



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2006 English Language exam consisted of three sections. Section 1 had 10 questions worth a total of 30 marks and Section 2 had 9 questions worth a total of 30 marks. Students could choose one of three essay topics in Section 3, which was worth 40 marks. Students were not required to compare the texts in Sections 1 and 2 this year – there were two texts for analysis in Section 1 and a single text in Section 2. The transcript contained 100 intonation units, as in past papers. This length seemed to be manageable for most students and enabled a range of questions to be set, which allowed students scope to show what they knew. Many students demonstrated excellent analysis skills. Students generally remembered to provide specific examples (with line references) to illustrate their answers, which is important for achieving high marks.

General Advice to Students

- Students need to analyse the questions carefully rather than just select one key word in the question and base their answer on that. This was particularly evident in Questions 4 and 10, where cohesion was often confused with coherence, and students used both terms interchangeably in their answers.
- If a question asks students to analyse features ‘in this text’ the answer must refer to the specifics of the text, not, for example, to spoken texts in general or interviews in general.
- Students should look for opportunities to demonstrate a broad knowledge of English language, particularly when instructed to ‘comment on’ or ‘discuss’.
- Prepared essays do not mould well to the unseen topics, are clearly identifiable by assessors, and are marked accordingly. Students who take this approach rarely score highly.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced in italics herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information. Unless otherwise stated, the samples provided are examples of good student responses.

Section 1 – Written Text

This section contained two written texts linked by a common topic (water conservation). The texts were different in nature and thus provided material for students to demonstrate their ability to analyse texts with different features.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	84	16	0.2

adjective

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	24	76	0.8

verb

Question 2

Marks	0	1	Average
%	40	60	0.6

adverbs

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	43	31	26	0.8

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Many students correctly identified a sentence with an example of passive voice but did not explain its use in this text, instead offering a definition of the passive voice. Some students quoted from a sentence which may or may not have contained a passive verb, but did not clearly identify the passive. The following answer was succinct and thorough.

'hosing down...is not permitted' lines 24–25. In this case the passive sounds authoritative; the use serves to emphasise the verb, highlighting the action for the audience so as they can recognise its [important to use the hose].

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	31	5	32	6	18	2	5	2.0

A number of students incorrectly read 'coherence' as 'cohesion' (which was examined in Question 10) and thus lost marks by analysing the cohesive features of the text. Good answers covered the various features of coherence (including the use of bolded headings, subheadings and paragraphs containing topic sentences), used supporting examples (sometimes, it was noted, in brackets) and focussed on one topic or item. A small number of students identified the logical development of ideas as a feature of coherence; however, few mentioned either the knowledge brought to the text by the reader or inference.

The graphological feature of a large heading (lines 1 & 2), which is in capital letters and set apart from the main section of the text (in a block of black and in white print) assists in coherence as it immediately informs the reader about the subject and domain of the text.

The sub-headings (eg 'manual watering systems' – line 6) also assist in textual coherence – they clearly outline the specific focus of the following prose paragraph.

The use of parenthesis (a grammatical feature) assists in coherence – it allows the clarification of a previous statement, often providing more detail, (eg, 'automatic watering systems (the kind.....automatically.....)' line 11). This clarifies the term 'automatic watering systems'.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	Average
%	41	59	0.6

The primary purpose of Text 2 was to inform the public about how to save water. The text states that the site is a 'central repository for relevant information (line 43) and that it 'showcases companies...that will assist you' (line 44).

Students needed to explain the function of this text using more than just a label (for example, 'to inform') to demonstrate their reading of it.

To inform people of the dire water situation and ways they can help.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	69	6	25	0.6

Question 6 directed students to focus on an aspect of 'this electronic text'. Many students attempted to comment on features found generally in informative texts and ignored the features particular to this web-based text. Others commented on features that were not at all characteristic of informative texts. Good answers noted the live links (lines 6–21), the search bar (line 2) or the link to locally specific information (lines 3–4).

The search function (line 2) enables readers to conduct their own research according to what either interests or concerns them. They are able to take active steps and the search function informs them of the specifics related to their inquiry.

Question 7a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	44	56	0.6

complex

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Question 7b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	21	79	0.8

simple

Question 7c.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	31	69	0.7

compound or compound complex

Question 8

The better answers to this question gave clearly different answers for parts b. and c. but some students, clearly not sure of the answer, simply repeated what had been said previously. Students needed to clearly identify the independent and subordinate clauses and quote correctly from the text.

Question 8a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	43	57	0.6

The independent clause is 'we each share responsibility for the sustainable management of our water resources' and the subordinate clause is 'which means using less water...every time.'

