

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2011 English Language examination consisted of three sections. Section 1 had five questions worth a total of 23 marks and Section 2 had five questions worth a total of 22 marks. Students could choose one of three essay topics in Section 3, which was worth 30 marks. There was one text for analysis in Section 1 and one text in Section 2. The transcript in Section 2 contained 98 intonation units, a similar amount to past years.

In general, Section 1 was answered well. However, a significant number of students were unable to answer Question 1a., Question 2 and Question 3. This suggested the need for a 'back to basics' approach regarding course content. Teachers and students should refer to the 'Metalinguage' sections in the 2012 *VCE English Language Study Design*, and practise using these metalinguistic tools to analyse language samples.

Students' responses to Section 2 needed to be detailed. There were four questions worth four marks and one question worth six marks. Students answered well and, with the exception of Question 5, addressed each question appropriately. It was apparent that students need to revise and improve their knowledge of syntax.

In the Section 3 essay, students who engaged with the topic, avoided writing pre-prepared paragraphs, and discussed the topic in an informed and confident manner were the ones who achieved high scores.

Students appeared to be writing more in their responses than in previous years. However, particularly with the essay, they need to resist the temptation of writing just because time allows them to do so. A number of essays contained additional paragraphs that weakened the overall quality of the response; it would have been far more prudent for the student to have written less and to have focused on quality rather than quantity. Equally, students should be careful to note the mark allocation. A four-mark or six-mark question will require much greater detail than a two-mark question. Some students were not succinct when responding to two-mark questions.

General advice to students

- Read questions carefully. Is the question fully understood? Have all the components of the question been addressed?
- The stimulus material provides a guide to the possible scope of an essay. Use this material to help plan your response.
- Practise using metalinguistic tools in analysing language.
- Engage with the text by referring to how linguistic features are used in the text; do not use generalisations, particularly with regard to transcription symbols.
- Write in pen, not pencil. While handwriting is not assessed, students should ensure that it is legible.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Section 1 – Written Text

This section consisted of a newspaper article on air travel and passenger etiquette. Questions 1 to 5 related to this text. There was a focus on cohesion in this section.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	35	32	34	1

'Really' is an adverb. The effect of this adverb being placed at the end of the sentence is to give it prominence and an emphatic function.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	21	19	60	1.4

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The metaphor between lines 3 and 5 is ‘the marathon talker...’ The image created by this metaphor is that of a person who talks for a prolonged period of time – someone who talks incessantly. The person sitting next to this talker, therefore, struggles to find peace and quiet.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	11	82	1.8

The sentence type is interrogative. Such direct questions set up the premise of the article and also create a link with the audience. The questions involve the audience and encourage them to read on to seek answers.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	31	9	21	39	1.7

Between lines 18 and 30 there were a number of examples of anaphoric referencing that could have been given. For example, ‘This’ may be obvious linking back to ‘Arrive early’ (line 18). Also, ‘they may be nervous’, linking back to those who are new at this (lines 29–30).

Students needed to explain that anaphoric referencing links back to an idea, person or concept mentioned previously, and that this avoids the unnecessary repetition of a phrase, thus creating a more cohesive text.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	37	38	24	0.9

Examples of cohesive devices included:

- the repetition of lexemes. For example, ‘stress’ in lines 6 and 7, ‘patience’ in lines 8 and 11, and ‘control’ in lines 12 and 13
- the use of question and answer. For example, ‘How to cope? Patience, courtesy...’
- the use of synonyms. For example, ‘incivility and rudeness’.

Students needed to explain how each device assisted cohesion.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	13	16	23	19	16	8	5	2.6

The function of the text is to provide travel tips to readers who may be travelling in the future. These tips make travelling easier and less stressful.

