2022 VCE English Language external assessment report

General comments

Students should:

- read questions in Section A carefully to ensure all elements have been addressed, particularly in relation to providing the correct number of examples
- engage fully and directly with the texts presented in Sections A and B. For example, when analysing a spoken-text transcript, students should be encouraged to refer to speakers by name. For written texts, students should be specific when analysing features of language in terms of purpose and situational context
- give careful consideration to the information provided in the text description in Sections A and B. This information will provide meaningful contextual information
- use precise metalanguage. Students should focus on the metalanguage listed in the study design and use these terms as the basis of their analytical responses
- select and analyse the language features in Section B that are most relevant to the text. Students should be judicious in their selection of examples and choose those that relate closest to the text's register(s), context(s) and social purpose(s)
- be mindful that texts do not always have a single register, function and/or social purpose. Students should consider both the 'parts' of a text and the 'whole' of a text when constructing an analytical commentary
- in Section C, engage with the implications and elements of the quote while directly answering the question when a quote is provided as part of the question. This is particularly important when the question determines the scope of the exposition
- refer to linguists, linguistic studies and/or linguistic debate meaningfully. Students should avoid tokenistic quotes that have little meaning out of context.

Specific information

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 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 of more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Short-answer questions

Text 1

In Text 1, Rulla Kelly-Mansell introduces Daniel and Marlon Motlop, with Daniel guiding viewers through a demonstration of how to make chilli mud crab.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	21	44	35	1.2

Students were required to select one of the prosodic features from the line range – pitch, stress and tempo – and explain how that prosodic feature functioned within the utterance.

For two marks, students needed to accurately identify the prosodic feature and then discuss its function. For example, the use of falling pitch by Rulla (feed\) functions to cede the floor to Daniel after their brief overlap on lines 39 and 40.

Students must take care to use appropriate metalanguage, as not all students did so when identifying the prosodic feature.

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

The increased tempo of the fast paced utterance '<A A lotta cousins ay lotta cousins to feed >A' (41-42) allows Rulla to add a parenthetical side note and further detail to the topic of big Aboriginal families that is addressed by MM.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	27	39	34	1.1

Students needed to identify the past tense being used between lines 7 and 10 and link the use of past tense to a purpose of the text. There were a number of valid purposes, including the establishment of expertise, clarifying cultural values and traditions, and reinforcing speaker authority.

While many students accurately identified the tense used between these lines, a large number were not able to link this to a valid purpose. Some students did not provide an example as evidence.

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

MM's use of the past tense verb "introduced" (7) supports the social purpose of clarifying the cultural value of the ingredients, referring to the Makassan traders in the past tense to reflect the historical context of the tamarind tree.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	19	23	36	22	1.6

High-scoring responses discussed how Daniel's utterances are influenced by elements of the situational context of a televised cooking show on which he is a guest demonstrating the cooking of a meal.

It was important for students to focus solely on Daniel's utterances, rather than any other participant. A number of students only provided a single feature as part of their discussion, rather than providing two as was required.

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

Since this is a show about food, Daniel utilises nouns that belong to the domain of food, such as "ginger and garlic" (L 22) and "lemongrass, tomato ... capsicum" (L26). Since the situational context also relates to cooking, Daniel employs jargon to effectively convey his messages such as the nouns "toss" (L48) and "crack" (21), as well as the collocation "taste test" (L59). These features reflect the situational context of a cooking show that uses food.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	6	14	48	32	2.1

A number of Rulla's responses helped to demonstrate his identity as a proud Tulampanga Kooparoona Niara Paka man. Student responses also discussed Rulla's identity as an Australian as well as other valid elements of his identity, such as being a host on a cooking show.

For three marks, students were required to discuss one of Rulla's identities and analyse two relevant features that demonstrate that identity. Some students referred to language features but did not link this to a valid identity. Others provided an identity but did not accurately identify the two language features required.

