Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2018

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 2018.

General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment[1] rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 84.1%; Writing 43.0%; Listening 76.4%; Speaking 57.6%; Classroom Language Assessment 95.6%.

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 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 2 asked 'What is wrong with making students sit still in rows and stuffing them with facts?' The correct response was that this teaching method fails to align with students' exuberance and curiosity. A number of candidates missed the point indicated by 'What is wrong' and responded by copying out the sentence 'Children learn best when teaching aligns with their natural exuberance, energy and curiosity'.

        4.2.2 Passage B, Question 20 asked candidates to identify three words and/or phrases in lines 1 to 5 which relate to 'war' as a metaphor for dealing with fake news. Candidates who correctly answered this question

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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.

understood that they had to quote *three* words/phrases from lines 1 to 5 *only*, as required by the question.

4.2.3 Passage B, Question 30 asked what the writer implies about the Malaysian government by quoting Dan Gillmor, to which the correct response was that it is an authoritarian government. The common answer 'the government is untrustworthy' was the view of James Chin, not Dan Gillmor.

4.2.4 Passage C, Question 43 asked what people who dismiss an argument 'because of the speaker's hypocrisy' are likely not to do. Many candidates responded by copying out the phrase 'ignore almost everything grown-ups say', which suggested that they had overlooked the word 'not' in the question.

4.3 Drawing inferences from the writer's words

4.3.1 Passage A, Question 6 asked why 'spinning jenny' is mentioned, to which the correct response was to show that the skills taught in schools are redundant and counter-productive. Wrong answers such as 'a machine used for weaving in 19th-century factories' or 'a machine that students are trained to operate' suggested that some candidates failed to infer the idea of uselessness.

4.3.2 Passage A, Question 7 asked what the writer means by 'for nothing'. Candidates who performed well on this question recognised that the implication relates to the relevance and usefulness of the skills taught in schools.

4.3.3 Passage B, Question 24 asked 'What reservation about the role of fact-checking websites does…'Still' point to?' Candidates who responded with answers such as 'the sites are not sufficient to solve the problem' demonstrated their understanding of meaning in context.

4.3.4 Passage C, Question 37 asked in what way the celebrity who 'nags people about energy conservation' is being hypocritical. Candidates who performed well on this question were able to read into what was stated in the text and correctly identify the point that the celebrity's flying around in a private jet does not conserve energy.

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 5 asked 'What perversities?' This refers to the ways children are taught in schools, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Answers which paraphrased the information presented in the following line '…sit silently at their benches all day, behaving identically, to produce identical products', were incorrect.

4.4.2 Passage B, Question 33 asked 'What was the case?' Strong candidates correctly understood that the 'case' refers to the fact that 'people in Indonesia believe the fake news they consume is accurate', instead of to the preceding sentence 'The impartiality of the portals… is accurate'.

4.5 Understanding figurative language
Candidates' performance on questions requiring interpretation of similes and metaphors in the passages was mixed.

4.5.1 Passage A, Question 9 asked in what way children are like 'battery chickens'. Candidates who correctly answered the question understood that children are confined to the spot, just like chickens in a battery farm.

4.5.2 Passage C, Question 35 asked what the metaphor of 'borrowing clothes' means. Candidates who responded with answers such as 'pretending to be virtuous' or 'hiding bad conduct with good words' demonstrated their understanding of the metaphor in context.

4.6 Grasp of global meaning – reading beyond the sentence level
Candidates generally performed well in this area. Questions which were less well tackled included Passage B, Question 34 which asked for the best title for the passage. The correct answer was option C 'Can government-backed fact-checking sites be trusted?' Candidates who chose option B ('Why don't people trust fact-checking portals?') appeared to have overlooked Ang Peng Hwa's view that such portals *can* be trusted as long as they only report facts.

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 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 misspellings where they create 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, in Passage B, Question 27 'Whose website?', candidates who had substituted the wrong response 'Sebenarnya' for the pronoun 'whose' would have recognised that 'Sebenarnya's website' fails to fulfil this criterion.

5.10   If the best response to a question is contained in words from the passage, candidates should use those words. If candidates choose to paraphrase the passage, they should make sure that the meaning is the same as suggested by the original. In this paper, for example, in Passage B, Question 19, the correct response was that government fact checkers are *perceived* to have less than objective motives. The answer 'they are not objective' is incorrect because the original, more subtle meaning is not retained in the rephrased answer.

