

# Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2017

## Assessment Report

### Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to consolidate the Chief Examiners' observations on the performance of candidates who sat the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) in 2017.

### General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment<sup>1</sup> rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 85.1%; Writing 39.2%; Listening 82.6%; Speaking 56.3%; Classroom Language Assessment 97.3%.

### Paper 1 (Reading)

3. The paper comprised three reading passages on different topics.

4. Candidates' performance

#### 4.1 Paper completion

Most candidates completed the questions for all three reading passages; however, there were a number of cases of questions being left blank. In a few cases, no attempt had been made to answer any of the questions for a particular passage, suggesting that those candidates may have run out of time to complete the paper.

#### 4.2 Understanding what a question was specifically asking and therefore what was required in a response

Overall, candidates' responses indicated that they had understood what the questions asked. Questions which were less well handled included the following:

4.2.1 Passage A, Question 16 asked '...how are workplace friendships generally perceived?' The correct response was that they are felt to involve effort and vulnerability. A number of candidates responded by copying out the phrase 'involve less effort and vulnerability' which missed the point indicated by 'than we realize'.

4.2.2 Passage A, Question 17 asked 'How can the results of interacting with colleagues be surprising?', to which the correct response was that such interaction can transform a transaction into a relationship. Candidates who correctly answered this question demonstrated an understanding of the need to address the adjective 'surprising' in the question.

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<sup>1</sup> Scoring Level 3 or above in the Reading and Listening papers, and Level 2.5 or above on any one scale and Level 3 or above on all other scales in the Writing, Speaking and Classroom Language Assessment (CLA) papers.

4.2.3 Passage B, Question 20 asked about the similarity between stimuli and the seasonings salt and pepper. Candidates who responded with ‘provoking taste buds is like provoking feelings’ or similar understood the need to address *both* ‘internal and external stimuli’ *and* ‘salt and pepper’, as required by the question.

#### 4.3 Drawing inferences from the writer’s words

4.3.1 Passage A, Question 7 asked what ‘single-serving friends’ suggests about friendships between colleagues. Strong candidates recognised that ‘single-serving’ implies that such friendships are transitory and not long-lasting. Common answers like ‘insincere’ and ‘casual’ were incorrect.

4.3.2 Passage C, Question 41 asked ‘What contrast does the writer present by using... ‘nevertheless’..?’ Candidates were required to mention the fact that buyers have an opportunity to return goods but do not take this opportunity, instead of focusing on the literal meaning of the discourse marker.

4.3.3 Passage C, Question 42 asked what the writer implied by using ‘slap’ in ‘slap a price tag on it’. Candidates who performed well on this question recognised that the implication relates to the arbitrariness in determining the price rather than the literal meaning.

4.3.4 Passage C, Question 44 asked what the writer implied by saying the ‘ripping sound of package tape is resonating... all over China’. The paragraph in which the phrase appears illustrates that Taobao has spawned a new crop of entrepreneurs. Candidates who responded with answers such as ‘many people are selling things through Taobao throughout China’ demonstrated their understanding of meaning in context.

#### 4.4 Identification of referents

Candidates’ performance on questions requiring identification of specific information in the passages was mixed.

4.4.1 Passage B, Question 18 asked for the referent of ‘it’ in ‘it has fundamentally to do with’. A number of candidates wrote ‘recreational fear’, rather than the correct answer ‘the psychology of recreational fear’ or ‘the reason why many people relish horror films and hair-raising fun-fair rides’.

4.4.2 Passage B, Question 22 asked ‘the remedy for what?’ This refers to the statement in the passage that ‘...to some seem too pale a source of stimulation; for them the vinaloo of a horror film is the remedy.’ Candidates who correctly answered the question understood that the ‘remedy’ was a corrective to the ‘pale (weak) stimulation’, not to the ‘stimulation’.

