



Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

This year students were reasonably well prepared for the oral examination. Many performed well in the Conversation section but not as well in the Discussion, where inappropriate choice of topic or a lack of preparation for the required in-depth analysis was sometimes shown.

Students should be given credit for their ability to converse well in the Conversation section on a variety of topics, such as school, friends, interests, travels and future aspirations. They generally showed the ability to use the language fluently and to respond well to the questions asked. However, there were still some students who seemed to think that the ability to speak Serbian was enough to score well, and appeared not to have put enough work into their preparation.

In the Discussion section, themes chosen were quite predictable. Most students chose to talk about an historical event – the Battle of Kosovo. Only a handful chose other topics, such as Nikola Tesla, Mileva Maric Einstein or folk poetry.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Students conversed about the subjects they were studying in Year 11 or 12, their aspirations and their interests or hobbies. Some of those who had arrived in Australia recently were not confident in talking about their lives overseas or their families, and the assessors respected their privacy and steered the conversation in another direction.

Well-prepared students were always ready to respond to and interact well with the assessors and expand their answers beyond the initial question. Those who enjoy reading demonstrated a mastery of the language, were good at choosing appropriate vocabulary and did not use any English substitutes, as the less prepared or less fluent students tended to do.

Students who did not prepare well enough found the Conversation extremely long, and their minimal answers proved hard to expand even after they were prompted by the assessors. Some performed poorly because of their inability to choose the correct words or to translate correctly, for example, the names of the subjects they were studying. Students should be reminded that it is not necessary to translate the names of well known places if they are talking about their travels in Australia.

Some students could barely utter a few words in Serbian. They could understand the questions if these were repeated or simplified, but their responses were monosyllabic and heavily supported by body language rather than spoken language. Some students had trouble with grammar, sentence structure and appropriate forms of address when interacting with the assessors. A number of them seemed to struggle with cases and others used a lot of colloquialisms, showing the rich pattern of the language, but not using the standardised form which is expected in the examination.

Section 2 – Discussion

Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

A number of students came well prepared and showed an understanding of their chosen topic by clearly stating the theme, topic and sub-topic of their Detailed Study, as well as the resources used. All sub-topics were very interesting and challenging, and required good proficiency in Serbian in order to understand, present and discuss the sub-topic chosen. Preparation often involved lots of reading and research by students and lots of practice with their teachers.

Within the popular historical theme of the Battle of Kosovo, the majority of students spoke about the battle itself and its significance. Many students dealt superficially with the topic, showing little in-depth analysis, or they may not have researched well enough, so that their resources did not support their discussion. These students would have been well advised to choose a different sub-topic, use more resources and to focus on an issue that would elicit discussion.

Others students who chose this theme opted to discuss the main characters as described in both historical documents and folk literature. Many believed that traditional sources were truer than historical documents and put forward their opinions accordingly. However, there were only a few students who used a variety of resources and showed an in-depth knowledge of the topic. They cited parts of the folk poems to emphasise significant moments in their discussion but also



compared these with historical data, showing differences in interpretation of the events and then positioning themselves in regards to the one they favoured.

A small number of students discussed the role of men and women in Serbian society in the past and today, based on their study of the lives, at the turn of the 19th century and into the 20th century, of two eminent Serbs, Nikola Tesla and Mileva Maric-Einstein, who were excellent examples of people whose struggles and life inspired many. Students' abilities and skills in discussing the topics varied and often were based on their readiness to research and read widely.

A handful of students studied folk poems and compared the main characters, researching not only why the poems were written but also what was behind the stories presented in the poems. These students generally impressed the assessors with their attitude and their interest in such a challenging topic, which required them to expand their vocabulary in order to understand the archaic expressions used and the time, culture and traditions that were described. In order to prepare for the examination, students read and learnt verses from folk poems about King Marko and Banovic Strahinja, and researched historical data connected with those two men. In their discussion, they not only talked fluently about the poems chosen but also expressed their view on the position of men and women in a very traditional society in the middle ages.

Resources were used well and included written material such as books, folk poems, legends, stories, reports and historical data from the Internet and audio-visual resources such as documentaries or movies. Students also brought support material which helped in their discussion. This was particularly the case for the students who had studied the battle of Kosovo, which they illustrated with reproductions of Kosovo's maiden, Kosovo's monasteries or Kosovo's heroes: Czar Lazar or Milos Obilic. They referred to the support material, drew some conclusions or used them as descriptive items to support their opinion.

Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Most students showed responsibility for their learning in the way they discussed their chosen sub-topic. Good students were able to compare and contrast; for example, two types of texts (for example, a folk poem about Czar Lazar and historical data or biography), two different but significant characters in the Kosovo epic, or the influence of two contrasting figures of the time, one hero and one traitor, and how they were shown in history and folk literature.

Students who discussed a famous person of Serbian background showed good preparation, often choosing the most significant or interesting part of their life to showcase. Most of the students who chose this topic also opted for a more modern approach to the data collected and tried to link the topic with today's happenings in, for example, science and how the lives of these people make new inventions and discoveries possible even today.

It was a delight to listen to the students who decided to prepare folk poetry and really ventured into the literature itself. They showed thorough preparation and performed very well, and their opinions were well explained and defended. However, only those who have a real inclination towards poetry and literature should choose a topic like this.

Accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Most students were fluent and had no problems in understanding assessors' questions and responding to them. Those who had studied hard and prepared well throughout the year generally performed well.

The most common errors were in the use of cases and the agreement of nouns with adjectives and verbs. These problems may have been caused by students' common use of dialects or a lack of fluency by students born in Australia. Students who had lived in Australia for more than five years showed a tendency to use English sentence structures, which also led to confusion and mistakes. Some students used a lot of colloquialisms, which they were obviously accustomed to using at home in everyday communication with their parents. Although these certainly add to the richness of the language, they are not a part of usage in its standard form.

Clarity of expression

Most students discussed their sub-topic well, were well prepared and had a good understanding of what was required in the second part of the examination. Good students came with lots of interesting details and opinions to share with the assessors. They were confident and referred to the resources they used while working on the Detailed Study.

Students should be reminded that no questions will be asked that are outside their knowledge, but incorrect or misleading resources can lead to questions that students do not know the answer to or did not cover while studying. If this occurs, the student should simply inform the assessors that they did not study this area, and the assessors will move on.