

Accreditation Period

2024–2028

Updated – version 1.2

Victorian Certificate of Education

English Language

Study Design

Amendments to study design history

Version	Status	Release Date	Comments
1.2	Current	July 2023	Key knowledge bullet point added as point eight for Area of Study 2, Outcome 2 (page 33).
1.1	Superseded	April 2023	Update to key knowledge bullet point ten for Unit 3 Area of Study 1, Outcome 1 (page 31). Update to key knowledge bullet point nine for Unit 3 Area of Study 2, Outcome 2 (page 33).
1.0	Superseded	March 2023	Original study design.

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Contents

Important information	4
Introduction	5
Scope of study	5
Rationale	5
Aims.....	6
Structure	6
Entry	6
Duration	6
Changes to the study design	6
Monitoring for quality	7
Safety and wellbeing	7
Employability skills.....	7
Legislative compliance	7
Child Safe Standards.....	7
Assessment and reporting	8
Satisfactory completion	8
Levels of achievement.....	8
Authentication	9
Characteristics of the study	10
Unit 1: Language and communication	23
Area of Study 1	23
Area of Study 2.....	24
Assessment	25
Unit 2: Language change	26
Area of Study 1	26
Area of Study 2.....	27
Assessment	28
Unit 3: Language variation and purpose	30
Area of Study 1	30
Area of Study 2.....	32
School-based assessment	33
External assessment	34
Unit 4: Language variation and identity	35
Area of Study 1	35
Area of Study 2.....	36
School-based assessment	37
External assessment	38

Important information

Accreditation period

Units 1–4: 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2028

Implementation of this study commences in 2024.

Other sources of information

The [VCAA Bulletin](#) is the only official source of changes to regulations and accredited studies. The Bulletin also regularly includes advice on VCE studies. It is the responsibility of each VCE teacher to refer to each issue of the Bulletin. The Bulletin is available as an e-newsletter via [free subscription](#) on the VCAA website.

To assist teachers in developing courses, the VCAA publishes online [Support materials](#) (incorporating the content previously supplied in the *Advice for teachers*).

The current [VCE Administrative Handbook](#) contains essential information on assessment processes and other procedures.

VCE providers

Throughout this study design the term ‘school’ is intended to include both schools and other VCE providers.

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Introduction

Scope of study

VCE English Language explores the ways in which language is used by individuals and groups and how it reflects our thinking and values. By learning about how we shape and can be shaped by our use of language, we can develop deeper understandings about ourselves, those who surround us and the society in which we live. These understandings enhance the skills for effective communication in all contexts.

VCE English Language is informed by the discipline of linguistics and draws on a set of metalinguistic tools to understand and analyse language use, variation and change. It is a study that builds on our experiences of Standard Australian English (SAE) and language varieties across numerous contexts, including in the classroom. It connects directly with key concepts embedded in the Victorian Curriculum F–10: English, including the language modes, the roles played by context, purpose and audience in any engagement with text, and the ways in which textual form contributes to creating meaning.

VCE English Language examines how use and interpretations of language are nuanced and complex rather than a series of fixed conventions. The study explores how we use spoken and written English to communicate, to think and innovate, to construct and reveal identities, to build and interrogate attitudes and assumptions, and to create and disrupt social cohesion.

The study of VCE English Language reveals the structures, features and discourses of written and spoken texts through the systematic and evidence-based construction and deconstruction of language in use.

Rationale

The study of VCE English Language enables students to consider their understanding and application of English using a set of metalinguistic tools informed by the discipline of linguistics. This focus provides students with fresh insights into their language choices, the values and assumptions constructed when considering the language use of others, and the power of language to control, shape and disrupt our lives.

Throughout their learning, students engage with the ways in which language is structured, the history of English and its variations both geographically and temporally, theories of language acquisition, variations of language created by social and cultural difference, the nexus between language and power, and the ways in which language can be used to construct and deconstruct identity. Students consider their own language use and the language use immediately surrounding them, as well as examples of language use locally, nationally and internationally. They explore the ways in which language use is adapted in consideration of formality, situational and cultural contexts, purpose and function.

In this study students read widely to further develop their analytical skills and to build their understanding of linguistics. Students are expected to read and study a range of historical and contemporary texts, drawn from a variety of contexts and forms, including academic texts and publications.

The study of VCE English Language enables students to further develop and refine their skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening to English. They become proficient in analysing and assessing language use and develop their abilities in effective communication. Through the exploration of language use, students gain insight into the experiences of others, develop empathy and compassion, and are better able to engage in active citizenship.

Aims

This study enables students to:

- appreciate the historical, social and cultural roles of language in their lives
- describe and analyse the structures, features and functions of spoken and written English language using appropriate metalanguage
- investigate language acquisition, language choice, use and variation, and language change over time
- reflect on and evaluate attitudes to language in historical, contemporary and individual contexts, with particular focus on identity, social cohesion and the distinctiveness of Australian Englishes
- explore and analyse the interplay between convention and creativity in language use
- develop an awareness of the critical, intentional and innovative use of language and apply this to their own writing and speaking
- become engaged, skilled and effective communicators.

Structure

The study is made up of four units.

- Unit 1: Language and communication
- Unit 2: Language change
- Unit 3: Language variation and purpose
- Unit 4: Language variation and identity

Each unit deals with specific content contained in areas of study and is designed to enable students to achieve a set of outcomes for that unit. Each outcome is described in terms of key knowledge and key skills.

Entry

There are no prerequisites for entry to Units 1, 2 and 3. Students must undertake Unit 3 and Unit 4 as a sequence. Units 1–4 are designed to the equivalent standard of the final two years of secondary education. All VCE studies are benchmarked against comparable national and international curriculum.

Duration

Each unit involves at least 50 hours of scheduled classroom instruction.

Changes to the study design

During its period of accreditation, minor changes to the study will be announced in the [VCAA Bulletin](#). The Bulletin is the only source of changes to regulations and accredited studies. It is the responsibility of each VCE teacher to monitor changes or advice about VCE studies published in the Bulletin.

Monitoring for quality

As part of ongoing monitoring and quality assurance, the VCAA will periodically undertake an audit of VCE English Language to ensure the study is being taught and assessed as accredited. The details of the audit procedures and requirements are published annually in the [VCE Administrative Handbook](#). Schools will be notified if they are required to submit material to be audited.

Safety and wellbeing

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that duty of care is exercised in relation to the health and safety of all students undertaking the study.