4.4.3 Passage C, Question 37 asked ‘No turning back to what?’ Strong candidates correctly identified the reference to be a general one to ‘retail shopping’ or ‘shopping in conventional shops’, instead of to the preceding phrase ‘how Chinese people shop’.

4.4.4 Passage C, Question 38 asked ‘The uncertainty of what?’ The reference here was to what follows ‘the uncertainty’ in the passage. Candidates’ correct responses indicated that they had understood the cataphoric reference.

4.5 Grasp of global meaning – reading beyond the sentence level  
Candidates generally performed well in this area, but Passage B, Question 32 proved to be challenging. It asked candidates to identify statements that most accurately reflected the writer’s views. Candidates who chose option C (‘Fear can make us aware of danger and thus spur us to action’) appeared to have overlooked the writer’s view that fear can paralyse effective action (line 21).

4.6 Appropriateness of responses  
Strong candidates identified the material that was relevant to the question being asked. In general, there was relatively little evidence of indiscriminate copying, although where this did happen the response was often inappropriate and attracted no marks.

## 5. Advice to candidates

In general:

5.1 Plan your time so that you can respond to all questions. Note that the length of passages and the number of questions for each will vary. Remember that you may tackle the passages in any order; start answering questions that you feel most confident with and aim to work reasonably quickly so that you will have time later to review any questions where you are least certain of your responses. Check your progress at intervals to ensure that you are most effectively demonstrating your competence within the time available.

5.2 Pay attention to how ideas are constructed in a passage. Sometimes, you may need to read back and forth in a passage to build your understanding of the points made by the writer.

5.3 Be aware that your first answer to a question is the one which will be marked; do not copy out a list of items or information in the hope that something within that list or information will attract a mark.

5.4 Remember that if more than one mark is awarded to a question, you may need to provide more than one point in your answer.

Specifically:

5.5 Where questions in a sequence seem to be asking for the same information, check them again to find what, specifically, is being asked. Each question is different and will require a unique response.

- 5.6 When responding to a question about the *meaning* of something in a passage, make sure that you take into account the *context* of the passage, not simply your own experience or general understanding. The paper does not test vocabulary or meaning without reference to the context.
- 5.7 Note that ‘phrase’ does not refer to a complete sentence; if a whole sentence is copied as a response then it will not attract a mark. ‘Phrase’ also means more than one word; a single word will not serve as a correct response.
- 5.8 Pay attention to the grammatical structure and spelling of your responses. While errors in structure and spelling are not taken into account in the mark scheme, you should recognise that markers cannot give credit to responses that are not intelligible or to mis-spellings where they create a different word from the one you wish to use.
- 5.9 When responding to questions asking for reference to information, candidates are advised to place their answer back into the question to check if the reference is correctly identified. For example, in Passage C, Question 37 ‘No turning back to what?’, candidates who had substituted the wrong response ‘how Chinese people shop’ for the pronoun ‘what’ would have recognised that ‘no turning back to how Chinese people shop’ fails to convey the writer’s intended meaning.
- 5.10 If the best response to a question is contained in words from the passage, candidates should use those words. If candidates choose to paraphrase the passage, they should make sure that the meaning is the same as suggested by the original. In this paper, for example, in Passage A, Question 11, one possible correct response was ‘people think that efficiency should be given priority at work’. Rephrasing this as ‘people are efficient at work’ is an incorrect response because the original meaning is not retained in the rephrased answer.

Finally:

- 5.11 Candidates are advised to enhance their reading skills by reading on a regular basis, expanding the range of reading both within and outside the educational field. Doing this will help strengthen comprehension of lexis, structure and meaning and thus the appreciation and understanding of the nuances of written English.
- 5.12 Reading fiction provides an opportunity to ‘hear’ English as it is spoken, in the dialogue within the text, and to appreciate descriptions of character and emotion. Reading expository writing builds an appreciation of the ways in which points of view unfold in a text and a stronger understanding of cohesion and coherence.