Finally:

5.11   Candidates are advised to enhance their reading skills by reading on a regular basis, expanding the range of reading both within and outside the educational field. Doing this will help strengthen comprehension of lexis, structure and meaning and thus the appreciation and understanding of the nuances of written English.

5.12   Reading fiction provides an opportunity to 'hear' English as it is spoken, in the dialogue within the text, and to appreciate descriptions of character and emotion. Reading expository writing builds an appreciation of the ways in which points

of view unfold in a text, and a stronger understanding of cohesion and coherence.

Paper 2 (Writing)

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

Part 1: Composition

7.   In Part 1 of the paper, candidates are required to write a coherent text using accurate grammar. The task for the 2018 assessment required candidates to write an article for a school magazine that acknowledged parents' concerns about the use of Information and Computer Technology (ICT) while explaining how it can be used to help students learn English more effectively. Candidates needed to provide at least two examples of activities in which ICT can improve the learning and teaching of English. The text length was to be about 400 words.

8.   To help candidates who may not have had experience with ICT a sample complaint letter from a parent was included in the question. The letter was meant to help candidates frame their response as a 'technology vs. traditional teaching' article. The task not only allowed candidates to demonstrate their English language ability but also to show their understanding of contemporary pedagogy and the range of possible responses to a very important issue.

9.   In the opinion of markers, candidates were able to show a good understanding of different positions and approaches to the issue as they wrote knowledgeably about a range of activities and techniques to integrate ICT into English classes. These included the use of computer apps in skills-based English lessons (especially reading and speaking), as a tool for self-correction in writing and for self-guided research, among others. There were also examples of policies and preventative measures that schools could take to calm parents' concerns about the health risks of students having too much screen time.

10. The article's topic was generally well addressed and it was clear that some candidates knew the structural elements of an article written for a school publication: writing from the viewpoint of a representative of the school, using an informative but balanced and understanding tone, being persuasive and so on. Markers noted that many candidates were able to use these approaches in a natural and authoritative manner.

11. 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.

12. The performance on scale (1) Organisation and Coherence was strong, with most candidates achieving Level 3 or above. However, some markers commented that candidates' organisation of ideas and information needed more planning; they focused on the paragraph level but did not devote enough attention to sentence level organisation. Some candidates included too many ideas and the writing seemed to be more of a list than a well-thought-out response. Articles that were written this way

usually suffered because the ideas were not clearly connected and explained, and could be hard to follow.

13. Some candidates had the opposite problem in that they focused on details and paid less attention to the macro-structure of the article. In these cases, while individual paragraphs were well written, there was limited connection between the larger ideas. The result was an article that had connected writing but limited focus or relevance. In this writing task, candidates needed to start with an overall organisation plan so that they could integrate and develop their two examples of ICT activities. Once an overall structure had been devised, candidates needed to include an activity that was relevant to the task and then explain how that activity would be useful in an English language class. Markers commented that at a surface level many of the suggested activities were relevant, but candidates did not always explain specifically how they would be beneficial in an English class.

14. The performance on scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range was the worst of the three scales. Markers reported errors in such areas as spelling mistakes of reasonably high frequency words, the use of articles, subject-verb agreement and verb patterns. Candidates are reminded that it is very important to proofread their work at the end of the writing process. Taking less time to write and using more time to proofread can be very beneficial. Markers commented that the choice of language and the tone adopted was occasionally inappropriate to the task, for example in being more akin to a school essay or debate speech rather than an article written by a panel chair for parents.

15. In scale (3) Task Completion, markers felt that most candidates were generally able to address all aspects of the task. The majority of candidates wrote a response article from the perspective of a school representative and considered their audience's concerns and interests while addressing the main issue: the beneficial use of ICT in an English class. However, some candidates did not make their position clear and this made their article read more like a letter to the editor or personal response. Some candidates spent too much time responding to the example of a health problem provided in the prompt and as a result did not add enough examples to illustrate their stance towards the beneficial use of ICT. Other issues included failing to offer appropriate justification for views, insufficient evidence, talking about only one example, and giving superficial arguments. Candidates are not tested on the pedagogical value of their activities, but they would do well to remember to avoid making simplistic and/or general statements of fact, and that claims should be followed up with examples and support.

