

2021 VCE English as an Additional Language (NHT) examination report

General comments

The 2021 English as an Additional Language (EAL) (NHT) examination consisted of three sections: Section A required responses to two aural texts; Section B required an extended response to one text; and Section C required the completion of two tasks in response to unseen material.

Assessment of extended responses in Sections B and C was holistic, using the published assessment criteria. Assessors related student performance directly to these criteria, and their judgements were assisted by the use of a set of descriptors. Most extended responses showed good knowledge of task requirements, in particular by using an appropriate structure to deliver a relevant response. Higher-scoring responses demonstrated strong writing skills, which conveyed meaning with clarity and fluency. The assessment criteria, the descriptors and the sample examination are published on the VCAA website.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section A: Listening to texts

Students were required to give responses based on their comprehension of two unfamiliar spoken texts. For each text, students were supplied with brief written background information. The first text was a podcast episode in which the presenter teaches his listeners how to make a margherita pizza. The second was conversation between two people about their friend who is moving to Canberra to study. There was a mix of question types with varying degrees of challenge. Questions covered literal and inferred meaning and addressed the key knowledge and key skills from the study design. Each text was played twice and many students made effective use of the note-taking space provided beside the questions.

Some aspects of spoken language are challenging for students. Students need familiarity with a range of features of spoken language, including tone and delivery. Exposure to a wide variety of spoken texts using Standard Australian English will assist. Students need to develop their critical listening skills both in and outside of the classroom in an ongoing, everyday basis. They are encouraged to listen to anything, in English, that interests them – current affairs, news, documentaries and podcasts can all be useful. Students should listen for the added effect of emphasis, pauses, sighs, hesitations, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with the terminology used in the key knowledge and key skills for the listening task. Students are encouraged to use the key words in the questions as a focus for their listening. Short-answer questions require concise and precise answers. Responses that demonstrated understanding provided what was asked for without including extraneous information. Expression skills need to be sufficiently controlled to convey meaning accurately.

Text 1

Question 1a.

A correct response identified any two of the following reasons:

- easy to make
- such fun
- young children enjoy it
- most people's favourite (including his).

Question 1b.

Relevant reasons were:

- Hands are used to mix the ingredients together until they form a sticky ball of dough.
- Hands are used to gently push and pull the dough.
- Hands are used to break the dough into two pieces.
- Hands are used to shape each piece of dough into a circle.
- You don't need a fancy food machine (because hands are used).

Question 1c.

Correct responses were expressions of the causal relationship:

- Pizza dough needs to rest in a warm place if it is to double in size, or if it is to rise.
- The yeast needs warmth to react with the other ingredients and so rise.

One answer needed to have the idea of the ingredients reacting with each other, and the other the need to rise.

Question 1d.

Correct responses expressed the idea that too much moisture, such as tomato sauce, will make the pizza base soggy, or not crisp.

Question 1e.

Correct responses gave a word or phrase that reflected Chef Tony's enthusiasm for cooking, such as positive, enthusiastic, passionate, finds it enjoyable, full of zeal.

Question 1eii.

Language use (1 mark)	Delivery (1 mark)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'In my opinion, there's nothing nicer than a homemade Margherita pizza.'• '... it's such fun to make.'• 'Even young children can enjoy it.'• 'This step can be a bit messy, but I promise you, you'll have fun!'• repeated use of 'I'm so hungry...'• He talks about loving food/positive smells etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• laughter• 'it's so easy' (with emphasis, elongated 'so')• making jokes• informal language• conversational tone• encouraging tone• upbeat tone• enthusiastic tone• references to tone required a link to appropriate language.

Text 2

Question 2a.

Relevant words for Pete were excited, pleased, happy for him, supports Tom's decision.

Relevant words for Lucy were upset, frustrated, sad, not accepting of decision, disappointed, unhappy, will miss him.

Question 2b.

Language use (1 mark)	Delivery (1 mark)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• negatives, e.g. won't, doesn't he know.• question forms, e.g. Couldn't Tom have done a similar course here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• upset tone• emphasis on 'won't'• pace (linked to language example)

Question 2c.

Relevant reasons were:

- He thinks they should support Tom in his decision.
- He thinks it's being good friends as it's a big change for Tom.
- He thinks it will help Lucy feel better.
- He's being a good friend to Lucy.

Question 2d.

Relevant examples of language use were:

- 'must' or modal verb
- imperatives or 'listen'
- contact, organise or listing of actions
- short sentences: 'I'm an expert', 'Someone must be in charge'.
- 'She knows exactly what food and music he likes'
- exclamation: 'Job done!'

Question 2e.

Relevant characteristics were:

- Lucy relies on him too much (or isn't self-reliant).
- She needs to think things through before acting – impatient, impulsive, impetuous.
- She needs to be more realistic.
- She is practical.
- She has good ideas.

Section B – Analytical Interpretation of a Text

Students were required to produce one piece of analytical or expository writing in response to one text. There were two topics for each of the selected texts. The descriptors used for assessment related to knowledge of the text, including consideration of its concepts and construction, the structure and relevance of the response, and writing skills – the control of the conventions of written English.