## **Paper 2 (Writing)**

6. This paper consists of two parts, Part 1: Task 1, Composition, and Part 2: Task 2A Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems, and 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems in a Students’ Composition.

## Part 1: Composition

7. In Part 1 of the paper, candidates are required to write a text. The 2017 task was to write a debate speech on the motion ‘Hong Kong is a gender-fair society.’ Candidates were invited to write the speech either in favour of or against the motion and needed to provide at least two reasons to justify their stance, supporting them with their own examples.
8. Markers noted that the test paper was well designed and gave candidates the opportunity to frame a debate speech around an important news topic. To help candidates who may not have had knowledge of gender issues in Hong Kong, an extract from a newspaper article was included in the question. The task allowed candidates to demonstrate their English language ability and markers commented that candidates showed a good understanding of the different views around the issue. Candidates wrote knowledgeably about a range of issues related to whether Hong Kong is a gender-fair society. These included references to the political situation in Hong Kong with female candidates standing for election to the position of Chief Executive, the ‘He for She’ campaign, the changing laws on maternity and paternity leave, and the role of women in business and industry. There were also examples from the local media about the work of the EOC. Markers felt there was a good spread of answers with many candidates choosing to argue against the motion and suggesting that Hong Kong is not a gender-fair society. The debate topic was generally well addressed and it was clear that some candidates had prior knowledge of debating terms and practices. This was *not* a requirement, however, and candidates simply needed to demonstrate that they were delivering a speech with a clear stance either for or against the set motion.
9. Candidates’ performance is graded on three scales for Part 1: (1) Organisation and Coherence, (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, and (3) Task Completion. Most candidates completed the task successfully, with a very pleasing number of candidates attaining Level 3 or above.
10. The performance on scale (1) Organisation and Coherence was strong with many candidates achieving Level 3 or above. Some markers commented that candidates’ organisation of ideas and information sometimes required more planning. Some candidates had used mind maps and other organisational devices and these seemed to translate into well-organised essays. However, at times there were too many points being presented and markers felt that some points lacked coherence and were hard to follow. In a writing task like a debate speech, candidates needed to prioritise and organise their points so that the arguments were clearly presented. The use of cohesive devices and discourse markers could also have been improved so that the candidates’ writing flowed more easily. Candidates are reminded that they should consider the possible effect of their writing on the reader and audience.
11. In terms of scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, markers reported that there were sometimes expressions which were inappropriate to the task. Grammatical problems were also identified, some of which impeded understanding. These included errors involving tenses, subject-verb agreement and prepositions, all of which might have been avoided with a more careful proofread at the end of the writing process. Markers were pleased to see that there was not an overreliance on clichés and stock phrases, but at times the choice of language was inappropriate to the task. At times there were direct translations from Cantonese. Candidates are reminded to read

widely so as to become more familiar with the nuances of English colloquial phrases and vocabulary.

12. In scale (3) Task Completion, markers felt that most candidates were able to address the task in the question. The majority of candidates wrote a debate speech and considered their audience very carefully. It was pleasing to see a range of debate formats, from very formal speeches to some lively, more humorous presentations. Some candidates drew effectively on personal examples to address the issue of a gender-fair society, while others adopted rhetorical devices that worked quite well. Some candidates did not make it clear that they were writing a debate speech and some pieces were more like discursive essays, however. Some candidates relied too heavily on the two examples provided in the prompt without adding any additional examples to illustrate their stance. Other candidates failed to offer appropriate justification for their views and were unable to extend their arguments with appropriate evidence. Some arguments were very weak, with hollow statements and exaggerated, simple facts or stories. The task did not require candidates to criticise Hong Kong's government or the EOC, and candidates are reminded to read the task carefully so that they can strike an appropriate balance in their response.
13. Candidates are reminded to follow the guidelines regarding the number of words to write, use other names when referring to schools as well as themselves, not write in the margins and leave sufficient time to proofread their writing at the end of the test.

