



2008 English Language GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2008 English Language examination consisted of three sections. Section 1 had nine questions worth a total of 23 marks (30%) and Section 2 had nine questions worth a total of 22 marks (30%). Students could choose one of two essay topics in Section 3, which was worth 30 marks (40% of the total marks available). There was one text for analysis in Section 1 and two texts in Section 2. The transcripts in Section 2 contained 72 and 27 intonation units respectively, a similar amount to past years. Students continued to manage their time well, with the majority completing all three sections of the examination. The range of examples used in this year's essay responses was broad and interesting.

General advice to students

- Students must read essay questions carefully. Before responding to a question, students should make sure that they understand what they are being asked and that, where possible, all parts of the question are addressed.
- Stimulus material for the essay topics provides guidance for students to engage with the topic. Students are encouraged to use this. However, essays which draw only on this material and do not contain any other material that the student has contributed are limited in their scope and are marked accordingly.
- Before the examination, students should practise writing answers for questions that require a sustained response, particularly those which require a student to 'discuss' or explain 'how'. Responses should be clear, ordered and comply with the question's requirements, such as line numbers and/or examples.
- Accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar are important. Students should remember that while the use of metalanguage, the understanding of concepts and the analysis of language are very important, clear, precise and fluent writing is the bedrock on which answers are constructed.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

For each question, an outline answer (or answers) is provided. In some cases the answer given is not the only answer that could have been awarded marks.

Section 1 – Written Text

This section contained a written memoir by John Harms, who reflects on his childhood in Queensland.

Question 1ai-ii.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	35	65	0.7

Examples of adverbial phrases between lines 4 and 5 included:

- cricket daily
- golf occasionally
- tennis often.

Two correct answers were required to obtain the mark. Students were required to identify adverbial phrases as examples. Answers that copied complete sentences without highlighting the adverbial phrase were not rewarded.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	38	62	0.6

Parallelism

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	9	18	28	28	18	2.3

Stylistic techniques that could have been discussed included:

- repetition
- listing
- simile

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- discourse structure
- slang.

It was important that students responded clearly and succinctly to this question. A number of responses lacked cohesion. A range of stylistic techniques could have been selected, but it was important that these styles emphasised the relentless heat of summer. The question required a discussion of the stylistic techniques, so students who listed examples without commentary did not attain full marks. One mark was allocated for the correct identification and discussion of each technique.

Following is an example of a high-scoring student response.

Use of the dysphemistic 'Bloody' in line 1 adds strong emotion and thus emphasises just how hot it is.

Use of the adverb 'All' in line 2 suggests that every one of his summer memories involve hot weather and this indicates that the heat is always present.

Use of the simile 'brown as pennies' in line 4 indicates the kids were very tanned, and infers that only constant exposure to the sun could cause this to occur.

Use of the adjectives such as 'sweltering' and 'monumental' intensify the idea of the heat and imply that it is relentless.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	20	27	53	1.4

Both of:

- the 'you' used in line 13 was a more general subject pronoun which could refer to any child in a similar situation in Darling Downs
- the 'you' in line 15 referred more specifically to the author and his siblings.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	14	24	63	1.5

Examples of figurative language included, but were not limited to:

- 'he wore his weathered skin loosely'
- 'like a trendy sports jacket'
- 'ours was dolphin-svelte.'

The majority of students were able to identify examples of metaphors and similes. To achieve full marks it was necessary to explain how this figurative language added to the meaning of the text. A small proportion of students was confused and labelled a metaphor as a simile and vice versa.

Following is an example of a high-scoring student response.

Reference of the supervisor's skin as 'weathered' and the children's as 'dolphin-svelte' highlights the age difference between them; a creative way of describing the old man's wrinkles and the children's smooth, young skin. The simile 'Like flipper himself.' implies that the children were good swimmers and enjoyed it immensely.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	42	39	19	0.8

Both of:

- substitution in this text creates cohesion by avoiding unnecessary repetition of noun phrases thus making the text more readable and lively. Examples include substituting 'they' for 'grade nine girls' and 'he' for 'the tough'
- antonymy in this text creates cohesion by providing contrast and providing a link between opposing ideas. For example 'little' contrasts with 'giant', 'huge', and 'great'.