Employability skills

This study offers a number of opportunities for students to develop employability skills. The [Support materials](#) provide specific examples of how students can develop employability skills during learning activities and assessment tasks.

Legislative compliance

When collecting and using information, the provisions of privacy and copyright legislation, such as the Victorian *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and *Health Records Act 2001*, and the federal *Privacy Act 1988* and *Copyright Act 1968*, must be met.

Child Safe Standards

Schools and education and training providers are required to comply with the Child Safe Standards made under the Victorian *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*. Registered schools are required to comply with *Ministerial Order No. 1359 Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*. For further information, consult the websites of the [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority](#), the [Commission for Children and Young People](#) and the [Department of Education](#).

Assessment and reporting

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on the teacher's decision that the student has demonstrated achievement of the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Demonstration of achievement of outcomes and satisfactory completion of a unit are determined by evidence gained through the assessment of a range of learning activities and tasks.

Teachers must develop courses that provide appropriate opportunities for students to demonstrate satisfactory achievement of outcomes.

The decision about satisfactory completion of a unit is distinct from the assessment of levels of achievement. Schools will report a student's result for each unit to the VCAA as S (Satisfactory) or N (Not Satisfactory).

Levels of achievement

Units 1 and 2

Procedures for the assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision. Assessment of levels of achievement for these units will not be reported to the VCAA. Schools may choose to report levels of achievement using grades, descriptive statements or other indicators.

Units 3 and 4

The VCAA specifies the assessment procedures for students undertaking scored assessment in Units 3 and 4. Designated assessment tasks are provided in the details for each unit in VCE study designs.

The student's level of achievement in Units 3 and 4 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework (SAC) as specified in the VCE study design, and external assessment.

The VCAA will report the student's level of achievement on each assessment component as a grade from A+ to E or UG (ungraded). To receive a study score, the student must achieve two or more graded assessments in the study and receive an S for both Units 3 and 4. The study score is reported on a scale of 0–50; it is a measure of how well the student performed in relation to all others who completed the study. Teachers should refer to the current [VCE Administrative Handbook](#) for details on graded assessment and calculation of the study score.

Percentage contributions to the study score in VCE English Language are as follows:

- Unit 3 School-assessed Coursework: 25 per cent
- Unit 4 School-assessed Coursework: 25 per cent
- end-of-year examination: 50 per cent.

Details of the assessment program are described in the sections on Units 3 and 4 in this study design.

Authentication

Work related to the outcomes of each unit will be accepted only if the teacher can attest that, to the best of their knowledge, all unacknowledged work is the student's own. Teachers need to refer to the current [VCE Administrative Handbook](#) for authentication rules and strategies.

Characteristics of the study

The language modes

The language modes of reading, viewing, speaking, listening and writing underpin the Victorian Curriculum F–10: English, and the mastery of these skills is the foundation for effective communication. These skills remain pivotal in VCE English Language as students further explore and refine their abilities in each of the language modes.

It is important to note that language modes are interdependent and engagement through one mode can offer students entry points into another mode to consolidate learning. In VCE English Language, the reading and viewing and writing language modes are often conceived as the gatekeepers of Standard Australian English (SAE) and formal language, while the speaking and listening language mode is often considered the place of linguistic innovation, language varieties and informality. However, these constructions are becoming increasingly blurred through digital forms such as text messaging, in which informal conversations are written rather than spoken, and signs and symbols such as emojis serve as another form of language innovation. VCE English Language students engage with these changes and intersections.

Reading and viewing

Reading and viewing involves students understanding, interpreting, critically analysing, reflecting upon and enjoying written and visual print and non-print texts. It encompasses reading and viewing a wide range of texts and media, including academic texts. Reading involves active engagement with texts and the development of knowledge about the relationship between them and the contexts in which they are created. It also involves the development of knowledge about a range of strategies for reading.

Speaking and listening

Speaking and listening refers to the various formal and informal ways oral language is used to convey and receive meaning. It involves the development and demonstration of knowledge about the appropriate oral language for particular audiences and occasions, including paralinguistic features and voice. It also involves the development of active listening strategies and an understanding of the conventions of different spoken and multimodal texts.

Writing

Writing involves students in the active process of conceiving, planning, composing, editing and publishing a range of texts. Writing involves using appropriate language for particular purposes or occasions, both formal and informal, to express and represent ideas and experiences, and to reflect on these aspects. It involves the development of knowledge about strategies for writing and the conventions of Standard Australian English. Students develop a metalanguage to discuss language conventions and use.

The subsystems of language

Phonetics and phonology

Phonetics is the study and classification of the speech sounds occurring in language. Phonology studies the way in which the speakers of a particular language systematically use a selection of these speech sounds to express meaning.

Morphology

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and the processes by which words are formed. Morphemes are the smallest unit of linguistic meaning or function.

Lexicology

Lexicology is the study of words within a specific language (the lexicon). A lexeme is a unit of meaning in a language, typically one word. A lexeme can also consist of a group of words that, by themselves, do not separately convey the meaning of the whole group; these are referred to as multi-word lexemes.

Syntax

Syntax is the study of the set of conventions and processes by which words are ordered to create grammatically well-formed phrases, clauses and sentences.

Discourse and pragmatics

Discourse and pragmatics is the study of how the meaning of spoken and written language is related to the context in which that speech and writing occurs. It involves studying speaker/writer intention as well as listener/reader interpretation based on situational and cultural contexts, the other speech or writing it is situated with, and any background knowledge that it relies upon. This includes the study of conversation as well as non-verbal communication.

Semantics

Semantics is the study of linguistic meaning in language (morphemes, words, phrases and sentences). Semantics involves the study of sense relations and word meanings.