Both topics on *Rear Window* provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills. Students were generally well prepared for this task, demonstrating good text knowledge, awareness of the use of film techniques and familiarity with how to structure a text response. Some were able to incorporate relevant quotes from the text. Most answers attempted a structured response that addressed the chosen essay question.

High-scoring responses were characterised by a sharp focus on the key words in the topics, selective and considered use of the text, and ideas expressed with strong language skills. In response to the first topic most students were able to identify that characters other than Thorwald engaged in unethical behaviour. While some responses focused on Jeff, stronger ones explored the behaviour of a range of characters, including the actions of Lisa in entering Thorwald's apartment.

The second topic invited discussion around Jeff's assumptions about women. Responses covered a range of ideas in relation to Jeff's assumptions and the ways in which they were challenged in the film.

Higher-scoring responses were structured, well developed and sustained, and demonstrated command of sufficient relevant vocabulary to communicate ideas meaningfully. They also demonstrated sound understanding of the requirements of analytical writing.

The task was an analytical interpretation of a text. It is important for students to be familiar with the language used for analysis. Analytical writing can include description, such as facts or information, but its focus is on the relationships between pieces of information. It may include comparing and contrasting, or assessing. Consequently, students need to develop writing skills that will enable them to incorporate knowledge of the text into their analysis or exposition. Writing that simply describes/tells what a character did rather than exploring why and how, and the effect of the behaviour relevant to the set topic, is a limited response. Students also need to be familiar with the variety of ways in which questions can be worded and understand the requirements of different task words, such as 'discuss', 'do you agree?', 'to what extent', etc.

Section C – Analysis of language use

The task material was one piece of writing about finding the balance between work and life. Brief contextual background information was supplied. This background information is an important starting point for students because it identifies the audience and context of the task material. The article explored the reasons why work–life balance is difficult to achieve, and the benefits for individuals and companies when attitudes change. The article was accompanied by two visuals, which depicted the challenges involved in dealing with this issue. The topic, language, length and style of the piece were appropriate for the tasks and offered opportunities for students at all levels to demonstrate their skills.

Question 1

These questions assessed comprehension of the task material and required precise answers that demonstrated a clear understanding of the ideas in the task material.

Question 1a.

Explanations expressing the idea that although managers and executives have success in business, they don't feel successful (they feel like failures) were correct.

Responses needed both ideas to score 2 marks.

Question 1b.

Correct reasons were:

- He thinks work is part of life and it is leisure time that we need.
- The need is to balance work and leisure, not work and life.
- He thinks leisure (not life) is the opposite of work (and we spend too much time at work.)

Question 1c.

The problem for executives and managers is that they are proud of, and encouraging, not 'just doing', longer hours. Correct reasons were:

- They are competitive with each other.
- They are proud of working long hours and think their success is due to long hours.
- They feel trapped into long hours.

Question 1d.

Strategies for individuals: do things that energise, take up a hobby such as playing a musical instrument, joining a theatre group, flying a model plane, learning a language.

Strategies for businesses: use flexible working hours, paid time for learning in non-work-related areas, options for longer holidays, move to a shorter working week.

Question 1e.

Benefits for individuals:

- more positive mood
- increased interest in things around them
- decrease in stress and lower heart rates
- they get more done by organising their time more efficiently.

Benefits for businesses:

- shorter working week leads to increased efficiency
- fewer sick days.

Question 2

In this question, students analysed how language, the use of argument and visual features in the task material were used in an attempt to persuade. The highest-scoring responses recognised that there are many things that writers do when they seek to influence a reader. Awareness of audience (in this case the readers of the magazine *Business for the Future*) is critical to understanding the purpose of the writing and how the arguments and language choices in the task material were meant to influence this audience. Students were expected to find connections between the text and the visuals. The expected qualities for scoring clearly indicate that to score 6 or more marks students need to show some understanding of how visual material is used to persuade in the context presented. One or both visuals could be used to do this.

There was a range of approaches in the responses to this question. Most responses tried to balance an analysis of argument with an analysis of language. The highest-scoring responses analysed argument use and language in an integrated way. A few responses focused too much on summarising what the writer said without identifying the specific language used for the purpose of persuading the readers to accept the argument. Strong responses comprehensively explored the ideas presented in the visuals and demonstrated the clear connections between the visuals and the ideas in the written text. Weaker responses just described the appearance of the visuals.

The challenge for students was to be able to use their theoretical knowledge of how writers or speakers use language persuasively to demonstrate accurately how this has been done in the task material provided.

Features of strong high-scoring responses included:

- a clear understanding of the context and audience for the writing and the point of view expressed in the piece
- discussion of how language, the visuals and the use of argument worked together in the task material
- an exploration of the implications of specific language choices, for example 'they feel trapped', 'it is like a competition', 'more successful, more powerful and more productive', repeated use of 'important', 'progressive, forward-thinking businesses'
- an ability to use a range of vocabulary and the structures of English to communicate clearly.