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Question 6

Marks	0	1	Average
%	34	66	0.7

Both of:

- in line 24 'tough' functions as a noun
- in line 25 'tough' functions as an adjective.

Question 7a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	26	74	0.8

Examples of ellipsis between lines 29 and 36 could have included, but were not limited to:

- time for cricket – missing subject pronoun 'it' and the verb 'was'
- more lemon water – missing subject pronoun 'we' and the verb 'drank'.
- and a run through the sprinkler – missing 'We had...'

Question 7b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	35	32	33	1

The effect of the ellipsis reflected a sense of routine but also highlighted the key points of a person's memories. The economical writing listed the familiar, expected activities of a day.

Following is an example of a high-scoring student response.

The use of ellipsis allows for short sentences which describe his experiences in a vivid manner. Their use also allows the description to sound like a recount of memories, providing greater descriptive effect and style.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	21	17	28	35	1.8

Examples of colloquial language included:

- 'bloody hot', 'I reckon', 'kid', 'stubbies' and 'bum-crack' (Australian colloquialisms)
- 'as brown as pennies', 'trendy' and 'treadlies' (age-related colloquialisms).

Most students were able to discuss how the author's use of colloquial language reflected his Australian identity and age. However, some students identified examples of colloquial language incorrectly. Two marks were awarded for each example and one mark was awarded for the discussion.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	48	6	8	10	28	1.7

In this text, there is a heavy reliance on interference by the reader in order to create coherence – as the author tries to create a feeling of authenticity in the nostalgic description of his childhood summers in Australia. The reader needs to infer the meaning of many expressions/concepts in order to fully understand the meaning of the text. Examples of this include:

- Commercial Hotel is a pub
- the many references to cricket – 'test match', 'first delivery', 'next session'
- Christmas beetles
- Flipper – the dolphin in a popular television series of the time
- 'treadlies', 'bombs' (into pool), 'stubbies' (name for the brand of shorts often worn as bathers), 'coconut oil'
- product names/eponyms – 'Dunlop volleys/volleys', 'ABC newsreader', 'Milo', 'Vegemite'.

Two marks were awarded for each of the examples of interference and two marks for the explanation.

Following is an example of a high-scoring student response.

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In line 30, 'the first delivery' requires previous knowledge of the audience to understand the sport of cricket, and that this is referring to the first bowl from the bowler.

In line 18, the simile 'like flipper himself' also requires previous knowledge that Flipper is a dolphin to understand what is implied.

Thus for the text to be coherent to the audience, the discourse relies on inference through the above examples.

Section 2 – Spoken Text

Text 2: Dialogue

The transcript of a television program provided material for the students to analyse. Mother and daughter were engaged in an unscripted discourse regarding their heritage and ancestry.

The personal nature of the information being discussed caused excitement and clearly the speakers had a close, supportive relationship. This information was important in the answering of several questions in this section. The transcript provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the features of spoken text.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	Average
%	41	59	0.6

The function of 'No' was to indicate a feigned disbelief or amazement. It expressed surprise, but also functioned as a back-channelling device allowing the other speaker to continue. It was not a sign of disagreement or discouragement.

Students are reminded that one word responses are to be discouraged as they do not provide adequate information.

Question 11a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	42	58	0.6

Isn't he

To receive the mark it was necessary to clearly identify the interrogative tag.

Question 11b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	27	73	0.8

The function of the interrogative tag was to encourage feedback and acts as a signal to hand over the floor. It was an invitation to respond and to get Cherie involved, thus forming part of a turn-taking strategy.

Question 12i-ii.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	55	35	10	0.6

Question 12i.

The first syllables in 'boring Augie' act as assonance.

Question 12ii.

The word play (pun) is on 'boring'. This can mean a person who is uninteresting but it also refers to Augie boring for water.

