

Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2020

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 2020.

General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment¹ rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 89.6%; Writing 50.2%; Listening 78.33%; Speaking 62.3%; and Classroom Language Assessment 92%.

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 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 13 asked for an example of a meritocratic practice given in Castilla and Benard's study. Many candidates responded by listing the outcomes of implementing such practice rather than the correct answer 'performance-based compensation', as if the question had asked about what the findings of the study are.

4.2.2 Passage B, Question 32 asked 'Which feature of the instructor's training was not a part of the coin-tossing experiment?', to which the correct response was 'feedback' or 'praise and/or punishment'. A number of candidates incorrectly answered the question by copying out the entire sentence ('the feedback to which life exposes us is perverse' or 'poor performance was typically followed by improvement... without any help from either praise or punishment') from the passage.

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 C, Question 35 asked how the mother misinterpreted the maxim. Candidates who responded correctly with ‘she thought it was intended as encouragement ’or ‘she believed it meant to encourage parents to spoil their child’ recognised that the question asked for her *misinterpretation*, not interpretation.
- 4.2.4 Passage C, Question 39 asked why the writer’s mother spoiled him, to which the correct response was ‘he was an only child and always sick’. Candidates who wrote ‘skinny’ were not awarded a mark because being skinny was not a reason for the writer’s being spoiled, according to paragraph 1.
- 4.3 Drawing inferences from the writer’s words
- 4.3.1 Passage A, Question 10 asked ‘What point is the writer making by saying ‘This is not to deny the industry and talent of successful people?’ Strong candidates recognised that the implication relates to the importance of industry and talent in success. Some candidates simply explained the literal meaning of the sentence.
- 4.3.2 Passage B, Question 22 asked what the instructor meant by saying that rewarding better performances ‘might be good for birds’. Candidates who performed well on this question were able to read into what was stated in the text and correctly identify the point that rewarding improved performance does not apply to flight cadets.
- 4.3.3 Passage C, Question 40 asked why the writer was able to have everything he wanted. Candidates who answered the question correctly were able to infer that the writer learned to want what his parents could afford. Common answers like ‘he was spoiled’ and ‘he could do without almost anything’ were incorrect.
- 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 12 asked ‘In addition to being false... What is false?’ The reference here was to what follows ‘research in psychology and neuroscience’ suggests that (believing in) meritocracy is false. Correct responses indicated that the cataphoric reference had been understood.
- 4.4.2 Passage B, Question 30 asked what ‘challenge’ the writer was referring to. Many candidates mistakenly took the reference to be ‘regression to the mean’, rather than the correct answer ‘to the writer’s argument ’or ‘from the seasoned flight instructor’.
- 4.5 Understanding figurative language
Performance on questions requiring interpretation of similes and metaphors in the passages was mixed. Passage 1, Question 2 asked how the metaphor of an ‘even playing field’ applies to meritocracy. Strong candidates who understood the figure of speech correctly identified ‘every player starts with the same opportunities’ as

part of the correct response.

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 A, Question 19 which asked for three statements that accurately reflected the writer’s opinions. Candidates who chose option C, ‘Meritocracy provides an even playing field which avoids unfair inequalities’ appeared to have overlooked the ‘paradox of meritocracy’ discussed in the paragraph beginning on line 42.

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

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 considered 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 16 asked ‘What is legitimated?’. Candidates who had substituted the (incorrect) answer ‘meritocracy’ for the pronoun ‘what’ would have recognised that ‘In addition to meritocracy’s being legitimated’ 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 C, Question 44, the correct response was that the writer can live on very little money without any sense of sacrifice. Rephrasing this as ‘he can live a non-materialistic life without feeling bad’ is an incorrect response because the original meaning is not retained in the rephrased answer.

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 given for the 2020 examination was for candidates to write an email to their school Principal suggesting suitable topics to be covered in a Professional Development Day (PDD). In particular, candidates needed to explain the reason for their choice of topic and how the PDD would be beneficial to them as teachers. The text of the email was to be about 400 words.
8. The task was relevant and apparently familiar to the candidates. Candidates at different proficiency levels were therefore able to respond well and demonstrate their professional knowledge and language control. As the task required them to suggest at least two activities or topics for the PDD, candidates could write about a range of activities or topics that they felt were individually and professionally useful. Under each of these topics, there was scope for candidates to write about a variety of sub-issues and to incorporate a range of lexical and grammatical structures that would help them demonstrate their English language ability.
9. Markers commented that the task was authentic and, as a result, candidates were able to combine their own schematic knowledge of a PDD with their understanding of possible suitable activities or events (e.g. ICT Workshop/ Meditation Workshop/Mental Health Seminar etc.) and their applicability to workplace success. Overall, candidates were able to back up their propositions with concrete ideas (e.g. personal experience and examples). Concerning the choice of activities or topics, a large number of candidates wrote about contemporary issues: e-learning / online teaching, mindfulness, SEN students, students’ emotional problems, and school suspension under COVID-19.
10. Candidates could have been more specific in their suggestions as some ideas were quite vague. For example, some candidates proposed promoting e-learning and inviting

