Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers
(English Language) 2016

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 2016.

General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment[1] rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 87.1%; Writing 50.2%; Listening 84.6%; Speaking 55.3%; Classroom Language Assessment 96.5%.

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 4 asked 'What support is there for Pat Brown's claim that they 'are not trying to make a meat alternative?'. The correct response was that they are basically using the same process, just like cows, to transform biomass into meat. A number of candidates responded with 'they are making meat a better way' as if the question had asked about why they are making synthetic meat.

        4.2.2 Passage A, Question 15 asked 'What phrase does the writer use to…'. The majority of candidates recognised the need to identify a specific phrase. Candidates who copied out the whole sentence 'Given this

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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.

opportunity, it was perhaps…' were not awarded a mark even though the phrase was included.

4.2.3 Passage B, Question 24 asked for examples of 'media that 'people get caught up in''. Candidates who performed well on this question correctly responded with 'newspapers, the radio, TV, and the telephone'. Wrong answers such as 'news, music, TV shows, and words' gave examples of the content, not media.

4.3 Identification of figurative devices
Candidates generally understood what was wanted when a question asked for identification of a metaphor.

4.3.1 Passage A, Question 11 asked for the metaphor that describes the kind of entrepreneurial process that companies like Hampton Creek are engaged in. Candidates who answered this question correctly understood that the process is likened to cooking a meal or preparing a dish.

4.3.2 Passage C, Question 34 asked what metaphor is used to refer to the 'stuff'. Many candidates correctly identified 'dinner dandruff' as the response. Wrong answers such as 'remains in the strainer' or 'food particles too big to go down the drain' suggest that some candidates did not understand the figure of speech that was used to describe the 'stuff'.

4.4 Drawing inferences from the writer's words

4.4.1 Passage C, Question 37 asked 'What is the writer suggesting by capitalising 'BARE HANDS' and 'BAREHANDED'?'. The word 'suggesting' here signalled a need to understand the *implication* of the use of capitals. The correct response was that the teenager is horrified at what his mother did or impressed at how brave his mother was.

4.4.2 Passage C, Question 42 asked what the writer meant by saying that he 'would have gone for the wood'. Candidates who responded with 'he would have preferred to be hit than to learn about the news' or 'he hated to hear the news' demonstrated their understanding of what the hyperbole implied, instead of focusing on the literal meaning of the text.

4.5 Identification of referents
In general, candidates performed quite well on questions requiring identification of specific information in the passages. Examples are Passage B, Question 27 and Passage C, Questions 38 and 41. Questions that were less well done included the following:

4.5.1 Passage A, Question 8 asked for the referent of 'they' in 'as chiefs of food-science start-ups, they share the same belief…' (line 28). Many candidates wrote 'chiefs of food-science start-ups', rather than the correct answer 'Pat Brown, Josh Tetrick, and Robert Rhinehart'. Careful reading of the statement suggests that not all chiefs, but only Brown, Tetrick and Rhinehart who, *in their capacity* as chiefs of food-science start-ups, share the same belief.

4.5.2 Passage A, Question 14 asked what 'the market' (line 42) refers to. Candidates who performed well on this question correctly identified the reference to be 'the market for synthetic food'. A number of candidates, however, mistakenly took the reference to be 'the market for food' or 'the market for investing in food science'.

4.5.3 Passage B, Question 26 asked for the referent of 'it' in 'Enthusiasts celebrate it; skeptics decry it'. The preceding line 'it's the content they wrestle over' suggests that 'it' refers to 'the content'. Answers like 'the medium' and 'the medium's effects' were incorrect.

4.5.4 Passage C, Question 40 asked 'What news?'. This refers to the statement in the passage that 'When I reported the new word to my mother… she… explained that the dinner I had just eaten was in just about the same condition in my stomach, rotting'. Candidates who correctly answered the question understood that the 'news' being referred to was that the food in the writer's stomach was rotting, not 'the new word *ordure'* or 'unspeakable filth'.