16. Candidates are reminded to follow the guidelines regarding the number of words to write and where to write answers, and leave sufficient time to proofread their writing at the end of the test.

Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems

17. 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.

18. Markers considered the instructions for Part 2 to be clearly stated and felt that the composition contained a balanced and fairly comprehensive range of testing items. Candidates performed quite strongly in Part 2A, but some candidates struggled with the following items:

- 9: The portion of the sentence which needed correction was 'they easier to get sick'. This proved to be too difficult to correct for the majority of candidates, with 'they are easier to get sick' being the most common erroneous correction provided. The most obvious means of correcting this sentence was actually for candidates to use a clause beginning with a non-referential 'it' in the following pattern: it+be+adj+(for+person)+to-inf, i.e. 'it is easier for them to get sick'. Several candidates succeeded in correctly using the non-referential 'it' clause to correct the overall structure of the clause but were not awarded a mark as they failed to note that the adjective in question was the comparative form 'easier'.

- 10(i): The phrase which needed correction was often not seen as a problem and thus left uncorrected by many candidates. Candidates should have corrected the phrase to create the phrasal preposition 'compared to', which signals a contrast between being online and doing other activities.

- 7(i): The item needing correction, 'play computers', should have been changed to 'play on/with computers'. The latter means using an application or searching on a website while 'play computers' suggests that a computer is a game or object to be played with.

- 3(i): The item needing correction, 'it is no denying', should have been changed to the semi-fixed phrase there+be+no denying, in this case 'there is no denying'. Alternatively, the phrase 'it cannot be denied' could have been used.

19. In Task 2B, candidates were given incomplete explanations of errors/problems. They 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 are some examples of common problems in Task 2B:

- 14(i): Candidates did not identify that 'like' was used as a preposition in the example sentence. Many provided the erroneous answer 'verb'. It would appear that candidates may not have looked closely at how 'like' was used in the sentence and instead resorted to their prior understanding of the word 'like', mistakenly believing that it is always used as a verb.

- 15(i): Candidates often provided the erroneous answer 'present participle' for this item. Candidates seemed to have resorted to an overgeneralisation in answering this item, that all words that end in '-ing' are present participles. In the context of the sentence provided, 'lacking' is in fact operating as an adjective and not a present participle.

- 19(i): Candidates were asked to explain why the verb pattern 'stop+-ing' should have been used. Some candidates erroneously provided an explanation which seemed to argue that it was a case of the present continuous tense. Others answered using the target structure 'stop doing something' as a means of explaining the verb pattern 'stop+-ing'. Rather than using this circular reasoning, answers should have expressed the idea that the verb pattern meant desist from doing something.

20. Though candidates this year performed better with words such as 'suffix' or 'affix' and 'possessive', a number of them misspelt 'auxiliary verb' and 'reflexive pronoun'.

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

Paper 3 (Listening)

22. This year's paper consisted of three sets of items relating to three different listening texts. The first text was a podcast on the topic of resilience in organisations; the second was an audio documentary about changes to the education system in Finland and the reasons for Finland's educational success; the third was a presentation by a linguist on whether texting should be considered a new type of language.

23. 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 current, relevant and engaging.

24. Different 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. Relatively few items were found to be particularly easy, and fewer still proved to be very difficult. Overall, none of the three texts stood out as being markedly more difficult for candidates, while the second text had more items that candidates found slightly easier.

    25.1 Only a few items were found to be particularly difficult, with two answered correctly by fewer than 20% of candidates and a further two by fewer than 30%.

    25.2 The hardest item in the assessment proved to be Question 3(i), with only 11% of candidates answering it correctly. Although candidates might have been able to identify the metaphor of a 'bulletproof vest', few were able to explain how this metaphor illustrates the concept of resilience.

    25.3 Question 18 also proved challenging to candidates. Although the key to this open-ended question is relatively short, i.e. 'due to earlier changes', weaker candidates tended to write much longer and incorrect answers.

    25.4 Eight items were answered correctly by more than 90% of the candidates. In general, the relatively easy items tended to occur at the beginning of each section or at the start of a more lengthy and complex set of questions. This was designed to provide an opportunity for candidates to tune in to the topic as a lead-in to some items which were judged to be relatively more complex.

