**Unit 3: Language variation and social purpose**

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

Students examine the stylistic features of formal and informal language in both spoken and written 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 purpose in 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 as a means of exploring how texts construct message and meaning.

Students consider how texts are in influenced by the situational and cultural contexts in which they occur. They examine how function, field, mode, setting and the relationships between participants all contribute to a person’s language choices, as do the values, attitudes and beliefs held by participants and the wider community. Students learn how speakers and writers select features from within particular stylistic variants, or registers, and 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 Informal language**

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 a particular social purpose. They consider the features and functions of informal language in written, spoken and electronic interactions, understanding that the situational and cultural context of an exchange determines the language used.

Students examine the features that distinguish informal language from more formal language. They understand that informal language often lacks the carefully planned structure of formal texts and 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 colloquialisms and non-Standard English in establishing informal registers. Students study texts in which speakers use informal language including conversations, narratives, monologues, interviews and unscripted commentaries. They also examine informal texts produced by writers, including narratives, advertisements, journals, notes, and electronic or other written interactions involving one or more participants. 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 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 which reflect pronunciation and prosodic patterns, emoticons and context-speci c graphemes. Both written and spoken informal texts may contain non-fluency features, ellipses, shortened lexical forms and syntactic complexity.

Students investigate how informal language can be used to meet and challenge others’ face needs, both positive (the need to be liked, respected and treated as a member of a group) and negative (the need to be autonomous and act without imposition from others); how informal language choices can build rapport by encouraging inclusiveness, 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 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 and non-Standard English in creating formal and informal texts
* differences in the nature and functions of formal and informal texts
* the relationship between the context and the features of language in informal texts
* the role of discourse features and lexical choice in creating textual cohesion and coherence in informal written texts
* stylistic features in informal speech and writing, including phonological patterning, syntactic patterning, morphological patterning, and lexical choice and semantic patterning
* features of spoken discourse and major discourse strategies used by speakers and the ways in which cooperation can be achieved
* the use of informal language for various social purposes, including:
  + –  encouraging intimacy, solidarity and equality
  + –  maintaining and challenging positive and negative face needs
  + –  promoting linguistic innovation
  + –  supporting in-group membership
* conventions for the transcription of spoken English texts, including symbols, legend, and line numbers
* metalanguage to discuss informal language in texts.

**Key skills**

* use key linguistic concepts as they relate to informal language in texts
* use key concepts and metalanguage appropriately to describe and analyse informal spoken and written

language use in an objective and a systematic way

* analyse the effect of informal contexts on language choices
* analyse the nature, features and functions of informal written texts and transcripts of informal spoken English.

**Area of Study 2 Formal language**

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

Students examine the features and functions of formal language, particularly in literature and the public domain. They understand that formal language, in all modes, tends to be less ambiguous, more cohesive, and is more likely to make explicit aspects of the presumed context. They examine formal texts, exploring how writers and speakers are more likely to consider how their audience might interpret their message, packaging it appropriately with attention to the art of rhetoric, including the use of gurative language. Students learn that formal written texts are more likely to have been edited while formal spoken texts may have been rehearsed. They examine such formal written texts as legal documents, bureaucratic policy and procedures, of cial documents, informational prose, and literature. They also examine formal language in spoken texts such as speeches, lectures, oaths, liturgies, performances, and monologues. Formal speech has many of the organisational and stylistic features of written language, but also draws on paralinguistic features such as gesture and eye contact and prosodic cues such as pitch, stress and intonation.

Students investigate the range of ways formal language can be used to perform various social purposes. They investigate how formal language can be used to meet and challenge others’ face needs, both positive and negative. Formal language choices, particularly politeness strategies, can also reinforce social distance and relationship hierarchies, or build rapport. Similarly, varieties 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, media, the law and bureaucracy. Students learn that formal language enables users to carefully negotiate social taboos through the employment of euphemisms, non-discriminatory language, and political correctness. They explore how variations in style reveal much about the intentions and values of speakers or writers, as well as the situational and social contexts in which formal texts are created.

**Outcome 2**

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify 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 nature and functions of formal and informal texts
* the relationship between the context and the features of language in formal texts
* the features and functions of formal writing and formal speech as represented in a range of texts from literature and the public domain
* the role of discourse features and lexical choice in creating textual cohesion and coherence in formal spoken and written texts
* stylistic features in formal speech and writing, including phonological patterning, syntactic patterning, morphological patterning, and lexical choice and semantic patterning
* the use of formal language for various social purposes, including:
  + –  maintaining and challenging positive and negative face needs
  + –  reinforcing social distance and authority
  + –  establishing expertise
  + –  promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport
  + –  clarifying, manipulating or obfuscating
* metalanguage to discuss formal language in texts.

**Key skills**

* use key linguistic concepts as they relate to formal language in texts
* use key concepts and metalanguage appropriately to describe and analyse formal spoken and written language

in an objective and a systematic way

* analyse the effect of formal contexts on language choices
* analyse the nature, features and functions of formal texts
* evaluate features of language in 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 specifed 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**

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 *Advice for teachers* for this study, which includes 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 Outcome 1

Identify and analyse distinctive features of informal language in written and spoken texts.

Analysis of one or more samples of informal language in any one or a combination of the following:

* a folio of annotated texts
* an essay
* an investigative report
* an analytical commentary
* short-answer questions.