Question 13

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	25	39	35	1.1

Examples of floor-holding strategies used by Kate included:

- elongated vowels (line 6)
- fast speech (lines 10–13)
- discourse particles (lines 18 and 22)

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- rising pitch (lines 6, 29, 45 and 47)
- adjacency pair (lines 28–30). Used in this case to elicit a one word response and then to continue to hold the floor.

One mark was awarded for each response. Most students were able to identify at least one example, but it was also necessary to provide line numbers. Responses without line numbers could not be awarded full marks.

Question 14

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	15	31	55	1.4

The overlapping showed that Cherie was following what she was being told and that she was also engaged. The overlapping expressed Cherie's enthusiasm for the story and excitement about what she is to hear. It was a cooperative signal rather than an attempt to take the floor.

Question 15

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	8	11	24	15	32	3.2

The relationship between mother and daughter was very close (one mark). They shared a common interest in their heritage and showed curiosity, enthusiasm and excitement. It was necessary to provide one example of a prosodic feature and one example of lexical choice to reflect this relationship (two marks each).

Examples of prosodic features included:

- staccato speech showed absolute disbelief (line 71)
- rising intonation indicated incredulousness on Cherie's behalf (lines 53 and 55)
- elongated vowel sounds (lines 5 and 6), especially line 48 '^No=' demonstrated their shared surprise and exuberance.

Examples of lexical features included:

- 'pirates and bums' (line 29). Colloquial language indicated familiarity with one another
- 'Augie' (line 43). The use of nicknames known to each speaker
- 'cool looking dude' (line 58) is colloquial language
- 'yeah' (lines 53, 69 and 72)
- 'we' (lines 29 and 31) repeated throughout the text to show unity.

Following is an example of a high-scoring student response.

Very high pitched, excited voice in Line 19 (↑so↑) demonstrates the close tenor between K and C as they don't feel it necessary to keep their emotion in check for the sake of being polite.

Informal lexical choice such as 'woah' (line 25) and 'bums' (line 29) and 'dude' (line 58) highlight and reflect the close tenor between K and C, as they clearly feel it appropriate to use such casual and non-standard lexemes in each others' presence. Therefore high pitched, excited voice (prosodics) and informal lexical choice reflect the reduced social distance between participants.

Text 3: Monologue

The transcript of a response to a television interviewer's question provided material for the students to analyse. The response, a monologue, was spontaneous and unscripted. The speaker had to overcome the difficulties of speaking in front of the camera, such as be informative, interesting, on subject and relatively fluent. The transcript provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the features of spoken text.

Question 16

Marks	0	1	Average
%	32	68	0.7

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‘Kind of’ and ‘sort of’ are discourse particles.

Question 17

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	21	13	19	19	28	2.2

The context of Text 3 was a recorded response to a question. This monologue was a spontaneous response for television and the speaker had sole access to the floor. Therefore the speaker stuck to the topic and tried to avoid long pauses, as they were not appropriate for television. However, the use of non-fluency features indicated that Kate required time to think on her feet and construct meaningful and relevant utterances. For example, pauses, pause fillers, repetition and false starts indicated the spontaneity of the speech and Kate’s attempts to express herself. The use of non-standard syntax was another feature that showed how context influenced language choice.

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

There are a number of fillers (‘um’, line 1, 27) throughout the text that reflect the spontaneous context of a spoken interview. Repetition (‘have, have married’ line 5, ‘there’s a very....very’, line 14-15) also occurs due to the rapid nature of the spoken discourse, where utterances are unplanned and not always perfect syntactically.

Question 18

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	13	17	32	38	2

Examples of slang included:

- ‘WASPy’
- ‘ethnic exotic mongrel thing’
- ‘pirates and bums’.

The role of slang in establishing the speaker’s identity in Text 3 was to establish Kate as an Australian woman who was in touch with her heritage and was comfortable using slang in the public domain. Her confidence extended to talking about her past and ethnicity in a dysphemistic way.