Metalinguage by subsystem of language and unit

Sub-system	Metalinguage	Unit			
		1	2	3	4
Phonetics and phonology	Speech sound production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consonants: voicing, place of articulation, manner of articulation vowels: height, backness, roundedness 	✓			
	Connected speech processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assimilation, vowel reduction, elision, insertion 	✓		✓	
	The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	The transcription of English, using the IPA, as described by Harrington, Cox & Evans (1997)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Prosodic features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pitch, stress, volume, tempo, intonation 	✓		✓	
	Phonological patterning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alliteration, assonance, consonance onomatopoeia, rhythm, rhyme 			✓	
Morphology	Morphemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> root, stem free, bound affix (prefix, suffix, infix) inflectional, derivational 	✓	✓		
	Morphological over-generalisation	✓			
	Word formation processes/morphological patterning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> affixation abbreviation shortening compounding blending backformation conversion of word class initialism, acronym contraction 		✓	✓	✓
	Hypocoristic use of suffixes				✓
Lexicology	Word classes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nouns, including pronouns verbs, including auxiliary verbs and modal verbs adjectives adverbs prepositions conjunctions (coordinators, subordinators) determiners interjections 	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Function words and content words	✓			
	Word formation processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> neologism borrowings commonisation nominalisation Word loss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> obsolescence, archaism 		✓	✓	
Syntax	Phrases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase, prepositional phrase 	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Clauses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> functions within the clause: subject, object, predicate, complement, adverbial combining clauses: coordination, subordination 	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Sentences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sentence structures: sentence fragments; simple, compound, complex, compound-complex sentence types and their communicative function: declarative, imperative, interrogative, exclamative 	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Word order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> subject, verb, object modifiers in a noun phrase adverbials 	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Active and passive voice, including agentless passives			✓	✓
	Syntactic patterning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> antithesis, listing, parallelism 			✓	
Discourse and pragmatics	Paralinguistic features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocal effects, including whispers, laughter non-verbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions, eye contact creakiness, breathiness 	✓		✓	
	Code switching as language learning Code switching as a means of demonstrating group membership and belonging	✓			✓
	Conventions for the transcription of spoken language			✓	✓
	Factors that contribute to a text's cohesion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lexical choice, including synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, hypernymy collocation information flow, including clefting, front focus and end focus anaphoric and cataphoric reference deictics repetition, substitution, ellipsis conjunctions and adverbials 			✓	

	<p>Factors that contribute to a text's coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cohesion • inference • logical ordering • formatting • consistency and conventions 			✓	
	<p>Features of spoken discourse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • openings and closings • adjacency pairs, minimal responses/backchannels • overlapping speech • discourse markers/particles • non-fluency features including pauses, filled pauses/voiced hesitations, false starts, repetition, repairs <p>Strategies in spoken discourse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • topic management • turn-taking • management of repair sequences • code switching as a marker of group membership and belonging 			✓	✓
	<p>Politeness strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive and negative face • positive and negative face threatening acts • positive and negative politeness 			✓	✓
Semantics	The relation of meaning and sign	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Semantic domain	✓		✓	✓
	Semantic over-generalisation	✓			
	Inference	✓		✓	✓
	Etymology		✓		
	<p>Semantic change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broadening, narrowing, shift • elevation, deterioration • denotation, changing connotation 		✓		
	<p>Semantic patterning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • figurative language, irony, metaphor, oxymoron, simile, hyperbole, personification, animation, puns, lexical ambiguity 			✓	✓
	<p>Lexical meaning, especially sense relations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • synonymy, antonymy • hyponymy and hypernymy • idiom • denotation and connotation 			✓	✓
	Euphemism and dysphemism			✓	✓

Linguistic terms and theories used in this study

This list includes linguistic terminology, language labels and linguistic theories and approaches.

Please note that the following terms and theories can have different interpretations. The definitions listed here apply for the purpose of this study.

Aboriginal Australian Englishes (AAE)

A continuum ranging from language use very close to Standard Australian English to something closer to a creole. Features of AAEs can include elements of non-standard Englishes, features from first contact and colonial language, and features of any of the First Nations languages in Australia.

Accent: Broad, General and Cultivated

These represent the various sounds made by speakers of Standard Australian English. There are regional differences, age-related differences and social differences.

Code switching

The practice of moving back and forth between languages in a single interaction is a normal and natural feature of the conversations between speakers who know the same two (or more) languages.

Codification

The process of developing a norm for a language can involve developing a writing system and official rules of orthography, pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary.

Colloquial language

The use of language that includes informal words, phrases or 'sayings' and which is often specific to geographical areas. Colloquial language is typically used in informal settings and in the language mode of speaking.

Context

This refers to an understanding of the environment in which a text appears together with real-world knowledge of speakers and listeners, writers and audiences.

Context-specific grapheme

A written symbol, typically punctuation, which provides additional meaning within a context. For example, '#' can be interpreted as a number, a unit of weight (lb) or a topic marker, depending on the context in which it is used.

Creole

A language developed through contact between two or more languages (for example, between European and non-European languages in colonies and former colonies). Creoles evolve from a pidgin to become a first (native) language of a speech community.

Critical period of language acquisition

The time between birth and puberty during which it is thought a child can acquire language easily, swiftly and without external intervention. After this period, acquisition of the grammar is difficult and, for some individuals, never fully achieved.

Cultural context

This refers to the extralinguistic circumstances that will influence language use, including the values, attitudes and beliefs of the speaker, writer and/or interlocutor(s) or audience.

Descriptivism

This focuses on language behaviour that can actually be observed, emphasising an objective account of the patterns and use of a language.

Dialect

A language variety that identifies the geographical or social background of a person, which is characterised by distinctive words and grammar (and may also be associated with distinctive features of pronunciation or accent).

Etymology

The term used for the history of words and for the study of the history of words.

Field

This refers to the content or subject matter. For example, our language choices vary depending on the nature of the activity performed or the topic discussed by the text (such as the linguistic features of science versus football).

First-language acquisition

This refers to the processes by which individuals acquire a home language. VCE English Language focuses on two possible explanations for how children learn language: Universal Grammar and opposing usage-based accounts.

Functions of language

Distinguishes six functions of language:

1. referential (conveys information, e.g. statements like 'The train leaves at 6.00 am.')
2. emotive (interprets feelings, desires, etc., e.g. interjections like 'Yuck!')
3. conative (engages the addressee, e.g. commands like 'Sit down!')
4. phatic (establishes a social connection, e.g. greetings like 'How are you?')
5. metalinguistic (talks about language itself, e.g. 'What does phatic mean?')
6. poetic (brings in the aesthetic dimension, e.g. embellishing a message with quotations like 'To be, or not to be?').

This theory is proposed by Roman Jakobson.

Hypocoristic use of suffixes

This is a characteristic of Australian English in which alternative forms of words or names – specifically through the use of abbreviation and suffixation like *mozzie*, *sickie*, *tradie* – share the same form and denotation as the original – *mosquito*, *sick day*, *tradesperson* – but have different connotations and levels of formality.

Idiolect

The unique language or speech pattern of an individual at a specific period of their life.

Indo-European

The descriptive name given to the ancestor language of many language families in Europe and Asia, including Germanic, Slavic and Indo-Iranian.