Examples of lexical choices between lines 23 and 45 included:

- lexical jargon: for example, ‘gate agent’ and ‘carry-on luggage’. These establish the topic covered by the article and give weight to the author’s advice
- colloquial language: for example, ‘know the drill’ and ‘stash some earplugs’. These set the register of the article and make it less formal and more personal
- the use of verbs: for example, ‘dress’ and ‘bring’. These help by providing instructions and add to the informative nature of the text.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The function of this text is to provide advice to readers on how to cope with air travel. This is supported by the writer’s lexical choice. She uses air travel jargon, such as ‘screening procedures’ (24), ‘carry-on luggage’ (24), ‘boarding area’ (44) to indicate that she has knowledge on this topic and to assert common knowledge with readers. She uses second person pronouns ‘you’ (27) and possessive pronoun ‘your’ (39) to directly address the reader and reduce the formality of the text to better engage the reader and indicate that she empathises with them. She uses abstract nouns such as ‘stress’ (18), ‘sympathy’ (21) ‘understanding’ (42) as a way to engage with the reader’s emotions and feelings and thus predispose them to follow her advice.



Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	32	17	20	14	11	4	3	1.8

Some students did not realise that syntactic patterning is a form of cohesion and their responses were weakened as a result.

Examples of syntactic patterning included:

- parallelism. Repetition of similar sentence structures help to link ideas and present information in an economical way. For example, ‘Stay calm if your gate agent gives you bad news’ (line 20) and ‘If you can’t choose your own environment, create your own’ (31)
- antithesis. Places words in opposition to create a contrary effect for impact or emphasis. For example, ‘less stress and more civility’ (17)
- listing. This allows the author to convey a lot of information in a compact manner. For example, lines 9–10 and 11–12.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The most obvious syntactic pattern in the text is the author’s use of listing, used particularly strongly in the first part of the text to evoke the discomfort of air travel (Lines 9 and 10), as well as the methods that someone can use to overcome them – ‘Patience, courtesy and flexibility’ (Line 11). Listing is also used in the second half, often to provide actions that a reader should take – ‘wear shoes that are easy to take on and off, and take items...’ (26). In the second half of the text we can also see a clear pattern being followed in the choice of sentence types – an imperative like ‘Arrive early’ followed by several declaratives like ‘This may be obvious...’ (line 18). This allows the author to place emphasis, also helped by graphemic features like bolding, on the instruction before explaining why it is important.

Section 2 – Spoken Text

The transcript was part of a commentary taken from ABC Radio during the Tennis Open. There were three commentators: Quentin Hull commentated during play, the other two between play.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	10	29	30	26	2.6

To answer this question it was necessary for students to discuss how prosodic features and verb tenses were used between lines 1 and 12. A number of students did not refer to verb tense in their answers and focused solely on prosodic features. Students needed to read this question carefully and ensure all points were answered.

Examples of prosodic features included:

- the use of stress on some words to highlight their importance in relation to play. For example, the type of shot used. For example, ‘Backhand’ (line 1)
- increase in volume when the play reaches a climax. For example, <F ‘It’s a winner’ F> (line 7)

Examples of present verb tense included:

- runs, pumps and plays. Present tense is used as the commentary is live and using this tense allows the listener to feel as though they are witnessing the game as it happens.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Prosodic features are important tools used by radio commentators as they provide vivid images for an audience who cannot see the events. Here, they include crescendo, as in ‘<CRE Schiavone...and CRE>’ (3-5) to indicate growing excitement and help the audience visualise what is happening. Fast pace ‘< A Backhand...A>’ (1-2) enables efficient communication of events as they are occurring at a high speed. Slow pace as in ‘<L It’s another...L>’ (8) is used for emphasis, and the speakers vary their pace to provide interest for the listeners. Verb tense used by the commentators is generally present, as in ‘runs’ (2), ‘comes’ (4), which signal events that are occurring at the present moment and enable the listeners to imagine the event occurring before their eyes.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	14	10	25	22	29	2.4

The four features were:

- hedging. This was used as Q could not be wholly accurate in his calling of the game. He therefore hedges some of his utterances because of this. For example, ‘shortish’ (line 61) and ‘both about half’ (line 72)
- ellipsis. This allows the commentator to focus on key events when he is under pressure to commentate on a fast-moving game (lines 70–75)
- fronting. By focusing on key information and placing it at the front of an utterance, the commentator helps the listener better understand what is happening. For example, ‘Crosscourt they go.’ (line 68)
- metaphor. Lexical choices from the semantic field of fighting help to highlight the competitiveness and tension of the match. For example, ‘trade fierce backhands’ (line 63) and ‘trading blows’ (line 73).