4.6 Grasp of global meaning – reading beyond the sentence level
Candidate performance in this area was generally good, but Passage C, Question 46 (multiple choice) proved to be tricky. It asked candidates to identify statements that 'reflect the views of the author as an adult'. Candidates who chose options A and F appear not to have recognised that the question was asking for the author's views as an adult, not as a teenager.

4.7 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   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 so that the marker can understand your answer. If you choose to paraphrase something from the passage, make sure that your meaning is the same as suggested by the passage. In this paper, for example, in Passage A, Question 16, the correct response relates to other new food-science start-ups. Rephrasing this as 'other biotechnology companies' is an incorrect response because the meaning of 'food-science start-ups' is not retained in the rephrased answer.

Finally:

5.10   Enhance your reading skills by reading on a regular basis. Read what you enjoy and then expand the range of your reading both within and outside your professional field. Doing so will broaden your comprehension of lexis, structure and meaning and thus your appreciation and understanding of the nuances of written English.

5.11   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. The opportunity, appreciation and understanding provided by engagement in

extensive reading can, in turn, positively inform your teaching and, most importantly, your students' learning.

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 2016 task was to write a letter to the Editor of a newspaper commenting on an article about the quality of life in Hong Kong. Candidates were asked to comment on the most recent surveys of people's quality of life around the world, then suggest how Hong Kong might improve its own quality of life compared to other places, with specific reference to social, economic and environmental aspects.

8. Markers noted that the test paper was well designed and gave candidates the opportunity to comment on a trending news topic. It gave candidates the chance to write about the quality of life in Hong Kong and to draw comparisons with other countries and cities around the world. To help candidates who may not have known about quality of life indices, an extract from a news article was included in the question. The task allowed candidates to demonstrate their English language ability and markers commented that candidates were able to show a good understanding of different perspectives on the issue. Candidates wrote quite knowledgably about positive and negative aspects of Hong Kong's quality of life. Candidates referred to well-known issues such as pollution, the high cost of living, high population density and political issues, but they also made interesting and valid comments about Hong Kong's natural beauty, its attempts to reduce waste and pollution and its reputation for business and free trade. Suggestions for improving Hong Kong's quality of life included more recycling facilities, better urban planning and greater support for eco-tourism. Many letters tried to send the positive message that Hong Kong can improve its quality of life in the coming years.

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 in scale (1) Organisation and Coherence was strong, with most candidates achieving Level 3 or above. Candidates who seemed to have spent time planning their responses, as evidenced by mind maps and other organisational devices generally seemed to write more coherent and better-organised papers. At times, too many points were presented and markers felt that some points lacked coherence and were hard to follow. The use of discourse markers could also be improved so that the candidates' writing flows more easily. Candidates are reminded to consider the possible effects of their writing on the reader or audience.

11. In 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 could probably have been avoided with a more careful proofread at the end of the writing process. Markers felt that this year there were more spelling mistakes than in previous years and candidates are reminded to check their work carefully and to practice writing essays (by hand). Once again there was an overreliance on clichés: the inclusion of quotations from classic novels or songs did not necessarily strengthen candidates' answers and were seen by markers as jarring and unnecessary.

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 letter to the Editor, but some candidates failed to attend to the formal aspect of the task. In some cases candidates wrote a speech or an essay with no evidence of audience awareness. Some candidates drew on personal examples of living in other countries or visiting other cities to highlight differences between Hong Kong and elsewhere. There were candidates who failed to offer appropriate justification for their suggestions and some who made clear suggestions, but then failed to elaborate on these points. For example, suggesting that the government or HK people 'should do more' to help address the problem does not offer anything concrete and measurable. Similarly it is not enough to state that Hong Kong people must 'work together' or 'hold hands' to solve the problems because there is no elaboration on what they should actually do together. Candidates should avoid making such hollow and empty statements.

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.