Question 8b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	46	54	0.6

The subordinate clause depends on the independent clause for meaning as it does not make sense on its own.

Question 8c.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	75	25	0.3

The emphasis is on the collective responsibility of everyone, all the people who read the text, so the independent clause is placed in front position.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	27	6	20	19	27	2.2

The use of the pronouns 'we' and 'you' involves the reader directly in the text and creates a relatively personal, informal tone. Some students selected 'my', 'our' and 'us' as examples, which were also acceptable if accompanied by an adequate explanation. The following example is analytical and thorough.

We (lines 23, 29, 32, 37) and you (lines 42, 43, 44) 'we' is an all inclusive pronoun; it adds to the informality of the text by placing the writer side by side with the readers, assuming common ground and little social distance. 'you' creates a little more distance by using a direct exophoric reference; it appeals to the readers, grabs their attention and allows the informal text to distinguish that what once was 'our' problem can now be solved by 'you'.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	40	7	20	5	16	3	10	2.0

Examples that could have been included were: lexical patterning (repetition of lexical items, use of jargon or technical terms), phonological patterning (assonance, alliteration), syntactic patterning (repetition of clause structures), pronouns, reference (anaphoric, cataphoric, deictic), hyperlinks, semantic field (water conservation, the environment) and information flow.

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Students were more comfortable with the concept of cohesion than with coherence (Question 4) and many were able to identify one or two features of cohesion. It was disappointing that relatively few scored full marks, despite there being numerous features that could be identified in the text.

It is important to clearly set out the answer in questions that require several examples or features. Clear and logical answers frequently contained numbering, asterisks or bullets.

Substitution is used on line 40, where 'one' is used instead of 'standard of living' (39). This allows for the sentence to be condensed so there is not too much information to take in, as well as linking the parts of the sentence together.

Repetition of 'water' throughout the text creates cohesion by having the same idea running through each paragraph. 'Water' links all of the paragraphs together.

Anaphoric reference is used in 'that' (line 31) which refers back to the point about water used in agriculture. 'The solution will take more than that.' (lines 30–31) avoids unnecessary repetition and links the new point with another, thus creating cohesion.

Section 2 – Spoken text

The transcript of a radio interview provided context-specific material for students to analyse. Students who carefully read the dialogue and paid attention to the transcript symbols were able to confidently analyse the interaction and demonstrate their knowledge of the features of spoken language.

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	18	22	60	1.4

There were several instances of repairs, predominantly in O's turns but also in each of H's and M's turns. Students who were awarded full marks explained why this feature occurred in this context.

'running f- the first control...' (13) uses a repair. This occurs because of the spontaneous nature of the speech in a radio interview. O doesn't have a planned response, so his speech will not be perfectly ordered. He stumbles as he tries to answer the question.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	Average
%	35	65	0.7

Most students identified that the interviewer first says Oscar's name to address him directly, then states his full name 'Oscar McNulty' to identify him to the listening audience.

The first 'Oscar' is directed to Oscar himself, while the second 'Oscar McNulty' is used to introduce him to listeners.

Question 13

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	18	40	42	1.3

Some students had read the transcript thoroughly to achieve a clear understanding of what the change of tempo indicated about the interviewer's discourse. Less insightful answers suggested that the interviewer was bored, or that the previous speaker had taken too long to answer. There were several possible explanations, including the avoidance of silences or pauses, which are not desirable in a radio broadcast; the time constraints of the radio interview; the need to keep the interview moving along; its use as a floor holding strategy and to ensure no interruptions occur; to cover a false start or repair; and M's enthusiasm for the topic creating a sense of excitement in his speech.

Line 27: this increased pace occurs as part of a repetition. It could be said here that the interviewer has made a false start and speeds up in order to both identify that this is what he meant and to cover his mistake.

Line 44–4: the interviewer quickly provides the young interviewee with options for the answer but doesn't want to take up too long forming the question.

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Question 14

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	16	12	30	29	13	2.1

There were four prosodic features (pause, falling intonation, rising intonation and emphatic stress) shown in this section of the transcript and students needed to identify and explain each one.

At the end of unit 53 there is a rising inflection and pause. The rise indicates that there is more information to come despite the pause, which is probably used for thinking time; as such the rising inflection is used as a floor holding strategy. The emphatic stress before 'Finnish friends' line 55 and 'days' line 56 indicates importance and is used for emphasis. The falling inflection on line 57 is used to indicate that H is finished talking and has relinquished the floor.

