**Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers
(English Language) 2019**

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 2019.

General Observations

2.   Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment[1] rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 83.9%; Writing 42.4%; Listening 86.4%; Speaking 58.0%; Classroom Language Assessment 91.9%.

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 but there were cases of questions being left blank, possibly indicating time management issues.

   4.2   Understanding what a question was asking
          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 7 asked for two words in lines 16-19 which show that the conclusions are not completely certain. The correct responses were 'may' and 'apparently'. A number of candidates incorrectly answered with the phrase 'may shed', where the second word 'shed' failed to answer the question (see 5.7 below).

      4.2.2   Passage A, Question 12 asked what the writer is contrasting human language with when he says 'This book is about human language'. Many candidates wrote 'with most books with language in the title' rather than the correct answer 'with specific languages', as if the question had asked about what the writer is contrasting *the book* with.

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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.

4.2.3 Passage B, Question 23 asked for an example of 'gamelike techniques'. Candidates who responded correctly with 'completing certain tasks' recognised that the question asked for *techniques*, not rewards.

4.2.4 Passage C, Question 36 asked 'What phrase in Henri Bergson's book is the writer paraphrasing when he refers to 'all the wonderful things you could do'…?'; to which the correct response was 'a multitude of forms, equally attractive and equally possible'. Candidates who correctly answered this question understood the need to address the quantifier 'all' in the question.

4.3 Drawing inferences from the writer's words

4.3.1 Passage A, Question 4 asked 'What amazing fact about humans is 'captured in the story of the Tower of Babel'?' Candidates who performed well on this question were able to infer the fact that using language allows humans to do great things. Answers which referred to 'reaching heaven' were too specific.

4.3.2 Passage B, Question 26 asked why 'meaning' and 'excitement' can be considered 'consolation prizes'. Candidates who answered this question correctly were able to read into what was stated in the text and correctly identify the point that the workers do not actually get the real reward (money).

4.3.3 Passage C, Question 35 asked what the phrase 'detonates a truth bomb' suggests about the main idea to be found in *Time and Free Will*. Candidates who responded with 'the truth may radically overturn beliefs' or similar demonstrated their understanding of the metaphor in context.

4.4 Identification of referents
Candidates generally understood what was wanted when a question asked for identification of specific information in the passages.

4.4.1 Passage A, Question 14 asked 'In the years since what?' Candidates who performed well on this question correctly identified the reference to be 'the birth of cognitive science'. Many candidates, however, mistakenly took the reference to be '35 years ago' (which answers the question *when*).

4.4.2 Passage A, Question 17 asked what 'event' the writer is referring to. Strong candidates recognised that the event referred to 'the invention of language', instead of to the preceding line, 'man's most important cultural invention'.

4.5 Grasp of global meaning – reading beyond the sentence level
Candidates generally performed well in this area. Questions which were less well handled included Passage B, Question 32, which asked for a summary of the passage. The correct response was option D, 'Using games to motivate workers'. Candidates who chose option C, 'The best way to motivate workers',

appeared to have misunderstood the tone of the passage, which was quite balanced in pointing out both the pros and cons of gamification.

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

5.1 Note that the length of passages and the number of questions for each will vary. The passages can be tackled in any order so candidates could start by answering questions that they feel most confident with.

5.2 Pay attention to how ideas are constructed in a passage. Sometimes it may be necessary to read back and forth to build an understanding of the points made by the writer.

5.3 Be aware that the first answer to a question is the one which will be marked. There is no point in listing items or information in the hope that something within that list or information will attract a mark.

5.4 If more than one mark is awarded to a question, it will probably be necessary to provide more than one point in the answer.

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 the *context* of the passage is taken into account, not simply personal 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 responses. While errors in structure and spelling are not taken into account in the mark scheme, markers cannot give credit to responses that are not intelligible or to misspellings which result in a different word from the correct one.

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, Passage A, Question 13 asked what 'it' refers to in '…there is something to write about it'. Candidates who had substituted the wrong response 'language' for the pronoun 'it' would have recognised that 'there is something to write about language' 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 as similar as possible to the original. For example, in Passage B, Question 24, the correct response was that gamelike techniques are designed to make workers feel more engaged and invested in their work (in the words of the passage). A paraphrase such as 'they motivate workers' would have been incorrect because it simply repeats the premise of the question and does not give a sense of why/how motivation works.

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 student's composition.