## **Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems**

14. Part 2 of the Writing Paper is divided into two parts: Task 2A, Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems and Task 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems. Candidates are given a composition that contains errors/problems and are asked to correct those that appear in the first part of the composition for 2A, and to fill in incomplete explanations of some of the errors/problems in the remainder of the composition in 2B.
15. Markers considered the instructions for Part 2 to be clearly stated and felt that the composition contained a balanced and fairly comprehensive range of testing items. Candidates performed quite strongly in Part 2A, but some struggled with the following questions:
  - 3: replacing the verb 'does' with 'plays' to create the collocation 'plays a big role'.
  - 12(a): replacing the sequence 'promised me go' with the verb pattern 'promised to take me' or 'promised that he would take me'.
  - 13(b): adding 'much' to complete the clause 'how much the Ocean Park visit meant to me'.
  - 13(c): replacing the plural noun 'words' with the singular noun 'word' to create the semi-fixed phrase 'keep his word', meaning to keep a promise.
16. In Task 2B, candidates were given incomplete explanations of errors/problems and had to fill in the blanks with one or more words so as to make the explanations complete. Many candidates did this successfully, but below are some examples of common problems identified by markers:
  - 14(c): Some candidates only mentioned that a noun phrase was required here, but failed to provide the reason why, that it is a noun phrase as it follows the preposition 'to'.

- 16(a): Many candidates incorrectly labelled ‘on’ in the phrasal verb ‘cheer on’ as a preposition rather than as an adverb or particle.
  - 17(a): Many candidates wrongly labelled the verb ‘are’ as an auxiliary verb instead of as a main, linking, copular or lexical verb.
  - 19(b): Some candidates failed to explain that the article ‘a’ should be used before ‘university’ as the initial sound of ‘university’ is a consonant.
  - 20(a): Many candidates failed to identify ‘-s’ in ‘advices’ as a suffix, affix or morpheme.
  - 21: Many candidates did not distinguish between different kinds of pronouns.
17. Candidates are reminded to check the spelling in their responses very carefully and to review their answers to make sure they are logical and grammatically correct. It is crucial that appropriate grammatical terminology is used, with the complete forms given and not abbreviations, although no single theoretical approach is preferred.

### **Paper 3 (Listening)**

18. This year’s paper consisted of items relating to three different listening texts. The first text was a radio broadcast of an interview between a journalist and a psychology professor about her research into motivation and mindsets. The second was a podcast on social media and data protection, which featured an expert outlining the threat to privacy from the amount of personal data available online. The third text was a radio chat show with two hosts and two guests discussing the legal and financial aspects of signatures.
19. The Moderation Committee considered the content of the three texts to be appropriate, allowing for interesting listening and for the setting of meaningful questions of different types. Markers considered the assessment overall to be effective in identifying different levels of listening comprehension. They expressed satisfaction with the texts, which they generally found to be of an appropriate and fairly equal level of difficulty, as well as with the topics, which they felt were current, relevant and engaging.
20. Markers judged the instructions and questions to be clear, and found the marking scheme easy to follow. They also felt that preparation for marking was appropriate.
21. A variety of task types were included in the paper, which allowed for a range of micro-listening skills to be tested, focusing both on gist and intensive listening. The paper included blank-filling, table-completion, multiple-choice and open-ended questions. There was no evidence that any of these formats was more difficult or easier than others for candidates.
22. Although a few items turned out to be fairly easy, and a few proved rather difficult, overall none of the three texts stood out as being markedly easier or more difficult for candidates.
- 22.1 Few items were found to be particularly difficult, with only four answered correctly by fewer than 20% of candidates. Although at times this was understandable in the context, there were also instances where some candidates gave answers which were too general to be acceptable. For example, Questions 10(ii) and 11 would seem to be the ‘hardest’ items. The topic for both items was

the internet and changes in its use over time, a topic candidates should have been familiar with. Closer analysis of candidates' performance, however, showed that answers were missing a crucial detail or contrastive feature which would indicate accurate understanding of the point made by the speaker. For example, for Question 10(ii): many candidates wrote 'read' instead of 'passively reading'; and for Question 11 candidates wrote 'half the world's population' instead of 'half the world's *internet* population'. The complete and more accurate answer for these points could have been extracted from the arguments built up over the discussion.