Question 15

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	7	9	33	51	2.3

There were several good examples of repetition in the transcript (lines 22, 27, 36), which were mainly shown in the interviewer's turns. Possible explanations included that repetition provides brief thinking time or occurs due to the pace of the questions; softens the directness of the questions; is a turn-taking strategy ensuring that the speaker either claims or maintains the turn; provides a prompt for the interviewee, suggesting a possible response; and is likely to be found in this context – a public broadcast characterised by spontaneous speech.

Line 22 – 'you have to identify...you have to identify'; lines 28–30 repetition of 'do you run with...?'

In line 22 the repetition is used as a floor-holding strategy while Mick gathers his thoughts and organises the next part of the utterance in his mind. In lines 28–30 the repetition is used to give the interviewee some ideas about what answers he could give; it also gives Mick's speech a rhythmic quality which is a feature of speech that can make it more appealing for the listener.

Question 16

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	22	9	36	11	22	2.0

Topic changes or shifts occurred at lines 8, 27, 50, 58, 68 and 79 and were initiated by the interviewer. Students needed to read carefully to identify the change correctly. Many incorrectly stated that a change of speaker (for example, at line 36 or 78) was a change of topic. Changes to the topic occurred to keep the conversation interesting, to cover the breadth of the topic under discussion and to maintain audience interest.

In line 8 M changes from discussing the number of orienteering events that O has participated in and asks what O feels about the sport. This change is initiated by M as is his role and to keep the interview going forward. In line 27 M again changes the topic to ask O who he runs with. This is to maintain the engagement of both the interviewees and the audience.

Question 17

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	10	29	22	31	2.6

Most students were able to analyse the nature of turn taking in some way, although for full marks there needed to be an understanding that turn taking is not an optional feature in an interview situation. The question required students to analyse the effectiveness of the turn taking. In this context the turns are orderly and occur smoothly, with only one instance of overlap (lines 21 and 22). The participants understand the rules of an interview and a series of adjacency pairs facilitates the effective taking of turns. The prosodic clues (for example, rising and falling intonation), the use of vocatives to assign turns and the use of various questioning strategies (such as follow-up questions to allow a turn to continue) are all features of turn taking in this transcript.

Turn taking consists of adjacency pairs, with M asking a question and either O or H answering. At the end of each answer, M again takes the floor. Line 58 M asks H a question and H provides an answer (line 59), then again on line 63 M asks another follow up question so that H can elaborate. On line 90 O gives an account of getting lost and on line 97, once O is finished, M takes the floor and sums up O's anecdote. This turn taking is very structured and orderly and there is only one overlap (line 22).

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Question 18

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	20	14	37	8	20	2.0

Effective turn taking is one aspect of the co-operative nature of the interview. The questioning techniques used by the interviewer ensure that the participants cooperate to achieve the purpose of the interview: extended questions which outline the possible answers the interviewees can choose (lines 27–30, 40–41 and 44–47); open ended questions allowing an extended response (line 8); and prompting by the interviewer to elicit more information (line 43). In addition, there is some use of minimal responses (line 35); the interviewer summarises or paraphrases what has been said by a previous speaker to clarify and invite a ‘yes’ response (lines 22–25); the speaker elaborates or gives examples so that the interviewer and audience understand (lines 19, 31–34); and each speaker has relatively equal floor time. All these features are evidence of cooperation.

Mention of Grice’s maxims alone was not sufficient for full marks as students needed to work more closely with the transcript and provide a specific analysis of what was occurring between the speakers.

Adjacency pairs (particularly questions and answers) and imperative statements (‘tell me about that’) are used to achieve cooperation and the balanced sharing of the floor between speakers. Both these strategies minimise disruptions and provide each speaker with sufficient time on the floor. The others do not attempt to take the floor in the middle of the other speaker’s utterances.

Question 19

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	30	6	15	10	18	6	17	2.6

This question provided students with a chance to demonstrate their knowledge of discourse features and to analyse their function in this particular text and context. For full marks students needed to discuss the special nature of the radio interview, with its public and somewhat formal conventions, and acknowledge that the youth of the two interviewees affected the nature of the interchange with the interviewer. Features that could have been mentioned included:

- adjacency pairs: predominantly a question and answer format, but using various strategies to elicit responses, thus ensuring continuous dialogue on air
- orderly turn taking: as expected in a friendly radio interview with two young children and an adult interviewer
- topic management: controlled by the interviewer (who probably has prepared questions or at least an outline of the items to be covered in the conversation), as would be expected in such a context
- tempo: to maintain interest, add variety for listeners, maintain momentum and keep to time constraints of being on air
- non-fluency features such as repetitions or false starts by the interviewer, who is thinking as he speaks and cannot allow silences to occur
- repairs that show the interviewee is thinking and speaking simultaneously and that answers are spontaneous, and absence of interviewer repairs, suggesting a script or prepared questions
- prosodics: elongated vowels or consonants allowing the interviewee thinking time; rising intonation for floor holding or questioning and relinquishing the floor; stress on key words for clarity and emphasis; pauses for thinking time
- contractions and reductions typically used in a spoken interaction and providing a degree of informality in this context
- syntax: extended utterances made up of incomplete sentences (for example, lines 9–21)
- vocatives: full name used to identify the next speaker (line 2), or first name with identifying extra data (lines 36–37) for audience clarification
- lexis: related to the topic of orienteering and including some jargon, but accompanied by explanation or clarification for an uninformed audience
- laughter: to ensure a light tone for listeners and to possibly engage the boys or relax them (lines 84–86).