16. Candidates generally performed well in Part 2A, but some candidates struggled with the following questions:
    - 3 (b): only recently **has it become…**
    - 8 (b): what causes someone **to want**…

17. In Task 2B, candidates were given incomplete explanations of errors/problems. Candidates were asked to fill in the blanks with one or more words so as to make the explanations complete. Many candidates did this successfully, but below there are some examples of common problems identified by markers in Task 2B:

    - 16 (a): Most candidates regarded the particle in the phrasal verb as a preposition.
    - 17 (a): A number of candidates spelt 'possessive' incorrectly.

- 18 (a): A lot of candidates were not awarded marks because of the missing 's'.
- 18 (b): Many candidates did not adequately explain the meaning of 'economical'. There was confusion between 'economical' and 'economic' in many answers.
- 18 (d): Many candidates simply wrote 'relative clause', which does not explain why 'that' should be replaced with 'which'. Candidates needed to be more precise in their answers.
- 19 (b): Many candidates incorrectly identified 'however' as a conjunction. It seems that even though many of them answered 19 (a) correctly, they did not fully understand the difference between an adverb and a conjunction and their roles in constructing sentences.
- 21 (a): Very few candidates managed to identify the real problem accurately. A common problem was to explain it as a 'transitive/intransitive verb' problem. Some other candidates seemed to recognise the error, but failed to explain it clearly and precisely.

18. 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 metalanguage/terminology is used. Candidates are also reminded to demonstrate their understanding of the linguistic problems with complete linguistic terms and not abbreviations.

Paper 3 (Listening)

19. This year's paper consisted of three sets of items relating to three different listening texts. The first text was a discussion between the host and her two guests focusing on the arguments for and against eating meat; the second was a conversation on a radio chat show between the presenter and her guest, who told his story about how he accompanied a pathologist on a bizarre road trip to return the brain of the famous scientist Albert Einstein to his family; the third text was a podcast monologue about a teacher's experience of teaching in an American prison.

20. 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 candidate 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 varied and interesting.

21. 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.

22. 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 markedly more difficult or easier than others for candidates.

23. Relatively few items were found to be particularly easy, and fewer still proved very difficult. Overall, while it is felt that none of the three texts stand out as having been

more difficult for candidates, the first text had more items that candidates found difficult.

23.1 Three questions (Questions 8, 14(i) and 22(iv)) were answered correctly by more than 90% of the candidates.

23.1.1 The high percentage of candidates choosing the correct answer for the multiple-choice question in Question 8 may be due to the correct response being signalled fairly explicitly by use of the conjunction 'but' prior to the chunk with the answer.

23.1.2 Question 14(i) and 22(iv) required local retrieval of a simple chunk of text. Question 14(i) was designed to be relatively easy in order to lead the candidates into a flow-chart with four items that were judged to be relatively difficult.

23.2 Overall, few items were found to be particularly hard, with only four answered correctly by fewer than 20% of candidates and only a further two by fewer than 30%.

23.2.1 The hardest item in the assessment proved to be Question 23. The difficulty this question presented to the candidates most probably lay in the fact that the target vocabulary item – 'haphazard' – is a low frequency word; some provided the answer 'hazard'. Although difficult, this item discriminated well.

23.2.2 Question 29(iii) also proved challenging to candidates. There are probably two main reasons for this. Firstly, this item followed quickly on from the question's preceding two items; secondly, it required candidates to not only correctly identify 'ideal' (rather than 'idea', which a number of candidates heard) but also link this concept with that of the following verb – 'aspire'.

23.2.3 Question 6 was poorly answered. This was probably due to the fact that the question required comparison of a machine to the source of the sound made. Candidates' responses, quoting or paraphrasing the text ('The sound that a cat made...'), generally instead referred to the sound itself.

23.2.4 Question 17(ii) depended largely on candidates' understanding of the phrase 'shelling out'; although stronger candidates may have been able to infer the meaning by reference to the following phrase 'lots of money'.

23.2.5 Question 31 required candidates to identify the preceding referent of the pronoun 'that' which in turn required them to have understood the gist of the preceding two sentences. The correct answer to Question 14(iv) was 'locally produced poultry' – the idea of food being produced locally had to be expressed in the answer to receive full marks. This in combination with the low frequency word, 'poultry' made the item particularly challenging. However, the item did discriminate well.