Part 1: Composition

7. In Part 1 of the paper, candidates were required to write a coherent text using accurate grammar. The task for the 2019 examination was a short talk to other teachers on the importance of students developing healthy friendships and avoiding 'toxic friendships'. Candidates needed to explain why healthy friendships are important for successful academic achievement and how teachers can help students get out of 'toxic friendships'. The text of the talk was to be about 400 words. To help candidates who may not be familiar with the term 'toxic friendship' an explanatory extract from a Hong Kong magazine was included in the question prompt.

8. The task gave candidates plenty of opportunity to demonstrate their English language ability. Since the task asked for candidates to discuss the relationship between peers/peer groups and individual academic success, as well as methods for teachers to help students get out of toxic friendships, there was scope for candidates to write about a variety of sub-issues such as self-esteem, copycat behaviour and bullying.

9. Candidates were able to understand the term 'toxic friendship' and its applicability to academic success. However, the concept could have been developed beyond the general description given in the prompt. Candidates could have been more specific in talking about how a person's behaviour creates happiness/unhappiness in others and how that leads to academic success or otherwise. Nonetheless, it was pleasing to see that candidates wrote knowledgably about a range of concerns that arise out of the relationship between friendship and academic success. In general, candidates supported their positions with examples of toxic friendships from their own lives, from the lives of their students or from media reports. This helped them structure a position from which they could write the second part of the text.

10. The second part was to be a discussion of how to help students disengage from these friendships. It was clear that many candidates had experience in giving pastoral care to others, as was evidenced by the coherent and detailed descriptions given. However, candidates stayed too close to the ideas given in the prompt. It would have been beneficial for them to have taken on ideas not already given because this would have

allowed them to demonstrate a larger range of vocabulary and concepts.

11. The text was to be a talk (a spoken text) and it was clear that some candidates knew the structural elements of a talk (an opening address, references to common situations and activities), as well as the appropriate spoken discourse patterns and lexis. Many candidates adopted these approaches in a very natural and confident manner. Some candidates, however, wrote an essay prefaced by a salutation such as "Good morning, everyone", which did not really qualify as a spoken text.

12. 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 large number of candidates attaining Level 3 or above.

13. The performance on scale (1) Organisation and Coherence was strong, with a majority of candidates achieving Level 3 or above. However, the organisation of ideas and information would have benefitted from more planning. There were to be two main components to the speech, and often there was far too much information in the first part, resulting in a lack of balance.

14. Some candidates also seemed to focus more on paragraph-level organisation than the sentential level. Too many ideas were included without establishing the connections between them, and the writing seemed to be more of a list than a well thought-out response. Talks written like this usually suffered because the detailed ideas were not clearly connected and explained, and could be hard to follow.

15. The performance on scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range was acceptable. One concern was that many candidates recycled too many words and phrases from the text prompt, which made it difficult to gauge their lexical range.

16. In scale (3) Task Completion, most candidates were generally able to address all aspects of the task. The majority of candidates wrote a speech directed to colleagues that talked about the two items in the prompt. However, as was mentioned earlier, some candidates did not write a talk, which was unfortunate as it was a required element. Some candidates spent too much time discussing toxic friendships and as a result did not write enough on teachers' roles. Other candidates failed to offer appropriate activities that teachers could do and, as a result, their arguments came across as misguided or inappropriate.

17. Some arguments were superficial or weak. Candidates are not tested on the philosophical value of their examples and activities but they would do well to avoid making simple or exaggerated statements, and should support all claims with examples and other support.

18. Candidates are reminded to follow the guidelines regarding the number of words to write and to leave sufficient time to proofread their writing.

Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems

19. 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. For Part 2A,

candidates are given a student composition that contains errors/problems and are asked to correct those that appear in the first part of the composition. For Part 2B, candidates are asked to fill in incomplete explanations of some of the errors/problems in the remainder of the composition. Markers considered the instructions for Part 2 to be clearly stated and felt that it contained a balanced and fairly comprehensive range of testing items.

20. Candidates performed quite strongly in Part 2A, but some struggled with the following items:

- 7(i): This item was related to the wrong use of 'in case'. This is a common error in Hong Kong students' writing and fewer than half of the candidates were able to correct it. The phrase 'in case' is used to indicate that a precaution is taken, or an action is done to prepare for something that might happen. There is no such sense in this sentence. Instead, the conjunction 'if' was required ('if the government had to pay...') to introduce the hypothetical circumstances needed for the taxes to keep increasing.

