

Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2013

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 2013.

General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment¹ rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 89%; Writing 45%; Listening 78%; Speaking 52%; Classroom Language Assessment 98%.

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 several 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
 - 4.2.1 In Passage A, Question 1, '*What* characterises...' the question is asking for *evidence* of high anxiety. Stronger candidates identified the response as 'insecurity, unrest and dissatisfaction'.
 - 4.2.2 In Passage A, Question 2, the question asks for an *indication* of the belief, not the belief itself. Stronger candidates identified soaring pessimism as the indication.
 - 4.2.3 In Passage B, Question 35, correct responses identified the *condition* 'years of effort', not the *result* 'large and lasting gains', which was not asked for in the question.

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.

- 4.3 Responding appropriately to the question
- 4.3.1 In Passage A, Question 1, candidates who responded ‘Despite the world’s unprecedented wealth...’ were not awarded a mark because that portion of the response did not answer the question.
- 4.3.2 In Passage A, Question 20, the question asks for a ‘synonym for ‘addictions’’. The correct response is ‘unhealthy dependency’. Candidates who wrote ‘create unhealthy dependency’ were not awarded a mark.
- 4.3.3 In Passage B, Question 35, candidates who copied the entire sentence from the text (‘when gains in intelligence have been achieved’) were not awarded a mark because that part of the sentence did not answer the question.
- 4.4 Identification of referents
Candidates’ performance on questions asking for references to information in the passages was mixed. Performances were strong in, for example, Passage A Question 17 and Passage B Question 33. Questions on which candidates performed less well included Passage C, Question 42, in which many candidates wrote ‘telling the boys to stay quiet’ instead of recognising that ‘it’ referred to the teacher’s telling them *that he was going to fetch the gun*. In Passage C, Question 44, many candidates failed to identify the lesson as one on momentum.
- 4.5 Recognition of meaning indicated in the structure/grammar of the questions
Candidates’ responses generally indicated that they had understood the structure of the question. Questions which were less well-tackled included the following:
- 4.5.1 In Passage A, Question 14, stronger candidates responded with ‘Economic progress *that...*’. Candidates who wrote simply ‘provides basic need’ or ‘alleviates poverty’ were not awarded a mark because it was not clear what they were referring to.
- 4.5.2 In Passage A, Question 15, many candidates appeared not to recognise that ‘but quite another’ has a negative connotation and denotes a criticism of what follows.
- 4.6 Grasp of global meaning – reading beyond the sentence level
Candidate performance in this area was mixed. For example, performance in Passage A, Questions 6 and 24, was strong, whereas in Passage C, Question 54, the majority of candidates did not correctly identify the teacher’s desire to arouse his students’ interest as his purpose in bringing the gun to the classroom.

- 4.7 Appropriateness of responses
Strong performers identified either in parts of the passage or in their own words the material that was relevant to the question being asked. Overall there was relatively little evidence of indiscriminate copying, although where this did take place the response was often inappropriate and attracted no marks.

5. Advice to candidates

In general:

- 5.1 Plan, monitor and use your time carefully so that you can respond to all questions in the paper. Note that the length of passages and the number of questions for each will vary. Remember that you may tackle the passages in any order; start where you feel most confident and aim to work reasonably quickly so that you have time to review any questions where you are not initially certain of your responses.
- 5.2 Read each passage quickly first, noting the title and aiming to get a sense of the writer's point of view.
- 5.3 Pay attention to how ideas are constructed in a passage. You may need to read back and forth in a passage to build your understanding of the points being made by the writer.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 Be aware that if more than one mark is awarded to a question you may need to provide more than one point in your answer.

Specifically:

- 5.6 Read each question carefully to ensure that you identify what is being asked.
- 5.7 Check the question which follows the one you are answering to help you differentiate between questions and ensure that each answer is relevant to a specific question.
- 5.8 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. The paper does not test vocabulary or meaning without reference to the context.
- 5.9 Remember that each question is looking for specific information which must be clearly identified in your response. Marks cannot be awarded

when a long piece of text has been copied which may include the answer to the question but does not identify it clearly. 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.

- 5.10 Pay attention to the grammatical structure and spelling of your responses. While errors in structure and spelling are not taken into account in the mark scheme, you should recognise that markers cannot give credit to responses that are not intelligible or to mis-spellings where they create a different word from the one you wish to use. Check that your answer makes sense in response to the question. (See Passage A, Question 14 and the note under 4.5.1 for an example.)
- 5.11 If the best response to a question is contained in words from the passage, use those words. If you choose to use your own words, check that you have expressed your meaning clearly so that the marker can understand your answer.

Finally:

- 5.12 Enhance your reading skills by reading on a regular basis. Choose first to read what you enjoy and then expand the range of your reading, both within and outside your professional field. In doing so you will broaden your comprehension of lexis, structure and meaning and thus your appreciation and understanding of the nuances of written English. This appreciation and understanding can, in turn, positively inform your teaching and your students’ learning.

Paper 2 (Writing)

6. This paper consists of two parts, Part 1: Task 1, Composition, and Part 2: Tasks 2A, Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems, and 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems.