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

This standardised system (first published in 1888) provides a separate symbol for each distinctive speech sound. It is used to transcribe the sounds of a language because an alphabetic spelling (or orthography) does not represent the sounds of a language in a consistent manner. In this study, the sounds of Australian English are transcribed as described by Harrington, Cox & Evans (1997).

Jargon

The specialised language of a trade, profession or group, which is often difficult for individuals outside the group to understand.

Language

A system of conventional spoken, signed or written symbols by means of which humans express themselves. Variation in language occurs through use and user and can be influenced by social, cultural and geographical contexts.

Language maintenance and shift

The processes by which the users of language either resist encroaching language(s) to maintain a traditional or existing language, or switch to the encroaching language.

Language reclamation

This refers to the process by which a language community attempts to revitalise a language that is in danger of being lost. It includes the politics of indigenous peoples' rights and is associated with reclaiming identity and culture from which a people have been dissociated. Language revitalisation or revival can take many forms, and there are numerous strategies for retrieving information about a heritage language, including attempts to relearn the language from material recorded in another era, when the language was spoken. Barry Blake is an example of a Victorian linguist researching this area.

Lingua franca

A common language used for communication (and often commerce) between groups of people who speak different languages.

Migrant ethnolect

A variety of language associated with a certain ethnic or cultural subgroup where the features of English used in Australian society are combined with some features of the first language of the speaker(s). An ethnolect can be a distinguishing marker of social identity.

Multilingualism

The ability to communicate in more than one language.

Multi-word lexemes

These are sequences of words that are stored and retrieved as single units from our memory banks (they include such expressions as idioms (for example, *to spill the beans*) and phrasal verbs (for example, *to switch off*).

Overt and covert prestige

These terms refer to two contrasting forms of prestige: overt prestige associated with standard variants (for example, Standard Australian English) as used by powerful groups or institutions in society, and covert prestige associated with local language forms that emphasise identity and group solidarity. Both forms of prestige can be attained by people through the exploitation of overt and covert language norms.

Paralinguistic features

These are the features of speech that are considered to be marginal to language (for example, voice quality such as a creaky voice). They include aspects of non-verbal communication such as stance, gesture and gaze.

Pidgin

A contact language that is no one's first language. It evolves as a vehicle of communication between speakers of different linguistic backgrounds (for example, between European and non-European populations). Typically it has a reduced linguistic structure, at least initially, but may gain complexity in both grammar and vocabulary if it remains in use across generations. A pidgin can evolve into a creole.

Politeness

Centres on the idea of politeness as an awareness of the public and/or personal image of another individual and includes face needs – either positive (our need to be well regarded) or negative (our need to have the freedom to act as we wish). Politeness strategies are used to mitigate face-threatening acts, both positive and negative. These ideas were proposed by Brown and Levison.

Prescriptivism

This focuses on correctness and describing language behaviour that aims to preserve imagined standards or ideals about how the language ‘should’ really be.

Purpose(s)

This refers to the many reasons a text is created. Purpose(s) can include meeting politeness expectations, establishing expertise and authority, reinforcing social distance and hierarchies, and negotiating social taboos. Any given text can have more than one purpose and there is no set list of purposes.

Rapport

This refers to agreement or sympathy between individuals, people and/or groups.

Register

This involves language variation that is defined by **use** (as opposed to dialects, sociolects, etc. that refer to language variation defined by **user**); registers involve features across a range of subsystems.

Rhetoric

This refers to the study of persuasive speech and writing.

Semantic domain

A lexical set of words that are grouped by meaning and share a common semantic property, often referred to as a semantic domain (for example, *spaniel*, *corgi*, *collie* and *terrier* are all part of the semantic domain of dogs).

Setting

The time and place in which a communicative act occurs.

Situational context

This refers to the extralinguistic circumstances that influence language use, including field, tenor, language mode, setting and text type.

Slang

That part of very informal language use that can be characterised by metaphorical, playful, vulgar and/or socially taboo vocabulary.

Social distance

The conceptual space between individuals or groups in society created or constructed by social class, ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality, education, social and economic status, occupation and social connections.

Sociolect

A language variety used by a particular social group.

Standard Australian English (SAE)

The variety of spoken and written English language in Australia that represents a common language standard agreed to by the general population and codified in dictionaries, style guides and grammar manuals. Standard Australian English represents a prestige variety in the Australian context.

Standard English (SE)

The variety of spoken and written English language that represents a common language standard agreed to by the general population and recorded in dictionaries, style guides and grammar manuals.

Standardisation

The process of bringing and promoting uniformity to the writing and speaking of a language.

Swearing

The use (deliberately or subconsciously) of offensive or vulgar language, including expletives.

Taboo language

This refers to language and language use that is socially proscribed as improper or unacceptable. Taboo language also includes the use of dysphemism. Euphemism is often used to avoid the use of taboo language.

Tenor

This refers to the relationships between participants in a language activity and relates especially to social distance. It also involves the level of formality participants adopt (formal, colloquial, etc.). Tenor will be affected by how well people know each other and their purpose for participation.

The Great Vowel Shift

A change in the pronunciation of English took place at the end of the Middle Ages when most long vowels, such as the vowel in *see* (which before the shift rhymed with the modern French *thé*), were raised, and the already close vowels in *shine* (which was pronounced like today's *sheen*) and *mouse* (which was pronounced like today's *moose*) became the diphthongs that they now are.

Universal grammar

There is a hypothesis that children are born with innate knowledge about the structure of language; this innate grammar centres around a set of rules for language that are assumed to be universal; that is, shared by all languages of the world. Research in this area has been characterised as prioritising 'nature' over 'nurture'. This theory was proposed by Noam Chomsky.

Usage-based theory

This theory focuses on human cognitive abilities and social behaviours to account for language acquisition. A usage-based account proposes that children build the grammar of their language from tailored interaction, in combination with their general cognitive skills. The theory also emphasises the importance of child-directed speech, which is different from adult-to-adult speech across cultures. This theory is associated with a number of theorists including Michael Tomasello.

The role of text in VCE English Language

Teachers should create a text-rich classroom and should have a broad and flexible understanding of what makes a ‘text’.