M uses predominantly interrogative sentences, as he is the interviewer. For example ‘What do you like most about it?’ (line 8) guides the conversation as the interviewer is required to do in this context. The two boys being interviewed predominantly use declarative sentences, such as ‘it’s quite challenging’ (line 9). This sentence type is best used to put across their information, stories and opinions, which is the function of an interview. Turn-taking always goes from M to the boys and back to M. O and H do not address each other and as they are so young they do not initiate any turns. This shows how the interviewer is in control of the topic in this

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context. In an interview the turns must be passed between the interviewer and the interviewees. The use of vocatives 'Oscar' and 'Henry' is consistent with people being interviewed on radio as it facilitates clarity for the audience of who is being spoken to.

Section 3

Question chosen	none	20	21	22
%	3	26	27	44

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	3	1	2	5	6	8	10	12	14	11	8	7	5	4	3	1	7.7

Section 3 of this year's paper contained three topics, all with 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 22 was the most popular topic, attracting approximately 44 per cent of responses, with Questions 20 and 21 attracting 26 and 27 per cent of responses respectively. One fifth of the essays received a mark in the medium to high range, which was very pleasing indeed, whilst slightly more than half the essays scored a medium range mark. A quarter of the essays were in the low range.

The better responses developed the topic in some detail and used metalanguage with assurance. Good essays contained specific examples that were linguistic rather than simply intuitive in nature. There was evidence of wide reading, including examples from current events. A few students continued to draw on examples dating back to the First Fleet or 1950s immigration, offering 'cobber', 'flat out like a lizard drinking' and other old colloquialisms as though they were in current use. The failure to comment on 21st century language practices in Australia diminished the student's chances for higher marks. 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.

Question 20

There were many aspects to this topic that could have been discussed by students in their responses. Some students made use of the stimulus material to focus their essays, but some also drew on their reading to tease out the topic. A few students insisted that Standard Australian English (SAE) no longer exists but were not able to provide evidence of this assertion in their responses. Some possible ideas that could be included were:

- SAE is a variety that coexists with many others in Australia; for example, ethnolects, Aboriginal English and regional varieties
- there is growing prestige given to SAE; for example, in language tests for immigrants
- SAE is the prestige variety and used in public domains; for example, education, government, commerce, radio, TV, media law and publishing.
- SAE facilitates communication within the community through use of a standard, common form of language. However, the inability to use SAE is considered to be evidence of poor literacy and has low prestige
- attitudes to non-use of SAE – people can be judged poorly, it may lead to discrimination (for example, racial slurs)
- other varieties in Australia are equally valid and appropriate in certain contexts; for example, ethnolects within a cultural group and teenagers speaking in their own vernacular
- Australian dictionaries and style guides enshrine SAE
- written contexts – literacy is essential and desirable as SAE provides access to institutions (for example, employment and academic life) and empowers language users
- spoken contexts – less of a discriminator than in written contexts but also important as it enables speakers to make themselves understood and to have access; for example, to make their views known about important issues
- important in a global context; for example, the Commonwealth Games broadcast to the world needs to be comprehensible to other English speakers
- essential for overseas trade, political and legal negotiations (for example, in the Bali courts).

Sample 1

The following response of 536 words received a high score. It canvasses a range of aspects of this topic and illustrates them with examples. It includes a discussion about attitudes to the varieties of Australian English and demonstrates some examples of the different contexts in which standard and non-standard varieties are appropriate.



Standard Australian English is both a relevant and important variety of language in Australia. While this is not true for some situations, it is most definitely true for others.

There are some situations in everyday life where the standard form of Australian English is not only not relevant but is actually inappropriate. An example of this is during spoken interactions between friends. In this situation it is actually the idiolect of the individual and their friends which is most relevant. By using slang words such as 'hardcore' and 'sick' (to mean cool) a person can identify themselves, for example, as a teenager. In a situation such as this, it would be inappropriate to use the standard and say 'that is really wonderful' as opposed to 'that's sick!' Similarly the use of non-standard syntax is also often appropriate in these situations. One might use the highly elliptic utterance 'comin' instead of 'Are you coming' and this would be far more appropriate. In that example a non-standard phonological feature is also shown – the changing of the /nj/ sound on the end of 'coming' for the non-standard /n/, often referred to as dropping the 'g'.

