Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2009

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 2009.

General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment [1] rates in different papers. The attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 80.3%; Writing 46.2%; Listening 69.5%; Speaking 50.6%; Classroom Language Assessment 97.2%.

Paper 1 (Reading)

3. About 80% of the cohort achieved the benchmark level in this paper, in line with the performance of earlier cohorts. Paper 1 results continue to be steady.

4. This year, as last year, the paper included three reading passages and featured a number of different question types, including a small number of multiple choice items.

5. Candidates' performance

    5.1   Paper completion
          Most candidates completed the questions for all three reading passages, although there was some evidence of answers completed in haste or questions left unanswered, most often in the third passage.

    5.2   Identification of expressions
          Candidates generally understood what was wanted when a question asked for a metaphor or similar expression as an answer. For example, stronger candidates identified 'take a back seat' as the metaphor required in Passage A Question 2. Weaker candidates wrote 'a back seat', which was not awarded the mark. Most candidates identified 'fizzled out' as the answer to Question 13 in the same passage. In Question 20, the correct answer was 'litter in the aural landscape', comparing litter or trash in the landscape (physical environment) with the litter of noise in the 'hearing' landscape (auditory environment).

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[1] 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.

Candidates had greater difficulty locating the expression 'first thoughts' as the answer to Question 36 in Passage C: 'In the first paragraph, what phrase suggests that parents, upon hearing about teaching sign language to small children, form a hasty opinion?' Candidates who answered the question correctly understood that the expression 'first thoughts' generally means that those thoughts may be followed, on reflection, by a change of mind.

5.3 Identification of viewpoints/positions/attitudes

5.3.1 About half of the candidature correctly identified the writer's attitude in Passage A Question 4 as negative or indicating disagreement. Clues to his attitude lie in the first sentence of the passage, in the word 'worse' and in the phrase 'Such concerns are justified', which begins paragraph 3.

5.3.2 In response to Passage B Question 30, the majority of candidates were able to identify McKinstry's position as option A, 'The hiring of female medical graduates should be reduced'. In the passage, this is indicated in paragraph 2 in his conclusion that 'we need to take a balanced approach to recruitment'.

5.4 Comprehension of content

5.4.1 Few candidates correctly identified the 'mental conditions' referred to in Passage A Question 8. A *mental* condition refers to a person's state of mind, not to their behaviour. Correct answers were therefore 'memory deficits' and '(propensity towards) aggressiveness', both conditions of the mind.

5.4.2 In Passage A, Question 11 asks specifically for an 'additional [new] perspective', which can be discovered by comparing Goines and Hagler's focus with that already mentioned.

5.5 Identification of referents

5.5.1 Candidates performed well on questions asking for references to specific information in the passages; for example, in Passage A Question 1'What threat?', most answered with 'noise pollution', and in Passage C Question 34 ('To what does "this" refer?'), with 'sign language'.

5.6 Recognition and use of English structures

5.6.1 Candidates generally wrote comprehensible responses. However, markers noted that sometimes a candidate's

weak grasp of grammar made it difficult to understand their answer, in which case no mark could be given.

5.6.2   In Passage B Question 22, weaker candidates identified the people negatively affected as 'three years senior citizens', which does not make sense; 'three years' is a part of the prepositional phrase 'in a mere three years'.

5.6.3   Many candidates were not familiar with the verb form 'convert' for the noun 'conversion' (Passage A line 47). Following the usual marking practice, responses with various spellings were accepted, unless the response used a recognisable, incorrect word such as 'conversations', in which case no mark was awarded.

5.7   Appropriacy of responses

5.7.1   Candidates are reminded that each question is looking for specific information as a response and cannot be answered successfully by simply copying large chunks of text. Overall there was relatively little evidence of indiscriminate copying.

6.   Advice to candidates

6.1   Plan, monitor and use your time carefully so that you can respond to all questions in the paper. Note that the length of passages and the number of questions for each will vary.

6.2   To focus effectively on each passage and its questions, read the passage quickly first, noting the title and getting a sense of the writer's point of view. Then skim through the entire set of questions before beginning to respond.

6.3   Read the questions carefully to ensure that you understand what is being asked.

6.4   Read backwards and forwards in the passage as you attempt to answer each question, to ensure that you have captured information which is relevant and appropriate to the question and that you understand the flow of the ideas in the passage.