They should ensure that their students:

- read, view and listen to a wide variety of texts, including written, spoken and multimodal texts
- consider texts about language, including linguistic theory
- consider texts for analysis of language use
- consider contemporary and historical texts
- look at many different forms/types of texts, including (but not necessarily limited to) academic writing, public documents, personal exchanges (text messages, phone calls, domestic interactions), interviews, speeches and spoken public and private exchanges (transcripts), advertising and marketing, literature and storytelling, manuals and technical documents, newspaper reports and opinion pieces, and social media
- are exposed to genuinely contemporary texts that are updated regularly
- are encouraged to bring texts into class
- all have adequate access to the studied texts.

Unit 1: Language and communication

Language is an essential aspect of human behaviour and the means by which individuals relate to the world, to each other and to the communities of which they are members. In this unit, students consider the ways language is organised so that its users have the means to make sense of their experiences and to interact with others. Students explore the various functions of language and the nature of language as an elaborate system of signs and conventions. The relationship between speech and writing as the dominant language modes and the impact of situational and cultural contexts on language choices are also considered. Students investigate children's ability to acquire language and the stages of language acquisition across a range of subsystems.

Area of Study 1

The nature and functions of language

In this area of study students explore the nature of language and the various functions that language performs in a range of Australian and other contexts. They consider the properties that distinguish human communication as unique, the differences between the modes of spoken and written language, and the relationship between meaning and conventions that govern language use. Students are introduced to the theory that language is a system of signs and conventions, and that while the relationship between words and meanings may be arbitrary, our use of language is governed by conventions and informed by accepted systems.

Meaning can be conveyed through the key language modes of writing and speaking. Languages allow for communication through actions, like speech sounds, or graphic symbols such as letters. Communication can also occur through systems such as sign languages, and students can consider the role of paralinguistic features in conveying meaning, but the focus of this area of study is on the language modes of writing and speaking.

Students learn that our language choices are always influenced by the function, register and tenor and the situational and cultural contexts in which they occur, and are based on understandings and traditions that shape and reflect our view of the world. They come to understand that language is never a neutral and transparent means of representing the world we inhabit; rather, it is influenced by situational and cultural understandings.

Students learn that the situational elements of a language exchange, such as the field, language mode, setting and text type, influence language choice. Cultural factors, such as the values, attitudes and beliefs held by participants and the wider community, also affect people's linguistic choices.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify and describe primary aspects of the nature and functions of human language.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- language as a meaning-making system that can be both arbitrary and governed by conventions
- major functions that language serves when used in a given context
- the properties that distinguish human communication as unique

- the influence of register, tenor and audience
- the influence of situational and cultural contexts – including field, language mode, setting and text type – and authorial intent on language choice and preparedness
- the subsystems of language: morphology, lexicology, syntax and semantics
- introduction to the subsystems of language: phonetics and phonology, and discourse and pragmatics
- features that distinguish speech from writing, such as paralinguistics and prosodics
- metalanguage to discuss aspects of the nature and functions of human language

Key skills

- identify and describe key linguistic concepts as they relate to the nature and functions of human language
- explore and use the subsystems of language: morphology, lexicology, syntax and semantics
- use key concepts and metalanguage to identify and describe language use in an objective and a systematic way through spoken and written Australian texts

Area of Study 2

Language acquisition

This area of study focuses on the developmental stages of language acquisition, both first- and additional-language learning. Students explore how, in addition to words and their meanings, people learn to use the phonological and grammatical conventions of the language, as well as the appropriate use of these conventions in different situational contexts.

Students are introduced to two linguistic theories – universal grammar and usage-based accounts – that attempt to explain how children acquire their first language. They research the so-called ‘critical period’, the window of opportunity during which language must be acquired. As children acquire language, they can be seen to change their language system gradually in response to the language use of others. At different stages, children’s language develops across a range of subsystems of language, allowing for increasingly complex communication and a greater range of functions.

Students also examine the similarities and differences between first- and additional-language acquisition, and multilingualism. They consider differences in the language acquisition process in children who are brought up multilingual compared with those who learn additional languages as they grow up. This extends to examining the language acquisition processes in adults who learn additional languages.

Students examine case studies and engage in field work to explore language acquisition.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify and describe types of language acquisition, and to discuss and investigate language acquisition in the context of linguistic theories.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

- the characteristics and developmental stages for first- and additional-language learners
- the universal grammar and usage-based theories of language acquisition
- commonalities and differences between learning a language as a young child and as an adult, including first- and additional-language learning, and multilingualism
- code switching in language learning

- the subsystem of language, phonetics and phonology and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)
- the phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic development of language in children, including speech sound production
- understanding of linguistic field work, including acquiring consent
- metalanguage to discuss how language is acquired

Key skills

- identify and use key linguistic concepts and theories as they relate to language acquisition
- identify and use key concepts and metalanguage appropriately to describe and analyse language use in an objective and a systematic way
- investigate what children need to acquire as they develop as users of spoken language in the critical period, including how they acquire language knowledge and how they learn to use language for a range of functions
- explore and use subsystems of language: phonetics and phonology, morphology, lexicology, syntax and semantics
- experience and interpret linguistic field work, including data collection
- use and interpret language samples of first- and additional-language acquisition, including the use of the IPA to interpret child language user samples
- use appropriate metalanguage to discuss language acquisition

Assessment

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks that provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study, including the key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes, should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks. Assessment must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and should be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

All assessments at Units 1 and 2 are school-based. Procedures for assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision.

For this unit students are required to demonstrate two outcomes. As a set these outcomes encompass the areas of study in the unit.

Suitable tasks for assessment in this unit may be selected from the following:

- a folio of annotated texts
- an essay
- an investigative report
- an analysis of spoken and/or written text
- an analytical commentary
- a case study
- short-answer questions
- an analysis of data.

Teachers must provide opportunities for assessment in written form, and at least one opportunity for assessment in an oral or multimodal form. Where teachers allow students to choose between tasks, they must ensure that the tasks they set are of comparable scope and demand.

Unit 2: Language change

In this unit, students focus on language change. Languages are dynamic and language change is an inevitable and continuous process. Students consider factors contributing to change in the English language over time and factors contributing to the spread of English. They explore texts from the past and from the present and consider how language change affects each of the subsystems of language – phonetics and phonology, morphology, lexicology, syntax, discourse, and pragmatics and semantics. Students also consider how attitudes to language change can vary markedly.

In addition to developing an understanding of how English has been transformed, they consider how the global spread of English has led to a diversification of the language and to English now being used by more people as an additional or a foreign language than as a first language. Students investigate how contact between English and other languages has led to the development of geographical and ethnic varieties but has also hastened the decline of the languages of indigenous peoples. They consider the cultural repercussions of the spread of English.