- 11(i): This item tested the candidates' ability to correct an error relating to the use of the verb 'regret' in the clause 'many people would regret in later life time'. Candidates needed to realise that 'regret' is a transitive verb and that transitive verbs must be followed by a direct object, something or someone who receives the action of the verb. In this case, the sentence should have been corrected to 'many people would regret it…'. Candidates who were not awarded a point for this item typically did not make any additions or amendments to this part of the text.

- 11(ii): This item was related to another error in the same clause 'many people would regret in later life time'. This problem relates to the phrase 'in later life time', which acts as an adverbial of time. Candidates were expected to correct the clause by deleting 'time' to create the prepositional phrase 'in later life' or by creating the adverb phrase 'later in life'. Most candidates were unable to do this, typically providing an erroneous correction which still contained the words 'life time'. The phrase 'life time' (or more commonly 'lifetime' as one word) is used to describe the entire time period that someone is alive (e.g. 'during his lifetime') and therefore does not combine with 'later'.

21. 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. Below are some examples of common problems in Task 2B:

- 15: This question was related to the student's sentence: 'many families do not have a problem paying, are they?' The error related to agreement between the verb phrase in the main clause and the question tag. Over half the candidates successfully identified 'are they?' as a question tag in 15(i). For item 15(iii) candidates were required to explain the mechanism of verbal agreement used in sentences containing question tags, i.e. that the verb in the question tag, 'do' in this case, must agree with the operator, or auxiliary verb, in the main clause, i.e. 'do' in the verb phrase 'do not have' in this sentence. Fewer than half the candidates were able to do this.

- 18(i): In this item, candidates were required to explain the meaning and use of the

fixed expression 'In the end'. This was done most effectively by not only considering the meaning of the expression but also by considering its discourse function in this particular case. Hence, a complete answer was one that made reference to the fact that the fixed expression is used to introduce a conclusion or a final judgement after consideration. Many candidates simply gave the answer 'it means eventually'. Although 'in the end' can mean 'eventually' in certain contexts, it does not mean 'eventually' here. Candidates are reminded to refer to the student's complete text provided in the Question Book in order to consider the text as a whole, and the discourse and rhetorical functions of the sentences in which errors occur, and not simply rely on the sentences in isolation as provided in the Question-Answer Book.

22. 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 meta-language/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)

23. This year's paper included three different listening texts. The first text was a radio chat show on the history of fortune cookies in the USA; the second was a podcast about introversion and its effect within educational settings; the third was a graduation speech offering life advice to new graduates. There were male and female speakers in the test speaking at a normal speed for the type of interaction involved, with passages of slower speech where appropriate.

24. Markers' feedback indicated that they considered the topics to be of interest to teachers. They judged the instructions and questions to be clear, and found the marking scheme easy to follow. 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.

25. Overall, although none of the three texts stood out as being markedly more difficult for candidates, the first text had more items that candidates found slightly easier. Overall, only a few items were found to be particularly difficult, with only one answered correctly by fewer than 20% of candidates and a further six by fewer than 30%.

    25.1 The hardest item in the assessment proved to be Question 33, which only 10% of candidates answered correctly. Here, careful listening was required as all items listed were mentioned by the speaker but several were in fact used to illustrate what is NOT considered to be a part of 'intelligent hope'.

    25.2 Eight items 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 more complex.

26. Advice to candidates

   26.1 When addressing items that required only short answers, some candidates struggled to express themselves coherently and succinctly. Candidates should be careful when copying verbatim large chunks of what is heard as this may lead to writing down information which is not relevant.

   26.2 Although the mark scheme does not penalise spelling errors *per se*, it is not possible for a mark to be given if the spelling of a word totally changes its meaning, e.g. candidates writing 'bring' rather than 'brain'.

   26.3 Candidates are reminded to check the phrasing of each question to ensure that the answer fits grammatically, particularly if it demands completion of a statement. Although grammatical accuracy is not the focus of the mark scheme, markers cannot give credit to answers that do not fit the stem.

   26.4 Candidates should practice listening for phonemes that can change meanings. For example, in Question 21(v), many candidates gave the answer 'flashed' instead of 'thrashed'. Likewise, the correct answer for Question 26(i) is 'literary critic'. The answer given by many was 'literal critic', which does not make sense.