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

Rulla's Indigenous identity is represented through the use of noun "tucker" (55), commonly used in the outback among Aboriginal Australians. Rulla's enthusiasm surrounding food in his identity is demonstrated through the rhetorical interrogative "How good's that?" (64) and positively connotated adjective "bewdiful" (68) displays an avid enjoyment of the cooking process and food in general.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	20	29	27	11	3	2.2

There were many features that students could refer to when discussing the relationships between Rulla, Daniel and Marlon. High-scoring responses needed to discuss discourse features and strategies that demonstrated participant relationships; this included prosodic features. Some responses neglected to fully explore the 'relationship' component of the question, focusing only on the features and strategies used by speakers. These responses did not score highly.

The quality of student responses relied on how the students discussed speaker relationships. Students needed to engage fully and directly with the text and use the information provided in the context description to further their understanding. High-scoring responses discussed all speakers in terms of their relationships.

The following is a sample response.

Part of Rulla's role as host is to ask questions and elicit information in a professional manner. By using question-answer adjacency pairs (45–46) 'just chuck it in like this?' he maintains an engaged relationship with his guests, particularly Daniel. He also compliments Daniel on his cooking ability by using positively connoted adjectives 'unbelievable' (53) and 'bewdiful' (27), thus making the relationship positive, appealing to face needs. Marlon on line 56 uses a paralinguistic feature and smiles, showing his enjoyment and support of Rulla's previous comments, thus the relationship is supportive. Daniel uses backchannelling (39)

'alright' to show support for and agreement of Marlon's previous comment. Both Daniel and Rulla use the discourse particle 'ay' as an interrogative tag (18, 68), showing a shared language and culture.

Section B – Analytical commentary

Text 2

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	0.4	0.4	1	1	2	4	8	13	20	19	14	9	5	2	0.8	0.1	8.4

Many students actively engaged with Text B, an extract from the First Pitch For Kids competition website. Organised and run by First Pivot, the text encourages children around Australia to consider problems or challenges that could be solved with a business innovation or social solution. Functionally, it serves as an invitation for applicants to enter, providing terms and conditions and outlining the requirements for entry. One purpose of the text is to empower young Australians to feel as if they could change the world, establishing a connection with them by reducing social distance between the organisation and its target audience. Similarly, the organisation aims to promote their own identity through the text as a respectful organisation that has some expertise in the fields of science and social science.

Delivered in a mixed register, there are clear elements of informality that support the function of attracting the attention of young people and inviting them to enter. This also serves to fulfil the social purpose of reducing social distance and creating a common ground between aspiring young people and the identity of the company. A clear shift in register occurs when delivering the rules of the competition, as the text at this point serves a more informative function. While not wholly formal, lines 22–42 are more formal than lines 1–21. A much more formal shift in register occurs between lines 49–52, where respectful language is used by the organisation to acknowledge First Nations peoples.

Higher-scoring responses identified these shifts in register within the text and explored the reasons for it occurring.

Students should take care that they are selecting relevant features when constructing an analysis and that they do so judiciously in timed conditions. High-scoring responses focused on stylistic and discourse features that directly contributed to the register, social purpose and contextual factors affecting and surrounding the text. This allowed students to demonstrate a higher level of understanding about the deliberate language features used by First Pivot.

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

Employing a largely informal register, this webpage is from First Pivot's website regarding their First Pitch For Kids competition. Addressing an audience of children that would be interested in taking part in this competition and their parents alike, First Pivot seeks to inform, reflect expertise, forge solidarity and encourage participation. The playful and enthusiastic tone reflect the inspirational nature of this discourse.