22.2 Questions 16(v) and 26 were also items which proved to be relatively challenging for candidates. For these questions, candidates were required to comprehend the gist of a larger stretch of language, interpret its meaning within a wider linguistic context or social situation, and provide a short written summary in their own words.

22.3 Five questions were answered correctly by more than 90% of candidates. In general, the relatively easy items tended to occur at the beginning of each section or at the start of a more lengthy and complex set of questions. This was designed to provide an opportunity for candidates to tune in to the topic as a lead-in to some items which were judged to be relatively more complex. Examples of items which occurred at or near the start of a table of responses and had mean percentages of 90% or above included Questions 2(i), 18(i), 18(ii), 27(i) and 27(ii).

## 23. Advice to candidates

23.1 When addressing items that required only short answers, some candidates struggled to express themselves coherently but succinctly. As in previous years, some candidates did not write anything in answer to some of the questions, which meant that they had no chance of gaining a mark. Candidates are reminded that there is nothing to be lost by writing down a word or phrase to indicate understanding of what they have heard, as this may turn out to be correct.

23.2 Candidates are reminded to:

- Check the phrasing of each question to ensure that the answer fits grammatically, particularly if the answer demands completion of a statement. For example, Question 2(v): 'People with an open mindset view hard work and asking for help as an opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_'. To fit appropriately, answers had to include a verb, i.e. 'get/become smarter'; answers that simply stated 'smarter' did not score a mark.
- Pay attention to indications of comparison or contrast. For example, in Question 27(v), candidates were asked to identify two advantages of chip-and-pin numbers over signatures. The correct answer in this context was 'more secure' or 'more security'. Candidates who answered 'secure' or 'security' could not be given a mark.

- Make a distinction, while listening, between general points made by speakers and the specific phrases or examples they use to make these points. For example, in Question 2(iv) the correct answer involved re-phrasing the speaker's expression 'Get me out of here' using the idea of 'avoidance', 'escaping' or 'withdrawing'. Some candidates copied down the speaker's exact words, however, and so did not show how the phrase was related to the more global context of 'facing setbacks'.
- Practice listening for phonemes that can change meanings. For example, in Question 14(ii), many candidates gave 'school' for 'score' and in Question 16(i) many candidates answered 'lives' for 'likes'.
- Listen to a wide variety of oral genres in English to increase awareness of natural spoken English, including the use of collocation, compounds and idioms.

#### **Paper 4 (Speaking)**

24. Paper 4 consists of two parts. In Part 1 there are two tasks; Task 1A: Reading Aloud a Prose Passage and Task 1B: Recounting an Experience/Presenting an Argument. There is only one task in Part 2: Group Interaction.
25. Candidates are tested on six scales of performance. Task 1A assesses candidates on two scales: (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation and (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning. Task 1B assesses candidates on two different scales: (3) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range and (4) Organisation and Cohesion. Finally, Task 2 assesses candidates on two different scales: (5) Interacting with Peers and (6) Discussing Educational Matters with Peers.
26. Five minutes are given for both Tasks 1A and 1B, with Task 1B beginning immediately after Task 1A finishes. After Task 1B is over, candidates are asked to go back to the preparation room where they wait for a short time before returning to the assessment room for Part 2 – Group Interaction, in which they discuss a topic of relevance to the educational context of Hong Kong. The Group Interaction lasts for either 10 minutes (if there are three candidates in a group) or for 13 minutes (if there are four candidates in a group).