Due to the informal and immediate nature of written communication via instant messaging (either online or by phone) the same applies for phatic interactions of this context. Instant messaging also has other unique features such as morphological compounding, eg, b4 = before, IH8U = I hate you, and the use of acronyms such as LOL = laugh out loud and BRB = be right back, which are non standard.

Although in these situations Standard Australian English is not relevant, there are certainly others in which it is.

The main reason standard English is still relevant is because it is a variety that belongs to everybody and can be understood by all speakers of English. For this reason it has an important use in things like news broadcasts, political speeches and teaching. In all of these spoken situations it is of the utmost importance that the speakers are able to be widely understood, in order to achieve their informative and sometimes persuasive functions to a wide audience.

Standard English is also important in the domain of written texts. In books, magazines, instruction manuals and some websites in order to reach the widest possible audience, standard English is required simply to make sure the text is able to be understood. For example, if someone who had recently learnt English, or perhaps someone who grew up in the 40s was reading a guide to Australia, they might be quite shocked if they were to read 'check out Melbz, it's friggen sick!' and may have trouble understanding the sentence. They would have a much easier time understanding one sentence if it read 'it is recommended that you visit Melbourne; it is a lovely city', as it uses none of the non-standard, lexical, syntactic or morphological features of the previous sentence.

So while Standard Australian English isn't important or relevant in some situations, it is imperative that we use this variety of English and keep it alive in our country, to ensure that information is accessible to all, not just to speakers of a particular idiolect, such as teenspeak.

Sample 2

The following response of 381 words received a low score. The essay makes a few relevant points, including reference to SAE in spoken and written modes and the prestige of written English, but the ideas are not developed. Some statements are very general, lacking explanation and bordering on incorrect, with little or no analysis. The essay is descriptive and contains very little metalanguage. The student does not demonstrate a convincing knowledge of the role of Standard Australian English.

The use of Standard Australian language can be traced back many years, but it is still in use in modern Australia. Many of us are unaware of its existence, even though we hear or see it everyday. We encounter SAE in many forms, be it in the media, in corporate situations or in legal areas. But Standard English Language is still as relevant and important as it was when first introduced.

Standard Australian language dominates in its written form. When official government legal documents are written up, they are done so in Standard Australian English. This form of Australian English has quite an unambiguous nature to it, this feature is very important in the legal and government domain as being misunderstood can cause quite a high economic loss to company. A feature of Standard Australian English which is usually more noticeable is the lexical/morphological side. SAE is known for its use of large words and commonly unused grammatical techniques. This is important to Standard Australian English when used for official documents as it means the writer is able to confuse the reader. The writers aren't considered to be doing anything wrong, but are still able to hide meaning from readers.

SAE is also important in spoken text. It is used in the media such as news reports or press conferences, to make everyday issues seem more important. If news was read by reporters in a less formal, broad way, the public would disregard the importance of the issue. When SAE is spoken, it is easier to understand, as the usually difficult syntax and semantics become clearer.

SAE is an important function of creating boundaries between the writer and the audience. If a piece of text uses colloquial language, the reader could get the impression that the text is not as important as it may be. Colloquial/informal language also has the ability to make the reader feel comfortable, or included, whereas the aim of media or legal texts is to draw boundaries between them and the audience.



Even though the use of SAE among the general public has reduced, it is still equally or even more important and relevant in society, whether it be spoken or written. If anything the reduced use, has made SAE a respected style of language in Australia.

Question 21

This topic was handled well by many students, who identified two different subsystems and used these to demonstrate their knowledge of the features of discourse in an Australian context. Some possible points for discussion in relation to this topic were:

- language choices are made based on participants/audience, context and purpose
- most individuals have access to a range of varieties, for example, intimate, social group and public/formal
- participants bring expectations to language situations and texts that mean the style of language can be anticipated
- stimulus material topics include: taboo words (semantics, lexicon, register); swearing (semantics, lexicon, inference); stereotypes (lexicon, discourse); cultural understandings and perceptions.

Sample 1

This essay of 866 words sits at the top of the medium range. It is well structured and provides a good analysis of three examples of one aspect of language – namely, the contentious use of swearing and slang. It is pleasing to see that the examples are very recent, providing evidence of the student’s reading and observation. There is a considerable amount of repetition in the essay. The focus on the use of Broad Australian allows the student to introduce some metalanguage but the relevance of the discussion to this topic is not made clear.