This question asked students to analyse two language features from this list of four, and they responded well, with the exception of fronting/front focus where some struggled to find appropriate examples.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Ellipsis is used frequently by Q, as he must narrate the events on court as they are occurring, so his utterances must be economical and to the point, as in ‘Great depth from Wozniacki’ (64), where the verb was ellipated, and ‘And both about half...’ (72), ellipting the copular verb ‘are’, as audiences could infer this from the context.

Fronting is also used by Q, as in ‘crosscourt they go’ (68) rather than ‘they go crosscourt’. This is to put the emphasis on the action by bringing it to the front of the utterance, and ensure a vivid image for the listeners, as here the action is more relevant than the people.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	18	32	28	17	2.3

Students were required to comment on the function of L and D’s interactions throughout the discourse and then discuss the features and strategies used by them in a particular section. A number of students commented on the function of L and D’s interactions for the particular section only and appeared to have misread the question. Most students were able to identify that the function of the interactions was to provide entertainment and light-hearted relief for the audience between periods of play.

Features and strategies discussed could have included:

- overlapping (lines 14–18), which is more prevalent in informal conversation. In this case it was supportive
- adjacency pairs (lines 13–16) signify cooperative conversation, provide information and are a break from the monologue
- personal pronouns (lines 16, 21 and 23) reduce distance and make the conversation seem more inclusive
- laughter (line 17) shows the commentator is relaxed and not taking things too seriously.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response.

L and D’s interactions are normally used to discuss any new developments in the game and also sometimes have a phatic function. They induce humour to keep their audience interested and entertained. Discussion between the two interlocutors is facilitated by the cooperative use of question/answer adjacency pairs, as in lines 15 and 16: ‘That little drop there?’ – ‘Mainly to give me a heart attack.’ The latter utterance is a hyperbole and is used in this discourse to create some humour and keep the audience interested. They also show cooperation in this exchange, by using minimal responses such as ‘Yeah’ in line 22, which encourage the other interlocutor to continue speaking and shows active listening.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	25	19	26	21	9	1.7

Students were asked to examine two extracts of the commentary and compare the syntactic features of each. One extract was of Q’s utterances, while the other was a dialogue between L and D. Few students were able to accurately describe sentence structure.

Features relating to Q could have included:

- Q’s utterances are all declarative as they provide information relating to shots and play

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- ellipsis (For example, lines 48 and 49) to make his utterances brief and efficient
- utterances are mainly minor sentences (fragments), but there is a compound-complex sentence in lines 51–53.

Features relating to L and D could have included:

- a variety of sentence types reflecting questions, answers and the providing of information
- the use of long, compound-complex sentences fragmented by minimal responses.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Q's utterances are largely declaratives, albeit highly ellipted, as in 'Game point for Schiavone' (18), 'Back to deuce' (54). This is because Q's utterances serve to describe the on court events clearly and economically, he is detailing the events as they are happening. Conversely, the interaction in lines 83-98 is more varied and about expressing opinions. Hence, its syntax is characterised by interrogatives, 'It's so much, isn't it?' (83) To encourage involvement by the other speaker, with less ellipsis as there are no rapid events to describe, e.g. 'When you're actually...' (90)

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	14	24	23	19	9	4	2.8

Most students attempted this question, although few achieved full marks. It was important for students to relate their response closely to the text. Successful responses used metalanguage, specific examples and line numbers to help illustrate their points. The less successful responses merely described what was happening in the discourse.

Points for discussion included:

- as Q describes the actual play he is able to hold the floor. The start of each play is a cue for Q to begin commentating
- Q holds the floor, sometimes for lengthy periods, and is largely uninterrupted except for some cooperative laughter and back-channelling (lines 6 and 9–10)
- Q's summary of the scoring signals to L and D that he is relinquishing the floor (lines 12, 33, 54 and 82)
- L and D have a different role as they provide casual conversation on the game
- L manages a lot of turn-taking by inviting D to answer direct questions
- overlaps between L and D are supportive and often encourage D to continue her comments.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The turn-taking and topic management reflect each speaker has a distinct role. Q is the dominant speaker. His turns are much longer than those of the other two, and this points towards him being assigned to report the action. His dominance is also asserted by the fact that he is rarely overlapped; furthermore, when L and D are speaking as on lines 12-26 and 34-47, when Q starts speaking again, the topic immediately shifts back to the immediate action of the game – e.g. on lines 34-47, L and D discuss Schiavone's appeal to the crowd; on line 48, as soon as Q seizes the floor, the topic shifts to the match. L and D are assigned to provide discussion and opinions, and they engage in more traditional turn-taking using adjacency pairs 'It's so much...isn't it?' (Line 83), and final intonation to relinquish the floor e.g line 88 – yeah. Topics within these discussions are usually initiated via adjacency pairs 'did she...on purpose?' (line 38), however, Q's description takes precedence. Thus, Q is the dominant speaker assigned to discuss the action, while the others provide additional commentary.