24. Advice to candidates

    24.1   When addressing items that required only short answers (the majority), some candidates struggled to express themselves coherently but succinctly. Also 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 that they think they have heard as this may turn out to be correct.

    24.2   As in previous years, candidates are reminded to:

- Check the number of marks allotted to a particular question as this will give an indication of the number of points they need to make.

- Make sure responses are comprehensibly written and that spelling is as accurate as possible. Candidates should be aware that if a proper noun is required (as in Question 27, for example), the spelling needs to be correct to gain a mark.

- Pay attention to discourse markers such as 'but' to mark contrast or 'previously' as a time marker.

- Listen to a wide variety of source materials in English in order to increase awareness of different genres, text-types and voices.

Paper 4 (Speaking)

25. Paper 4 consists of two parts. Part 1 comprises two tasks; Task 1A: Reading Aloud a Prose Passage and Task 1B: Recounting an Experience/Presenting Arguments. There is only one task in Part 2: Group Interaction.

26. 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.

27. 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 while 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 Discussion 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

28. The passages that candidates were required to read for Task 1A were selected from a

wide variety of sources and covered a range of topics. During the moderation process, care was taken to select texts that were meaningful, contextualised and accessible to candidates. Passages generally included description of setting, character and mood along with narrative, and direct and reported speech.

29. The texts presented a range of lexis and grammatical structures to allow discrimination between different levels of performance in terms of clear and accurate pronunciation, stress and intonation. Care was taken to select passages which would allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to read aloud meaningfully through varying pitch over segments of text by using voice (narrator/character) and tone to create mood, as well as to display their ability to chunk sense groups to convey meaning effectively.

30. The chosen passages were all of equal length and were long enough to allow for an accurate assessment, but short enough to allow for adequate preparation.

31. Task 1A, Reading Aloud with Meaning was the weakest of the three tasks, but was still quite well done. Most candidates were able to sustain accurate pronunciation, stress and intonation over stretches of text and chunk language into meaningful thought groups, use strong and weaker forms in context and link items. Many candidates also displayed the ability to establish the meaning and mood of the passages and to differentiate narration from dialogue through effective use of intonation and tone.

32. Candidates who performed well on this task were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the text, establish an awareness of the audience and effectively attend to meaning and mood while reading. These candidates were able to group segments of language, modulate pitch and tone and vary pace and volume to convey meaning.

33. Stronger performances were also marked by the candidates' ability to identify and clearly signal stages in the text and shifts in mood through the use of pitch, pace and volume. When this was well managed, and in concert with effective chunking, accurate pronunciation and effective use of stress and intonation, the readings delivered were natural and engaging.

34. On scale 1, less successful performances were characterised by problems such as difficulty enunciating individual sounds and consonant clusters, difficulty distinguishing long from short vowels and sustaining accurate word and sentence stress. Lack of clarity of final sounds, plural forms and past tense endings were also indicative of weaker performances.

35. On scale 2, some candidates were sometimes unable to chunk words and phrases to create meaningful thought groups by using linking, pitch and intonation. This resulted in monotone and flat readings, which provided little access to meaning and mood and caused some strain for the listener. This may have been an outcome of a lack of sensitivity to pitch or due to misunderstanding the meaning or mood of the text.

36. Inappropriate pacing was another key characteristic of less successful readings. Candidates are reminded that a very slow delivery may result in the loss of meaningful thought groups. On the other hand, an overly brisk reading may impact negatively on intonation, pace and volume, all of which help establish mood.

37. Candidates who attained a Level 3 or above were those who were able to attend to the needs of a listening audience by consistently correct pronunciation of easy-to-recognise sounds. They were also able to demonstrate understanding of the meaning of the text by grouping phrases and clauses for intonation or sentence stress modulation. Individual sounds, connections between sounds and, at the discourse level, sense groups and pitch changes were used to establish an appropriate voice, mood and tone.