university professors to conduct the PDD, which are very general suggestions and would have benefitted from more detail. The same problem occurred when candidates discussed the benefits of their suggested activities, which were often couched in general terms. It would have been better for candidates to describe specific benefits as this would have allowed them to demonstrate their familiarity with a range of relevant vocabulary and concepts.

11. The email format posed few problems for candidates, but a small minority instead wrote an essay prefaced by a salutation such as ‘Dear Principal’.
12. Candidates’ performance was 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 many candidates attaining Level 3 or above.
13. The performance in scale (1) Organisation and Coherence was acceptable, with a majority of candidates achieving Level 3 or above. However, some candidates’ organisation of ideas and information would have benefitted from more planning. There were to be two main components to the email, the topic for the PDD and the benefits that would accrue, but sometimes there was too much information on the first part. The result was that the second part was too short and the text was unbalanced and unconvincing.
14. In terms of organisation and coherence, texts were not always smooth and there was sometimes an over-reliance on paragraph-initial and sentence-initial adverbials (e.g. First/Firstly). The more successful candidates used different types of cohesive devices (e.g. lexical chains, pronoun substitution, synonym, ellipsis, labelling nouns, definite article use etc.) to help organise their ideas smoothly. In terms of content, some candidates did not explain how the activities or topics suggested would help them develop as a teacher. Instead, they explained how they could promote teachers’ physical and mental growth. While it is implicitly understood that physical and mental growth are beneficial, a stronger candidate would have made that connection clear and convincing, demonstrating how that would contribute to excellence in the classroom.
15. The performance on scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, was acceptable, although the usual range of errors was to be found. An additional concern was the use of many words and phrases from the text prompt, which stifled the opportunity to demonstrate lexical range.
16. In scale (3) Task Completion, markers felt that most candidates were 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 their texts as emails and this was unfortunate as it was a required element. Some candidates spent too much time discussing topics and did not write a sufficient amount on the beneficial component of their suggested topic. Other candidates failed to offer appropriate activities that teachers could do and as a result, their arguments came off as misguided or inappropriate.
17. Many markers stated that they found some arguments to be very superficial and weak. Candidates are not tested on the philosophical value of their topics and activities, but would do well to avoid making simple and general statements of fact. Additionally, candidates should never confuse rhetoric or an exaggeration of the facts with a well-

constructed argument.

18. 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 assessment.

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 the composition contained a balanced and fairly comprehensive range of testing items.
20. Candidates performed quite strongly in Part 2A, but some candidates struggled with the following questions:
 - 2(ii): The item ‘no matter you are studying or working’ relates to the usage of the phrase ‘no matter’, which means that the subject matter is true in all circumstances. It is followed by a wh-word (*what, when, where, which, who* or *how*) or by ‘if’ or ‘whether’. In this case two alternatives (studying or working) are presented as being equally possible. Hence, the sentence requires the inclusion of ‘if’ or ‘whether’ and the construction should have been ‘no matter if you are studying or working.’
 - 3(i): This item required the correction of ‘Not only hobbies are fun’. ‘Not only’ can be used at the beginning of the clause for emphasis. However, when it is placed in this position an inversion must be used, i.e. the normal word order of a structure is reversed. In this case, the order of the subject hobbies and the verb are reversed so that the subject (hobbies) follows the verb (are). The correct construction should therefore have been ‘not only are hobbies fun.’
 - 5(i): The item ‘Some people’s jobs which involve sitting down’ proved to be problematic for many candidates. The item relates to the incorrect usage of the relative pronoun ‘which’. The key to correcting this sentence is seen later in the sentence in the verb phrase ‘may choose’. This means that ‘Some people’ must be the subject of the sentence and head of the noun phrase as logically only people can choose to do something, jobs cannot. Given this, then, the correct relative pronoun to use was whose as it refers to possession – the jobs of some people thus creating the post-modifier ‘whose jobs involve sitting down’ and the complete noun phrase ‘Some people whose jobs involve sitting down’.
21. In Task 2B, many candidates performed well. However, certain items caused problems:
 - 16 (iii): This item was an open-ended one in which candidates were expected to provide a clear explanation using appropriate metalanguage. Such items often imply a contrast, as was the case in this item. In this item candidates were asked to explain why the determiner ‘a few’ was correct whereas ‘few’ was incorrect in the given sentence ‘There have always few free online courses available.’ Key to being able