First Pivot draws upon a variety of linguistic features in their introduction to the First Pitch For Kids competition in order to entice readers. The bolded interrogative subheading "Are You Up For The Challenge?" is used on line 2 as First Pivot leads into their introduction of and calls upon potential candidates to take part in their competition. The bolding of this subheading draws emphasis to this call to action while also supporting reader navigation of the discourse which builds coherence. On line 3, the first person plural subject pronoun "We" is used as well as the possessive determiner "our" when First Pivot states that they're seeking to recognise young entrepreneurs. By employing the personal pronoun and a more personal determiner, First Pivot seeks to humanise their brand and reflect a warm and personal

identity. This supports them in reducing the social distance with their audience when discussing that they seek to support young entrepreneurs. Parallelism and listing of the "indefinite article-adjective-noun" structure is used on lines 4, 5 and 6 when First Pivot poses the various skills that applicants can have such as being "A quirky scientist? A creative artist? An aspiring Engineer?". The mirrored structures link the various identities that First Pivot proposes together while the listing creates a semantic thread of various skills. This serves to build cohesion and information readers that the First Pitch For Kids competition is one that involves a range of skills. The crafted nature of this feature reflects the planned nature of this discourse and increases the formality of the register.

When outlining the rules of their competition, First Pivot utilises various lexical and discourse features to communicate with readers. A numbered list is used from lines 23 and 42 when First Pivot lists the various rules of their First Pitch For Kids competition line in "1. Open to kids... // 2. The idea and pitch must be...". The numbered list packages the rules into a distinct unit that is easier to navigate which supports reader understanding of the requirements for this competition. This, alongside adhering to the conventions of a numbered rules list, builds coherence. Throughout this section, the colloquial plural noun "kids" is used like on line 24 when First Pivot emphasises that parents must offer minimal help with their children's pitch. The colloquial nature of this noun reflects First Pivot's enthusiastic and youthful identity while reducing the formality of the register. This supports First Pivot in reinforcing the playful nature of this competition. The initialism "AEST" is employed on line 35 in First Pivot's note that the deadline for the competition is on October the 9th at 11:59 Australian Eastern Standard Time. The jargonistic nature of this initialism reflects First Pivot's expertise and professionalism while also providing clarity as to what time zone they are referring to as inference cannot be assumed given the online nature of this discourse. This supports them informing parents and their children of the deadline by providing detail and lending First Pivot authority. In their final call of participation on line 45, non-Standard capitalisation is employed on the hyperlink and imperative "APPLY NOW!". The hyperlink reflects the digital context of the discourse while the capitalisation of each grapheme in this imperative indicates First Pivot's enthusiasm and energy in encouraging readers to engage with the First Pitch For Kids program. The non-Standard nature of this capitalisation reduces the formality of the register.

First Pivot makes an acknowledgement of country at the end of this webpage and draws upon numerous features to ensure they successfully navigate this more serious topic. Non-Standard capitalisation can be seen on the noun phrase "Traditional Owners" on lines 49 when First Pivot initially acknowledges the Indigenous people and their connection to the land that First Pivot uses. By capitalising the adjective 'traditional' and the noun 'owners', First Pivot reflects their respect through lending prominence and importance to this noun phrase. This reflects their identity as considerate of the Aboriginal culture. A degree of expertise and knowledge of Aboriginal culture can be seen on line 51 in the capitalisation of the noun "Country" when First Pivot is referring to the land on which they operate. The use of "Country" as a proper noun is a feature of Aboriginal culture and First Pivot's use of this highlights their respect and knowledge. Elevated lexical choices are made such as the noun "custodianship" on line 49 to acknowledge the Aboriginal ownership of the lands that First Pivot uses. The low-frequency nature of this lexeme raises the formality of the register which supports First Pivot in navigating the topic of Aboriginal ownership of land within Australia.

Section C – Essay

Question	0	7	8	9
%	1	32	44	24

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	1	1	2	3	5	9	12	18	16	14	8	6	4	2	0.3	8.4

In Section C, students were able to respond meaningfully to the questions posed, incorporating contemporary linguistic discussion and debate. Reference to the provided stimulus material was consistently included by almost all students. Many students were able to include appropriate metalanguage that meaningfully added to the quality of their responses.

It is important that students take care in structuring their response, paying particular attention to paragraphing, to ensure that their written features of discourse are as accurate as possible given the timed nature of the essay task.