#### ***Part 1: Task 1A Reading Aloud a Prose Passage***

27. The prose passages selected for candidates to read aloud in Task 1A were chosen from contemporary literature. The passages presented candidates with an opportunity to read aloud description, narration and dialogue/conversation. While selecting the passages, care was taken to ensure that there was sufficient context within the passages for candidates to access meaning while offering opportunities to express mood and character. There was also a range of lexico-grammatical structures, to allow for differentiation between levels.
28. All the passages were long enough to ensure that an accurate assessment could take place, but short enough to allow the candidates adequate time to complete Tasks 1A and 1B.

29. Overall, Task 1A was well managed, with many candidates demonstrating the ability to establish the meaning and mood of the passages through effective use of intonation and tone to differentiate narration from dialogue, and the ability to chunk language into meaningful units, use strong and weaker forms in context and link items.
30. Stronger candidates were also able to moderate pace throughout the passage to meet the needs of a listening audience and to communicate shifts in meaning within the passage.
31. In terms of the discrete aspects of speech, stronger performances were marked by consistently clear enunciation of individual sounds, such as consonant clusters, and by sustained control over long and short vowels, word and sentence stress. Consistent clarity of final sounds, plural forms and past tense endings was also an indicator of a strong performance.
32. With regard to pacing, less successful readings were characterised by the candidate either reading too slowly or too quickly. Overly slow readings often resulted in the loss of meaningful thought groups; overly quick readings, however, resulted in unclear pronunciation, and less effective use of intonation, pacing and volume to establish the mood of the passage.
33. In terms of pronunciation, stress and intonation, less successful performances were characterised by a lack of clarity in the language produced. Common problems included difficulty articulating vowel length, consonant clusters and final sounds. Being unable to chunk words and phrases to create meaningful thought groups by using linking, pitch and intonation was also evident in weaker readings. Readings characterised by a number of these issues would result in strain on the listener.
34. Stronger readings were produced by candidates who were able not only to convey meaning through clear pronunciation, stress, intonation and chunking of sense groups, but also to indicate the shifting mood and tone in a passage by employing changes in volume, pitch and pacing. Readings that demonstrated a high level of sensitivity to the text were characterised by an ability to capture the intended meaning of a text, including the feelings and attitudes developed through narration and dialogue in the passage.

***Part 1: Task 1B Recounting an Experience/Presenting an Argument***

35. Task 1B takes place immediately after candidates have finished reading aloud the prose passage; both tasks are completed within 5 minutes. Task 1B assesses candidates on their ability to speak on a topic after a short preparation period. It provides candidates with the opportunity to use their own language resources to demonstrate their ability to produce meaningful, cohesive spoken English.
36. The topics chosen for Task 1B were intended to be accessible to all candidates and offered candidates an opportunity to voice their opinions on issues relating to Hong Kong current affairs and education, and as such were considered relevant to the candidates' personal or professional experience.
37. In terms of Organisation and Cohesion, candidates adopted different approaches to the task. Some turns were characterised by an informal, unstructured flow of ideas that were almost conversational in nature. Others adopted a more explicit organisational

plan, with overt signposting indicating the stages of the text. Both approaches were acceptable as long as a clear and cogent argument was presented, with the semantic relationship between ideas clear.

