



Interactive Sign Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2006 students generally performed well in the interactive sign examination. Those who were thoroughly prepared were able to communicate with confidence and advance the exchange effectively. Conversely, those who were less well prepared found the task more difficult.

It is imperative when preparing for this examination that students are familiar with all components of the examination criteria used for assessment, as well as the correct form of address to use when signing to the assessor. They must remember to sign their student number in Auslan and use an appropriate greeting on both entering and leaving the examination room. Also, many students' finger-spelled very basic signs, which is not grammatically correct.

Students should choose simple topics that are relevant to them and their life experiences and, importantly, which they are capable of explaining easily in Auslan. Students should not prepare their topics in English and then try to present a translation. Some students chose very interesting topics for Section 2 and presented very interesting photographs.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The Interactive sign examination is designed primarily to assess the students' knowledge and skill in using Auslan for conversation, reporting and discussion purposes. The Interactive sign examination has two sections – Conversation and Discussion, and Presentation and Response.

Section 1 – Conversation and Discussion

The examination should begin with an introduction and continue into a conversation between the student and the assessor based on the student's personal world; for example, life, family and friends, interests and aspirations and current events. This section should last for approximately seven minutes.

Good preparation for this section of the examination allowed the conversation to flow naturally. Students who had explored the topics thoroughly were able to effectively link with assessors, and express and expand on their information and ideas. However, there were still some students who had not prepared adequately and could not elaborate on their responses or expand the conversation. They could only give very limited answers and therefore did not perform well.

Rote-learning slabs of information is not advisable. Students who relied solely on memorised material found it difficult to continue the conversation when the assessor interacted with them. These students were more likely to give irrelevant responses as they relied solely on their pre-prepared materials in response to any question asked. Students should remember that a conversation is an interaction between two or more people and cannot be learned.

When preparing for the Conversation and Discussion, teachers and students should take note of the following information.

- Students are required to sign their student number as soon as they are seated; some students seemed to forget this.
- Students need to be reminded that they must not sign their name at the beginning, nor should they reveal their name when describing their family.
- Students should not ask the assessor questions about his or her family.
- Teachers need to instruct students how to use 'enumeration' correctly when listing family members (there was some phonologically incorrect use of movement).
- Some students unnecessarily overused rhetorical questions.
- A high number of students had problems in reading/understanding the assessor's question 'what do?' They had difficulty understanding the finger spelled sign for 'do' and asked several times for a repeat. Students should be taught common finger spelled words such as 'so', 'do', 'but', 'too', 'it', etc., as this is part of the Auslan vocabulary.
- The majority of students did not understand the sign for 'cook/cooking'. This sign was used several times by assessors in Section 1 when students were asked for information about their hobbies, for example, cooking.
- Several students had difficulty signing 'age' numbers – most were not clearly defined and were quite sloppy.



- Students need to be instructed not to look at marking examiners when signing but to focus on the assessor interacting with them.
- Finger spelling orientation continues to be a problem.
- Several students used the incorrect 'seven' hand shape for the letter 'Y'.
- There were problems with read-back in finger spelling.
- Students need to understand the meanings for the two different signs 'teach' and 'teacher'. Also, 'quick' and 'fast'. Each word uses different signs. Students also need to understand the role of noun-verb pairs.

Section 2 – Presentation and Response

Following the informal Conversation and Discussion, students are required to indicate to the assessor the topic chosen for the Presentation and Response. This topic should be selected from an area of interest to the student.

The student may support the Presentation (three minutes) and Response (five minutes) with objects such as photographs, diagrams and maps. Notes and cue cards are not permitted. Upon completion of the Presentation the student should respond to questions raised by the assessor.

The focus of the discussion is to explore aspects of language and culture. Students are given three minutes to clearly and briefly give their Presentation. Some students assumed that they would be allowed to present an extended monologue of their topic and were surprised when the assessor interacted with them.