Assessment tasks may be written, oral or multi-modal. The total suggested length of the student responses should be approximately 600–800 words or equivalent.

Marks allocated\* 50

Outcome 2

Identify and analyse distinctive features of formal language in written and spoken texts.

Analysis of one or more samples of formal language in any one or a combination of the following:

* a folio of annotated texts
* an essay
* an investigative report
* an analytical commentary
* short-answer questions.

Assessment tasks may be written, oral or multi-modal. The total suggested length of the student responses should be approximately 600–800 words or equivalent.

Marks allocated\* 50

**External assessment**

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination, which will contribute 50 per cent.

**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, including national, regional, cultural and social variations. Standard Australian English is the variety that is granted prestige in contemporary Australian society and it has a role in establishing national identity. However, non-Standard English varieties also play a role in constructing users’ social and cultural identities. Students examine a range of texts to explore the ways different identities are constructed. These texts include extracts from novels, lms or television programs, poetry, letters and emails, transcripts of spoken interaction, songs, advertisements, speeches and bureaucratic or of cial documents.

Students explore how our sense of identity evolves in response to situations and experiences and is in uenced 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 contributions these varieties make to a construction of shared national identity. 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.

Students explore how the Broad, General and Cultivated Australian accents re ect the society from which they emerged and the forms that achieved social prestige over time. However, 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 in uence of modern technologies and other social changes are shaping contemporary Australian English, and attitudes towards Australian language continue to evolve.

Students examine how Standard Australian English, as the variety of Australian English afforded prestige by public institutions, has played a pivotal role in establishing the legitimacy of Australian English in comparison to other national varieties of English. They explore how the non-Standard English varieties operating in Australia provide further dimensions to Australian English. They consider variation between regions, a range of migrant ethnolects, and Aboriginal Englishes, in addition to exploring how the language features associated with stereotypes may be adopted subconsciously or deliberately employed to establish or challenge identities.

**Outcome 1**

On completion of this unit the student should be able to investigate and analyse varieties of Australian English and attitudes towards them.

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 and non-Standard English in Australian society
* the ways in which a variety of Australian identities are constructed and re ected in a range of texts
* the characteristics of Australian English in contrast to Englishes from other continents, in phonological, morphological, lexical, and grammatical patterns
* the features of Broad, General and Cultivated Australian English accents
* how Australian English varies according to geography, including national and regional variation
* how Australian English varies according to culture, including Aboriginal English and ethnolects
* attitudes within society to different varieties of Australian English, including prescriptivism and descriptivism
* the role of language in constructing national identity
* metalanguage to discuss varieties of Australian English.

**Key skills**

* use key linguistic concepts and metalanguage appropriately to discuss language variation and identity in Australia in an objective and a systematic way
* use key concepts and metalanguage appropriately to analyse attitudes to varieties of Australian English in an objective and a systematic way
* investigate and analyse how Australian identity is constructed and re ected in a range of written and spoken texts.

**Area of Study 2  
Individual and group identities**

In this area of study students focus on the role of language in re ecting and constructing individual and group identities. They examine how language users are able to play different roles within speech communities and to construct their identities through subconscious and conscious language variation, according to age, gender, 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 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 norms in speech communities. They consider how knowing and being able to exploit overt norms – which are typically associated with Standard English – allows users to construct 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 and are typically associated with non- Standard English – can be powerful in constructing identities, establishing those who use them as members of the ‘in’ group, while those who are unable to conform are cast as outsiders. The language features associated with jargon and slang also provide a powerful basis for inclusion and exclusion.

Students learn how societal attitudes, personal associations and individual prejudices can lead to social disadvantage and discrimination against use of non-Standard English dialects and accents.

**Outcome 2**

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse how people’s choice of language re ects and constructs their 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 in language according to factors such as age, gender, occupation, interests, aspirations and education
  + features of language that contribute to a sense of individual identity and group membership
  + 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
* the relationship between social attitudes and language choices
* metalanguage to discuss representations of identity in texts.

**Key skills**

* use key linguistic concepts and metalanguage appropriately to discuss the relationship between language variation and identity for both individuals and groups in an objective and a systematic way
* use key concepts and metalanguage appropriately to analyse attitudes to varieties of English in contemporary Australian society in an objective and a systematic way
* explain and analyse how group and individual identities are constructed and re ected 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 speci ed 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**

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 *Advice for teachers* for this study, which includes 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 nal assessment**

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

**Outcomes Outcome 1**

Investigate and analyse varieties of Australian English and attitudes towards them.

* a folio of annotated texts
* an essay
* an investigative report
* an analytical commentary
* short-answer questions.

Assessment tasks may be written, oral or multi-modal. The total suggested length of the student responses should be approximately 600–800 words or equivalent.

Marks allocated\* 50

**Outcome 2**

Analyse how people’s choice of language re ects and constructs their identities.

For each outcome, any one or a combination of the following:

* a folio of annotated texts
* an essay
* an investigative report
* an analytical commentary
* short-answer questions.

Assessment tasks may be written, oral or multi-modal. The total suggested length of the student responses should be approximately 600–800 words or equivalent.

Marks allocated\* 50

**External assessment**

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

**Contribution to nal assessment**

The examination will contribute 50 per cent.

**End-of-year examination**

**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: two 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 and VCAL 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 speci cations 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 rst year of implementation of the revised Units 3 and 4 sequence together with any sample material.