   26.5 By listening to a wide variety of oral genres in English, candidates can increase their awareness of natural spoken English with its collocations, compounds and idioms.

Paper 4 (Speaking)

27. 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 Arguments. There is one task in Part 2: Group Interaction.

28. 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. Task 2 assesses candidates on two more scales: (5) Interacting with Peers and (6) Discussing Educational Matters with Peers.

29. Each individual candidate has five minutes to complete both Tasks 1A and 1B, with Task 1B beginning immediately after Task 1A. After the five minutes for Task 1A and 1B, candidates are asked to return to the preparation room where they wait for a short time. They then return to the assessment room for Part 2, in which groups of candidates 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

30.   The passages that candidates were required to read for Task 1A were selected from contemporary literature and covered a range of topics and themes. The passages gave opportunities to read aloud descriptions of setting, narration and dialogue.

31.   The two scales for this task are (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation and (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning. The passages included a range of lexis and sentence structures, allowing for the accuracy and clarity of pronunciation of individual sounds and words to be assessed reliably, as well as stress and intonation over stretches of text. Passages also allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability to read with meaning by varying pitch, tone, speed and pausing.

32.   The passages were all of a similar length and long enough to ensure accurate assessment but short enough to allow sufficient time to complete both Tasks 1A and 1B.

33.   In Task 1A, many candidates were able to sustain accurate pronunciation, stress and intonation in large parts of the text while demonstrating some awareness of the audience in their reading. In general, candidates were able to establish the mood of the text through manipulation of intonation, tone, speed and pausing, in particular differentiating between narration and dialogue.

34.   Candidates who gave stronger readings were able to effectively use a range of phonological features, showed an awareness of strong and weak forms, and accurately pronounced even low-frequency words.

35.   Stronger candidates were able to use pitch and tone along with speed and pausing to demonstrate a high level of sensitivity to the meaning of the text, such as in marking transitions and connections within and across sentences. Candidates who performed very well had a clear understanding of the attitude of the passage and were able to express an understanding of the characters as well as effectively express more subtle, nuanced meaning through the effective moderation of volume, pitch and tone.

36.   Candidates who were less successful in Task 1A often had problems articulating individual sounds, such as final consonant sounds or consonant clusters, as well as distinguishing between long and short vowel sounds. Weaker candidates had problems identifying and clearly expressing thought groups. All of these areas sometimes caused temporary confusion for examiners.

37.   Less successful performances were sometimes due to the candidate rushing the reading, which disrupted the marking of thought groups and interfered with the mood of the passage, or reading so slowly that communication of meaning was lacking. Pronunciation features such as connected speech, rhythm and sentence stress were negatively affected by renditions that were inappropriately paced.

38.   It is recommended that candidates prepare for Task 1A by reading aloud, paying attention to the naturalness of pace, rhythm, pitch and intonation. Over-articulation should be avoided. Candidates can use textual clues, such as punctuation and discourse markers, to aid their understanding of the relationships between ideas in the text. Finally, while it is essential to demonstrate audience awareness and effectively express the meaning of the text, candidates should avoid overly-dramatic renditions.

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

39. Tasks 1A and 1B are completed in the assessment room within 5 minutes. As soon as the candidate has finished reading aloud Task 1A, Task 1B begins and continues until the permitted 5 minutes has elapsed.

40. The prompts for Task 1B reflected a range of issues, topics and themes that are relevant to education matters or to contemporary life in Hong Kong. Candidates were asked to present arguments using their own language resources to produce coherent and cohesive speech on the given topic.

41. The two scales for this task are (3) Organisation and Cohesion, and (4) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range. The scales assess the candidates' ability to organise ideas and demonstrate lexico-grammatical range and accuracy in spontaneous or semi-spontaneous spoken English. Arguments can be presented in a more conversational, informal discourse or as a more formal presentation with a clear introduction and conclusion, and explicit signposting. Both approaches are acceptable as long as the argument presented is cogent and the relationship between ideas clear.

42. Candidates performed well on both of these scales. The majority of candidates presented a more formal style of presentation, with explicitly-structured arguments employing a range of cohesive devices to signpost stages, highlight relationships between ideas and arguments. Many candidates made use of organising phrases to give a clear overview ('I believe that x is important for two key reasons'), to indicate priorities ('The most important factor is'), or to contrast ideas ('although').