The choice of topic was often an important factor in determining students' success in the Response. Topics needed to be broad enough to allow for a discussion, but not too difficult in content and vocabulary requirements.

When selecting the topic, it is advisable to avoid subjects discussed in the Conversation section, as many students merely repeated what had already been covered. If the topic studied is related to a theme covered in the Conversation, it is important for the student to provide a clearly different focus.

It is expected that students will have a wide range of information to discuss. Students who devoted adequate time to their topic were able to effectively support and elaborate on their ideas, information and opinions while referring to the topic studied.

When preparing for the Presentation and Response, teachers and students should take note of the following information.

- It was good to see some improvement in the use of classifiers, role shift, colloquialisms and use of space.
- If signing a children's story for this section, students should ensure that there is capacity for a formal discussion with the assessor afterwards.
- Prior to signing this section, several students began by signing the classifier only for 'flashing light' then 'I am talking about...' and 'My audience is...' (this isn't necessary).
- When presenting the title of a book or movie, students should be aware that it is not necessary to sign 'next' between each word; for example, 'The' (next) 'red' (next) 'house'.
- A few students brought objects/materials to support their presentation but forgot to use them with the assessor.

Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall students performed well in the 2006 Auslan Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination.

Every year there are some students who do not attend the practice session for this exam. It is extremely important to be present as it is an opportunity for students to familiarise themselves with the equipment. Teachers need to encourage students to attend. Students should also practise focusing the camera on themselves during the year. They should be able to see themselves from head to waist and from one shoulder to the other. They must sit up straight while recording and **not** bend forward. Students must look into the camera while recording as if looking at their audience. Students should also watch the position of their hands. The palm should be facing inward towards the student's chest. Students need to check that they can see themselves signing.

When completing the Auslan examination, students should:

- avoid wearing colourful (fluorescent colours) tops; grey, white, light grey or light blue are preferred. Hair should be tied back so the assessor is able to see the student's facial expression



- always look into the camera. If the response is for only one person they need to look straight into the camera. If they are responding to a group of people they should move their head from side to side, showing that they are interacting with a group rather than an individual
- use their time wisely. Many students are still rewinding and forwarding tapes during the exam; they should remember that the information is repeated for them three times
- sign their student number at the start of each draft, especially if they fast forward their tape to the start of their chosen draft. Many are still not preparing the video tape at their chosen draft
- ensure that they do not produce too many drafts. Usually the first or second draft is the best. Those who do more than two drafts seem to leave out information each time a draft is completed
- number drafts in numerical order and clearly indicate at the start of each draft the number of that draft
- not write out whole responses in English but spend time organising their response in Auslan. Brief reminder lists only should be written
- ensure that they answer the question asked. A minority of fluent signers repeated the texts and failed to answer the question. Students lose marks for **not** answering the question
- check signs in the resources on the video if they are unsure of signs
- start their answer in an appropriate way, rather than just launching in with signing. Auslan is a visual language, if students gets stuck or are not sure how to start, they should just imagine the scene visually
- check both videos after completing the exam and ensure they have recorded a response.

Some points that were observed in the 2006 Auslan exam were:

- there still seems to be confusion about the difference between formal and informal signs. It is very important that students know the differences between formal and informal and the cultural difference in both
- many responses were too short. Students should aim to produce a response in the time allocated in the study design
- there seemed to be an overuse of signs which were culturally inappropriate; for example, good
- there was little use of current Auslan fillers
- many students voiced or mouthed English words during their responses
- information was often not well structured. Teachers should practise sequencing ideas and information with students so that ideas are not repeated
- hand shapes were not always clearly defined
- incorrect movements were used
- some vocabulary was signed incorrectly (for example, 'dream', 'your' for 'you're', 'man', 'typing/typist', 'want', etc.)
- some students included a few signed English signs; for example, using the 'three' hand shape for 'mother'
- role-shifting and inappropriate body shifts were sometimes too exaggerated
- in some formal presentations many classifiers were used that were more appropriate for informal signing
- students lacked the ability to use 'referents' in space or anaphoric pronouns, especially in the informal tasks improvement was evident in two areas: the use of non-manual features and the use of space.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section I: Watching and responding to informal signed texts

(the use of the term informal signed texts here refers to spontaneous communication, namely that which is not normally recorded)

Description of the task

Section I is designed primarily to assess the student's knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from informal signed texts. It is related to one or more of the prescribed themes.