26. Advice to candidates

    26.1 As in previous years, some candidates did not write anything in answer to some of the questions, which meant that they had no chance of gaining a mark. Candidates are reminded that there is nothing to be lost by guessing at a word or phrase as this may turn out to be correct.

    26.2 When addressing items that required only short answers, some candidates struggled to express themselves coherently but 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 to answering the question. If the answer does not address the question, no marks will be given.

    26.3 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. Question 22(i) where some candidates wrote 'loser' rather than 'looser'. Candidates should spend time proofreading their answers and writing as legibly as possible.

    26.4 Certain questions in a sequence were mistakenly assumed to be asking for the same information. For example, many candidates repeated the answer to 'What' in Question 29(i) in the 'Why' in Question 29(ii). Also, if more than one mark is awarded to a question, there is usually a mark given for each point.

    26.5 Candidates are reminded to:

    - Check the phrasing of each question to ensure that the answer fits grammatically, particularly if the answer demands completion of a statement. Although grammatical accuracy is not the focus of the mark scheme, markers cannot give credit to answers that do not fit the stem and are therefore structurally unintelligible. For example, in Question 6 on giving tips to manage a team for resilience, answers should start with a verb. Similarly, to complete the blank in Question 4(iii), 'being part of a ____', the answer should be a noun.

    - Practice listening for phonemes that can change meaning. For example, in Question 25, many candidates gave the answer 'free charging' instead of 'fee charging'. Likewise, the correct answer for Question 22 is 'less reflective'. The answer given by many was 'less effective', which does not make sense.

    - Listen to a wide variety of oral genres in English to increase awareness of natural spoken English, including the use of collocation, compounds and idioms.

Paper 4 (Speaking)

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

29. Five minutes are given for both Tasks 1A and 1B, with Task 1B beginning immediately after Task 1A. After Task 1B has finished, candidates are asked to go back to the preparation room where they wait for a short time before returning to the assessment room for Part 2 – Group Interaction, in which they discuss a topic of relevance to the educational context of Hong Kong. The Group Interaction lasts for either 10 minutes (if there are three candidates in a group) or for 13 minutes (if there are four candidates in a group).

Part 1: Task 1A Reading Aloud a Prose Passage

30. The passages that candidates were required to read for Task 1A were sourced from contemporary literature and covered diverse topics. The passages presented sufficient context for candidates to understand their meaning while allowing opportunities to read aloud descriptions of setting, narration of plot and dialogue.

31. 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 through employing pitch and tone to communicate mood and thought groups.

32. The passages were all of a similar length and were long enough for accurate assessment to take place but short enough to ensure that there was sufficient time to complete Tasks 1A and 1B within the assigned time.

33. Task 1A, Reading Aloud with Meaning, was the weakest of the three tasks but was still well managed, with most candidates able to sustain accurate pronunciation, stress and intonation over stretches of text and demonstrate awareness of the audience while reading. Many candidates were also able to establish the mood of the passage through effective use of intonation and tone to differentiate between narration and dialogue.

34. Stronger performances were marked by a range of phonological features, including an awareness of strong and weak forms, the linking of sounds and accurate pronunciation of low frequency words. Those candidates who performed well were also able to use pitch and tone to demonstrate a high level of sensitivity to the meaning of the passage, and use pace and volume to signal stages in the text. Some candidates were also able to identify the nuances of character or inference in the text and to communicate these effectively.

35. Less successful readings were often due to a lack of clarity in articulating individual sounds, clusters of sounds, final sounds and vowel length. Weaker performances were also marked by an inability to create meaningful thought groups through linking of

sounds, pitch and intonation, which sometimes caused temporary confusion for examiners.

36. With regard to pacing and pausing, less successful performances were sometimes due to the candidate rushing the reading and, as a result, failing to communicate shifts in mood, or reading so slowly that communication of meaning was not sufficiently established. Pronunciation was also negatively affected by renditions that were inappropriately paced.

37. Attempting to communicate meaning through overly dramatic renditions was another feature of weaker performances. Candidates who were able to moderate volume, pitch and tone to communicate meaning were able to demonstrate their understanding of the text and produce acceptable readings.

