

Answer Guide

Section A Short answer questions: Speeding fine

(15 marks)

1. Describe the context and social purpose of the conversation between line 3 and 133. 2 marks

Purpose of call – to obtain information about applying for a waiver, and to find out if eligible, hence J is hesitant, using hedging phrases and non-fluency features due to the sensitive nature of the request.

Formal context although language has many features of non-standard, spontaneous speech by P. P maintains strict focus on the business, J complies with this, although the conversation develops into a slightly more friendly relationship over the course of the interaction. Finishes with a formulaic “Can I help you with anything else today?” to which J responds “no” so that she can finish the exchange.

2. Compare the opening sequence (lines 4 to 6) with the closing sequence (lines 126 – 133).

2 marks

Opening is unexpected – the term ‘allegation’ seems to cause her to hesitate and fumble. This is not an adjacency pair. The closing sequence is standard although long, and runs smoothly, characterised by adjacency pairs, politeness conventions. J appears to try to finish the conversation at line 116 but P continues with another comment and then a question. Finally the two interlocutors reach a satisfactory conclusion.

3. Discuss how the topics are managed by P and J, with reference to two examples between line 30 and line 52.

2 marks

P is in the power position, J has less authority as she is seeking information from a person who represents the statutory body. P’s use of ‘we’ (line 93) aligns her with Penalty Review Board. After J’s initial query and the one about her last fine (line 53), P manages the topics for the remainder of the conversation.

4. Discuss at least two discourse strategies used by J that enable P to maintain the floor between line 62 and line 92.

2 marks

J’s minimal responses - J is non-committal in her responses, listening and encouraging P to continue – ends responses on even note, not wanting to continue turn and allowing P to maintain the floor.

5. Describe and give reasons for the prosodic features of P’s turns between lines 93 and 101.

3 marks

P’s fast speech, most turns continuing, suggesting routine, has answered the questions and given the information many times and is very familiar with it. These utterances are more scripted than other turns where she converses with J, such as 47 – 51.

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6. Identify three shifts in register in the transcript, giving reasons for these changes, with examples to illustrate your answer. **4 marks**

The register is automated and formal from line 1 to line 3, with J listening silently to the recorded message. This register is designed to be friendly but is actually quite disempowering for callers, who have no option but to wait until a person comes on to the line.

At line 4 P picks up the call and briskly gets down to business, asking J for her 'allegation number'. The register here is quite formal and J is caught unawares by the direct question, causing her to fumble and hesitate for a moment. From there until line 41 the register continues to be formal and business-like, necessary for P to establish the details of the caller so that she can then properly assist her with her query. P lists the eligibility criteria in lines 38, 40, 42, 43; these are a series of statements to inform J. At line 44 P shifts to a more informal register, offering her opinion and advice to J. Perhaps she wants to present a more 'human' side of the department and to engage at a more personal level with the caller. P's utterances include hesitations (line 42), repetitions ('I have seen matters') because she has gone 'off script' and is speaking more spontaneously. From line 78 P switches into more formal mode again, explaining the process and carefully giving the details that J needs to make an application, thereby fulfilling her obligations as a customer service officer. The register changes again at line 115 with J and P engaging in more friendly, less formal discourse as they reach an agreed closing sequence in lines 126 to 133.

Section B: Analytical Commentary

30 marks

Question 7. Write an analytical commentary about Text 2.

In your response, you should comment on the:

- stylistic and discourse features of the text
- social purpose and register of the text
- contextual factors surrounding the text.

Refer to at least **two** subsystems in your analysis.

Sample commentary

Liberal Member of Parliament, Malcolm Turnbull, delivered this eulogy in the Australian House of Representatives, a few days after Robert Hughes' death. Turnbull's awareness of the context, and the fact that it would become part of the Hansard record, ensures that his language choices and presentation are formal yet engaging for the audience, combining literary, rhetorical flourishes with personal anecdotes and humour.

His purpose is to pay tribute to a man whom he admires, both as a public figure and as a family member. As he celebrates Hughes' life, Turnbull wants to convey to the audience the breadth and depth of the man in both capacities and to bring to life the private person. Turnbull adjusts his language accordingly to suit these purposes.