6.5   Check to see how many marks are awarded for each question. If two marks are awarded, you will probably need to provide two parts or points in your answer.

6.6   Be aware that your first answer to the question is the one which will be marked; there is little point in copying out a list of items or answers in the hope that one of these will attract a mark.

6.7 When a question asks for the identification of an expression, specific word or metaphor/simile, aim to write only that information as the response, thus making it clear that you have understood what has been asked for.

6.8 Pay attention to the grammatical structure of your responses. While errors in grammatical structure are not penalised in the mark scheme, you should recognise that markers cannot give credit to responses that are not intelligible.

6.9 If the best response to a question is contained in words from the passage, use those words. If you choose to use your own words, check that you have expressed your meaning clearly and that the marker will be able to understand your answer.

6.10 Aim to strengthen and use reading comprehension strategies such as skimming and scanning, locating key sentences, identifying clues to writer attitudes, identifying referents and so on as a part of your ongoing English language skills development.

6.11 Read on a regular basis. Read different types of material so as to become familiar with various writing styles, with the conventions of good writing and with the use of stylistic devices such as metaphor. Read what you enjoy so that regular reading is a pleasure, not a burden.

Paper 2 (Writing)

7. This paper consists of two parts, Part 1: Task 1, Composition, and Part 2: Tasks 2A & 2B, Correcting and Explaining Errors/Problems in a Student's Composition.

Part 1: Composition

8. In Part 1 of the paper, candidates are required to write a coherent text on a specified subject. The 2009 task was to write an article for a Parent Teacher Association newsletter 'about the importance of giving children opportunities to develop their personal and social skills, as well as self-reliance'. Markers commented that the test paper was well designed; the topic was appropriate, the background information provided in the given text was suitable, and the task gave an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their ability to use a range of English structures.

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.

10. Most candidates were able to produce a piece of writing which was satisfactorily organised, with a logical structure and containing relevant examples and suggestions. However, there was a tendency to rely on certain

common cohesive devices to structure the compositions. Candidates are reminded that cohesion is achieved (and coherence promoted) not simply by inserting lexical connectives, such as 'moreover' or 'besides', but by relating the ideas logically through the way the substance of the argument develops.

11. Candidates are reminded to write within the word limit and not to write in the margins.

12 It was quite common for scripts to contain grammatical problems, some of which were intrusive and impeded understanding. Below are some common problem areas:

- Subject-verb disagreement, e.g. "Giving children opportunities to develop their skills are"; "Students' home actually have more teaching materials than"

- L1-influenced constructions, e.g. "they will not feel nothing to do"; "they find their habits"

- Inappropriate use of full infinitives when bare infinitives or gerunds should have been used, e.g. "let… to do"; "prevent… to do"; "avoid… to do"

- Unnecessary/inappropriate change of tenses, including a confusing mix of present and past tenses

13. Most candidates completed the task in a satisfactory way but there was a certain repetitiveness in the way that the topic was approached by candidates, with very similar ideas and examples from many. The main problems with task completion were as follows:

- The importance of giving children opportunities to develop their skills was reiterated in the composition but some candidates did not explain how one might go about doing this.

- Examples of how children might improve their skills *in formal learning environments like school* were given, rather than 'outside school', as requested in the question.

- There was a tendency to write down over-simplistic statements which lacked support e.g. some candidates wrote that children can improve their social skills by shopping at a store or by going swimming. Without support or further development, it was not always apparent how the suggested activities could foster the development of particular skills.

Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems

14. Part 2 of the Writing Paper is divided into two parts: Task A, Detection and Correction of errors/problems and Task B, Explanation of errors/problems. Candidates were given a composition that contained errors and were asked to correct these in the first part of the text for Part 2A, and to fill in blanks in

incomplete explanations of some of the errors/problems in the remainder of the text in Task 2B.

15. Markers felt that the instructions for Part 2 were clearly stated and the composition contained a balanced and comprehensive range of testing items. Most candidates did well in Task 2A but were not as successful in Task 2B.