to answer this item was to consider the wider context in which the sentence was situated in the text, as grammatically both ‘few’ and ‘a few’ are correct. From the complete text of the student’s work given in the Question Answer booklet, we realise that the sentence in question is an elaboration on the previous sentence: ‘Education is not restricted to schools.’ Hence, for this item it was expected that candidates would contrast the meaning and connotation of ‘a few’ and ‘few’. A correct answer would state that ‘a few’ is more appropriate in this context as it denotes a small number or focuses on the choice of courses available whereas ‘few’ denotes insufficiency or scarcity.

- 17(ii): This item tested candidates understanding of the different forms of nouns. The candidates were told that in order for the sentence to be correct the student should add the suffix ‘-ship’ to the end of the concrete noun ‘mentor’ in order to form a new noun ‘mentorship.’ Candidates were asked to state which type of noun ‘mentorship’ is. Many candidates responded that this was a compound noun. However, a compound noun is a noun that is made up of two or more different words, for example ‘cakeshop’ or ‘schoolteacher’. In this case, ‘ship’ is not a noun in its own right. It is not the noun that typically means a seafaring vessel. Rather, it is a suffix which changes the meaning of the noun in a variety of ways. The word ‘mentorship’ is therefore a product of derivation rather than compounding. The incomplete explanation gave the candidates a very clear indication of how to approach this item in that it set up the semantic contrast between the concrete noun ‘mentor’ and the abstract noun ‘mentorship’.
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 consisted of three sets of items relating to three different listening texts. The first text consisted of a podcast about wine and the work of a sommelier; the second was an interview with the author of a new book about the origins and the meanings behind the concept of *schadenfreude*; the third text was part of a keynote conference speech about educational change. There were male and female speakers in the test speaking at a normal to occasionally slower speed for the type of interaction involved.
24. 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. 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.
25. 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, sequencing of a narrative, summarising ideas, multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Of the different task types, those that required candidates to summarise ideas that they heard and write them in their own words proved

to be more challenging as such tasks require not only accurate identification of information but also synthesising into wording appropriate to answer the question. There was no evidence that any of the formats was more difficult or easier than others for candidates.

26. Although none of the three texts stand out as being markedly more difficult for candidates, the third text had more items that candidates found a little more difficult.

26.1 Only a few items were found to be particularly difficult, with one answered correctly by fewer than 10% of candidates and a further four by fewer than 20%.

26.2 The most difficult item in the test proved to be Question 22, with only 2% of candidates answering it correctly. This item required candidates to summarise in their own words the idea that *teachers have become attached to traditional educational practices and think that education can't be done differently*. Most candidates were unable to get both parts of the answer and so failed to get the mark.

26.3 Another item that proved to be difficult for candidates was Question 20, which was answered correctly by only 12% of candidates. Again, candidates needed to express the idea in two parts, i.e. that talent is like *a natural resource that is buried deep [or] needs to be extracted*.

26.4 Four 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.

26.5 Overall, the test items showed a variation in difficulty level that was appropriate for the candidature and provided a good test of listening comprehension.

27. Advice to candidates

27.1 When addressing items that required rephrasing what was heard, some candidates struggled to express themselves coherently and succinctly. Candidates should be careful when attempting to copy verbatim chunks of what is heard as this may lead to writing down information which is not relevant to answering the question. If the answer requires a comparison, for example, then candidates should consider this when composing their answer. If the emphasis of an answer does not address the question, no marks will be given.

27.2 When considering what form an answer should take, candidates should pay attention to two things: (1) the number of marks given for the item and (2) any example answer given. In Question 12, two-part answers were required and so each item was allocated two marks to reflect this, and an example was given showing how an answer should be constructed.

27.3 For some items, answers were not accepted if the spelling of the key word was incorrect, for example 'aggressive' in Question 12(ii) and 'anonymously' in Question 15(iv). It is also not possible for a mark to be given if the spelling of a

word totally changes its meaning, e.g. candidates writing ‘testing’ rather than ‘tasting’. Candidates should spend time proofreading and amending their answers where necessary.