Section 3

Essay chosen	0	1	2
%	1	56	43

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	1	1	4	5	8	11	13	15	13	11	8	5	3	2	1	7.9

Section 3 of this year’s paper contained two essay topics. Both topics had stimulus material that could be used by students in their responses. The stimulus material provided cues as to the types of issues or features that could be addressed in the essay responses. Question 19 was the most popular topic chosen. It required references to at least two subsystems and students responded accordingly.

Students who scored highly in this section were able to combine a broad, yet detailed, knowledge of the topic with a confident use of metalanguage. Most students wrote at length. Students who could demonstrate accurate use of the conventions of written discourse, such as coherence, cohesion, wide vocabulary, good spelling and accurate punctuation, were appropriately rewarded. The ability to write accurately is an important criterion in this section and students need to be reminded of this.

Question 19

Relevant topics explored included, but were not limited to:

- Australian accent and accent change
- ethnolects
- the language of teenagers (teenspeak)
- the language associated with occupations, including the language of politicians
- use of jargon
- use of slang.



This topic required an understanding of how language creates identity. A significant number of students failed to link their responses to how one 'would like to be perceived' and instead focused on writing generally about creating an identity through language, almost creating a review of Unit 3. A close reading of the question was required and the more successful students were able to discuss how individual language variations are based on context. In other words, we change our language according to the situation we are in and we can change our language when we want to be perceived differently. Some students also restricted their responses solely to location (where you come from) and education, sometimes leading to rather generalised discussions of class divides.

Sample 1

The following extract from one student's essay showed a firm understanding of how language can be used to achieve an identity and how language can shape how we wish to be perceived. The examples used by the student were relevant and varied.

Language is a key marker of our identity. Our lexical choices including slang and jargon as well as our accent are some of the key features of our language which denote our belonging to a certain group in the society, our ethnicity and upbringing. A person can modify their language use to portray a specific identity depending on how they wish to be perceived. We constantly change our language use based on our perception of the context and what would be appropriate in it. Thus through our language use we can choose to be perceived in a certain way depending on our perception on the context on how we want to fit in the society.

One of the main features which define us is our accent. An Australian is clearly identifiable by their non-rhotic pronunciation and use of diphthong instead of monothongs in words such as 'day' pronounced as 'die' and 'mate' pronounced as 'mite'. These variations are more masked in a Broad Australian accent, which is often linked to the 'stereotypical' Australian; than in the General Australian accent. Most people are moving towards using a general accent in Australia because it portrays a more educated image while still retaining the distinct features of Australian English mentioned above. In the past the Cultivated accent was linked to prestige which was closest to the Received Pronunciation. But the fast decline of this variety shows how most people choose to retain this distinct Australian identity. A person may use a Broad accent to portray an uneducated and friendly image, suggested by some linguists that people deliberately choose a low status accent as a way of invoking prestige. An example of this can be seen from the movie – 'Looking for Alibrandi' where Jacob's use of Broad Australian accent makes him a more popular choice in the audience in a debating competition. He uses slang – 'ma old man' for father in a context in which Broad accent would not normally be used. This invokes prestige as the audience identify with him being a 'true' Australian. Josie on the other hand uses a General Accent which not only highlights her education but also reflects on her idealistic personality. She does what was traditionally expected of her.

Another example of how people use accent convey a specific identity can be seen from various ethnolects present in Australia. A migrant may choose to be identified from his or her ethnicity by retaining features from their own language and accent. This can be seen from the typical pronunciation of Italians where they stress the second last syllable of words. Lebanese speak is another such example where Lebanese accent is evident from the pronunciation of the word 'pleasure' rhyming with 'car' rather than 'uh'. On the other hand some migrants may choose to acquire an Australian accent in order to be perceived as Australians. However, ethnolects reflect on their individual cultural heritage and Australian identity as well.

