INSIGHT

YEAR 12 *Trial Exam Paper*

2013

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Written examination

Sample responses

This book presents:

➢ high-level sample responses
➢ mark allocations
➢ tips for achieving top results

SECTION A – Short-answer questions

Text 1

Question 1

Sample response

Although the text has some formal elements, it is largely an informal discourse.

Mark allocation

- 1 mark for correct identification of the register as informal

Question 2

Sample response

This text serves both entertainment and expressive functions. In order for the reader to understand the author's purpose, he or she must first infer that although the discourse is in the style of a 'break-up' letter, it is in fact a satirical text that aims to critique the author's own inability to work efficiently, rather than a literal break-up with 'Procrastination'.

Mark allocation: 2 marks

- 1 mark for correct identification of one or both functions
- 1 mark for an acknowledgement that the text is satirical and for linking this to the author's purpose

Question 3

Sample responses

Parallelism occurs in the text to describe the actions of Procrastination: 'You send' (L16), 'you encourage' (L16) and 'you whisper' (L17). By repeating the pronoun–verb syntactic pattern, the list reinforces the notion that Procrastination's influence over the writer is pervasive and therefore inescapable.

<div align="center">**OR**</div>

Parallelism occurs in the text to describe Procrastination's initial visits to the writer: 'Between work, between study, between other social engagements' (L13–14). This parallelism acts to provide a list that implies the moments were innumerable yet not intrusive. By occurring 'between' the events listed, Procrastination's visits did not interrupt anything important.

Mark allocation: 2 marks

- 1 mark for correct identification of an example
- 1 mark for an explanation of the effect on the discourse

Question 4

Sample response

The writer has employed personification, in which the abstract noun 'procrastination' is given human qualities. This suggests that the exchange is between two people who know each other well.

Mark allocation: 2 marks

- 1 mark for correct use of the metalanguage term
- 1 mark for an explanation of the process

Question 5

Sample response

Although the writer makes use of some elevated lexemes such as 'absurdity' (L5) and 'indoctrinate' (L30), the text is largely informal. This informality is established through the employment of lexical choices that lend the letter a conversational style. For example, the lexical repetition of the adverb 'really' (L3, L6, L8) is usually associated with spoken interactions, as is the use of 'so' (L34) as a discourse particle, to signal the closing or shift of a topic. The reduplication of the phrase 'I know' (L29) also mimics the spoken mode. The writer's choice of the first-person pronouns, 'I' (L2, L8) and 'we' (L12), combined with the second-person pronoun 'you' (L12), close the social distance between the writer and her audience, thus reducing the formality within the text. This is further established through the intimate vocative 'baby' (L25). Finally, colloquialisms such as 'hanging out' (L13) and 'whatever' (L32) also reduce the formality, as does the writer's choice to use lexemes that lack specificity, such as 'a while' (L2) and 'a few' (L6).

Mark allocation: 4 marks

This question should be marked holistically, using the following guide.
- 4 marks: The response demonstrates a detailed knowledge of topic and is supported by relevant examples/evidence from the text. Metalanguage is used appropriately and effectively. Features of written discourse are consistently used.
- 3 to 2 marks: The response demonstrates a sound knowledge of the topic and is supported by some examples/evidence from the text. The metalanguage used is relevant. Features of written discourse are mostly evident.
- 1 to 0 marks: The response demonstrates a limited knowledge of the topic and contains few examples from the text. The use of metalanguage is limited or absent. Few features of written discourse are evident.

Tip

- *It's important in broad questions such as this that students are able to introduce a breadth of ideas and provide clear examples. Dealing with just one metalanguage term or concept is not sufficient for a question that specifies 'lexical choices'.*

SECTION A

Question 6

Sample response

Two key contextual elements influence the syntactic features and patterns in the text. The entertainment function of the text leads to the repeated use of listing; for example, 'hanging on the couch, watching a bit of reality TV or meandering across the internet' (L3–4). Here, the listing builds up a humorous image of the author's various procrastination strategies. This pattern is repeated later in the discourse: 'You send me YouTube links … you encourage my need for coffee … you whisper conspiratorially' (L16–17). The expressive function of the text leads the writer to rely mostly on declarative sentence types in order to share information and experiences with the reader; for example, 'I think you're great' (L10). This also leads to a prevalence of compound-complex structures, such as 'I hope this letter finds you well and you actually getting [sic] around to reading it before you wonder where I have gone' (L34–35). In addition, the writer uses a range of pre-modifiers to emphasise her feelings, such as 'I <u>really</u> am' (L8).

