

2019 VCE English as an Additional Language (NHT) examination report

General comments

The 2019 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. Most extended responses showed good knowledge of task requirements, in particular by using an appropriate structure to deliver a relevant response. Higher-scoring responses showed evidence of both fluency and clarity of meaning. The assessment criteria, the descriptors and the sample examination 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 a discussion between two sisters about children moving out of home. The second was a radio interview about volunteering, with a focus on assisting seniors. There was a mix of question types with varying degrees of challenge. Questions covered literal and inferred meaning and addressed the key knowledge and key skills from the study design. Students are advised to make effective use of the note-taking space provided beside the questions.

Some aspects of spoken language are challenging for students. Students need familiarity with a range of features of spoken language, including tone and delivery. 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 in 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 effect of emphasis, pauses, sighs, hesitations, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with the terminology used in the key knowledge and key 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.

Jessica's big decision is to leave home or move out of home.

Question 1aai.

A correct response identified any one of the following reasons given by Renee:

- she couldn't afford rent when she was at university
- she wanted more independence/needs to be independent
- too much travel time to work
- the opportunity came up – her friend had an apartment to share.

Question 1b.

Relevant reasons were:

- She will have to learn to cook (more than toast).
- Her brothers will finally be able to get their own (bed)rooms/gives her brothers more space.
- She will have to learn how to budget.

Question 1c.

- Attitude: He puts comfort and convenience ahead of independence.
Example: He has all the space, freedom and independence he wants.
- Attitude: He sees spending money on rent as a waste/it is cheaper to live at home.
Example: He can save money for travel.
- Attitude: He doesn't have to worry about daily chores if he lives at home.
Example: No cooking, no laundry.

Question 1d.

Relevant words or phrases were:

- It's typical of Harry. He does what he wants.
- Harry is only thinking of himself/putting his own needs first.
- Harry wants to enjoy being young.
- Harry likes to have fun, e.g. travel.
- Harry is selfish – using his parents, taking them for granted.

Question 1ei.

Correct responses gave a word or phrase that showed a positive and close interaction, e.g. 'close/familiar', 'friendly', 'find the same things funny', 'thoughtful/understanding/accepting of each other', 'warm/relaxed', 'intimate'.

Question 1eii.

Delivery (1 mark)	Language use (1 mark)
laughter	'Oh, my dear Renee'
calling by specific relationship – 'little sister'	'you will miss her'
remembering past events and times wistfully	'his most favourite aunty'
interrupting in a familiar way, emphasis on 'most favourite aunty'	'Yes, we had lots of fun'

knowing what each other will say, i.e. speaking together, echoing each other's words	'You remember little sister when I moved out of home' 'Unlike when you and I were growing up' 'You know me so well'
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Text 2

Question 2ai.

Because it is International Day of Older Persons.

Question 2aii.

Relevant words or phrases were: 'rich contribution', 'acknowledge and appreciate', 'special welcome', 'appreciate'.

Question 2bi.

Relevant explanations: work experience to complement her studies, related to Occupational Therapy study.

Question 2bii.

Relevant responses were:

- she became interested in the patients
- 'I genuinely enjoy their company'
- her view changed from her own needs (for example, her study) to engaging with the people
- she became a 'listening ear'.

Question 2c.

Correct responses referred to one of the following ideas:

- someone to spend time really listening to them
- genuine conversing and engaging with their stories.

Question 2d.

Language (1 mark)	Delivery (1 mark)
'loss', listing losses shift from fear of old age to fear of isolation and loneliness	repetition – loss emphasis – most, loss slower pace, pauses between the losses empathetic voice, soft, warm

Question 2e.

Examples of language use included:

- uses imperatives – treasure, stay, keep
- lists the advice she's been given
- short sentences – sharp and to the point
- uses metaphor – look for the silver lining.

Question 2f.

Relevant responses included one of the following ideas:

- doesn't take it as a serious question to be answered
- she feels she can't answer for older people yet
- because she's still young/not experienced through age.
- she isn't old enough yet to have a view on that.

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 text knowledge and familiarity with how to structure a text response. Some were able to incorporate relevant quotes from the texts. Most answers attempted a structured response that addressed the chosen essay question.

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. 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 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 was one piece of writing about improving road travel for everyone. 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 article explored the reasons why the trucking industry should support the introduction of more bike lanes on roads. The newsletter article was accompanied by a photograph depicting a busy road with cyclists going in opposite directions and other heavy vehicles. 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 answers needed to be precise to demonstrate comprehension.

Question 1a.

Reasons in the first two paragraphs included:

- The trucking industry needs to help reduce the negative impact of trucks on roads.

- Bike lanes help to provide quicker, safe and cheaper transport.
- The trucking industry has a responsibility to the wider community/captains of industry should be leaders/good for the wider community.

Question 1b.

Either of the following approaches was accepted as a correct response.

- Everyone benefits/both groups benefit/list of who benefits plus an example from the text to support one or both.
- One example from each group that benefits – thereby demonstrating that the quote means both benefit, for example:
 - Employee benefits: good for health/fitness to get exercise every day
 - Employer (trucking industry) benefits: healthier employees take less time off work/fewer sick days.

Question 1c.

Correct responses were specifically related to the safety of cyclists. Any two of the following were correct. Cyclists don't have to:

- swerve around parked cars
- compete for space with vehicles
- worry about being seen.

Question 1d.

Correct responses addressed the benefits to the trucking industry and included a relevant reference to people having more money; for example, bikes are cheaper to maintain than cars, so people would have more money available, then connecting this to a benefit for the truck industry; for example, people would have more money to buy the goods we provide with our trucks.

Question 1e.

Students needed to give:

- a relevant main purpose; for example, bike lanes benefit the road transport industry economically
- a relevant call to action; for example, remember the needs of all road users, promote the needs of road users with the government.

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. The highest-scoring responses recognised that there are many things that writers do when they seek to influence a reader. Awareness of audience (in this case the leaders of the Australian truck industry) is critical to understanding the purpose of the writing and 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 visual. To score highly, students needed 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. Some responses were structured by argument followed by analysis of how the argument was presented. The highest-scoring responses analysed argument use and language in an integrated way. A few responses focused too much on argument and neglected to identify the specific language used for the purpose of persuading the

readers to accept the argument. Students interpreted the photograph either as showing the benefits of bike lanes, or the need for bike lanes given current levels of road congestion. Low-scoring responses just described the visual.

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 had been done in the task material provided.

Features of high-scoring responses included:

- a clear understanding of the context and audience for the writing and the point of view expressed in the piece
- 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, 'put the brakes on profit-before-people', 'captains of industry', 'Why should we care?', 'we are responsible...we should play a role',
- an ability to use a range of vocabulary and the structures of English to communicate clearly.