16. Markers noted the following common problems in responses to Task 2A:

   ● Confusion between the meaning and usage of 'on the contrary', 'however', 'in contrast' and 'on the other hand' (Item 3(a))

   ● Confusion between the past simple and past continuous (Item 5(a))

   ● Inappropriate use/choice of modals (e.g. could, might, must) to replace 'may' in the procedure beginning with 'First you may chop…' (Item 7(a))

17. As regards Task 2B, candidates generally performed better in this round than in the previous round. In this task, candidates were given incomplete explanations of errors/problems and were asked to fill in the blanks with one or more words. It appears that candidates did not perform as well in cases where they needed to use more than single words to complete the blanks, e.g. Item 13(d), where an explanation is needed.

   Here are some examples of the problems in Task 2B answers:

   ● Difficulties with explaining why the present perfect tense should be used (Item 14(b))

   ● Describing clauses or parts of sentences as whole sentences (Item 16(c))

   ● Incorrect spelling of the following words: "excessive" (12(d)); "perfect" (14(a)); "superlative" (15(a)); "reflexive" (16(a)); "infinitive" (16(d))

18. The most problematic item was 13(d), which required candidates to explain why "good" in "eat plenty of fruit and vegetables to stay good" should be changed to "well". While the correct answer needs to refer to the different meanings of good and well, many candidates mistakenly took this to be an erroneous use of the wrong part of speech, believing that well exists only as an adverb and never as an adjective. Candidates are strongly encouraged to consider errors/problems from both syntactic and semantic perspectives.

19. Candidates are reminded that they should refrain from using abbreviations and short forms (e.g. prep., adj., vt) in answering Task 2B. They are advised to demonstrate their understanding of the linguistic problems with full spellings of words and terms so that markers can clearly understand the given answers.

20. As stated in last year's LPATE Assessment Report, candidates must ensure that their answers are correctly spelled and grammatically correct. The

terminology used must be precise enough to explain unambiguously the error in the context of the student text.

Paper 3 (Listening)

21. A total of 1298 candidates took the 2009 paper, with 69.5% of candidates obtaining a Level 3 or above.

22. This year's paper consisted of three sets of items on three different listening texts. The first was an interview with an academic on the issue of child bullying. The second, on travel, was an interview with a motor-cyclist reporting his experiences in Africa and Asia. In the third text, entitled 'Public Space', a landscape designer gave his views on the use of public spaces in Hong Kong. There were two speakers (one male and one female) in each of the three interviews.

23. As usual, the paper went through a rigorous moderation and pre-testing process and the Moderation Committee considered the topics of the three texts to be appropriate, allowing for meaningful and interesting listening.

24. A wide variety of task types were included in this paper, which allowed for a range of micro-listening skills to be tested. The paper included blank-filling, table-completion, multiple choice and open-ended questions.

25. The easiest items
    The easiest item in the whole paper was Question 4, which was answered correctly by almost all candidates. A total of 4 items were answered correctly by more than 90% of candidates (3(iii), 10(i), 18(i) and 23(iii)).

26. The hardest items

    26.1 The hardest item was Question 35(ii), which was answered correctly by only 4% of candidates. The next hardest items were 5(ii), 6, 12(ii), 23(ii), 29(i), 25(ii) and 28, all of which were answered correctly by less than a fifth of candidates.

    26.2 While these were difficult items, they all yielded healthy discrimination indices, implying that despite being challenging, weaker candidates were not able to answer them correctly by chance.

27. Listening to numbers
    Previous LPATE listening papers have always included items on listening to figures, and Question 3 in the present paper was of this nature. It is gratifying to note that these items were generally answered well.

28. Low frequency words
    There was evidence that some of the weaker candidates were confused by certain low-frequency lexical items. For example, Question 5 required candidates complete a summary of the following text:

> Megan: Most importantly, most of the [cyber] bullying is anonymous, which affects the levels of paranoia that young children can develop. They go back to school the next day and see other children laughing, and they're not sure if they're laughing at something they're watching, or they're laughing at a particular person because that's who they're bullying. The fact is that young people tell us that they can be much nastier online than they can be face to face.

28.1 The text giving a gist of Megan's turn requires that candidates produce the following answers:

'Because cyber bullying is very often ((5(i)) anonymous, it affects children by increasing their (5(ii)) paranoia because they think that other children might be (5(iii)) laughing at them.'

28.2 Many candidates seemed to be able to make sense of the original text given by Megan, and most wrote something which suggested they had heard the right word, even if this was not always spelled correctly. The same applied to other answers containing low-frequency words such as "menacing", "pedestrian" and "rehydrated".