43. Having said this, those candidates who demonstrated a stronger level of performance were less reliant on overt signposting and were able to access a wider range of cohesive devices, such as pronoun referencing, lexical chains and ellipsis, to help the listener navigate the views and opinions within the flow of discourse. The stronger levels of performance were marked by being able to refer backwards and forwards ('as I said before'; 'other than this'; 'whilst at the same time') to build an argument by linking different stages of the discourse together.

44. Candidates with a weaker level of performance lacked ideas to substantiate their claims and develop points, or the ideas lacked coherence, causing confusion for the listener.

45. Weaker candidates often relied on a very narrow range of connectives such as 'and', 'and then' and 'also' to string their ideas together, which tended to produce a list of ideas rather than an argument demonstrating the relationships between ideas.

46. Less successful performances demonstrated difficulty accessing the lexis and grammatical structures needed to express meaning appropriately or to successfully paraphrase meaning. Such performances often exhibited a limited range of vocabulary and grammatical frames, or there were errors when forming complex structures.

47. In a few cases, candidates relied on a script they had written during the preparation time. The purpose of the task is to assess spontaneous language, which cannot be produced when by reading from a script.

48. Overall, stronger performances on this task were from candidates who prepared notes

using bullet points to aid the general organisation of their ideas and produced the language to convey these ideas spontaneously in the assessment room.

49. More successful candidates were able to access a varied range of appropriate lexis relevant to the topic, as well as accurately produce a wide range of grammatical structures, such as complex verb phrases, embedded clauses and modal structures, to express attitudes, beliefs and ideas.

50. Timing is a final point to note. Candidates have five minutes in total to complete Task 1A and Task 1B, one following immediately after the other. Therefore, it is wise to be aware of how much can realistically be said in Task 1B in a period of approximately two to three minutes, and to make good use of the time available. If candidates exceed the five minutes allowed for Task 1A and Task 1B, examiners will ask them to stop; where candidates complete Task 1B and have time left, examiners will check that they have said all they intended to.

51. It is recommended that candidates prepare for Task 1B by studying the descriptors to understand what is being assessed. Candidates should develop an awareness of the inaccuracies and deficiencies in their lexico-grammatical range in order to improve in these areas. When planning, candidates should consider the complexity of arguments and counter-arguments and avoid just listing points. Arguments should be expressed through a range of grammatical structures and devices.

Part 2: Group Interaction

52. Part 2 of the paper requires candidates to take part in a professional, collaborative discussion on an education-related, school-based issue, plan or project. During the course of the discussion, candidates have the opportunity to contribute their own views and ideas, explore and challenge the ideas of others, and collaboratively complete a task agenda. The two scales for Part 2 are (5) Interacting with Peers and (6) Discussing Language Matters with Peers.

53. Generally, this task was well handled, with candidates demonstrating an ability to take part in a collaborative, professional discussion. Less successful performances were from candidates who contributed little to the discussion in terms of development of ideas and opinions, or who provided ideas and suggestions that were tangential to the discussion. These candidates seemed to lack active listening skills and the conversational resources required for the task. Frequently, weaker candidates were unable to ask relevant follow-up questions or offer commentary to demonstrate their presence in the discussion. The overall effect was a lack of confidence and engagement.

54. Less successful interaction patterns were characterised by sequential turn-taking, where points were made without candidates really taking on board what others were saying. In these discussions, there was little collaborative professional exchange or real interaction, with many instances of simple agreement or disagreement.

55. In terms of interaction, those candidates who performed well were able to engage fully in a meaningful professional exchange and demonstrate a wide range of 'discourse moves' such as making claims and suggestions; asking for and constructively exploring the views of others; facilitating collaboration by accepting and conceding others' views; and demonstrating an ability to keep the discussion focused and on-track.

56.   Stronger candidates were also able to briefly clarify or justify their own points or those from others, link points back to the issue under discussion, and periodically summarise to ensure the discussion progressed in a collaborative manner. These stronger candidates were also willing and able to encourage more passive members of the group to contribute.

57.   In terms of content, stronger candidates were able to draw on their own (language) learning and teaching to make their contributions meaningful and insightful. They were familiar with the kinds of discourse appropriate to a discussion of an education-related plan or project.