38. This year the tasks mostly involved presenting an argument. Candidates who performed well were able to present their thoughts in a logical order and use cohesive devices to highlight relationships between ideas. Stronger performances were marked by an ability to clearly signpost shifts in topics and link ideas through the use of cohesive devices such as ellipsis, parallel structures and lexical chains. This helped the listener identify stages in the text and follow the flow of the argument.
39. In weaker performances, the views expressed lacked clarity, were unsubstantiated or presented in an illogical order. The relationship between ideas was also at times unclear, causing confusion to the listener. Examiners observed that candidates who relied on the use of the connective 'and' to link their ideas tended to produce spoken texts which were 'list-like' in nature, rather than argumentative.
40. As in previous years, a small number of candidates read aloud from a script they had written during preparation. These performances lacked the spontaneity of natural spoken English which this task aims to assess. Candidates who were able to express and develop their thoughts spontaneously from bullet points tended to produce the strongest performances on this task. Candidates should make brief notes during the preparation period and speak spontaneously from these rather than relying on a script.
41. This task also assesses the range and accuracy of the grammar and vocabulary used. This scale is sensitive to the topic of the task and the register that has been selected by the candidate (from less formal to more formal). Stronger performances were able to access varied lexis relevant to the topic and use a range of grammatical structures to explore and evaluate the topic, and convey ideas, attitudes and values.
42. Candidates who had difficulty accessing language to express range of meaning, who relied on a limited repertoire of vocabulary or grammatical frames to introduce or convey their ideas, or who failed to sustain accuracy across their spontaneous turn were less successful in this task. As in previous years, there were issues with, for example, grammatical phrasing and tense in context, subject-verb agreement and reference.
43. Candidates are reminded that they have five minutes in total to complete both Task 1A and Task 1B. To make best use of the time available, candidates should plan to talk for around two minutes in Task 1B. If candidates exceed the five minutes allowed, examiners will ask candidates to stop; where candidates complete Task 1B and have time left, examiners will check that candidates have said all that they intended to.

### ***Part 2: Group Interaction***

44. In Part 2 of the paper, candidates discuss an education-related, school-based issue, plan or project. The task is designed to give candidates an opportunity to take part in a professional, collaborative, focused discussion during the course of which they contribute their own views and ideas, extend and develop these and consider, explore or challenge the ideas of others, all the while working constructively with each other.
45. The scales for Part 2, Group Interaction are Interacting with Peers and Discussing

## Educational Matters with Peers.

46. Candidates participated well in this task, contributing relevant ideas and accessing a range of functional and situational language. Candidates who performed well understood that a discussion involves collaborative meaning-making rather than individuals merely contributing their own ideas. Stronger candidates were able to move beyond making claims and providing support for their points to building on each other's ideas through clarification and extension, thus moving the discussion towards a focused outcome. Stronger candidates were also able to access a wide variety of discussion strategies including making claims and suggestions, asking for the views of others, constructively elaborating on the points made by others, and being able to manage the discussion by keeping it focused and on-track.
47. In terms of content, stronger candidates were able to contribute insight and reflection on learning and teaching, children, parents, teachers, schools and learning environments in order to frame the discussion and move it towards practical and meaningful outcomes.
48. Stronger candidates were often adept at developing the discussion by clarifying or justifying points of view, contextualising ideas, summarising points made, and encouraging others to participate, and so collaboratively moved the discussion on.
49. Less successful candidates did not engage in the discussion, either because of a lack of conversational resources or of relevant ideas. These candidates often took shorter turns and did not move beyond contributing their own ideas. Some candidates failed to demonstrate the strategies needed to genuinely engage in a discussion, such as follow-up questions or comments, or paraphrasing others' views. Other candidates did not seem to listen to the points made by others and so made seemingly random and disconnected contributions.
50. Overall, group interactions marked by sequential turn-taking, rather than a natural and lively exchange of ideas, tended to be less successful. Candidates in such discussions were often unable to move beyond the most cursory level of interaction and were unable to demonstrate an awareness of the characteristics of a professional exchange. These interactions often appeared mechanical and uninvolved, with the ideas expressed often superficial.
51. In preparation for Part 2, candidates are encouraged to take part in meaningful professional exchange and dialogue by discussing learning and teaching issues with their colleagues.