Part 1: Composition

7. In Part 1 of the paper, candidates are required to write a short text. The 2013 task was to write a short speech to parents about digital technology. In their speeches, candidates were asked to talk about how technology affects young people today, and what impact it may have on them in the future. Markers commented that the test paper was well designed, the topic relevant and interesting, and that sufficient background information was provided in the prompt. It was felt that the task allowed candidates to demonstrate their proficiency in English.
8. 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. Nearly 80% of candidates attained Level 3 or above on Scale 1 and

Scale 3 and more than 71% did so on Scale 2, which indicates that the quality of the writing was good in general.

9. Markers noted that there were some excellent answers to this task. Candidates produced a range of suitable answers and many were able to show a good understanding of the topic in their speeches. Many used temporal comparisons to highlight the development of technology over time, and there were some very engaging introductions to the talks, for example by involving the parent audience in the topic.
10. On scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, markers found it common for scripts to contain lexical and grammatical problems, but most of these were not too intrusive and did not impede understanding.
11. One problematic area was the overuse of cohesive devices. Candidates are reminded that cohesion and coherence are achieved not simply by inserting one or two word connectives, such as 'Moreover' or 'Besides', but by making sure that the argument of the text follows logically and smoothly from one part to another.
12. Future candidates are advised to pay attention to the following:
 - Avoid using clichés as these can make the writing seem unnatural at times.
 - Put your strongest points first and then elaborate on them with details and supporting examples, such as personal anecdotes.
 - It is not necessary to use language which is overly complex or ornate in order to demonstrate mastery of low-frequency words or expressions. It is more important to use language which fits the context and suits the requirements of the task.
13. Candidates are reminded to follow the instructions, write within the word limit and not write in the margins.

Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems

14. Part 2 of the Writing Paper is divided into two parts: 2A, Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems, and 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems. Candidates are given a composition that contains grammatical errors/problems and have to correct those that appear in the first part of the composition for 2A, and to fill in incomplete explanations of some of the errors in the remainder of the composition in 2B.
15. Markers felt that the instructions for Part 2 were clearly stated and the composition contained a balanced and comprehensive range of testing items.
16. Task 2A was well done by the majority of candidates and more than 80% of candidates achieved Level 3 or above on this scale. The following were some areas of weakness:
 - Failure to add a final 's' to the problematic 'oversea' (Question 2(b))

- Uncertainty about the difference between the choice of verb in Question 6(a): ‘waste your family’ should have been corrected to ‘cost your family’.
 - Uncertainty about the structures ‘feel it is difficult to adapt’ (Question 9) and ‘you are afraid’ (Question 11).
 - Confusion about the form of the verb in Question 15, ‘Your future lies in your hands’.
17. In Task 2B, candidates generally performed quite well, with close to 60% of candidates attaining Level 3 or above. In this task, candidates were given incomplete explanations of errors/problems. In order to make the explanations complete, candidates were asked to fill in the blanks with one or more words. Candidates are reminded of the importance of clarity and brevity when providing their answers. The terminology used must be *precise* enough to explain the error in the context of the student text.
18. Here are some examples of the questions in which candidates performed less well:
- Question 6(a). Use of the plural morpheme ‘s’ for nouns with the singular morpheme ‘s’ for verbs, with some candidates regarding the verb ‘pays’ as plural.
 - Some candidates spelt key grammatical terms incorrectly. These terms included ‘auxiliary’, ‘preposition’ and ‘modal’. Candidates are reminded of the importance of accuracy when using key grammatical terms.
 - Question 6(b). Some candidates incorrectly identified the subject, omitting ‘for help’, for example.
 - Question 13. Some candidates did not explain clearly the difference between consonant and vowel sounds.
 - Question 15. Some candidates gave generic explanations without taking into account the communicative context.
19. Candidates are advised to take greater care to insert into the blanks correctly-spelt words, phrases and clauses to make the whole sentence logical and grammatically appropriate.
20. Candidates are reminded that they should not use abbreviations and short forms (e.g. prep., adj., vb) in answering 2B. Only those linguistic terms which are correctly used and spelt are awarded marks.

Paper 3 (Listening)

21. This year’s paper consisted of three sets of items relating to three different listening texts. The first text was a discussion between the host and two guests on the topic of coffee and the coffee business; the second was a talk on the topic of talent; in the third, the host interviewed an expert about the topic of information and society. There were male and female speakers in the test, with a variety of accents, speaking at normal speed for the type of interaction.