In contemporary Australian society, the appropriateness of particular language use depends very much on the context, as well as the audience and purpose relating to its use. Expletives and dysphemism are considered appropriate in some circumstances, and inappropriate in others, and society’s views on this issue are eminently varied and contrasting. To focus on a number of specific contexts, opinions of appropriate language vary greatly in the media and advertising domains. Also, as highlighted by recent events, the same is true in the sporting domain. Through these contexts and others, society’s views on what is appropriate language use are ever-changing and evolving. The broad and standard varieties are also linked with appropriateness and upholding society’s expectations. Appropriate language can be studied across the subsystems. It is inevitable that opinions will vary about this issue, and what language is considered appropriate will depend heavily on its purpose, audience and the context in which it is used.

*As highlighted by recent events, much debate occurs about the appropriateness of expletives and dysphemistic (and sometimes colloquial) language in the domain of the media and advertising. In the recent advertising campaign for tourism in Australia, the slogan ‘so where the bloody hell are you?’ was established by the Australian Government Tourism Authority and broadcast throughout the world. This evoked a dramatic reaction from certain groups, saying the advertisement was inappropriate in using the lexeme ‘bloody’. In opposition to this, other groups responded by arguing that ‘bloody’ has evolved and become a characteristic, Australian term. The ad was eventually stopped, because of the outcry. Another example of the views on appropriate language in the media is when Rove McManus swore after winning the Gold Logie on national television (‘this is f***ing brilliant!’). This caused a lot of controversy and started an extended debate about the appropriateness of dysphemism and expletives on television. What has become clear through these events is the fact that society’s opinions are rarely cohesive – many contrasting views exist regarding the appropriateness of ‘bad’ language in the media and advertising as a specific context.*

*Similarly, recent events in the domain of sport have highlighted the variety of social opinions and expectations about the appropriateness of certain language in the context. After the 2006 AFL Grand Final several West Coast Eagles players were interviewed on national television and used dysphemistic language a number of times (the common expletive f*** and variations thereof). For this, the players and the club experienced an exceeding amount of criticism, and public debate raged. An opinion poll appeared in the Herald Sun newspaper not long after the incident, asking whether it was appropriate for the players to use this language; half of those interviewed said it was acceptable, half said it was not. These footballers using ‘the occasional expletive for a bit of no-nonsense impact’ demonstrated the wide variety of opinion on this matter in the area of sport, and the fact that perceptions of socially acceptable language are so inconsistent in this popular, dominant context of sport, in contemporary Australian society.*

It is important to note that views on appropriateness in language use change and progress over time, as do the connotations of certain lexemes; the broader variety (as opposed to the standard) is important in looking at appropriate language choices to uphold society’s expectations. All language changes and progresses over time, and this is also seen in attitudes towards appropriateness. The lexeme ‘hell’, for instance, was once considered highly inappropriate for most contexts, purposes and audiences. It has changed with time, however, and lost its heavy negative connotations – it is now considered to be simple colloquial and tame. The factor of language evolution, and that of attitudes, is important when looking at appropriateness in language. Additionally the broader variety as compared to the standard is important. Lexicologically speaking, colloquialisms such as ‘bloody’, ‘mate’ and ‘stubby’ characterise this variety. Morphologically, the diminutive ending (eg, ‘umpy’ and ‘mozzie’) is characteristic. In terms of phonology, assimilation and elision are typical (eg, a speaker of Broad Australian English may pronounce ‘hand bag’ as ‘hambag’, substituting a lazier nasal phoneme /m/ before the bilabial /b/. This variety can be considered appropriate or inappropriate in Australian society,



depending on the audience, context and purpose of the interaction. In a more informal context it may be deemed appropriate. The use of dysphemism is closely associated with the broader variety.

Social views and expectations regarding appropriate language use are dramatically varied and contrasting. The 'appropriate topics for discussion' and language use across the subsystems in different contexts are viewed in a number of contrasting ways. Recent events have highlighted the range of social opinions in the domains of media/advertising and sporting contexts, with individuals willing to 'throw in the occasional expletive for a bit of no nonsense impact' being met with potent public criticism and perhaps wishing they had remained 'mindful of the existence of a whole range of equally useful adjectives and superlatives'. The broad variety is linked with appropriateness of language use in different contexts, and opinions and connotations of dysphemistic language are changing and evolving. The range of public opinions are, and will inevitably continue to be, dramatically variable and contrasting regarding the appropriate use of language.

Sample 2

This essay of 444 words demonstrates some understanding of the topic, but the ideas are general, superficial and/or repetitive. There is an absence of supporting examples or evidence and the response is descriptive rather than analytical, with little or no use of metalanguage.