The 'relationship' between the writer and the imagined recipient of the letter also influences the syntactic features in the text. For example, the use of imperative sentence types such as 'Put your feet up' (L22) demonstrates the authority that Procrastination has over the writer. However, the close social distance is also demonstrated in the writer's non-Standard syntactic choices, such as beginning a sentence with the conjunction 'so' (L34) or using a sentence fragment such as 'much less nausea' (L33).

Mark allocation: 4 marks

This question should be marked holistically, using the following guide.
- 4 marks: The response demonstrates a detailed knowledge of topic and is supported by relevant examples/evidence from the text. Metalanguage is used appropriately and effectively. Features of written discourse are consistently used.
- 3 to 2 marks: The response demonstrates a sound knowledge of the topic and is supported by some examples/evidence from the text. The metalanguage used is relevant. Features of written discourse are mostly evident.
- 1 to 0 marks: The response demonstrates a limited knowledge of the topic and contains few examples from the text. The use of metalanguage is limited or absent. Few features of written discourse are evident.

Tip

- *Students may wish to draw on their response to Question 3 in this answer. It is perfectly acceptable to use information from an earlier answer in a later response. However, this question, as with Question 5, also requires students to demonstrate a breadth of knowledge of the relevant subsystem. Therefore, students must go beyond a discussion of parallelism and introduce other syntactic features. It's also important in questions such as this that students choose specific elements of the situational context and are able to make connections between the situational context and the features they are observing.*

SECTION A

SECTION B – Task

Text 2

Question 7

Sample response

Prime Minister Julia Gillard's address to Congress is a prepared speech that seeks to reinforce the strong diplomatic relationship between Australia and the United States of America. It is a formal text, and although available to viewers online and through television broadcasts, the primary audience for the speech is American Senators and Members of the House of Representatives. Therefore, the cultural contexts of both America and Australia work with the situational context to influence the stylistic and discourse features. While the speaker uses a range of linguistic strategies to achieve formality, the inclusion of Gillard's own experiences does somewhat decrease the formality of some parts of the text.

The relationship between the participants is a significant contextual factor affecting the text. As the representative of Australia, Prime Minister Gillard is addressing a group of politicians of whom she knows very little beyond their professional role, and therefore there is a large degree of social distance. Consequently, Gillard uses the formal vocative of occupational title to address her audience: 'Distinguished Members of the Senate and the House' (L13). While social distance exists between the participants themselves, Australia and the US have a shared history as allies. It is within this context that Gillard is able to rely on a collective cultural knowledge for coherence. She relies on the audience's ability to use inference to interpret her message when she refers to wars in which both Australia and the US fought: 'From Korea and Vietnam to the conflicts in the Gulf' (L65). She also alludes to Australia's 'darkest days' following the 'fall of Singapore' (L47), anticipating that her audience will be able to infer that she is acknowledging America's role in protecting Australia from Japanese invasion during WWII. Gillard also relies on the shared cultural understanding of the two countries in her allusion to the September 11 attacks and Australia's participation in the subsequent conflicts in the Middle East: 'Your darkest days … were ten years ago in Washington and New York, and we were with you' (L66–67). In relying on inference, Gillard is simultaneously depending on and signalling the solidarity that exists between the two countries.

The function of the text, to establish closer ties between Australia and the US, is achieved through a number of planned discourse features. For example, Gillard uses a repeated pattern of antithesis in order to emphasise the strength and endurance of the diplomatic relationship: 'A message which has been true in <u>war</u> and <u>peace</u>, a message which has been true in <u>hardship</u> and <u>prosperity</u>, in the <u>Cold War</u> and in the <u>new world</u>' (L9–11). Gillard also employs pre-modifiers designed to praise the United States and therefore remind her audience of her pro-US stance. She describes their invitation as a '<u>great</u> honour' (L2) and her audience as '<u>brave</u> and <u>free</u> people' (L26), as well as reminding the audience that Australia is a '<u>true</u> friend' (L14). Although the speech is largely formal, Gillard uses some informal strategies to communicate her Australian identity and to again signal solidarity with her audience. For example, she uses widely known Australian colloquialisms such as 'down under' (L14) and 'mates' (L33) in order to create a sense of intimacy with her audience. This intimacy is directly acknowledged in the declarative sentences on L29 and L30–31: 'Your great dream – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness – inspires us all' and 'Those of you who have spent time with Australians know that we are not given to overstatement.' In making these statements, Gillard is signalling that there is a shared understanding between the two countries of their respective and complementary national identities. Further informality is created between L19 and L22, when Gillard

SECTION B

details her own experiences of watching the moon landing. Her use of personal pronouns, such as '<u>I</u>'ll always remember thinking' (L22), personalises the speech and conveys that Gillard shares not just a diplomatic but also a personal admiration of America. This approach ensures that her words are given further credibility, thus contributing to the text's persuasive function.