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The register of this discourse is formal, as befits the parliamentary setting and the circumstances – a eulogy honouring a great Australian who is who is internationally acclaimed, delivered by a man who is himself a public figure, and who has been Leader of the Opposition. Despite its formality, there are touches of personal, less formal language that create an image of ‘Bob’ (line 14), ‘Uncle Bob... WU’ (line 32), in contrast to the internationally recognised figure, Robert Hughes. Turnbull would have expected the speech to be published widely and so treads a skilful path between formal and less formal registers.

Because Turnbull is married to Hughes’ niece Lucy, he himself is part of Hughes’ family. This allows him to talk about aspects of Hughes that allude to the private man. When Turnbull focuses on these aspects of Hughes’ life, the discourse is slightly less formal although highly respectful and characterised by fondness and humour, such as in line 17 where Turnbull mentions “...masculine failings including untidiness and waywardness....”

The use of archaic terms and structures is appropriate to the context, which is the most significant and traditional institution in the country – the House of Parliament. In line 29, Turnbull personifies “the House” attributing to it the human quality of “courtesy” in a highly formal display of politeness that shows he understands the conventions and expectations of the place and can operate within them with style. He uses the verb “trust” as an almost archaic synonym for ‘hope’ and the past participle “trespassed” to suggest - with ironic gallantry - that he fears he might have stepped over some metaphorical line into a forbidden place (lines 29-30). In line 16 he states that Hughes had a fondness for wine ‘in measures illiberal’, a quaint transposition of adjective and noun. Archaic terms “measure” as a synonym for ‘amounts’ and “illiberal” synonymous with ‘vulgar’, used as a post modifier, humorously conveys the speaker’s delicacy as he mentions this matter in a way that is semantically obscure or euphemistic. Turnbull says that Lucy, Hughes’ niece and Turnbull’s wife, ‘always gave Bob free rein. He could do no wrong ...all other men in her life’ (lines 22-23). The metaphors here refer to horse riding (“free rein”, line 22) and serving in the army (“leave pass”, line 23) and are almost archaic, from another era, likely to resonate with an older audience.

Turnbull speaks in a highly rhetorical style, using metaphor, personification and alliteration to convey his message. In lines 1-7 Turnbull emphasises Hughes’ Australianess: ‘Everything about [him]...was forged here in Australia’. This blacksmithing metaphor suggests that Hughes’ Australianess had a strength and robustness, like iron, and this is reinforced by the simplicity and plainness of the lexis in lines 2-4. He describes Hughes alliteratively as “Rambunctiously rebellious” (line 5), with a “fondness for food and wine in measures illiberal” (line 15-16), with “masculine failings” (line 17), behaving as “ a colourful guest” (line 21). There is an element of gallant euphemism in all these phrases that suggest Turnbull’s tolerant understanding, even appreciative acceptance, of these aspects of Hughes’ character, some of which at least Turnbull himself and members of the audience perhaps share. Turnbull touches on some characteristics for which Hughes might have been criticised and places a positive connotation on them. For instance the archaic modifier “rambunctiously” distracts from the negative meaning of rebelliousness. It might also add to the audience’s understanding of why the phrase “colourful guest” is applied to Hughes, because the former term suggests boisterous high spirits.

Turnbull lists at several points Hughes’ attributes and talents, packaging a great deal of information into the short time he has to deliver his speech. He establishes a measured pace, with long nominal groups serving variously as sentence subjects (eg lines 14-16), adverbial (eg lines 18-19), complement (eg lines 8-9). Listing efficiently compacts ideas and information about Hughes (line 4).