The concept of appropriate language use in specific contexts in Australia has been ever-changing and has many different and individual views relating to it. The idea of supposedly 'unnecessary' expletives and private discussions in public areas is becoming more and more popular as the Australian population moves more towards the Broad and General standards of Australian English.

A recently released Australian Tourism advertisement caused much a fuss due to its use of distinctly Australian activities, sceneries and, most contravercial, language or phrases. The final line of this ad was the cause of the strife, 'so where the bloody hell are you?' The term 'bloody hell' is a term once held by only the lower class members of society, speaking Broad English. However, now that there is no distinction of social class in language this slightly dysphemistic phrase is more common here, but not understood elsewhere as it's connotative meaning is unclear.

A similar point has been made about public transport passangers discussing private matters in a manner viewed by some to be inappropriate. It is common view that private related conversations are to be held in private situations as something are personal and should not be openly shared. The distinction between a 'private' or 'public' conversation commonly lies with the formality and use of things such as jargon and slang. Jargon is a form of language specific to a specific group or speciality and can be used to either include or exclude people from the conversation. Also, prosodic features such as intonation and pitch play a large role in distincting the appropriateness of a conversation, especially in regards to modern taboo subjects.

*The use of slang-like terminology such as swearing is now seen as part of many an Australian idiolect. Today's swear words are most popularly not used in conjunction with their denotative meanings. Words such as 'f***' are commonly used in the form of an adjective rather than the also popular use as a noun. Other words can be used as a more affectionate terminology between a specific group of friends and seen as being highly inappropriate in any other context.*

In a conversation one individual may find the topic to be highly inappropriate for the context in which it is being discussed. One way of showing this disapproval, that I have both used and witnessed, is the use of minimal response such as 'mmm' or an attempt at a topic change.

Overall, what was once considered as being inappropriate language use in a public place has now changed. This change will continue as new taboo subjects arise, different types of slang are created and as Australian English develops over the years.

Question 22

There were many good responses to this topic, although some students had difficulty grappling with the notion of changing social attitudes as reflected in language. In those responses, students tended instead to describe a range of values without linking this to linguistic behaviour, and then failed to select language examples that were appropriate. There was a lot written about political correctness, but often with only a superficial understanding of the complexities of the concept; for example, reference to 'rainbow sheep' instead of 'black sheep' or 'little penguins' for 'fairy penguins' were provided as the key or only illustrations of politically correct language. The better answers did not speak in absolutes, such as making claims that 'Australia no longer tolerates discrimination', instead discussing the range of attitudes and practices amongst members of Australian society.

Some possible points for inclusion in a response to this topic were:

- language is rarely/never neutral or value-free; most words/phrases have connotations that go far beyond their literal meaning and either clearly show or more quietly hint at the values, ideologies and attitudes of the user



- the language is used in a very overt, deliberate and conscious way to convey our values, attitudes and ideologies. This is done by the media, government, other public institutions and individuals (for example, refugees, Iraq war, abortion debate, Cronulla riots and terrorism)
- language can betray/convey our values, attitudes and ideologies. For example, some members of older generations may unwittingly use what is now considered 'non-PC' language
- our attitudes, values and ideologies can be conveyed through the 'presence' of the language we use, but also through the 'absence' of language
- reading 'between the lines' can gauge the author's ideological stance. Not sharing/echoing the 'group's' language can also suggest/convey an attitude towards what is being discussed. This is often apparent in discussions about different ethnic groups
- inclusive language: pronouns, euphemistic language, terms of address, adapting your language to match theirs (accommodation), phonology, PC language
- exclusive language: dysphemisms, swearing/slang, double-speak (through jargon, figurative language, complex sentences, nominalisation and use of passive), use of non-PC language.

Sample 1

This high scoring essay of 696 words covers a range of topics and subsystems, including lexicon, semantics, phonology and morphology in various guises including technology. It is well structured and has a clear sense of direction, and links each paragraph to the topic. The student uses metalanguage with assurance in the analysis. The conclusion is somewhat truncated.

As the social values and beliefs of Australians change into the 21st Century so does their language. The evolving language reflects new ideas and thoughts. This is shown by the rise of politically correct and antidiscriminatory language, the use of foreign and technical language, and a loosening up of rules regarding spelling, syntax and lexical items, as well as phonological shifts.