- 27.4 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 and hence become structurally unintelligible.
- 27.5 Candidates should practice listening for phonemes that can change meanings. For example, in Question 1(ii), many candidates gave the answer as ‘whether expensive wine is better than cheap wine’ instead of whether expensive wine is better than cheaper wine, missing the ‘er’ which indicates comparison. Likewise, the correct answer for Question 13(ii) is ‘the things that matter the most to us’. The answer given by many did not include the plural ‘s’ from ‘things’ and therefore did not convey the intended meaning of generalisability.
- 27.6 By listening to a wide variety of oral genres in English, candidates can increase their awareness of natural spoken English, especially such features as collocation and idiomaticity.

Paper 4 (Speaking)

28. Paper 4 consists of two parts. In Part 1 there are two tasks, Task 1A: Reading Aloud and Task 1B: Recounting an Experience/Presenting Arguments. There is one task in Part 2: Group Interaction.
29. 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 scales: (5) Interacting with Peers and (6) Discussing Educational Matters with Peers.
30. Each 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 – Group Interaction, in which candidates discuss together 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).
31. A series of precautionary measures based on recommendations from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) were implemented to ensure the health and wellbeing of candidates while also ensuring that they could be clearly heard and recorded.

Part 1: Task 1A Reading Aloud

32. The passages for Task 1A were selected from contemporary literature and covered a range of topics and themes. The passages were easy to understand and gave opportunities for reading aloud descriptions of setting, narration of plot and dialogue.
33. 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 through employing pitch and tone, varying speed and employing appropriate pausing to communicate mood and thought groups.
34. The passages were all of a similar length and long enough to ensure accurate assessment to take place yet short enough to allow sufficient time for candidates to complete both Tasks 1A and 1B within the assigned time.
35. Task 1A, Reading Aloud. Of the three tasks this was the one where candidates performance was weakest in terms of (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation and (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning. Many candidates demonstrated an ability to sustain appropriate pronunciation, stress and intonation across sections of the text while demonstrating some awareness of audience. On the whole, they were able to identify the overall mood of the text and to communicate this through their manipulation of intonation, tone, speed and pausing. Candidates were able to communicate the differentiation between narration and dialogue particularly well.
36. Those candidates who demonstrated a stronger performance were able to effectively utilise a wider range of phonological features in terms Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation. This was demonstrated in their use of connected speech features such as elision, assimilation, catenation, intrusion and the use of strong and weak forms, as well as a greater degree of accuracy in pronunciation of low frequency words.
37. Candidates who performed very well in Task 1A had a clear understanding of the mood of the passage and were able to convey an understanding of the characters as well as effectively express more subtle, nuanced meaning through the effective moderation of volume, pitch and tone. In Reading Aloud with Meaning, the candidates who gave a stronger performance were able to use speed, pausing, pitch and tone to demonstrate a higher degree of sensitivity to the meaning of the text. This was employed to effectively mark the transitions in the text including mood, location, and character. Such candidates were able to express a connection between elements within a sentence but also across longer stretches of the text between sentences and paragraphs.
38. Those candidates who were less successful in Task 1A often had problems clearly articulating long and short vowel sounds, final consonant sounds and consonant clusters. The effort required by weaker candidates to read the text often resulted in an unnatural rhythm to the speech as well as pauses at inappropriate places, resulting in a temporary confusion for the listener.
39. Weaker candidates lacked accuracy and appropriacy in Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation but also were unable to effectively express an understanding of the mood and meaning of the text as evaluated in Reading Aloud with Meaning. The reading was often too slow and deliberate, more of a word-by-word reading.

40. In order to prepare for Task 1A candidates should practise reading texts to understand the mood and attitudes of the characters, then try to read aloud using clues in the text such as punctuation and discourse markers, to convey the relationships between the ideas in the text. Candidates should pay attention to the pronunciation of sounds vowel length, final consonants and consonant clusters, which need to be accurate but not over-articulated. A balance is needed between expressing the meaning and emotions of the text and being overly dramatic.