Area of Study 1

English across time

This area of study examines the changes that have occurred in English over time. Students investigate the factors that bring about language change, including those that come from contact with other languages, from social and technological transformation, and from within the language itself. They explore language change across some subsystems of language as represented in texts.

Students consider the relationship and influence of Indo-European languages on the English language.

Students examine the general concept of standardisation and the notion of ‘correct English’. While some language changes are critiqued by the wider community, with linguistic change often viewed as indicative of declining standards, others occur without widespread acknowledgment. The role of prescriptivist attitudes in establishing and maintaining standard language is considered in this area of study, as are descriptivist approaches to language change.

Students must be introduced to all the events and periods listed in the elective options below but study only ONE elective option in depth (that is, choose EITHER ‘Incursions’ OR ‘Inventions’ and study each of the dot points listed beneath those options in depth). The in-depth exploration must consider how significant social and cultural change impacts language and leads to language change across the subsystems of language. Teachers can consider significant texts that emerged in Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English and Modern English.

Incursions

- The Vikings
- Norman conquest in 1066
- Religion
- Plagues

Inventions

- Gutenberg and the printing press
- Dictionaries
- Typewriters/keyboards
- The internet

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify and describe language change and its effects on the English language and analyse attitudes to language change.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- the historical development of English through key events and resulting language change
- the relationship of English to the Indo-European languages
- the codification and the evolution of Standard English, focusing on the origins of the English spelling and grammar systems
- changes across the subsystems of language, including:
 - phonetics and phonology – the Great Vowel Shift
 - morphology – abbreviations, acronyms, shortenings, compounding, blends, backformation, affixation
 - lexicology – borrowings, commonisation, archaisms, neologisms, obsolescence
 - syntax – word order
 - semantics – broadenings, narrowings, elevation, deterioration, shift
- attitudes to changes in language, including prescriptivism and descriptivism
- metalanguage to discuss language change

Key skills

- use key linguistic concepts and metalanguage as they relate to the changing nature of English
- identify and describe language change in an objective and a systematic way
- trace etymologies in appropriate sources, such as databases and etymological dictionaries
- analyse changes in the English language over time as reflected in texts
- apply and analyse knowledge of the evolution of English in consideration of prescriptivism and descriptivism

Area of Study 2

Englishes in contact

In this area of study students consider the effects of the global spread of English by learning about both the development and decline of languages as a result of English contact, the elevation of English as a global lingua franca and the cultural consequences of language contact. Students explore the many ways English is used as an expression of identity and culture in written and spoken texts

Students explore factors that contributed to the spread of English in the past, such as trade and colonisation, and factors that continue to contribute to the spread of English today. They consider the development of Australian Englishes, including Aboriginal Australian Englishes, through the lens of colonialism.

Students explore the development and features of English-based varieties, including pidgins and creoles, and the consequences on the languages of indigenous peoples around the world. Students become familiar with the distinctive features of a number of national, ethnic and regional varieties of English and explore the ways that some of these varieties show the effects of intensive contact with other languages. Students explore how changes to and loss of language affect its users' cultural identities and worldviews, as evidenced by language reclamation and maintenance movements in contemporary Australian society.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify and explain the effects of the global spread of English through spoken and written texts.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

- factors in the development of English as a world language
- the distinctive features of English-based varieties
- the distinctive features of English-based pidgins and creoles
- the role of English as a lingua franca
- the role of language as an expression of cultures and worldviews, including representations of worldviews
- the processes of language maintenance, shift and reclamation
- cultural and social effects of language change and loss, with particular reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages
- metalanguage to discuss the global spread of English

Key skills

- identify and use key linguistic concepts as they relate to the development of English as a world language
- use the subsystems of language to analyse language in written and spoken texts
- interpret and explain debates about language change and influence
- identify and apply key concepts related to language maintenance, shift, reclamation, change and loss

Assessment

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks that provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study, including the key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes, should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks. Assessment must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and should be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

All assessments at Units 1 and 2 are school-based. Procedures for assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision.

For this unit students are required to demonstrate two outcomes. As a set these outcomes encompass the areas of study in the unit.

Suitable tasks for assessment in this unit may be selected from the following:

- a folio of annotated texts
- an essay
- an investigative report
- an analysis of spoken and/or written text
- an analytical commentary
- a case study

- short-answer questions
- an analysis of data.

Teachers must provide opportunities for assessment in written form, and at least one opportunity for assessment in an oral or multimodal form. Where teachers allow students to choose between tasks, they must ensure that the tasks they set are of comparable scope and demand.

Unit 3: Language variation and purpose

In this unit students investigate English language in contemporary Australian settings. They consider language as a means of interaction, exploring how through written and spoken texts we communicate information, ideas, attitudes, prejudices and ideological stances.

Students examine the features of formal and informal language in both spoken and written language modes; the grammatical and discourse structure of language; the choice and meanings of words within texts; how words are combined to convey a message; the role played by the functions of language when conveying a message; and the particular context in which a message is conveyed. Students learn how to describe the interrelationship between words, sentences and text and explore how texts present message and meaning.

Students learn that language choices are always influenced by the function, register and tenor, and the situational and cultural contexts in which they occur. They learn that the situational elements of a language exchange, such as the field, language mode, setting and text type, influence language choice, as do the values, attitudes and beliefs held by participants and the wider community. Students learn how speakers and writers select language features and how this in turn establishes the degree of formality within a discourse. They learn how language can be indicative of relationships, power structures and purpose through the choice of a particular variety of language and through the ways in which language varieties are used in processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Area of Study 1

Informality

In this area of study students consider the way speakers and writers choose from a repertoire of language to vary the style of their language to suit particular purposes. They identify the function and consider and analyse the features of informal language in written, spoken and electronic interactions, understanding that the situational and cultural contexts of an exchange influence the language used.

Students examine the features that distinguish informal language from more formal language. They understand how spontaneity and planning can both play a role in informal language and the ways in which informality may play an important role in building rapport. They examine how users of informal language may be idiosyncratic in their linguistic choices and structure texts in a non-linear way, and they explore the role of colloquial language and language varieties in establishing informal registers. Students consider features of 'chat' associated with both speaking and writing, such as a reliance on sequencing, cooperation and turn-taking, as well as features that are particular to each language mode. Students learn that speakers have at their disposal a support system of prosodic and paralinguistic cues that they can use to organise and present information. They explore how writers may choose to rely on abbreviations, spellings that reflect pronunciation and prosodic patterns, emoticons, emojis and context-specific graphemes. Both written and spoken informal texts may contain non-fluency features, ellipses, shortened lexical forms and syntactic creativity.