Section 3 – Essay

Question chosen	0	11	12	13
%	1	45	18	35

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	1	2	2	4	5	9	12	17	15	13	9	6	3	1	0	8.1

Section 3 contained three essay topics. The most popular essay was Question 11, and the least popular was Question 12. The instructions for Section 3 required students to refer to the stimulus material provided and most students made a clear reference to at least one extract from the stimulus material. However, a number of students, particularly with Question 12, went well beyond the suggestions of the stimulus material. The word ‘culture’ in Question 12 brought with it a varied, and sometimes incorrect, interpretation.

Again, it was crucial that students engaged with the topic when writing their response. By not focusing on the key words of a topic, or not using the stimulus material as a guide, some students wrote very broad responses that failed to address the question.

It was apparent that few students fully planned a response and, as a result, some essays lacked structure and cohesion. The hasty re-wording of pre-prepared essays was evident; students are advised to avoid this practice.

Nevertheless, nearly all students completed an essay. It was noticeable that examples were often up-to-date and that tired, clichéd and old examples were avoided. However, it is important when writing an essay not to just rely on producing a list of examples for content. Examples need to be used, but these examples must support pertinent and well-crafted discussion.

Question 11

Relevant topics explored included (but were not limited to):

- whether there is a universal taboo
- how changes in society reflect changing taboos
- how taboo can vary depending on audience and context
- the role of political correctness
- the role of the law in creating rules.

The topic required an understanding of taboo in today’s society. Students provided many relevant examples of the taboos that exist in society today. Most students recognised how changing social values had affected the use of taboos. Examples were drawn from areas including racism, sexism and other areas of discrimination. Students were often very aware of how contemporary taboos sometimes differ from taboos of the past. Stronger students remembered the need to use appropriate metalanguage and to keep the focus of the essay on linguistic evidence. A small number of weaker responses tried to argue, unsuccessfully, that we have no linguistic taboos in our society today.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response. There were some issues that detracted from the overall quality of the response, such as inaccuracies in spelling, but overall it showed a strong grasp of the topic and provided a broad range of interesting examples, many of which were relevant and contemporary. The student met several important criteria; the essay’s use of metalanguage was assured; a reference was made to the stimulus material; and semantics, lexicology, and to a lesser extent discourse, were discussed. The student recognised how society influences taboo and that taboos can change over time, but also that language can be used in a subtle way to convey meaning. By recognising that certain taboos today still carry considerable ‘weight’, the student was able to explore the taboo of death in a detailed and convincing manner.

The changing values and trends of society correspond directly to change in language and changing taboos. It is true that the taboos of the early twentieth century are no longer addressed in the same manner as many have fallen out of use. The development of new taboos and shift in values has led to the creation of covert discrimination. In addition to these new taboos there are still certain taboos that remain – some so severe that they are not spoken of.

The overt discrimination used in the twentieth century around taboo topics no longer holds the same regard as it did, and in turn, there are some taboos of that time that are regularly referred to by young adults and teenagers in the Western World. Overt discriminatory terms such as ‘freak of nature’, ‘misfit’ and ‘outsider’ were commonly used to describe circus performers of the

early 1900s. These lexemes, while acceptable then, are no longer so as they are seen as directly offensive and harmful to those not as able as the majority of the modern day society. Overt discrimination has fallen out of use as the taboo around 'ability' has changed. Currently, those who suffer physical or mental problems are welcomed into society when they were shunned as outcasts only a century ago. In addition, the demise of certain taboos is reflected through the growing acceptability of swearing in public. Kate Holden's comment that 'The quickest way to relax an audience is to use the f-word' (The Age 2010) would not have been as valid fifty years ago. Expletives are becoming so commonly used, that are losing their weight and effect in shocking others and rupturing the social fabric. These taboo lexemes have lost their taboo and are now frequently seen on products in shops such as the sticky notes reading 'F### it' to mean don't worry or don't bother with it. Many teenage males have adopted 'the f-word' as an adjective that can even describe something that is amazing or brilliant (f###ing brilliant). The growing use of expletives and the changing stance around 'ability' demonstrate that some taboos become less taboo over time.