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

41. Both Task 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 proceeds until the remaining time within the permitted 5 minutes has elapsed.
42. The prompts for Task 1B reflected a range of issues, topics and themes that are relevant to contemporary life in Hong Kong or to education matters in general. Candidates are asked to produce a coherent and cohesive response to the given topic using their own language resources.
43. The two scales used to evaluate a candidate's performance 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. The candidates can choose to present their response to the task in conversational, informal discourse or as a more formal presentation with a clear introduction and conclusion with more explicit signposting throughout. Both approaches were acceptable as long as the argument presented was cogent and the relationships between ideas were clear.
44. In Task 1B, candidates appeared to perform equally well on both of the assessment scales. The majority of the candidates chose to deliver their response in a more formal presentation style with a clear introduction and conclusion, and with explicit signposting, such as organising phrases identifying their position ('I partially agree with the statement that...'), outlining the structure ('there are two key reasons for this...'), identifying priorities ('The main reason for this is...') as well as marking the relationships between ideas ('despite', 'as a result', 'for example').
45. Those candidates who demonstrated a stronger level of performance were almost always less reliant on such overt signposting and were able to access a wider range of cohesive devices to help the listener navigate through the views and opinions presented. This often included building an argument by referring to and adding to previous statements ('similarly', 'at the same time', 'apart from that') linking different stages of the discourse together, developing lexical chains, using parallel structures and employing ellipsis.
46. In contrast, the stronger candidate's performances were produced from candidates who had prepared notes (in bullet point form or note form) where they had ideas and a general outline of the organisation of their ideas but that the language produced to express those ideas was spontaneously produced in the assessment. In their response they called upon a wider range of more precise lexis and wider range of grammatical structures including perfect and continuous tenses, appropriate use of active and passive voice, appropriate

use of modal verbs as well as more complex clauses such as embedded clauses to express their own opinions and attitudes.

47. Those candidates who were less successful in Task 1B were often lacking in relevant ideas to support their opinions and points of view, often providing examples but not justifications. They relied on a narrower range of connectives, using ‘and’, ‘also’ and ‘then’ to string their ideas together, which would often result in a list of ideas rather than a coherent argument. Vocabulary and grammar were likewise more restricted.
48. 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.
49. In the preparation for Task 1B, candidates should consider the complexity of arguments and counter-arguments and avoid just listing points.

Part 2: Group Interaction

50. 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. Overall, this task was well handled, with candidates demonstrating a clear ability to take part in a collaborative, professional discussion.
51. The two scales for Part 2 are (5) Interacting with Peers and (6) Discussing Language Matters with Peers.
52. In terms of interaction, the stronger candidates were able to engage more fully in a meaningful professional exchange and demonstrate a wider 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.
53. Stronger candidates were also able to briefly clarify or justify their own points of view, ask for clarification from others when meaning was obscured or offer their own understanding of others’ unclear propositions, make connections between previous points in the discussion, and periodically summarise to ensure the discussion progressed in a collaborative manner. They were also willing and able to sensitively encourage more passive members of the group to contribute.
54. Less successful candidates in Part 2 produced limited contributions to the discussion in terms of frequency, the development of ideas and opinions, or relevance. They were able to add a point to the discussion but were unable to effectively develop or build on the ideas of others. These candidates seemed to lack active listening skills and the discussion skills required for the task. Such candidates were often unable to ask appropriate follow-up questions or comment on others’ ideas leading to an overall impression of a lack of

engagement and confidence.

55. In terms of interaction patterns in Interacting with Peers, less successful performances were characterised by a lack of direct engagement with others' ideas and contributions, with contributions from candidates either unrelated to each other or only superficially so (such as saying 'I agree' before moving on to a different issue).
56. In terms of Discussing Educational Matters with Peers, stronger candidates were able to draw on their understanding of (language) learning and teaching, as well as a degree of professional reflection and insight, in order to ensure that discussions were meaningful and focused on practical outcomes. Lexis related to the education-related, school-based issues, plan or project under discussion was often used.
57. 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, as well as reflecting on their own learning and teaching experience and knowledge.
58. It is recommended that candidates become familiar with the features of collaborative interaction and the range of functional language needed in order to be comfortable producing these in Part 2 of the assessment. Producing lengthy monologues harms the progression of ideas in the discussion. Instead, candidates should listen closely to their group members' ideas and build on them. Candidates should not be afraid to revisit ideas expressed earlier in the discussion if it is useful to do so and they can seek clarification from group members should any points be unclear.

Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment)²

59. A total of 387 candidates were assessed between November 2019 and November 2020, with 92% 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 In general, candidates' communicative competence was adequate. Although there were some inaccuracies in syntax and word choices, communication was clear and unimpeded on the whole. To demonstrate their command of the language, candidates are encouraged to make good use of their linguistic repertoires, including a range of different grammatical and lexical items, at opportune moments in classroom discourse to address various communicative purposes (such as paraphrasing and making clarifications) as appropriate.
 - 60.2 Candidates were reasonably familiar with the accurate use of grammar. In a number of instances, it was noted that the more cautious candidates were able to self-correct or avoid the majority of grammatical errors. The types of errors most frequently observed involved the incorrect use of tenses, plural endings, indirect

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

questions as well as subject-verb agreement.

- 60.3 An acceptable range of grammatical structures was employed. Many candidates were capable of articulating simple and compound sentences correctly, with a small number of them attempting a limited range of more complex structures (such as the use of relative clauses or conditional sentences) at times. A wider spectrum of complex structures was employed and produced accurately by the more competent candidates.
- 60.4 Candidates possessed a sufficient lexicon to tackle the demands of classroom communication. Stronger candidates had a rich vocabulary at their disposal, giving them a flair for demonstrating good choice of words under different contexts in the classroom. The diction of candidates with a narrow lexical range was restricted to that adopted in the teaching materials. This affected the level of spontaneity and naturalness in their speech.

61. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

- 61.1 Performance on this scale continued to be the strongest among the four scales. Articulation of vowels and consonants was generally accurate and words were pronounced clearly. Appropriate use of stress patterns at the word and sentence levels was evident.
- 61.2 Although pronunciation errors rarely caused much strain on the listener, some typical errors were identified, for example, in the distinction between short and long vowel sounds (e.g. /ɪ/ as in “slip” was mispronounced as /i:/ and vice versa, /i:/ as in “worksheet” was mispronounced as the clipped vowel /i/), and voiced and voiceless dental fricatives (e.g. /θ/ as in “thing” was pronounced as /f/, and /ð/ as in “the” was pronounced as /d/). In some lessons, the lateral alveolar sound was confused with its nasal counterpart (e.g. /l/ as in “line” was pronounced as /n/ as in “nine”). Other than refraining from making most of the errors, stronger candidates were able to enunciate consonant clusters and ending sounds with confidence and accuracy; an area which proved to be a shared challenge among weaker candidates.
- 61.3 Candidates’ speech was marked by the use of natural-sounding stress and intonation patterns that sufficed to communicate the intended meaning. The strongest group of candidates had a good command of various prosodic features like tone and linking features, enabling them to convey the nuances of meaning with precision. However, first language interference remained an issue for weaker candidates, with a small number of them wrongly stressing the final syllable of most words or placing undue stress on most words in a sentence.

62. Language of Interaction

- 62.1 Overall, candidates were able to use appropriate functional language to maintain smooth interaction with their students. The more competent candidates demonstrated clearly the ability to sustain spontaneous and meaningful interaction using a wide range of functional language while interactive language was somewhat repetitive and feedback rather mechanical among weaker candidates.

62.2 Commendable performance on this scale was manifested in the ability to extend meaningful dialogue using a range of functional language, such as by flexibly reformulating questions to elicit further responses, and providing prompt feedback and clarifications whenever appropriate. On the other hand, the less competent candidates tended to pose mainly display questions or close-ended questions, and to give perfunctory remarks to students' answers. Interaction was often hampered by insufficient prompts and repetitious exchanges that only yielded brief and expected responses from students.

62.3 Very often, the inability to extend dialogue beyond the routine patterns of exchanges was an indication of both a narrow range of functional language and a lack of spontaneity thereof. The spontaneous use of functional language, especially with regard to making timely adjustments in relation to students' varied linguistic levels, was found wanting in some lessons. In those lessons, candidates failed to properly address unanticipated questions or answers from students, and repair breakdowns or clarify ambiguities when called for.

63. Language of Instruction

63.1 In the main, candidates managed to use clear and appropriate instructional language to present and explain lesson content, give instructions for tasks and activities as well as use signalling devices to signpost different stages of the lessons. Nevertheless, extended explanations or elaborations were found insufficient in many cases.

63.2 The instructional language of the more competent candidates was smooth, spontaneous and natural. Such candidates used a good range of discourse markers to ensure a sustained and coherent discourse. Extended explanations were delivered clearly when needed, with a logical and coherent flow of ideas.

63.3 The variety of instructional language as well as the cohesion of ideas deserve the attention of weaker candidates. Owing to their restricted range of instructional language, extended explanations were either not given when needed, or contained much ambiguity, especially when spontaneous instructional language was required. Their limited range of cohesive devices also resulted in a lack of spoken cohesion.