The mode of the text is a further contextual element that influences the features and strategies present. As this is a formal speech, there is no turn-taking, but the audience does have a role in providing back-channelling or encouragement through frequent and sustained applause. On lines 15, 23, 40, and 57, Gillard includes lengthy pauses as her audience acknowledges her statements. Pauses are further employed by Gillard for dramatic effect, such as in L17, in the words 'the landing of Normandy\ (..)', where attention is drawn to Gillard's acknowledgement of America's role in WWII. Other prosodic features contribute to the delivery of Gillard's speech; for example, on L22 Gillard states that '<*Americans* can do *anything*>'. Here Gillard uses emphatic stress as well as slowing the pace of her speech to draw attention to her concluding statement. Elsewhere, attention is also drawn through the elongation of sounds, such as 'You have an ally:: in Australia' (L36). On lines 9–10, Gillard's repeated use of upwards and then downwards intonation reinforces the syntactic pattern of her speech: 'A message which has been *true/* in war (.) and peace \ (..)' and 'A message which has been true/ in hardship (.) and prosperity\ (..).'

In the Prime Minister's address to Congress, the lexis, syntactic patterns, prosodic features and reliance on inference all contribute to a formal and highly planned speech, while the use of Australian colloquialisms reduces the formality somewhat. The features and strategies employed by Gillard are determined by her awareness of relevant contextual factors, such as the cultural beliefs and values of Australia and America, Gillard's persuasive purpose, the formality of the setting, and the social distance that exists between the speaker and her audience.

SECTION B

Tips

- *In this section, students are expected to produce a detailed discourse analysis. It is important for students to avoid a simple labelling exercise, in which they identify features using metalanguage. Students must aim to connect the identified features with the social purpose, context and register of the text. It is also important that students respond thoughtfully to the text in front of them, rather than reading with a checklist of features to discuss. For example, in some texts a discussion of how the writer or speaker achieves coherence and cohesion will be relevant. In other texts there will be other features that should take precedence.*
- *While there is no specific structure that students must follow in their response to Section B, students who choose to organise their response according to subsystem can occasionally limit their opportunities for discussion. Yet regardless of structure, responses should be well organised, and students should use paragraphing. Subheadings may be appropriate to help organise some responses and students will not be penalised if they are used appropriately.*
- *Students should ensure that they avoid restricting their discussion to just one section of the text. It's important that students address the text as a whole.*
- *The length of a response is not necessarily related to the quality of the response. Regardless of length, the response should draw on a variety of subsystems and textual features, and make frequent connections to situational and cultural context. Students should devote the same amount of time to Section B as they do to Section C of the examination.*

SECTION B

SECTION C – Essay

Question 8

Sample response

This topic requires students to have a thorough understanding of the features and social purpose of formal language. They should explore formal language in depth, using appropriate metalanguage, and quote linguistic evidence to support their ideas. The importance of situational and cultural context in determining the effect of a person's language choices should also be acknowledged.

The topic has two important components that must be addressed – how formal language can *promote* social harmony and how formal language can *prevent* social harmony. Both of these components can be broken down further for a close examination of social purpose. While students might choose to introduce a discussion of how informal language can also promote and prevent harmony, the focus of this essay should be on displaying a detailed knowledge of formal language.

Students could use contrasting scenarios to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the course and the importance of context. For example, the employment of jargon can create social harmony if the listener is then able to put their trust in the expertise of the speaker. However, the listener might also feel shut out of such communication, leading to discord. The same can be said of negative politeness strategies. While the use of such strategies acknowledges the negative face needs of the interlocutors, such formality could cause offence if one participant felt that the other was attempting to avoid intimacy.

The stimulus material may point students towards a discussion of the following.

- Political correctness – how do we avoid conflict by being linguistically careful? In particular, how to we avoid causing offence by embracing non-discriminatory language practices?
- Negative politeness strategies – how is social harmony created by addressing the interlocutors' negative face needs? How does indirectness enable us to negotiate social taboos? Are such strategies dishonest (and therefore preventing harmony) or a necessary tool to decrease tension in sensitive situations (and therefore contributing to harmony)?
- The role of formal written language in manipulating and obfuscating – how can language be used to hide the truth? Does such obfuscation prevent or promote harmony? In whose interests and under what circumstances do such strategies work?
- The way doublespeak is propagated in public institutions – what role does the media play in magnifying the problems associated with manipulative or obfuscating language? Does Plain English promote greater social harmony than doublespeak? In what contexts?