Slang and jargon are two lexical features of language which denote identity and mark people as belonging to a certain group. Teenagers often create their own slang to form a distinct identity from others. For example Jonah from the T.V. series Summer Heights uses the words – 'Punk'd' and jargon related to break dancing and can be clearly identified as belonging to that specific group of teenagers. In one of the episodes he mentions how a Year 7 boy did not know what punk'd meant and his teacher replies he doesn't either. This shows that this word was restricted to that particular group. A person who wishes to be seen as belonging to a certain social group may start using that slang to be included in the group and be identified as belonging to it.

An example which demonstrates the link between language use based on perception is demonstrated in Bruce Moore's book – 'Speaking our Language' where he talks about the word 'habib' by Lebanese Australians. The word seems synonymous to 'mate' but is used more seriously, and marks a close kinship with people using it. Most young Lebanese use it to mask their non- Anglo cultured values....Thus, using 'habib' typically denotes aggressively imposing Lebanese Culture and distinguishing yourself from Anglo-Saxon values. This is how strongly lexemes can mark our identity and be purposely used to mark that identity.

Sample 2

The following extract gave a confident response which was full of relevant examples. This student shows a clear awareness of how subtle uses of language can expose a person's beliefs and values, thus affecting how they are perceived by others.

Our choice of language can also send out messages about the values we hold as individuals, for example, our use of taboo terms, politically correct language or euphemisms. We may choose to use politically correct terms such as 'bipolar' over 'manic-depressive' or euphemisms such as a 'little dull', to show others the values we hold. Many choose to use certain 'PC' terms and not others. For example, despite the feminist movement of the mid to late 20th Century, many interlocutors still choose to use



gratuitous specification ('female bus driver') or marked and unmarked terms ('actor' and 'actress'). This sends a message to those around us that identifies the values we hold, just as our choice to use discriminatory language, such as racist terms like 'pakky' or 'ching', can clearly show others the way we would like to be perceived. While Kate Burridge has identified that some people hold politically correct speakers to be 'self-righteous, ideological monsters', many people base their perceptions about us upon the language they hear us use, and as such, our choice to avoid taboo areas or not in our speech can heavily impact the way we are perceived by others. As taboos shift and change over the years, others' perceptions regarding previous taboo areas may not, and as such their perception of us and the language we use will be influenced by their own values as language users. For example, while many speakers may no longer consider blasphemous terms to be taboo, using such phrases as 'go to hell' and 'I don't give a damn' freely, for others in our society this language use may feel inappropriate, particularly for members of the 'Cuss Control Academy' who publish pamphlets outlining acceptable euphemisms for blasphemous terms. As such, others' perceptions of us and our values may be highly influenced by our choice of language, whether we choose to use politically correct terms, taboo words or words we feel carry no taboo, all our language choices will influence the way other interlocutors perceive us and our values.

Question 20

Again it was important to fully understand the scope of the question before attempting a response. Many students wrote at length about the benefits and disadvantages of today's technology but failed to explore 'the traditional forms of communication' mentioned in the question. Better responses addressed both sides of the topic and provided relevant examples with linguistic evidence. Students should be reminded that appropriate metalanguage usage and analysis of linguistic usage are key criteria for assessment.

Reasons why a community might be concerned that technology is replacing traditional forms of communication included:

- it can be seen as being an anti-social, sometimes solitary activity and that the art of conversation is dying
- the negative impact on standard English usage
- the importance of using prosodic and paralinguistic features to enhance meaning
- the loss of spontaneity.

Reasons why a community might not be concerned that technology is replacing traditional forms of communication included:

- technology supplements our communication needs and provides more linguistic tools for us to use. It can co-exist with more traditional methods
- it is valued due to its speed, efficiency and appropriateness
- it can facilitate human interaction, for example chat rooms and dating services
- traditional methods of communication will still have value, for example speeches, religious sermons and pillow talk.

Sample 1

This student's response recognised the role played by technology in the development of language. While the important role of face to face communication was acknowledged, the use of prosodics was not discussed.

In a society where technological advances are made daily, many are worried that with the development of tools including instant messaging, SMS and blogging, traditional forms of oral communication will become obsolete. However, spoken language is still the predominant form of communication, and despite the widespread effects of technology on the lexicon and syntax of the English language, the spoken word will invariably continue to prosper.