Students investigate how informal language use can incorporate politeness strategies; how informal language choices can build rapport by encouraging inclusivity, intimacy, solidarity and equality; and how informal language features, such as slang and swearing patterns, are important in encouraging linguistic innovation and in-group membership.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify, describe and analyse distinctive features of informal language in written and spoken texts.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- the role of Standard English in creating formal and informal texts
- major functions that language serves when used in a given context
- the influence of register, tenor and audience in informal texts
- the features of informal writing and informal speech as represented in a range of texts
- the relationship between context and features of language in informal texts
- features of spoken discourse in creating informal texts
- features of informal speech and writing, including:
 - subsystem patterning
 - colloquial language
 - slang
 - taboo language
 - dysphemism
 - swearing
 - emoticons, emojis and context-specific graphemes
- discourse strategies used by speakers and the ways in which cooperation can be achieved
- the use of informal language for various purposes and intents, including:
 - encouraging intimacy, solidarity and equality
 - politeness strategies
 - promoting linguistic innovation
 - promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport
 - supporting in-group membership
- the role of discourse factors in creating textual cohesion and coherence in informal texts
- conventions for the transcription of spoken English texts, including symbols, legend and line numbers
- metalanguage to discuss informal language in texts

Key skills

- identify the function of informal spoken and written texts
- identify and use metalanguage appropriately to describe and analyse informal spoken and written texts in an objective and a systematic way
- analyse the effect of informal contexts on language choices
- analyse the characteristics and features of informal written texts and transcripts of informal spoken English

Area of Study 2

Formality

In this area of study students consider the way speakers and writers choose from a repertoire of language to suit particular purposes. As with informal language, the situational and cultural contexts determine whether people use formal language and in which language mode they choose to communicate.

They identify the function and consider and analyse the features of formal language in written, spoken and electronic interactions, understanding that the situational and cultural context of an exchange influences the language used. They understand that formal language, in all language modes, tends to have greater cohesion, and is more likely to make some aspects of the presumed context more explicit. Formal language, however, can also be deliberately ambiguous and can obfuscate meaning. Students examine examples of formal texts, exploring how writers and speakers are more likely to consider how their audience might interpret their message. Students learn that formal written texts are more likely to have been edited and formal spoken texts may have been both edited and rehearsed. Formal speech has many of the organisational features of written language, but also draws on prosody and paralinguistic features.

Students explore the range of ways in which formal language can be used to perform various purposes. They investigate how formal language choices, particularly politeness strategies, can reinforce or challenge social distance, relationship hierarchies and rapport. Similarly, specialised language such as jargon can reinforce the user's authority and expertise or promote in-group solidarity.

Students examine texts in which speakers and writers use formal language to celebrate and commemorate, and they explore how formal language can be used to clarify, manipulate or obfuscate, particularly in public language – the language of politics, reportage, the law and bureaucracy. Students learn that formal language enables users to carefully negotiate social taboos through the employment of euphemisms and non-discriminatory language. They explore how variations in language reveal much about the intentions and values of speakers or writers, as well as the situational and cultural contexts in which formal texts are created.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify, describe and analyse distinctive features of formal language in written and spoken texts.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

- the role of Standard English in creating formal and informal texts
- major functions that language serves when used in a given context
- the influence of register, tenor and audience in formal texts
- the relationship between context and features of language in formal texts
- the features of formal writing and formal speech as represented in a range of texts
- features of spoken discourse in creating formal texts
- features in formal speech and writing, including:
 - subsystem patterning
 - rhetoric
 - jargon
 - euphemism

- double speak
- non-discriminatory language
- discourse strategies used by speakers and the ways in which cooperation can be achieved
- the use of formal language for various purposes and intents, including:
 - politeness strategies
 - reinforcing social distance and authority
 - establishing expertise
 - promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport
 - clarifying, manipulating or obfuscating
- the role of discourse factors in creating textual cohesion and coherence in formal texts
- conventions for the transcription of spoken English texts, including symbols, legend and line numbers
- metalanguage to discuss formal language in texts

Key skills

- identify the function of formal spoken and written texts
- identify and use metalanguage appropriately to describe and analyse formal spoken and written texts in an objective and a systematic way
- analyse the effect of formal contexts on language choices
- analyse the feature and purposes of a range of formal texts, including from the public domain

School-based assessment

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks to provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study and key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks.

Assessment of levels of achievement

School-assessment Coursework

The student's level of achievement in Unit 3 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework. School-assessed Coursework tasks must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and must not unduly add to the workload associated with that program. They must be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

Where teachers provide a range of options for the same School-assessed Coursework task, they should ensure that the options are of comparable scope and demand.

The types and range of forms of School-assessed Coursework for the outcomes are prescribed within the study design. The VCAA publishes [Support materials](#) for this study, which include advice on the design of assessment tasks and the assessment of student work for a level of achievement.

Teachers will provide to the VCAA a numerical score representing an assessment of the student’s level of achievement. The score must be based on the teacher’s assessment of the performance of each student on the tasks set out in the following table.

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

Outcomes	Marks allocated	Assessment tasks
<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Identify, describe and analyse distinctive features of informal language in written and spoken texts.</p>	50	<p>Analysis of one or more samples of informal language in any one or a combination of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a folio of annotated texts • an essay • an investigative report • an analytical commentary • short-answer questions. <p>Assessment tasks may be written, oral or multimodal. The total suggested length of the student responses should be approximately 700–900 words or equivalent.</p>
<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Identify, describe and analyse distinctive features of formal language in written and spoken texts.</p>	50	<p>Analysis of one or more samples of formal language in any one or a combination of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a folio of annotated texts • an essay • an investigative report • an analytical commentary • short-answer questions. <p>Assessment tasks may be written, oral or multimodal. The total suggested length of the student responses should be approximately 700–900 words or equivalent.</p>
Total marks		100

External assessment

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination (see [page 38](#)), which will contribute 50 per cent to the study score.