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Turnbull's lexicon and semantics, such as superlatives, antithesis and collocation, emphasise the unpredictable and quixotic nature of the man and support the purpose of the speech, ie, to convey his complexity and stature. He describes Hughes as '...impossibly handsome, a rich vocabulary and an even richer, rolling voice – now booming and declamatory, now quieter....' (lines 11-12), demonstrating adeptly how much the man excelled in all things. Similarly, just how Hughes came to deserve and "revel" in the title "WU", the acronym standing for "Wicked Uncle" (line 24), remains an esoteric reference for those in Hughes' family circle and underlines the contrasts in his personality and behaviour in public and private spheres. At the end of the speech, Turnbull considers the public man, "one of our greatest writers, one of the world's greatest critics" (lines 26-27), using superlatives that celebrate Hughes' outstanding national and international achievements. In a final hyperbolic, metaphorical and rhetorical flourish Turnbull avers that "...in a sense the great man...the titan of arts and letters, will never leave us" (line 35), to emphasise his achievements and legacy. The collocation a "man's man" (lines 14, 17) serves to excuse Hughes from behaviour that may otherwise not be tolerated, with higher standards generally expected. Turnbull's (perhaps rueful) implication here is that he himself did not enjoy the same indulgence from Lucy as her Uncle did. This comment shows Turnbull's awareness that his family is part of the audience for this speech and perhaps there is personal and private meaning in its implicature.

The speech is carefully organised to engage the audience by foreshadowing new information and emphasising important ideas by end focus and front focus. Front focus in line 9 'His book and television series...' reminds the listener of his achievements in fields that are highly competitive and difficult to succeed in. The end focus of the sentence in lines 9, makes the point strongly that he was a world figure, as do lines 12-13. The deictic 'here' (line 1), draws attention to the fact that Turnbull is presenting this speech in Australia to Australians and that many people listening to it might recognise first-hand the places and the practices that he mentions. In particular he refers to rites of passage likely to be familiar to many in the audience: "fishing for leather jackets and bream on the jetty at Rose Bay...inspired by the Jesuits at Riverview", thereby establishing Hughes credentials as someone "who never ceased to be///Australian" (2). Long nominal groups, such as in lines 3, 4 and 8 are an efficient way of presenting the depth and range of Hughes' attributes which confirm that he is a person for Australians to be proud of.

Turnbull's closing remarks reflect his purpose in this speech - to juxtapose the public and the personal man and to pay tribute to both aspects of his character. Rather than this "titan" of a public figure, finally it is "Uncle Bob" and "WU" whom Turnbull "farewell[s]", and these vocatives again recall the private man, as well as the intimate and loving relationship that Turnbull and his family had with Robert Hughes.

Section C essay

30 marks

Select **one** of the two following topics. Refer to AT LEAST two subsystems of language in your essay and provide examples from current discussions about language that you have studied in class.

8. 'While they may be acceptable in e-mail or in chat rooms, colloquialisms diminish the quality of a formal written text.' Do you agree?

It would depend on the context.

- There are contexts where this would be true, such as petition writing, or legal situations where the gravity and complexity of a matter mean that the discourse needs to be extremely formal to reflect this seriousness

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- Written texts might want to suggest acceptance of the audience, friendliness, approachability eg VTAC addressing potential tertiary students. Contemporary formal texts are often designed to suggest inclusiveness rather than social hierarchy and seek to lessen the sense of social distance between author and audience
- Notions of quality might include criteria about accessibility, so that jargon and various forms of 'ese' were eschewed in favor of more colloquial language, as in Bell Shakespeare's recent production of Henry IV where archaic terms were occasionally replaced by more colloquial lexis so that the contemporary audience was able to get the meaning more readily.
- What might once have been thought colloquial might now be accepted as part of Standard usage. Eg recent debates about appropriate etiquette in emailing and texting where standard forms of address and 'greeting' are considered by some to be impolite time-wasters in these types of discourse and an example of the writer neglecting the negative face needs of the reader
- Codification by dictionaries and style-guides less strict and effective than it once was because of digital production and publication of such texts, readily modification of these texts to reflect ongoing changes in language use

**9. 'In our community, it is the ability to use formal registers that is the key to success.'
Is this your understanding of language use in contemporary Australia?**

Ability to use SAE is important and gives one access to significant institutions related to education, finance and the law. It could also influence one's ability to get a job in certain circumstances. This is especially so in written forms. Not being able to control the standard forms of syntax and spelling can be marginalising and stigmatising.

On the other hand, the ability to use a range of registers, including informal, is essential for one's interpersonal relationships and other social functions such as engaging in transactions in shops. Successful communication also depends on one's understanding of face needs and the ability to cater to them by using an appropriate register. Eg inappropriate discourse, from the public gallery in Parliament. Training personnel in off-shore call centres so they can convincingly engage with callers in a variety of ways.