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

38. Task 1B takes place immediately after candidates complete Task 1A. Candidates have 5 minutes to complete both tasks in the assessment room. Task 1B assesses candidates' ability to speak spontaneously or semi-spontaneously on a given topic. The task provides candidates with the opportunity to use their own language resources to produce meaningful, coherent spoken English.

39. The topics chosen for Task 1B are intended to be relevant to the candidates' personal and professional experience, such as education or current affairs.

40. The two scales for this task are Organisation and Cohesion, and Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range. Candidates performed well on these scales, with the vast majority attaining Level 3 or above.

41. Task 1B tests candidates' ability to organise spoken discourse coherently and demonstrate access to a range of lexico-grammatical structures. Candidates can present their arguments as informal, unstructured and conversational discourse or as a more formal presentation. Both approaches are acceptable as long as a cogent argument is presented, with the relationship between ideas clear.

42. All of the tasks this year called on candidates to present an argument. Those candidates that performed well were able to enlist a range of cohesive devices to clearly signpost stages in their texts, highlight relationships between ideas and build solid arguments. Stronger candidates were typically able to use organising phrases such as those to recap ideas ('as I mentioned earlier'), recognise knowledge ('as you probably know'), show contrast or concession of ideas ('having said that…'; 'in spite of that…') or indicate priorities ('The main point is…'; 'another important point to consider is…'). The use of such phrases to frame and connect ideas led to highly cohesive and natural speech.

43. This task also assesses Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range in semi-spontaneous speech. More successful performances were by candidates who were able to access a wide range of lexis and grammatical structures to demonstrate sensitivity to the topic while being able to clearly convey their own views, values and attitudes towards it.

44. Candidates who were less successful employed a limited range of cohesive devices and formulaic signposting, which at times resulted in a lack of a clear argument. Over-reliance on the connective 'and', for example, led to the listing of ideas rather than to a clear argument. Candidates are reminded to structure their short turn so that an argument can be clearly identified.

45. Some candidates lacked relevant ideas to substantiate claims made or enlisted ideas that did not clearly relate to each other. This weakened arguments and at times led to

confusion for the listener.

46. As in previous years, a few candidates read aloud from a script or extensive notes written during the preparation time. Candidates are reminded to use the preparation time to think in general about the organisation of what they will say and to make brief notes to support their delivery and are advised against writing a script.

47. In terms of the accuracy and range of language produced, less successful performances were from candidates whose communication was limited by a narrow range of vocabulary or grammatical structures to introduce or convey their ideas, or who failed to sustain a degree of accuracy at the phrase or clause level throughout their turn.

Part 2: Group Interaction

48. In Part 2 of the paper, candidates engage in a group discussion based on an education-related, school-based issue, plan or project. The task is designed so that candidates have an opportunity to take part in a professional discussion during the course of which they contribute their own views and ideas. They extend, develop, consider, investigate or challenge the ideas of others, working constructively with each other from the task agenda. The vast majority of candidates were able to take part in this collaborative discussion in a way that was focused and relevant.

49. The scales for Part 2, Group Interaction are Interacting with Peers and Discussing Language Matters with Peers.

50. Stronger performances came from candidates who were able to participate in a meaningful professional exchange by using a wide variety of discussion strategies. Such strategies include: making claims and suggestions; asking for the views of others; constructively elaborating on the points made by others; and demonstrating an ability to keep the discussion focused and on-track.

51. An ability to clarify or justify ideas being raised, relate them to context and summarise for the group was another characteristic of stronger candidates. Here it was evident that these candidates clearly understood the collaborative nature of a discussion and were able to successfully build on each other's contributions to move the discussion on.

52. Less successful performances came from candidates who were not active in the discussion (unless encouraged by their peers), had limited points to offer or provided ideas and suggestions seemingly irrelevant to what others were discussing. The lack of strategies such as follow-up questions or comments that show one is part of purposeful professional discourse, coupled with an absence of strategies to develop and keep the discussion focused, were indicative of weak performances.

53. The performance of less successful candidates was characterised by sequential turn-taking, where points were made without candidates taking on board what others were saying. The lack of collaborative professional action resulted in discussions that may have seemed stilted.