Question 7

For this question, students were required to consider the extent language has changed due to exposure to or influence from other cultures, either within Australia or outside of it.

Many students clearly engaged with the topic and discussed in some depth cultural influences on Australian English in written and spoken contexts, providing relevant contemporary examples and linguistic discussion. A notable number of students discussed when language has not evolved or when cultures have not had an impact, which was within the scope of the question. For example, the playful application of affixation and shortening as seen in terms such as 'ambo', 'brekky' and 'footy' has remained steadfast in modern Australian vernacular. It was important that students acknowledged the extent to which other cultures have influenced language, rather than discussing only when it is true.

Students responded to this question with varying levels of depth, touching on ideas such as:

- the loss of Australian colloquialisms and slang in preference to informal language features from other cultures such as those from the United States and United Kingdom (stimulus A)
- obsolete English slang making a comeback through Aboriginal Australian English (AAE), particularly in the northern parts of Australia, demonstrating the increasing use of First Nations and AAE language features (stimulus B)
- the influence of technology on language, such as being used on social media (and other online sub-cultures) providing many opportunities for the evolution of Australian English (stimulus C)
- how Australian English is still a distinct variety of English, despite influences of other cultures on the language. While there has been a reduction in some of the distinctive features of Australian Englishes, particularly in comparison to American Englishes, language is not simply borrowed and used as-is. Language is often adopted from other cultures and then modified to be more 'Australian'
- language change can demonstrate a movement away from Australian Englishes, as demonstrated in stimulus D, where 'hooroo' is less heard over 'see you later' in contemporary society. Americanised spelling is increasingly common, such as a preference of -ize over -ise, yet this has not necessarily been codified into Standard Australian English.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response. This student was able to discuss with some detail the increasing use of AAE in Standard Australian English, the influence of American culture on language use and the impact of digital communication and language features on Australian Englishes. They provided their own contemporary examples with accompanying metalanguage and meaningfully referred to the stimulus in their response. Included below is their introduction and a portion of two body paragraphs.

Language is constantly changing. Language change is often influenced by an increased valuing of other cultures by the mainstream, leading to aspects of other groups of people such as Aboriginal Australians and Americans having greater influence over the language used within Australia, however they are not the only vehicle of change within contemporary Australian society. The rise of the internet and social media has also caused Australian English to evolve rapidly.

The increase prevalence of Aboriginal English (AbE) within Australian English reflects the greater respect White Australia is developing for First Nations People and as such, a greater willingness to incorporate features of AbE into Australian English. The recent discussion by Moreland City Council to change their name from Moreland to 'Merri-bek' reflects this. 'Merri-bek' is a Woi-Wurrung noun phrase meaning 'Rocky Country'. By opting to pick an Indigenous name, the council signalled their request for Indigenous history and actively allowed the local Indigenous langauge to influence Australian English. According to political philosophy Frantz Fanon, 'To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture', and this is exactly what the Merri-bek council did here when they actively incorporated AbE into their place name to take on and acknowledge the Indigenous history of the place. The increased willingness by non-Indigenous people to use Indigenous language also reflects their desire to appear respectful...

The increased presence of American spelling and AAVE within Australian English and slang represents how America is a larger cultural juggernaut than Australia and much of the media Australians are consuming is steeped in American culture. The spellings of many standard Australian English (SAE) words is different to their American English counterparts, such as 'colour' in SAE being 'color' in American English, and the 's' in many SAE words being a 'z' in many American English words, such as 'organise' and 'organize'. Despite the official Australian spelling being different many Australians will actually use the American spelling. One of my teachers frequently uses the American spellings of words in their feedback on SACs, such as saying 'familiarize' instead of 'familiarise'. Ultimately this has no impact on meaning, however it demonstrates how the American spelling is as prevalent as the Australian spelling, drawing attention to the great influence American culture has on Australians through the media, film and literature...