Unit 4: Language variation and identity

In this unit students focus on the role of language in establishing and challenging different identities. There are many varieties of English used in contemporary Australian society, influenced by the intersection of geographical, cultural and social factors. Standard Australian English is the variety that is granted prestige in contemporary Australian society and, as such, has a central role in the complex construct of a national identity. However, the use of language varieties can play important roles in constructing users' social and cultural identities. Students examine texts to explore the ways different identities are imposed, negotiated and conveyed.

Students explore how our sense of identity evolves in response to situations and experiences, and is influenced by how we see ourselves and how others see us. Through our language we express ourselves as individuals and signal our membership of particular groups. Students explore how language can distinguish between 'us' and 'them', creating solidarity and reinforcing social distance.

Area of Study 1

Language variation in Australian society

This area of study enables students to examine the range of language varieties that exist in contemporary Australian society and the role of those varieties in contributing to an increasingly contested national identity. Standard Australian English has much in common with Englishes from other continents, but the language has also developed features across all subsystems of language that distinguish it from other Englishes.

Australia is not linguistically uniform, and contemporary texts in both written and spoken modes both challenge and construct notions of what it means to be Australian and what might be meant by 'national identity'. Increasing global contact, the influence of modern technologies and other social changes are shaping contemporary English in Australian society, and attitudes towards language continue to evolve.

Students examine how Standard Australian English is afforded prestige by public institutions. They explore how the language varieties operating in Australia provide further dimensions to English in Australian society. They consider a range of migrant ethnolects and Aboriginal Australian Englishes in addition to exploring language features associated with emerging and established stereotypes that can be adopted subconsciously or deliberately to establish or challenge identities. Students also consider and challenge the validity and use of language features associated with stereotypes in contemporary Australian society.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify, describe and analyse varieties of English in Australian society, the attitudes towards them and the identities they reflect.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- the features of Standard Australian English and its role in Australian society
- the ways in which a variety of identities are conveyed and reflected in Australian texts
- the evolution of Broad, General and Cultivated Australian English accents
- how English varies according to culture, including Standard Australian English, Aboriginal Australian Englishes and migrant ethnolects

- attitudes within Australian society to different varieties of English, including prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes
- how English in Australian society is influenced by global contact and modern technologies
- the role of language in conveying a perceived national identity
- metalanguage to discuss varieties of English in Australian society

Key skills

- identify and use metalanguage appropriately to discuss language variation and identity in Australia in an objective and a systematic way
- use metalanguage appropriately to describe and analyse attitudes to varieties of English in Australian society in an objective and a systematic way
- describe and analyse how identity is conveyed and reflected in written and spoken Australian texts

Area of Study 2

Individual and group identities

In this area of study students focus on the role of language in reflecting, imposing, negotiating and conveying individual and group identities. They examine how language users play different roles within speech communities and are able to construct their identities through subconscious and conscious language variation. In this work, students engage with social variables including age, gender, sexuality, occupation, interests, aspiration and education. While individual identity can be derived from the character traits that make us unique, our social identities are drawn from our membership of particular groups. Students investigate how, as individuals, we make language choices that draw on our understanding of social expectations and community attitudes.

Students examine overt and covert prestige in speech communities. They consider how knowing and being able to exploit overt norms – which are typically associated with Standard Australian English – allows users to convey a prestigious identity associated with their class, education, occupation, social status and aspirations. They also consider how covert norms – those that are given prestige by local groups – can be powerful in conveying identities, establishing those who use them as members of the ‘in’ group, while those who are unable to conform are excluded.

Students learn how societal attitudes, personal associations and individual prejudices can lead to social disadvantage and discrimination.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify, describe and analyse how variation in language, linguistic repertoires and language choices reflects and conveys people’s identities.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

- social and personal variation (sociolects and idiolects) in language according to factors such as age, gender, sexuality, occupation, interests, aspirations and education
- representations of individual and group identities in a range of texts
- the ways in which the language of individuals and the language of groups is shaped by social expectations and community attitudes

- the ways in which people draw on their linguistic repertoire to gain power and prestige, including exploiting overt and covert norms
- code switching as a means of demonstrating group membership and belonging
- the relationship between social attitudes and language choices
- metalanguage to discuss representations of identity in texts

Key skills

- identify and use metalanguage appropriately to discuss the relationship between language variation and identity for both individuals and groups in an objective and a systematic way
- use metalanguage appropriately to analyse attitudes to varieties of English in contemporary Australian society in an objective and a systematic way
- describe and analyse how group and individual identities are conveyed and reflected in a range of written and spoken texts

School-based assessment

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks to provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study and key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks.

Assessment of levels of achievement

School-assessed Coursework

The student's level of achievement in Unit 4 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework. School-assessed Coursework tasks must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and must not unduly add to the workload associated with that program. They must be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

Where teachers provide a range of options for the same School-assessed Coursework task, they should ensure that the options are of comparable scope and demand.

The types and range of forms of School-assessed Coursework for the outcomes are prescribed within the study design. The VCAA publishes [Support materials](#) for this study, which include advice on the design of assessment tasks and the assessment of student work for a level of achievement.

Teachers will provide to the VCAA a numerical score representing an assessment of the student's level of achievement. The score must be based on the teacher's assessment of the performance of each student on the tasks set out in the following table.

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 4 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

Outcomes	Marks allocated	Assessment tasks
<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Identify, describe and analyse varieties of English in Australian society, the attitudes towards them and the identities they reflect.</p>	50	<p>For each outcome, any one or a combination of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a folio of annotated texts • an essay • an investigative report • an analytical commentary • short-answer questions.
<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Identify, describe and analyse how variation in language, linguistic repertoires and language choices reflects and conveys people's identities.</p>	50	<p>Assessment tasks may be written, oral or multimodal. The total suggested length of the student responses should be approximately 700–900 words or equivalent.</p>
	Total marks	100

External assessment

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination.

End-of-year examination

Contribution to final assessment

The examination will contribute 50 per cent to the study score.

Description

The examination will be set by a panel appointed by the VCAA. All the key knowledge and key skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4 are examinable.

Conditions

The examination will be completed under the following conditions:

- Duration: 2 hours.
- Date: end-of-year, on a date to be published annually by the VCAA.
- VCAA examination rules will apply. Details of these rules are published annually in the [VCE Administrative Handbook](#).
- The examination will be marked by assessors appointed by the VCAA.

Further advice

The VCAA publishes specifications for all VCE examinations on the VCAA website. Examination specifications include details about the sections of the examination, their weighting, the question format(s) and any other essential information. The specifications are published in the first year of implementation of the revised Unit 3 and 4 sequence together with any sample material.