54. 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)[2]

55. A total of 312 candidates were assessed between November 2015 and April 2016. The attainment rate was high, with 96.5% 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.

56. Overall, candidates' performance was satisfying. The majority of the candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the descriptors and displayed the ability to use English effectively in the classroom. The attainment rates across the scales were consistently high but there were relatively fewer outstanding candidates achieving Level 5 on the scale of Language of Instruction.

57. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range

    57.1 In general, candidates demonstrated a satisfactory use of grammar necessary for handling the teaching content in primary and secondary classrooms. There might have been some errors but communication was generally clear and unimpeded on the whole. The outstanding candidates managed to use a wide range of sentence structures and completely natural and spontaneous speech.

    57.2 The most common mistakes included subject-verb disagreement, confusion over singulars and plurals and inconsistent/wrong use of tenses. Present tense was often confused with past tense when referring to a story. The subject-verb inversion in indirect questions remained a challenge for candidates and questions such as 'Do you know what is it?' and 'Can you tell me what are the problems?' were commonly noted. Other mistakes made by weaker candidates mainly involved preposition errors, omission of articles, confusion of parts of speech and first language interference (e.g. 'Is this sentence _finished_?').

    57.3 While most candidates demonstrated a good grasp of grammar accuracy, limited sentence complexity was noted in the performance of the weaker candidates whose language displayed little structural complexity.

58. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

    58.1 Candidates' performance on this scale was generally good with an encouraging number of candidates demonstrating excellent pronunciation. Those strong candidates served as good classroom models of spoken English and their speech was always comprehensible, with very accurate articulation of vowel and consonant sounds and natural sentence stress and intonation patterns.

    58.2 Stress, including word/sentence stress, stress timing and phrasing, was found to be particularly challenging for some candidates. Apart from inappropriate sentence stress, weak syllables were read as strong syllables (e.g. _po_lite, _con_structive, ans_wer_). Unnatural sentence stress such as uttering every word in the sentence with the same stress and the rare use of linking features were also noted. Some other recurring errors among the weaker candidates included

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

confusion between long and short vowels (e.g. read/rid) and unclear or missing consonants (e.g. wan*t*, bir*d*).

58.3 Intonation was generally appropriate. However, some candidates used an intonation which was unnaturally flat and they tended to use the rising tone for all question types, including wh-questions.

59. Language of Interaction

59.1 Most candidates were capable of using appropriate language to interact with their students in the classroom. The stronger candidates distinguished themselves by using a wide range of interactive language effectively. They demonstrated an ability to give constructive feedback on students' responses and made use of a range of questions to encourage elaborated responses from students. The most outstanding candidates were able to extemporise when students gave unexpected answers and paraphrase students' speech whenever the students made mistakes.

59.2 A narrow range of functional language was a common problem among weaker candidates. They tended to use repetitive structures when eliciting responses (e.g. 'Who knows the answer?' and 'Can anyone answer the question?') and there was little follow-through for better responses. A few candidates followed their prepared teaching materials so closely that they failed to interact with the students spontaneously.

60. Language of Instruction

60.1 Instructions and explanations were generally clear and understood by students in most lessons. Stronger candidates were capable of giving extended and systematic explanations and their instructional language was always smooth, spontaneous and natural with good spoken cohesion and logical flow.

60.2 It was quite common to find lessons in which candidates gave inadequate or superficial explanations without appropriate elaboration. Their speech was repetitive in form and bound by the target structures taught and the instructions in textbooks. In some instances, candidates read aloud instructions from books or PowerPoint slides without using spontaneous and natural instructional language.

60.3 A number of candidates lacked the ability to present instructions clearly and coherently. There were inappropriate pauses in mid-utterances and insufficient use of signalling devices to indicate different stages of the lesson. Weaker candidates failed to explain grammatical concepts clearly when grammar items were explicitly taught. Inappropriate language use was also noted in less successful performances. While most candidates refrained from using Cantonese when teaching vocabulary, some were too ready to supply Chinese translations or explanations of vocabulary items without adequate attempts to illustrate their meanings in English.