The technological revolution has coincided with the adolescence of Generation Y, providing the now widely known, Teenspeak. The advent of Teenspeak has largely been a result of the popularity of online instant messaging and SMS, resulting in a lingo which strives for efficiency and aims to replicate the spoken word. Since SMS messages only allow 160 characters per message at a cost of 25 cents, the strive for efficient communication has resulted to widespread additions and changes to the English lexicon. Abbreviations and acronyms are widely used, notable examples including 'btw' (by the way), 'gtg' (got to go) and the now infamous 'lol' (laugh out loud); and their popularity has almost resulted in codification as 'lol' and 'gg' (good game) are regularly heard on our streets.

There have also been significant changes to the syntax as a result of the technological revolution. Many prescriptive linguists are in outrage over the state of grammar in our society. Also as a result of the aim for efficient communication, conjunctions are regularly left out and utterances heavily ellipsed, a typical feature of spoken language. The move towards phonetic spellings has also been prevalent as a result of technology, as 'would' becomes 'wld', 'please' becomes 'pls' and 'thanks' becomes 'thx'.

However, technology also has many advantages over face-to-face communication. For instance, SMS and Instant Messaging allow communication between individuals over long distances where this would not be possible or practical. Many individuals,



including Nathan Rosenburg, believe that 'text allows people tosay things they wouldn't normally say', giving individuals confidence and ease of communication.

An example of the importance of face to face conversations and public speaking is demonstrated through the art of speech making. Evident throughout the U.S. presidential campaign and the 2007 Australian federal elections, world leaders and important figures utilised speeches as the main form of communication. The importance and persuasive power of facial expressions, for example, smiling and bodily gestures were especially evident throughout these political campaigns, emphasising the advantages of face to face conversations and spoken language over technological means of communication.

The recent advances in technology and the advent of online instant messaging and SMS have lead to their widespread popularity and subsequent influence on the English language. However, despite their effect on the lexicon and syntax of the language, and their perceived benefits over spoken language, the social aspects and the greater depth of communication provided by face-to-face conversations ensures that the spoken mode of communication will continue to dominate.

Sample 2

The following extract from one student's response did not score highly. There was some understanding of the topic but this was coupled with an overreliance on the stimulus material. This material can be used but it should lead to a detailed linguistic discussion and be a prompt for students to introduce their own examples. It is also important for students to paragraph and use the conventions of English correctly. A formal register is required for the writing of English Language essays.

Sure its easy to say that kids spent far too much time on their phones talking or texting but when there in school or amongst friends the traditional face to face conversations shall take place and even in classrooms.

Nathan Rosenberg in The Age, 13 March 2008 states 'texts allow [people] to have a bit of fun and flirt, and then say things they wouldn't normally say'. This is also true, the idea of texts allows the user to get rid of any awkwardness than can contribute to any face to face conversation allowing any traditional conversation to be much easier. However texts are known for the use of abbreviations /shortenings of words, which allows others to point the finger and say this is allowing students english scores to drag.

The use of the internet has been a great way of allowing students to gather information they would not find from teachers, parents and such. This allows students to share their interests with others and have the chance to meet with people around the globe. Even in the workforce today there is such a thing called video conferencing where two or more people, miles apart from a conversation as if they were right next to each other, because of the wide screen which is situated in front of them.

It is stated by Stephen Millar, The Age 13 March 2008, that virtual conversation is 'inferior'. But in video conferencing, both participants are right in front of video screen. Body language would be just as normal as if it were the real thing. The facial gestures and nuances will be seen by who else is watching.

Angelina Pippas, The Age 13 January 2008 stated, 'I love nothing more than debating all the hot topics around my kitchen table'. That may be so but these forms of communication such as texting, calls, email are intended for contact between large distances between the users. Not around the dinner table, and if Angela Pippas isn't debating topics around the dinner table its obviously not the fault of new technology but that of her own.