The decline in overt discrimination has led to a rise in covert discrimination, highlighting new taboos. This type of discrimination is ever more potent and offensive as it attacks individuals subtly and indirectly, much like the offense caused by whispering behind someone's back. The comments made towards a customer published on the internet in September 2011 clearly demonstrate this. The assistant was able to offend a woman by simply commenting that 'someone of your figure' should purchase anything that looked good. The rise in this taboo and the way people address it reflects the influence of the mass media. The lexemes do not confront issues directly, but address them subtly in a way that is new in society and demonstrates that new taboos do evolve to reflect changing trends.

There are some taboos that remain throughout time, they continue to hold their weight. The taboo of death, killing and suicide continues to be strong and hard for many to speak about in Western society, when it is addressed, it is most often in ways that promote social harmony through euphemisms rather than deliberately seeking to upset the audience by using dysphemistic lexemes. Common euphemistic references for death include 'pushing up daisies' and 'gone to heaven' which strengthen the social fabric by suggesting that the dead are in a better place, where they can do pleasant things. Obama has also referenced the killing of Osama Bin Laden (2011) in a way that avoided shocking his audience. In this public speech, Obama refers to 'the operation' rather than assassination of Bin Laden to promote social cohesion in the Western world and distance the taboo action of killing another human by making it seem necessary. This taboo of death has been ever prevalent in society throughout time, it is law not to kill another has been for many centuries. In addition, the taboo of suicide is so strong in society that it is almost never addressed by even the media. In recent reports on Channel Ten's 'The Project', the issue of suicide was discussed in an attempt to raise awareness. Reporter Mazadou suggested that often the media will not report it 'because they don't know how'. The taboo is most frequently addressed by silence (discourse) and solemnity. The inability to talk about it is further highlighted by the lack of euphemisms for it and the silence used on television broadcasts of advertisements for 'Lifeline'. The taboo of death remains in society as strong as ever, with aspects such as suicide being ignored and unspoken of in society's best attempt to rid it.

Changing trends and values are reflected in language change. Certain taboos have lost their weight and importance within the community and other ones have been developed to take their place. However, there are certain taboos such as death, killing and will continue to as they form written and unwritten laws about the actions of humans towards each other.

Question 12

Relevant topics explored included (but were not limited to):

- the effect of multiculturalism on language in Australia
- the role of Aboriginal English in reflecting culture
- the use of ethnolects in reflecting culture
- the use of accent in reflecting culture.

Students engaged in interesting discussions on the various Englishes that exist within Australia today. Many linked the use of one of these varieties to the forging of an identity and a voice. The use of code-switching and/or the use of Standard English were also commented on. Students also discussed the notion of prestige and the connotations surrounding language use. The more able students discussed pragmatics and semantics in relation to understanding a particular culture.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response. This student wrote a confident and detailed response that engaged with the topic. There was a very clear structure, and the student showed a firm grasp of the conventions of English. Excellent use of metalanguage and evidence of wider reading reflected a sound knowledge. By referring to President Obama's speech of 'yesterday', the student showed an engagement with the subject and an ability to use examples beyond those found in the classroom or text books.

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined. In contemporary Australian society, the myriad of English varieties spoken reflect our diverse culture and also changes that are occurring to our culture. This is epitomised through features of migrant ethnolects, Aboriginal English, and also foreign borrowings, such as Americanisms, that indicate an increased confidence in our own culture. Indeed, our diversity is clearly conveyed through our language.