38. It is recommended that candidates prepare for Task 1A by practising reading aloud. Candidates are reminded that their speech should be natural and that they should pay attention to vowel length and clusters, and avoid articulating every sound. Candidates can also pay attention to textual clues, such as punctuation and discourse markers, to aid their reading. Finally, while it is important to demonstrate audience awareness and express the meaning of the text, candidates should avoid overly dramatic renditions or rushing through the text.

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

39. Both Task 1A and 1B are completed in the assessment room within 5 minutes. As soon as the candidate has finished reading aloud, s/he is asked to start Task 1B.

40. Task 1B calls on candidates to use their own language resources to produce coherent and cohesive speech on a given topic. Candidates were asked to present arguments about issues related to education or local current affairs.

41. The two scales for this task are Organisation and Cohesion, and Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range. Candidates performed well on both of these scales.

42. The task assessed candidates' ability to organise ideas and demonstrate lexico-grammatical range and accuracy in spontaneous or semi-spontaneous spoken English. Candidates presented their arguments in a conversational style as informal, unstructured discourse or as a more formal presentation with a clear introduction and conclusion and explicit signposting. Both approaches were acceptable as long as the argument presented was cogent and the relationship between ideas was clear.

43. Most candidates were able to structure their arguments clearly and employ a range of cohesive devices to signpost stages, highlight relationships between ideas and build solid arguments. Many candidates made good use of organising phrases to give a clear overview ('There are three points to support my view'), to indicate priorities ('The main point is'), demonstrate how ideas related to each other ('in the same way'; 'it could also be argued') or to contrast ideas ('despite this').

44. Stronger candidates 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. They were also able to refer backwards and forwards ('as I mentioned earlier'; 'the next point to consider'; 'I'll return to this point later') to build an argument by linking different stages of the discourse together.

45. Weaker performances were marked by a lack of relevant ideas to substantiate claims or ideas that did not clearly relate to each other. Instances of incoherent discourse resulted in weak arguments or confusion for the listener.

46. Candidates who relied on a narrow range of connectives such as 'and' or 'and then' to string their ideas together tended to produce texts which seemed to comprise a list of ideas rather than the argumentation which arises from highlighting relationships between ideas.

47. A small number of candidates read aloud from a script they had written during preparation. Candidates are reminded that the purpose of the task is to assess language that is, to a large extent, spontaneous, which cannot be achieved by reading from a script. Overall, stronger performances on this task were from candidates who used bullet points for general organisation and produced the language to convey these ideas spontaneously.

48. This task also assessed the range and accuracy of vocabulary and grammar in semi-spontaneous speech. More successful candidates were able to access varied lexis relevant to the topic and to accurately use a range of grammatical structures to explore and evaluate the topic and express attitudes, beliefs and ideas.

49. Less successful performances were from candidates who had difficulty accessing lexis and grammatical structures to express meaning precisely or to successfully paraphrase meaning. These candidates often demonstrated a limited range of vocabulary and grammatical frames or attempted to use more complex structures but were unable to sustain accuracy. Weaker performances were marked by the occurrence of errors in both simple and complex structures.

50. Timing is a final point to note. Candidates are reminded that they have 5 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 full use of the time available. If candidates exceed the five minutes allowed for Task 1A and Task 1B, examiners will ask them to stop; equally, where candidates complete Task 1B and have time left, examiners will check that candidates have said all that they intended to.

51. To prepare for Task 1B, candidates are reminded to study the descriptors to understand what is being assessed. While planning, candidates should consider the complexity of arguments and counter-arguments offered and avoid just listing points. Arguments should be expanded on and expressed through a range of grammatical structures and linking 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, all candidates have the opportunity to contribute their own views and ideas, explore and challenge the ideas of others, and develop and collaboratively complete a task agenda. In general, this task was well handled, with candidates demonstrating an ability to take part in a collaborative, professional discussion.

53. The scales for Part 2 are Interacting with Peers and Discussing Language Matters with Peers.

54. 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.

55. 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. They were also willing and able to encourage passive members of the group to contribute.

56. In terms of content, stronger candidates were able to draw on their understanding of (language) learning and teaching, as well as a level of professional reflection and insight, in order to ensure that discussions were meaningful and focused on practical outcomes.

57. Less successful performances were from candidates who contributed less, took shorter turns, or who provided ideas and suggestions that were tangential to the discussion or did not effectively build on the ideas of others. These candidates seemed to lack active listening skills and the conversational skills 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 involvement.