The students observed an informal signed discourse. This signed discourse was a video recorded performance of between five and seven minutes duration. The discourse was repeated three times with a two-minute pause between each performance during which students were able to take notes.

Comments

Students were expected to respond in Auslan to the set task; for example respond to a message or an announcement. The question was available on videotape in Auslan and written in English. The length of the response needed to be between two and three minutes.



A few students performed very well in this part of the examination; however, many students failed to read the question carefully, which resulted in a number of errors. Some students took on the wrong role play or continued being themselves rather than taking on the role of the counsellor. Many students ignored the question by simply giving poor descriptions of the two signers. Many did not use the information on the video to show that there are other deaf people who have achieved what seemed an impossible dream and achieved their goals. Many students produced a statement and failed to engage in discussion between two people.

Many students did not produce an appropriate informal introduction as required, instead beginning with a formal introduction, assuming that they had not met the student before. Many students also failed to use a correctly structured greeting/opening, body of discussion and closure of discussion/parting/arranging another meeting, etc.

In their responses, students should have used the following information.

- dreams – chef and movie maker
- use experience of two signers (their stories)
- use dreams of signers
- achieved their goals
- why were the goals not achieved initially?
 - access
 - interpreter
 - number of students
 - communication barriers
 - lack of provision for schools for deaf students
 - no funding for deaf projects
 - just followed other deaf people into jobs they did not want (sheep syndrome)
- how did their dreams become reality?
 - more access
 - better awareness
 - better support; for example, interpreters
 - more acceptance of deaf people
 - never giving up (waited a long time and acquired skills at home)
 - studied sociology and used those skills to help write scripts
- ways to achieve goals
 - volunteer
 - pick related skills (subjects)
 - look for deaf role models
 - think of positive ways to achieve goals (signer 1: future films, deaf crew, etc.; signer 2: deaf restaurant, deaf chief conference, deaf world community)

Section II: Watching and responding to formal signed texts

(the use of the term formal here refers to a communicative act prepared prior to presentation)

Description of task

Section II is designed primarily to assess the students' knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from formally signed texts.

The students watched a pre-recorded formal signed discourse. The duration of the signed discourse was between three and five minutes. Students were required to respond in Auslan to the signed text. The task specified a purpose, context and audience. The length of the response should have been approximately three to four minutes.

Comments

This section was poorly answered with many students failing to read the questions correctly. Many ignored the question by failing to identify and analyse the information on the video and identify the task appropriately. This also resulted in confusion over the context and audience.

Again this year students failed to extract, classify or reorganise the information, with only a minority of the students completing the task effectively. Few students managed to use the information to explain why last year's winner had won but merely described a few characteristics of the winner.

2006 Assessment Report



Student responses had a similar pattern to the informal responses although students generally understood the nature of formal discourse and more students took care to set up the introduction, main body and closure.

In their responses, students should have:

- been conscious of their role as the chairperson
- described the situation
- used formal language as this was a new committee
- used the correct structure:
 - introduction – name, role (work), acknowledge new committee members
 - inform committee of last year's decision
 - explain last year's decision
 - conclusion
- explained why the deaf person was chosen (pioneer, raised awareness of deaf people)
 - established paid work for deaf – new job opportunities
 - produced lots of different shows for the whole community
 - programs he developed were used Australia-wide
 - responsible for providing access for deaf, hard of hearing, etc.
 - produced children's TV suitable for deaf and HI
 - these programs helped first language acquisition for deaf children
 - started with nothing
 - started with volunteers, eventually had paid staff
 - first to gain government support
 - established own studio with government funding.