Question 8

For this question, students were required to discuss contexts where it is true that language can disrupt, deceive and divide in Australian society. Students explored situations where language use creates havoc, regardless of whether the outcomes are positive or negative. For example, language that is disruptive can be used to both cause harm and prevent it. Disruptive uses of language were discussed by many students, particularly in relation to obfuscatory language and how it can be used to mislead and obscure the truth. In terms of language use that causes division, many students focused on language to exclude, for whatever purpose. Many contemporary examples were used to support these discussions.

Student responses varied and touched on many situations and contexts. Some of these included:

- how language can divide and disrupt even when not intended. Stimulus A discussed the unintentional consequences of seeking feedback, which can result in abuse under the guise of anonymity
- deliberate deception to achieve a purpose, whether positive or negative. Students successfully discussed stimulus B and the use of jargon in real estate to manipulate
- conscious and subconscious language use to exclude – dividing, disrupting and deceiving. Sometimes, even when not intended, language can do all of these, in particular when assumptions and stereotypes cause people to feel excluded or maligned (stimulus C)
- how obfuscatory language can deliberately disguise meaning in order to deceive. Sometimes there may be no meaning whatsoever to what is said, acting as a deceptive deflection (stimulus D).

A significant number of students presented an exploration of the contexts in which language does not disrupt, deceive or divide, which was out of the scope of the question. For this question, students were directed to discuss 'when [it] is true' that language disrupts, deceives and divides. This contrasts to Question 7, where

students were asked to explore the extent of the statement being true. It is important that students read the topic carefully before responding.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response, which demonstrates a very good understanding of the topic. This student was able to systematically explore the three elements of the topic – disruption, deception and division – providing linguistic evidence and contemporary examples in their response. Included below is their introduction and one body paragraph.

In contemporary Australian society, language can be used to suit 'the needs ... of different people' (Burnside), and hence it can be used to disrupt, deceive and divide when desired, as well as be done unintentionally. While language can of course be used for more positive purposes, it is undeniable that language can be controlled 'at times' in order to achieve these purposes.

The ability of language to disrupt can be seen in how it can be both present a threat to one's face, and also threaten social harmony. This can be seen in the domain of public language. For example, following the death of Australian cricketer Shane Warne, fellow Australian wicketkeeper Ian Healy remarked, 'An early passing didn't surprise me for Warnie ... he yoyoed up and down'. The inherently face-threatening content of Healy's comment led to strong criticism from the media. Furthermore, the informal register associated with the diminutive nickname 'Warnie' and the colloquial verb 'yoyo' furthered his comment's face-threatening nature, as it did not communicate the level of respect and deference that was expected for the death of an Australian icon. Hence, Healy's use of face-threatening language demonstrates how language can lead to disruption, in this case, by disrupting Healy's image and the social harmony between him and others. Social harmony was also threatened in 2022 through Prime Minister Albanese's apology, 'Sorry, I'm not sure about that' when he was unable to name the Australian unemployment rate and the Reserve Bank cash rate. This apology marked by the hedge 'not sure' did not constitute a high level of expertise from Albanese, which led to much media scrutiny as Albanese appeared cavalier about important economical details. For example, Australian Financial Review labelled his error a 'doozy' and political commentator David Crowe remarked that there was 'no excuse' for not knowing the figures. Hence, Albanese's use of language created disruption by marring his image and identity as a competent political leader, thus threatening social harmony. Clearly, language can disrupt, sometimes unintentionally.

Question 9

In this question, students needed to explore how the linguistic repertoires of users can exploit overt and covert norms. Students discussed how speakers manipulate and choose their language, consciously or not, in order to achieve aspirations, such as how a speaker is perceived, viewed or judged, and what they want to achieve. Ultimately, this question links closely with identity and belonging, and is about how we want to fit into society to achieve our purposes. While the majority of students discussed individual speaker or writer aspirations, many were also successfully able to explore the aspirations of speakers as part of particular groups.

Some students did not acknowledge the element of the question requiring a discussion of how language can assist in achieving aspirations. This was an important component of the question.