28.3 However, a significant minority did not write anything in the blanks, which meant that there was no chance of getting a mark.

28.4 Candidates are reminded that it is to their advantage to write down what they *think* they have heard, even if they are not sure of the spelling, as their answer will be marked correct if it closely resembles the required answer. This is a matter of marker judgement, of course, but the benefit of the doubt will usually be given as long as a candidate's answer is considered to be a misspelling of the required word rather than a completely different word.

29. Table completion tasks

29.1 Table completion proved to be a tricky task type. The first of the two tasks of this type was Question 12, consisting of three testing items.

> Megan: ……We know that children who bully others have an adult in their life, an older sibling or someone who is demonstrating this behaviour because it's learnt. Now what we feel is an issue in this area is that young people often feel powerless when they're being bullied, but now they can get online and perhaps get back at that person who they don't like or who's

been treating them poorly. Cyber bullying opens up an opportunity for them when they can have more power than otherwise they would have.

29.2   As can be seen from the excerpt, here Megan discussed the similarity (12(i)) and differences between cyber bulling and face-to-face bullying (12(ii), (iii)). A majority of the candidates got the second difference, the fact that cyber bullying doesn't happen at school. Very few got the first (12(ii): children who are bullied have the power to get back at the person who is bulling them) or picked up on the similarity (that bullies have usually been bullied).

29.3   A number of factors seem to have contributed to the difficulty of Question 12. First, the use of anaphoric reference. When the speaker's said "someone who is demonstrating this behaviour", a listener would have to recall what "this behaviour" refers to, i.e. "bullying others" appearing earlier in the turn. Second, the expression "it's learnt" indicates that a bullied child would learn from the bullying adult or a sibling.

29.4   Nearly 85% of candidates failed to provide the correct answer to Question 12(ii). It is quite possible that candidates were confused by the two discourse markers, "now" and "but now". To come to the correct interpretation of Megan's utterance, a candidate had to be aware that the two discourse markers serve totally different functions. The first "now" is a filler, used by the speaker to indicate that she would like to continue. The second discourse marker signalled that she was talking about how cyber bullying differed from face-to-face bullying. Weaker candidates who failed to distinguish the uses of these two markers might have felt confused when trying to answer this item.

29.5   The second table-completion task, consisting of five items, appeared in Question 29. The table presented the trends in how public space is used in Hong Kong in terms of Factor, Action taken (by the concerned party), and the Effect of the action. Peter Cook argues that the responsibility for open space (factor) is often transferred (action) to property developers in Hong Kong, resulting in the pressure being taken off the government (effect).

29.6   Some weaker candidates could have been much more careful in the way they presented their answers, particularly in their use of function words such as prepositions. For example, many weaker candidates were not sensitive to the difference between "pressure *off* the government" and "pressure *of* the government" and so wrote the wrong one. The same insensitivity was seen with Question 29(iii). Weaker candidates put down "city of the sky" instead of "city in the sky" and so were not awarded the mark. Also, quite a few low scorers gave answers such as "increase traffic" as the answer to Question 29(v), whereas the correct answer is "increase

traffic flow" (which is the opposite).

30. Candidates are advised to:

- Check their spelling, particularly of low-frequency words.

- Enhance their understanding of discourse markers such as "now" as a continuation marker and "but now" as a marker for contrast or comparison.

- Become more sensitive towards the use of function words (e.g. prepositions), which may often carry subtle meaning and important information.

- Listen to a wide variety of source materials in English so as to enhance comprehension ability.

Paper 4 (Speaking)

31. This paper consists of two parts. Part 1 has two tasks, Task 1A, Reading Aloud a prose passage and Task 1B, Recounting an Experience/Presenting an Argument. These are examined together, with 1B beginning as soon as the candidate has finished the reading aloud task. Five minutes are given for Part 1, after which candidates leave the assessment room. They later return and are given the task for Part 2, Group Interaction, in which they discuss a topic of relevance to the school context for either 10 minutes (if there are 3 candidates in a group) or 13 minutes (if there are 4 in a group).

32. Candidates are tested on six scales of performance: (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation; (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning; (3) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range; (4) Organisation and Cohesion; (5) Interacting with Peers; and (6) Discussing Educational Matters with Peers. Different scales are used to assess different tasks.