Linguistic features of migrant ethnolects used in contemporary Australian society reflect the diverse cultures and identities of these ethnic groups. This is exemplified in non-Standard phonological and syntactic features of the Greek ethnolect. As ethnolect features reflect the native language of speakers, ethnic varieties become important symbols of the culture and identity of these groups, and reflect Australia's diverse culture. The Greek ethnolect is characterised by phoneme shifts, from dental fricative/ð/to alveolar plosive/d/, as in 'the' pronounced/də/, as well as shifts from/lə/to/lɪ/as in 'here' pronounced/hɪ/, and from/ə/to/e/as in 'definitely' pronounced/definetli/. Syntactic features include ellipsis of preposition and article, as in 'can I go bathroom?' and 'Can I have money?'. As these features reflect Greek, the mother tongue of ethnolect speakers, they are important symbols of the Greek culture. Indeed, 'Language is so closely bound up with the life and culture of its speakers that it's very difficult to separate them.' (Burrige) Interestingly, 'there is a growing trend for Australian born children of migrants to embrace their culture's heritage' through ethnolects (Macquarie University). While this is dictated by the Principle of Appropriateness, as second generation ethnolect speakers are able to code-switch to the standard in educational and other formal contexts, it reflects the use of language to embrace the diversity of cultures in familial settings. As young Australians embrace their ethnolect, this brings an interesting cultural dimension to our society. Lexical features of ethnolect varieties also reflect the culture of these groups. For example, many Asian ethnolects use the term 'Aunty' and 'Uncle' to refer to any adult, which reflects cultural values of respect and family values. In addition, lexical borrowings such as 'habib' in the Lebanese ethnolect, which has different connotations from its Standard equivalent 'mate', as it expresses a sense of great intimacy and gravity, enables the speakers of their ethnolect to display their culture and contributes to diversity in Australia.

As Australians become more confident of our own culture and identity, we are accepting of foreign influence on language change. This is shown through foreign lexical borrowings such as 'tai chi' from Chinese and 'yoga' from Hindi and as these terms have become standardised, they reflect the diversity in our society. In addition, the widespread import of Americanisms such as 'fo' shiz' in teenspeak, as well as 'get a grip', reflect a more urbanised and globalised society. However, these borrowings have not compromised traditional Australian culture and this is shown through our language in morphological features such as diminutives 'brekkie', 'pressie' and more recently 'jelly' (jealous) which is part of Australian teenspeak, as well as idioms such as 'ear-bashing' and 'chinwag' and phrases such as 'no worries' and 'she'll be right', highlighted yesterday in Barack Obama's speech in Parliament, where he made a comment about the distinctiveness of Australian English. Thus, our language enables us to present ourselves and our individual culture to the world. The voices in Australia are a symbol of our diversity.

Aboriginal English is a distinctive language variety used in our society that highlights our cultural diversity. Indigenous Australians use this variety to express their culture and identity as 'language is a tool for us to...signal who we are ...' (Trudgill). Indeed, the culture of Aboriginal Australians is an 'important part of Australian heritage.' (Bullying: No way website) and is reflected in their language. Features such as interchangeable use of phonemes/g/and/f/ and/ð/and elision of/h/, as these phonemes do not exist in Aboriginal languages, reflect this, as do distinctive Aboriginal English, such as non-Standard use of prepositions, 'he was scared from the dog'; a lack of inversion when asking questions: 'You ate the cheese?'; use of 'bin' to denote completed action, 'he bin wait long'; double comparatives, 'more better' and double negatives, 'I never did nothing'. Pragmatic features of Aboriginal English are an important marker of culture, as in gratuitous concurrence, which reflects the value of politeness and respect in Aboriginal culture, as well as the prosodics of using low volume and paralinguistics of reduced eye contact when interacting with a stranger. Language can be used to demonstrate identity and thus convey aspects of an individual's culture, as language shapes the way we think. The increasing acceptance of Aboriginal English varieties in our society, such as accommodation for this variety in law courts, reflects the Australian culture which is changing to be one of acceptance and diversity.

With a different language comes a different way of viewing the world. Thus, language can be used to express and embrace culture. This is relevant in Australian society through the use of migrant ethnolects, which increase our diversity by reflecting aspects of speakers' ethnic backgrounds, as well as in our acceptance of foreign lexemes and Americanisms which reflect not only a culturally diverse society but an increased confidence in the traditional mainstream Australian values and culture. Aboriginal English is another aspect of language variation in Australia, and it enhances our diversity by reflecting our heritage and history as Australians. Indeed, Australian voices reflect our diverse culture because with a language comes a set of values and a history.