The 21st Century Australian values and seeks equality for all. There is now greater respect for minority groups, such as aborigines and the blind, and women. However as little as thirty years ago this was not the case. Today's language in Australia reflects this change in values. Whereas before derogatory terms for foreigners were acceptable ('abbo', 'eyetie'), these are not accepted today. Euphemistic lexemes have been introduced to show an increased respect for minorities: 'intellectually challenged' and 'person of mature age' used for retirement advertisements. Gender neutral job names are now commonplace (eg, 'firefighter' for 'fireman') and show inclusion of women in society. The masculine fist person 'he' formerly used to refer to both genders, is now replaced with gender-neutral 'they', eg, 'each citizen must do what he can' to 'each citizen must do what they can...' The changing social attitudes of Australians in the 21st century towards minority groups and women have brought about the wider use of non-discriminatory language today, although racist and sexist discriminatory language emerges from time to time. When racial slurs are reported, such as at football matches, the perpetrators are usually in trouble as a result, although there are always others who try to justify its use.

21st century Australia is keen on being integrated into the world community, and part of this means sounding less like the stereotyped Aussie and having a more neutral accent. This is shown in part by the general trend over the past 50 years of the phonological shift from the broad end of the Broad-Cultivated spectrum to the General variety of Australian English – our vowels and diphthongs are closer to the standard (eg, our 'today no longer sounds a lot like 'to die' and we rarely elide /h/ from lexemes such as 'hat'). This trend, culminating in the 21st century, shows our enthusiastic attitude towards joining the world community. This is also shown by the interpretation of many foreign lexemes in our vernacular such as newly popular 'sudokos' and Americanisms 'shizzle my nizzle'.

The 21st century has seen a boom in technological advances, and Australia is keen on being in the thick of the action. This is reflected in neologisms which morphologically manipulate lexemes, such as 'podcast' from 'ipod' and 'telecast' and 'webcam' from 'web' and 'camera'. The use of up to date technological terms in Australia reflects our ambitions for technological advancement. The bound suffix '-e-' for 'electronic' is attached to existing lexemes to reflect a novel approach, eg, 'e-bay', 'email', 'e-chat'. New lexical items have also been introduced from companies, eg, verb 'google' as in 'I'll google this product'. Semantic shifts have occurred with old lexemes such as 'own' which, because of a popular net game, now is being used to mean 'dominate over'.

The Australian of the 21st century has a relaxed, easy-going and carefree attitude. This, too, is reflected in the language, through the loosening of old rules regarding syntax, spelling and lexicon. Rules such as never splitting an infinitive (to boldly go...) and not putting prepositions or conjunctions at the end of an utterance ('I'm fine now, but') are being thrown to the wind. This also reflects our increased regard for and esteem towards self expression and originality – neologisms such as 'chillax' and 'higgify' are being created daily to reflect our playful, creative identity. Spelling has become more relaxed, also reflecting our easy-going ways. In appropriate contexts, such as email, spelling taking advantage of the phonological nature of letters and numbers (eg, '2nyt') is perfectly acceptable. Acronyms ('AFAIK= as far as I know') and onomatopoeic lexemes ('mwa' for a kiss, 'wahn' for crying) are commonplace. These changes in the rules and what is acceptable reflect Australia's changing social attitudes in that we're now more relaxed and easy-going in our way of life.

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We can see the important impacts that the evolving beliefs and attitudes of Australian society have had on Australian language use, including neologisms, phonological shifts and amore relaxed view of grammatical and lexical rules.

Sample 2

This essay of 227 words scored in the low range. The premise that non-discriminatory language is not tolerated in Australia is a simplification that does not recognise the complexity of this issue and is not borne out by evidence. The essay makes only two main points and includes a smattering of linguistic language and analysis.

In the ever changing society that we live in today, our language that we use reflects the changing social attitudes in contemporary times. This has been demonstrated through the usage of non-discriminatory language in society, the acceptance of technological terms and our reluctance to accept Americanisms.

Language plays an all pervasive role in reflecting our changing social attitudes and expectations. Language that propagates demeaning attitudes and differentiates between 'us' and 'them' is no longer tolerated in society today. Rather language that tolerates and supports, has been promoted and used in society. This has resulted in the usage of terms such as 'differently-abled' and 'mentally challenged' over 'spastic', 'mental' and the 'disabled'. Acts such as the Racial Vilification Act have also been highly effective in eliminating discriminatory language. It has also seen derogatory language that unfairly discriminated against different races, such as 'Nigga' and 'wog' have faded through disuse. Some have even been embraced to show empathy and being associated with a particular social group – 'wog' -> 'The Wog Boy'.

Political correct language is another notion that has assisted the elimination of pergorative terms in society, especially in gender oriented terms. Where it has see us adopt more gender neutral terms over the 'preferred' '-man' suffixes such as in 'spokesperson', 'chairperson', 'barperson', however these changes have occurred very slowly as the 'man' 'men' suffixes are often preferred.