58. Less successful discussion groups were characterised by sequential turn-taking, where points were made without candidates taking on board what others were saying. In these discussions, there was little collaborative professional exchange or real interaction. Basic discussion functions of agreeing and disagreeing affected the flow and development of the conversation, with contributions from members often not explicitly related to each other. This had the effect of appearing mechanical and lacking in substance.

59. To prepare for Part 2, future candidates are encouraged to take part in meaningful professional exchange and dialogue by discussing learning and teaching issues with their colleagues.

60. During the assessment, candidates are advised to listen closely to their group members' ideas and to build on them. Candidates should not be afraid to revisit points expressed earlier in the discussion if it is useful to do so. Candidates are encouraged to seek clarification from group members should any points raised be unclear.

Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment)[2]

61. A total of 340 candidates were assessed between November 2017 and April 2018. The attainment rate was high, with 95.6% 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.

62. Overall, candidates' performance was satisfactory. Most of the candidates were able to deliver the lessons using appropriate and effective classroom language. Comments on candidates' performance on each of the four scales are given below.

63. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range

   63.1 In general, candidates were able to use a mix of simple and complex sentences. Errors occurred sometimes but communication was clear and unimpeded. Most candidates had a reasonable range of vocabulary that allowed them to express meaning accurately.

   63.2 The stronger candidates displayed the ability to make their meaning clear and precise by using accurate complex structures (e.g. tense variety, conditional sentences and modality), wide-ranging vocabulary and expressions wherever appropriate. They were also able to use collocations correctly. They made few mistakes and could self-correct promptly and effectively when needed.

   63.3 While most candidates were able to use a range of grammatical structures reasonably well, some common errors were spotted. They included errors in subject-verb agreement, plural endings, articles and tenses.

64. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

   64.1 Candidates' performance on this scale was satisfactory. The majority of candidates paid due attention to the clear articulation of sounds and their speech was generally easy to follow.

   64.2 Proficient candidates spoke very natural English. Their pronunciation was characterised by accurate articulation of phonemes and words. At the sentence level, there was skilful use of sentence stress and intonation patterns to heighten effects and to convey the intended meaning.

   64.3 Some typical pronunciation errors included the inaccurate articulation of consonant clusters (e.g. /pl/ as in 'pleasure') and diphthongs (e.g. 'take' was confused with 'tick'), undue stress on weak syllables (e.g. tomato; packet), and the use of rising intonation for all question types. Some weaker candidates had a tendency to articulate every word separately and put equal stress on each syllable. As a result, the meaning of the phrase or sentence was sometimes not clearly conveyed.

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

65. Language of Interaction

65.1　In most lessons, candidates were able to use functional language for eliciting, responding and providing feedback. On the whole, interaction with students was smooth.

65.2　Competent candidates demonstrated spontaneity and confidence in the use of functional language. They were able to reformulate questions, make clarifications and provide clues to help students elaborate or refine their responses. The ability to use spontaneous and appropriate language to handle unanticipated questions was also noted.

65.3　While there were good attempts to use different types of functional language, the quality of functional language could be improved in some lessons with little dynamic interaction. In those lessons, teachers tended mainly to pose questions requiring short answers. They lacked the language to probe students further for an on-going interaction. Their feedback was sometimes inadequate. For example, while brief feedback (e.g. 'Good', 'Well done', 'Try again' and 'Not exactly') was often provided, specific comments pointing out students' areas of strength or weakness were scarce even when they were needed.

66. Language of Instruction

66.1　Overall, candidates were able to give clear instructions when conducting activities and managing classroom routines. Lesson content was presented to students in a coherent and systematic way.

66.2　Exemplary use of instructional language was noted in lessons where candidates were able to develop their presentation fully, offering clear explanations and relevant examples as appropriate. In response to students' questions, they could adjust their instructions effectively. Strong candidates were also able to make their speech easy to follow by employing varied cohesive devices appropriately.

66.3　A typical weakness noted was the inability to extend explanations readily. Though many candidates communicated ideas clearly, their speech tended to be repetitive and short without due elaboration where appropriate. In some cases, weaker candidates who did not have the confidence and language proficiency to elaborate or rephrase would just repeat the prepared instructions.