58.   It is recommended that candidates reflect on the natural features of collaborative interaction and the language needed to produce this kind of discourse in Part 2 of the assessment. Producing lengthy monologues harms the progression of ideas in the discussion. Candidates are advised to listen closely to their group members' ideas and to build on them. They should not be afraid to revisit points expressed earlier in the discussion if it is useful to do so, and are encouraged to seek clarification from group members should any points raised be unclear.

Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment)[2]

59.   A total of 356 candidates were assessed between November 2018 and April 2019, with 91.9% of candidates attaining Level 3 or above. Candidates were graded on four scales of performance: (1) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range; (2) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation; (3) Language of Interaction and (4) Language of Instruction. Comments on candidates' performance on each of the four scales are given below.

60.   Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range

    60.1   Grammatical competence was generally adequate as evidenced in most lessons. Candidates displayed the ability to communicate effectively with appropriate use of grammar. There were some incidents of grammatical mistakes but they seldom interfered with communication. The types of errors noted most frequently involved the incorrect use of tenses, singular/plural nouns and articles, as well as subject-verb agreement. In many cases, the occurrence of grammatical errors would have been minimised if candidates had been more cautious.

    60.2   An acceptable grammatical range was noted. While candidates were able to use simple and compound sentences with ease, many of them displayed a lack of confidence and proficiency to attempt a wider range of complex structures. Candidates are encouraged to demonstrate accurate use of an extensive range of grammatical structures, including a variety of complex structures wherever appropriate.

    60.3   Candidates had a sufficient vocabulary to make meaning clear. Good performance was marked by a strong command of a broad lexical repertoire and

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

keen awareness of connotative levels of meaning. By contrast, weaker candidates had difficulty accessing lexis to express meaning on unfamiliar topics and their lexical range was often confined to the words and phrases from the textbooks or teaching materials they had prepared.

61. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

61.1 Of the four scales, performance on this scale was the strongest. Overall, pronunciation accuracy and intelligibility was good. Pronunciation of individual sounds and words was generally accurate and clear. Pronunciation errors were not frequent, but candidates had more problems with, for example, voiced and voiceless dental fricatives (e.g. /θ/ as in 'thought' was pronounced as /f/ as in 'fought' and /ð/ as in 'there' was pronounced as /d/ as in 'dare'). In some lessons, the diphthong /eɪ/ as in 'game' was mistaken as /e/ whereas /aɪ/ as in 'time' was mispronounced as /ɑ:/.

61.2 Syllable and word stress was generally accurate and the ability to use appropriate intonation patterns to convey the intended meaning was exhibited by candidates. Good performance was characterised by smooth and natural flow of speech enabled by effective use of linking features and fine variations in tone. However, in some cases, first language interference affected candidates' stress and intonation patterns. For example, a few candidates had problems producing the unstressed sounds in a sentence and tended to place equal stress on every word.

62. Language of Interaction

62.1 Though generally acceptable, interaction tended to be mechanical and superficial in lessons with insufficient interaction. In those lessons, questions were repetitious and restricted to mainly close-ended questions inviting brief and expected answers. Displaying the ability to use a wider range of functional language to extend dialogue, strong candidates were able to properly phrase a variety of questions, including open-ended questions, to encourage opinions, elaboration and discussion. In general, feedback was rather routine, mainly in the form of confirmation, correction and encouragement. More competent candidates were able to give concrete feedback which provided specific information about where students did satisfactorily, as well as ways to improve.

62.2 The use of spontaneous and natural interactive language proved challenging. In response to reticent students or unexpected responses, some candidates simply repeated the prepared questions without variation or shied away from students' requests and questions. The inability to spontaneously adjust the use of functional language when needed was a sign of insufficient language proficiency. There were also candidates who failed to use the language suited to the students' level, and thus communication breakdowns occurred.

63. Language of Instruction

63.1 Many candidates were able to give clear instructions, with stronger candidates being able to deliver sustained and coherent discourse spontaneously. Most candidates were able to make use of signalling devices to signpost various

stages of the lesson. However, repetitious use of a rather restricted range of cohesive devices was displayed in many lessons. Overreliance on 'and' and 'so' to connect ideas was a common problem among weak candidates.

63.2 Though many candidates communicated ideas clearly, their speech tended to be repetitive and short. They displayed a lack of confidence to speak at length, as when elaboration was required. There were a few lessons consisting largely of repetition of a few recycled phrases, or in which the amount of instruction was insufficient for the purpose of assessment. Candidates should note that an appropriate display of variety and complexity in the language used will always be to their credit.