation as well as the effect of Jeff’s physical incapacity as a result of an accident. High-scoring responses presented a view on the extent to which it was fear generated by these elements that motivated Jeff’s behaviour.

The second topic focused on Hitchcock’s creation of an atmosphere of emotional insecurity. As a ‘discuss’ task word, responses explored a range of characters, including some who did not appear to experience emotional insecurity.

Students used both their knowledge of the context of the film setting and the period in which it was set to explore factors that contributed to characters’ experience of emotional insecurity, including the impact of one’s environment. Most responses referred to the techniques Hitchcock used to create this atmosphere.

Overall, responses that scored highly were structured and developed. They demonstrated a command of sufficient relevant vocabulary to communicate ideas meaningfully and a 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. 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 environmental and financial impacts of fast fashion. 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 the transcript of an episode from a podcast called *Garment Gab*. In it, the speaker shared her concern about the impact of fast fashion. The podcast transcript was accompanied by two visuals linked to the 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 reflected two of Gabrielle’s attitudes towards consumers of fast fashion.

* They are thoughtless (showing a lack of awareness or concern for the consequences of fast fashion).
* They are selfishly thinking only of how they look or of wearing the latest clothes.
* They are wasteful because useful clothes are thrown away.

Correct responses needed to have a specific link to the language of the text, not just general terms such as ‘critical’.

Question 1b.

A correct response was an explanatory statement that included the idea that both clothing waste (because of land pollution) and a snake are life-threatening.

Question 1c.

A correct response explained that Gabrielle believes everyone in society is affected by the consequences of fast fashion.

Any two of the following examples support this view:

* the impact of land / soil pollution / waste
* the impact of water pollution / the impact on marine life / plants / animals
* the impact of air pollution from carbon emissions from manufacture / production / consumption / from kilometres involved.

Question 1d.

A relevant response reflected that the main reason some people are positive is because they think fast fashion has benefits for the economy.

Relevant evidence reflected one of:

* Fast fashion helps society by keeping the economy growing / money circulating through spending.
* Taxes as a result of economic activity build roads, schools and hospitals, which benefit everyone.

Question 1e.

The following two reasons support suggestion that people should rent, swap or recycle clothes.

* To balance the need to protect the environment with wanting to be fashionable.
* To minimise the impact of fast fashion on the environment.

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 techniques writers and speakers use when they seek to influence a reader. Awareness of audience (in this case the followers of the podcast *Garment Gab*,which claims to provide reliable information about the fashion and clothing industries) is critical to understanding 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. Some identified a point of argument and then considered the impact of the language used to present that point. Higher-scoring responses analysed argument and language use 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. Higher-scoring responses 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 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. The audience for this piece is the followers of the presenter’s podcast, which covers issues related to fashion and the clothing industry. She expresses strong views about the consumers of fast fashion and encourages the audience to think more about the environmental and financial impacts of fast fashion
* 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 smartly dressed woman, with lots of shopping bags, apparently oblivious to the rubbish she is standing on
* an exploration of the implications of specific language choices, imagery and analogy, for example, ‘thoughtless consumers’, ‘toss out the clothes’, ‘mountain of waste’, ‘squeezing the life out of our land’, ‘smelly old rags’ and ‘a huge deadly snake’
* an ability to use a range of vocabulary and the structures of English to communicate clearly.