Question 9

Sample response

This topic requires students to explore the connection between language and the Australian cultural context (the attitudes and beliefs within Australian society). It is worth noting that the question refers explicitly to 'Australian Englishes'. Students should avoid referring to just one version of Australian English, but should instead acknowledge the range of varieties available. This could include Standard Australian English, the vernacular, Aboriginal Englishes, and migrant ethnolects, as well as social variations (such as the continuum of Australian accents).

The use of the word 'how' is asking students not only to identify connections between language and cultural context, but also to explore the process by which values and beliefs have had an impact on the linguistic choices of Australians. Making these connections explicit in explanation is essential to answering this question effectively. Therefore, this essay requires much more from students than a simple description of the features of Australian varieties of language.

The stimulus material may point students towards a discussion of the following.

- The establishment of Standard Australian English and the way in which it emerged from the belief that Australia had reached maturity as a nation. Students could consider the confidence in the Australian national identity that emerged at the same time as SAE and how this fed the belief that our language could stand as an equal among other national varieties of English.
- The way that creative or colourful idiomatic expressions reflect something of the Australian character. This could link to a reluctance to follow 'rules', therefore resulting in our vernacular being more reflective of our cultural context than the Standard. Students could also make links to Australian values, such as egalitarianism, or to established social practices, such as a trend towards informality in many social contexts.
- The prompt asks students to focus on the Australian cultural context. Therefore, they need to consider what is valued in Australian culture. This might include directness, sincerity and an aversion to conforming to 'rules'. Students should then provide linguistic examples of where such values become evident within varieties of Australian English.
- Students should also consider the role of Australian national identity in establishing linguistic norms. Sometimes we are as much defined by what we are 'not' as by what we are. Considering social attitudes towards American English (and why Australians are so afraid of it polluting Australian English) might provide a point of discussion about what is valued in Australian language.

SECTION C

Question 10

Sample response

This topic requires students to explore the features and functions of in-group language through a discussion of covert language strategies. Embedded in this discussion should be an understanding of why particular speech communities might choose to reject overt norms, as well as an appreciation for how covert strategies signal shared goals, beliefs and interests (solidarity).

The stimulus material may point students towards a discussion of the following.

- Cultural varieties of Australian English and their role in establishing identity. For example, the cultural significance of Aboriginal Englishes – not as 'lesser' Englishes but as shibboleths that convey particular messages about indigenous cultural norms and attitudes.
- A further exploration of the role of cultural varieties in contemporary Australian culture (in this case, migrant ethnolects). This prompt points students to the notion of code-switching or style-shifting – that speakers make deliberate choices to adopt certain linguistic practices and are therefore able to play up their membership of specific speech communities in certain contexts.
- The importance of elements of situational context in determining which linguistic choices are appropriate. For example, while adherence to overt norms might be required in some settings or for some audiences, in other contexts adopting covert norms will be a more successful strategy.
- The role of language in establishing social boundaries by excluding undesirable participants. In this instance, the stimulus material refers to adolescent varieties of language. However, the same exclusionary function can be served by a range of social varieties.

Tips

- *In this section, students have an opportunity to draw from a wide range of linguistic concepts for their discussion. However, it is important that students balance the requirements of showing both a breadth and a depth of knowledge of the course. Generalised discussion is not rewarded. Students should look to support their ideas with specific metalanguage terms and relevant evidence. It is important that students focus on understanding the nuances of the topic, and select and use appropriate linguistic evidence in their analysis. Students are required to use at least **one** of the stimulus quotes provided to inform their response.*
- *As always, students should look to include recent and relevant examples of language use. While some examples are given in the stimulus quotes, students should also be prepared to use their own original examples to support the discussion. Creativity in examples is always preferable over reusing unoriginal choices. Students who demonstrate evidence of wider academic reading, and use this knowledge to formulate an appropriate response to the topic, should be rewarded.*

SECTION C

Assessment criteria

Examination responses will be assessed on the extent to which they demonstrate the ability to

- use metalanguage tools to describe and analyse structures, features and functions of language in a range of contexts
- explain and analyse linguistic features of written and spoken English in a range of registers
- understand and analyse relationships between language and identities in society
- identify and analyse differing attitudes to varieties of Australian English
- draw on contemporary discussions and debate about language
- write clearly organised responses with controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task.

END OF SAMPLE RESPONSES BOOK