33. The proficiency attainment rate of the 1285 candidates who attempted this paper was 50.6%.

Part 1: Task 1A Reading Aloud a Prose Passage

34. In this task, candidates are assessed on two criteria, 'Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation' and 'Reading Aloud with Meaning'. The passages were extracted from a wide range of sources. They contained narration, dialogue/conversation and description and were long enough for accurate assessment to take place but short enough to ensure that candidates had sufficient time for Task 1B.

35. There were occasional problems with candidates who read the passage very slowly. Candidates are advised to keep an eye on the timer as they are reading and to ensure that they leave themselves enough time to do Task 1B.

36. Overall, candidates performed fairly well in this task and the majority were able to make themselves understood. The pronunciation of individual sounds was generally accurate. However, problems occurred at sentence level, in areas such as linking, stress and intonation, which meant that the meaning was sometimes not conveyed appropriately. Word stress was generally well placed, but sentence stress was often inappropriate. It is recommended that candidates pay attention to the importance of linking, stress and intonation and that they spend time identifying and practising these elements.

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

37. In this task, candidates are assessed on two criteria, 'Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range' and 'Organisation and Cohesion'. In general, most candidates were able to talk on the given topic for the time required. However, some candidates just read from a 'script' that they had prepared during the preparation time. Once they had finished reading their 'script' they then went on to talk about other issues with little relationship to what had gone before. Many candidates relied on a single connector, such as 'and', to move from one point to another.

38. It is suggested that candidates make a general plan of how they will approach the task, and only brief notes, perhaps in the form of bullet points, during the preparation time. In this way, the talk is more likely to have a clear structure and be relevant to the topic throughout. Candidates should not be overly concerned by the time as examiners will allow them to conclude what they are saying if they feel that this is necessary. There is no pressure to fill *all* of the time available: the aim of the assessment is to sample a candidate's English and there is no requirement to keep talking until the timer goes off.

39. Some candidates seemed to be unable to control different tenses when recounting their experience for Task 1B, with some repeating the tense of the task at the outset but thereafter using just the present simple, for example. Candidates should practice changing tense and aspect to suit the rhetorical purpose of what they are saying, especially under pressure.

40. Examiners also noticed a tendency to speak in a more written form of English, with full forms used instead of contractions, for example. This may happen because candidates are allowed to prepare notes beforehand, but may also be due to a misunderstanding that semi-formal speech means adopting the vocabulary and structures of formal, written English, which is perhaps the form most familiar to many candidates.

41. Coherence is another area that could be improved upon. The importance of sequencing cannot be over-stressed; many candidates were able to structure information chronologically or thematically, but few did this with any real sense that they were naturally developing an argument.

Part 2: Group Interaction

42. In Part 2 of the paper, candidates discuss an education-related topic or situation and are assessed on the criteria of 'Interacting with Peers' and 'Discussing Educational Matters with Peers'. Candidates performed strongly on this part of the paper, with approximately four-fifths attaining the benchmark level or above on scales 5 and 6.

43. Candidates were generally able to express opinions, agree/disagree with others, interrupt, clarify and ask for clarification. In general, candidates were able to take part in a conversation, as opposed to just giving their own opinions, and so did quite well in terms of the criterion 'Interacting with Peers'. It was the case, however, that some speakers simply said what they had prepared and then stopped, unable to fit their contribution into the flow of the ongoing discourse.

44. There was also a sense that some candidates did not really understand what they (or others) were saying and simply followed the direction of the turn of the previous speaker. In this way, some discussions drifted off track, or became unfocused because candidates did not, or were not able to, bring it back into focus.

45. There were a few candidates who attempted to dominate the conversation, and such candidates should be reminded that preventing others from speaking is not considered professional interaction.

46. For 'Discussing Educational Matters with Peers', candidates are expected to provide ideas and/or suggestions that are relevant to the topic under discussion and are internally coherent so that both the examiners and the other candidates can understand them. On the whole, candidates were able to contribute relevant ideas in a manner that could be understood.

Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment) [2]

47. A total of 424 candidates were assessed between December 2008 and April 2009. The pass rate was high with 97.2 % attaining at least Level 3 or above in all the four scales of *Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range; Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation*; *Language of Interaction*; and *Language of Instruction.*

48. Overall, the performance of most candidates was satisfying with the strongest candidates displaying outstanding level of competence in all areas.

49. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range

    49.1 Grammatical competence was generally adequate as evidenced in most lessons and incidents of incorrect grammar interfering with communication were relatively few. When errors occurred, they

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[2] Administered by the Education Bureau, which contributed this section of the Assessment Report.

usually involved articles, subject-verb agreement, singular/plural forms, tenses and word order, with the last problem occurring most notably in indirect questions such as "Can your classmates guess what is your job?", or "Try to think about what can we do". The omission of pronouns and wrong prepositions were some other problems noted as in "How to spell", "on a new paragraph", "Look at here", and "Think some other adjectives".

49.2 In terms of grammatical range, while the better candidates were able to demonstrate with accuracy a wide range of sentence patterns, the weakest mainly confined themselves to simple sentences displaying little variety. When more complex sentences were attempted by the latter group, structural problems invariably occurred. Problem of first language interference sometimes surfaced as in "I want to know after 'to' what is it?" At its worst, an utterance could be but broken chunks that knew no syntax.

49.3 Apart from grammatical competence, lexical range also proved a discriminating element. The stronger candidates were not only able to produce longer strings of language but they were also capable of deploying appropriate words and idiomatic expressions that were relevant, clear and concise, thus greatly aiding fluency and effectiveness. The average candidates, on the other hand, were often found to be using bland and repetitive language that gave the students very limited language exposure. These candidates were also prone to use words and phrases in a hesitant and faulty manner, and showed a rather weak understanding of the common collocations of words.

50. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

50.1 The pronunciation of sounds and the use of stress/tone/intonation patterns were generally accurate. The strongest candidates in fact displayed not only accuracy but also fine variations in tone, pitch and loudness to heighten effects and to convey different shades of meaning.

50.2 As in the past years, some sounds like /v/, /r/, /w/, /l/, /s/, /ʃ/ and /Ө/ proved particularly tricky. Other problem areas included the consonant clusters as in "blanks", final consonants as in "nine", and final syllables as in "painted". In vowel distinction, confusion over the long/short vowels as in "sleep/slip" and "pat/pet" continued to appear.

50.3 Wrong syllable stress as in multi-syllabic words like "informative" and "superlative", and inappropriate stress being placed on the weak syllables as in "repeat", "method" and "police" also occasionally occurred. As for intonation, intonation flatness and the wrong use of intonation for questions were both common among the average candidates.

51. Language of Interaction

   51.1   Most candidates were able to interact fairly naturally and adequately with their students using appropriate language. There was always clear effort to elicit responses from the students especially through prompting and hinting. The attempt at interaction actually took on admirable qualities when the persevering teachers tried different functional language to engage even the weak and inattentive students. However, it was generally felt that the language used tended to be rather repetitive, with "Who knows?" and "What else?" being the most familiar. It was also noted that many questions were display questions which only required "yes/no" answers.

   51.2   Given the effort to initiate communication, the failure to maintain the interactive process, which mostly happened when teachers failed to respond to students' questions and to provide proper clarification and feedback, often came as a letdown. While verbal praise was often generously handed out (sometimes rather vaguely such as "Good", "Well-done", "Fantastic" and "Brilliant"), concrete comments were scarce. This was particularly obvious in the senior forms when there was a clear need for specific guidance. In some extreme situations, there was actually no audible evidence of interaction as the teacher simply walked around the class while the students worked on their own.

52. Language of Instruction

   52.1   Most candidates gave clear presentations and explanations in language appropriate to the level. The stronger candidates also demonstrated the capacity to give extended speeches, rich in elaboration and illustration. There was also the sound use of cohesive devices to smoothly move the lesson from one stage to the next. Occasionally though, the explanation of some words or grammatical points proved a bit inadequate as when 'waiter' was explained as "a person who helps you to serve the table". In giving instructions, most candidates had no problem with the routine classroom activities like giving homework and conducting learning activities.

   52.2   Occasionally noted still was some teachers' extensive reading from notes, textbooks and other prepared materials such as power-point slides and worksheets. Such 'recitals' tended to undermine these candidates' capacity to deliver a natural speech and were generally not conducive to a good demonstration of linguistic skills for assessment purposes.