Students responded to this question in varying levels of depth, touching on ideas such as:

- how language choices can be used to achieve aspirations, such as successfully applying for a job. Changes in register and stylistic choices help achieve this (stimulus A)
- situations where covert norms influence our orthography, particularly in younger generations, and how these shape the language people use in written contexts. Many students linked this to the aspirations of group belonging trumping the overt norms of using Standard Australian English (stimulus B)
- an exploration of how we are judged, and are aware of that judgement, based on the language we use when we aspire to show that we are educated and knowledgeable. The internet meme demonstrates a shift towards prescriptive attitudes in both overt and covert contexts (Stimulus C)

- linguistic repertoires needing to match situational and cultural contexts, particularly in terms of group membership. This links to aspirations towards group status and social belonging. Language must match the norms of the group, as demonstrated in stimulus D.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response, which demonstrated a very good understanding of the topic. This student was able to discuss specific elements of linguistic repertoires that assist in the achievement of aspirations, both overt and covert. Their response considered a variety of contexts and situations in which the manipulation of linguistic repertoires assisted in meeting particular needs of users, such as modifying an idiolect to meet dominant group social norms, using jargon to establish expertise, and exploiting covert norms to promote group membership and belonging. Below is their introduction and two of their body paragraphs.

"Language must account for a variety of social behaviours" - Kate Burridge. As a medium of expression, language is used for a variety of different purposes, all with differing end goals. The prescence of overt and covert norms means that within certain contexts, variations of English will be employed for more efficient and often satisfying social outcomes. Teenspeak can be used to create in groups while genderlects can be used to negotiate social norms and manipulate one's image in social interactions. Jargon is especially effective when communicating to individuals within a shared domain, thus suggesting that a great linguistic repertoire can help to achieve a wide facet of aspirations.

The use of teenspeak exploits covert norms and aids in promoting in group membership and solidarity. "Teenagers love to innovate, but at the end of the day, they know they must be understood" - David Crystal. This suggests that through representation, teenagers are able to carve a linguistic niche for themselves. An example of this is the TikTok trend of "yassifying my Dad" where the lexeme "yassified", while nonstandard, is used interchangably and given the same level of prestige as standard lexemes such as "making my Dad 'fabulous'". As such, participants understand the nonstandard equivalent, exploit covert prestige and are seen as part of an in group. In addition to neologisms, new social norms are also established by teenagers as suggested by Stimulus B where it is observed that the use of full stops "makes teens think you're angry with them." This is a covert norm common in online spheres and during texting that establishes an unspoken practice which out group members may disobey, thus, promoting solidarity when participants successfully navigate this norm. Further, the tendency for teenagers to use reubeses like "u" or initialisms like "lmao" when communicating makes it difficult for members of an outgroup to attain meaning from an interaction, further contributing to the differences between in group and out group members. Thus the use of teenspeak is a piece of linguistic repertoire that is beneficial to navigating social interactions.

The use of jargon exploits overt norms in order to establish expertise. "Unless you're part of a clique, it's gibberish" - Steve Pinker, suggests that jargon is only for a specific group of speakers who share the same profession/domain., Despite this, it is given overt prestige by society for employing standard conventions and an indicator higher education. As proposed by Dr. Sonja Ardoin (2013), jargon is an academic environment is used to simultaneously facilitate efficient discussion while also acting as a communications barrier for people unfamiliar with it. This can be evidenced in ex-treasurer Josh Frydenberg's PUBLIC budget announcement where he used "inflation" (economic jargon) rather than more universally understandable phrases such as "the cost of living rose." While he was able to establish expertise, in a public address, this appeal to overt norms was unsuccessful in fulfilling the function of informing the public as the lexical choice was inefficient in communicating ideas in a comprehensive manner. Conversely, when Dr. Mikhail Varshavski (That Hot Instagram Doctor) used "hypotension" in with a fellow colleague as 'The Doctor' he was able to express a symptom (that otherwise would have taken up a phrase) in a simple word, thus demonstrating jargon's efficiency at expressing ideas within a specific realm of expertise.