Question 13

Relevant topics explored included (but were not limited to):

- both spoken and written modes have an influence in society today and are a powerful means of communication
- the role of context and audience in determining influence
- how spoken language can be personal, intimate and engaging
- how written language carries prestige and is often used by authority in society.

This proved to be a challenging question for many students who failed to address the topic. A detailed discussion on the influence of the two modes of language on society was required, rather than a discussion of their features and their influence on language. Students struggled to provide relevant examples. A number did discuss the power of a speech and provided interesting examples from Kevin Rudd and Martin Luther King, but did not always comment on the use of prosodics and paralinguistics in sufficient detail.

The importance of planning and careful essay selection was apparent with this question. Ill-prepared students relied on using the stimulus material to pad out their responses. Careful selection of topic would have enabled students to realise that this was a challenging topic.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response. The student recognised that it is difficult to adopt the position that the written mode has more influence than the spoken mode or vice-versa. A very good understanding of the topic is shown and a clear focus maintained throughout. The response is fluent, accurate and well structured. At times the lack of examples, particularly when referring to metalanguage, weakened this response, although the paragraph considering speech in the public domain went some way towards compensating for this. Very little mention was made of the fact that writing these days often takes place in an electronic form and that social media such as Twitter and blogs have a significant influence on public opinion.

Language is a powerful tool used by humans to convey meaning, express their thoughts and feelings, and to communicate amongst each other. Humans can communicate with each other either via the spoken mode or the written mode, 'each of which has developed to fulfil a particular set of communicative needs' (Crystal). Hence, both spoken and written language share relatively equal influence in contemporary Australia, as each is used to suit different situations and purposes.

The written mode of language has long been considered the most prestigious and influential form of communication. It is considered to be a more formal mode than spoken, being characterised by what is considered to be 'proper' grammar, syntax and punctuation. Due to its permanence and the fact that errors can be corrected in drafts, written language is used to convey information such as government documents and legal documents. The written mode is also specifically taught in schools, where sentence structure, spelling and punctuation are taught, which represents its influence and importance in the domain of education. Furthermore, prestige is obtained with the written mode because it offers special, sentimental emphasis which is expressed in Lawrence Money's statement, 'You can't beat a hand written letter because it means the sender made the extra effort'. Therefore, the written mode is in its own right an influential device used for communication.

Spoken language is considered to be a less prestigious mode than written language, however, it has the ability to influence and shape the perceptions and identities of Australians. Speech is the primal method of communication used by humans. Unlike the written mode it allows emotion and greater depth of detail to be conveyed with the aid of prosodic and paralinguistic features, such as intonation, body gestures and facial expressions. The way a person speaks, that is, their accent, pronunciation of words and lexical choice are all factors that define an individual's identity. Spoken language allows greater detail of a person's identity to be conveyed through language use. Furthermore, the spoken allows Australian English to develop and evolve, as linguistic variation such as ellipsis, elision, contractions and other morphological features, which occur so naturally in speech occasionally start being used in the written mode. This shows that the spoken mode has somewhat greater influence in the language use of Australians.

Speech is also more influential in a public domain. With its ability to convey emotion by variation in pitch, tone, loudness, tempo and voice quality, the spoken mode is well suited to public communication. This is evident in speeches made by politicians such as the 'sorry speech' made by Kevin Rudd where he apologised to the stolen generation of Indigenous Australians. Through the variation of voice quality and the use of personal pronouns such as 'we', Kevin Rudd was able to encompass the attitude of all Australians and apologise for the wrong doing that occurred in Australia's history. Hence, it can be said that the spoken mode has greater influence in Australia as this 'great speech' made a difference in Australian society.

Both spoken and written language have an equal influence on Australian society in the domain of electronic communication. Here features of the spoken mode are present in written discourse which can be said to be spoken language written down. With the ever-growing presence of technology in society, the language of electronic communication will become a very influential force in Australia. Characterised by spoken mode features such as elision, ellipsis, non-fluency features, simple sentences and discourse particles, this language is used predominantly by the younger generations while communicating electronically is blurring the distinction between the spoken and written modes and expresses that the written mode is still an influential force in Australia.

Writing cannot substitute for speech, nor speech for writing. Hence both spoken and written modes will remain equally influential in Australia.