## **Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment)<sup>2</sup>**

52. A total of 332 candidates were assessed between November 2016 and April 2017. The attainment rate was high, with 97.3% of the candidates attaining Level 3 or above on all four scales: (1) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range; (2) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation; (3) Language of Interaction and (4) Language of Instruction.
53. Overall, the performance of the candidates was satisfactory. The majority of the

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<sup>2</sup> Administered by the Education Bureau, which contributed this section of the Assessment Report.

candidates demonstrated a competent level of language proficiency in the lessons observed. They were capable of using accurate and appropriate language for classroom instruction and classroom interaction. The strongest candidates achieved a very high standard of proficiency in all scales, serving as good models of spoken English for their students.

#### 54. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range

54.1 Candidates in general manifested mindful use of grammar and were able to use language that was appropriate to the level of the students. The ability to recognise and correct simple errors was evident among many of them. Although some grammatical errors were noted, communication was unimpeded on the whole.

54.2 While the stronger candidates were capable of using an extensive range of vocabulary, sentence structures and idiomatic expressions in completely natural and spontaneous speech, weaker candidates had difficulty in using complex sentence structures, especially when trying to make spontaneous responses. Some tended to use a relatively narrow range of vocabulary which was mostly based on their prepared set of teaching materials.

54.3 Although most candidates demonstrated a good grasp of grammar, errors in subject-verb agreement, articles, tenses and singular/plural nouns were noted.

#### 55. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

55.1 Overall, candidates were able to speak fluently. Stronger candidates attended to word endings well. Satisfactory performance was typified by clear articulation of vowel and consonant sounds with natural variations of stress and intonation patterns. Contrastive stress was always appropriately used to arouse students' interest in learning. For example, it was used to create a dramatic effect in story-telling or to highlight the target language items to enhance students' understanding.

55.2 Weaker candidates did not place sufficient focus on clarity of individual sounds. They had problems in pronouncing consonant sounds/clusters clearly such as /ð/ as in 'mother' and /l/ as in 'please'. Also, confusion over the long/short vowels, as in 'leave/live' and 'seat/sit' was found.

55.3 Inappropriate or unnatural word/sentence stress, linking and intonation remained a common problem. Undue stress was given to weak syllables (e.g. concern, centre, together). Wrong words were stressed or every word in a sentence was pronounced with the same degree of stress, resulting in monotone. Pauses were not used effectively, leading to a breakdown in understanding. Furthermore, rising/falling tone was used inappropriately. For instance, there was no terminal fall in statements and/or rising tone was adopted for all question types, including wh-questions.

#### 56. Language of Interaction

56.1 Most candidates were able to employ appropriate language to elicit responses

from students and to acknowledge students' responses appropriately. Quality of interaction greatly varied. The stronger candidates displayed good linguistic awareness and sensitivity to students' responses and were able to maintain a smooth, natural and spontaneous interaction with the class all the way through. Scaffolding using questions and cues worked well in encouraging various levels of response from students. Prompts were properly used to help students rectify their own mistakes and individualised feedback was appropriately given.

- 56.2 The use of a restricted range of functional language was a common problem among weaker candidates. Questions were repetitive or confined to those requiring one-word answers. While questions asked were mainly display questions, few attempts were made to ask extended questions, or to give hints or prompts when communication breakdowns occurred. Weaker candidates demonstrated inadequate ability in eliciting response from students or failed to react spontaneously to students' answers when required. For dubious or incorrect answers, feedback was inadequate and vague.

## 57. Language of Instruction

- 57.1 Most candidates were able to give clear explanations and instructions using language appropriate to the level. Their discourse was generally coherent. The stronger candidates demonstrated the capacity to give extended elaborations. Proper signalling devices were often successfully employed to indicate the different stages of the lesson.
- 57.2 Some weaker candidates read extensively from notes, textbooks and other prepared materials such as PowerPoint slides and worksheets. They relied heavily on prepared materials and were unable to paraphrase and explain when required. They struggled at times to explain complex ideas. When explaining new words and language items, some were too ready to explain in Chinese without attempting to do it in English.