22. As usual, the paper went through a rigorous moderation and pre-testing process. Markers expressed satisfaction with the topics tested, which were felt to be varied and interesting, and with the marking schemes and processes.
23. A variety of task types were included in the paper, which allowed for a range of micro-listening skills to be tested, focusing both on gist and intensive listening. The paper included blank-filling, table-completion, multiple-choice and open-ended questions. There was no evidence that any of these formats was markedly more difficult or easier than others for candidates.
24. It was pleasing to note the generally high scores achieved by this year's cohort, with approximately 78% of candidates attaining Level 3 or above.
25. The easiest items
- 25.1 Four items, all relating to Text 1, were answered correctly by more than 90% of candidates, but all of these items were shown to have discriminated effectively between weaker and stronger candidates. Question 1(i) and (iii) required the listener to identify the speakers. Since this information framed the entire text, and since these were the first questions of the entire test, the items were deliberately designed not to be too challenging.
- 25.2 Question 9(i) to (iii) required the candidates to complete a diagram which summarised a process. While candidates found the first two steps in the process easy to identify, with over 90% answering Question 9(i) and (ii) correctly, Question 9(iii) proved to be difficult with only just over 10% providing the correct response. Question 9(i) and 9(ii) were quite strongly signposted with contextual clues that used fairly simple language, whereas Question 9(iii) included a couple of lexical items that may not have been familiar to all candidates (e.g. 'bubbling', 'gurgling', 'wafting' and 'aroma').
26. The hardest items
- 26.1 There were few very hard items, with only three items having a mean facility score of less than 10%.
- 26.2 The three hardest items were found in the first (two items) and second texts. The hardest item (Question 3) was the second item in a two-part open-ended question, the first part of which was answered correctly by approximately 27% of candidates. The answer for Question 3 was initiated by the interviewer but then completed by the guest, and this may have distracted the listener. Question 6 depended upon the candidate either knowing the expression 'fell into coffee' (in the sense of it being unintended) or inferring this from the guest's comment about most coffee professionals not having planned to enter the coffee profession. The third difficult item, Question 13(a), required candidates to include two connected but distinct pieces of information to explain the reason for the uniqueness of Valley Road at that time,

and many failed to provide one of these two.

26.3 Overall, candidates found the third text to be somewhat easier than the first two, with the most difficult item (Question 23(b)(iv)) being answered correctly by approximately 16% of candidates. Question 23(b)(iv) required candidates to transfer the input from the noun form(s) ('differences' and 'disagreements') to a verb form and this, together possibly with the candidates' schema around the lexical items 'networks', 'links' and 'ideas', made this item rather taxing.

27. Some of the open-ended questions seem to have caused problems relating to examination skills, namely that some candidates may not have paid attention to the number of marks offered and thus only provided one answer for a two-mark question, and some provided incomplete answers for such items.

28. Question 17(b)(ii) was only answered correctly by approximately 11% of candidates. Since approximately 76% of candidates answered the related follow-on item correctly, a most likely explanation for the problem with Question 17(b)(ii) is that candidates did not have time to process the fact that the expression 'have a brain for mathematics' was being used synonymously with not 'having the talent'; they have understood the context by the time they come to the expression 'not really equipped to do languages' in Question 17(b)(iii).

29. Vocabulary

Although lexical knowledge does not seem to have been a major issue, some lower frequency lexical items (as noted above, for example, with regard to Question 9(iii)) may have made comprehension difficult for weaker candidates. A number of lexical items proved to be confusing for candidates, including 'found', sometimes confused with 'fund', and 'immersed', confused with 'emerged'.

30. As in previous years, some candidates did not write anything in answer to some of the questions, which meant that there was no chance of getting a mark. Candidates are reminded that there is nothing to be lost by writing down a word or phrase that they think they have heard as this may turn out to be correct: the mark will be awarded as long as the candidate's answer is considered to be a mis-spelling of the required answer rather than a completely different word.

31. Advice to candidates

As in previous years, candidates are reminded to:

- Read the tasks carefully in the time allowed and consider exactly what it is that you are being required to listen for.
- Check the number of marks allotted to a particular question as this will give an indication of the number of points you are expected to make.
- Make sure responses are comprehensibly written and that spelling is as accurate as possible.

- Pay attention to discourse markers such as ‘however’ to mark contrast, or ‘previously’ as a time marker.
- Listen to a wide variety of source materials in English in order to increase your awareness of different genres and text-types.

Paper 4 (Speaking)

32. 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 an Argument. There is only one task in Part 2: Group Interaction.
33. Candidates are tested on six scales of performance. Task 1A assesses candidates on two scales: (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation and (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning. Task 1B assesses candidates on two different scales: (3) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range and (4) Organisation and Cohesion. Finally, Task 2 assesses candidates on two different scales: (5) Interacting with Peers and (6) Discussing Educational Matters with Peers.
34. Five minutes are given for both Tasks 1A and 1B, with Task 1B beginning immediately after Task 1A finishes. After Task 1B is over, candidates are asked to go back to the preparation room where they wait for a short while before returning to the assessment room for Part 2 – Group Interaction, in which they discuss a topic of relevance to the educational context of Hong Kong. The Group Discussion lasts for either 10 minutes (if there are three candidates in a group) or for 13 minutes (if there are four candidates in a group).

Part 1: Task 1A Reading Aloud a Prose Passage

35. The passages that candidates were required to read for Task 1A were extracted from a wide variety of sources representing a range of narrative topics. Care was taken to ensure that the narratives presented candidates with an opportunity to read aloud description, narration and dialogue / conversation.
36. Every attempt was made in the Paper 4 Speaking 2013 exam to select passages from wide and diverse areas of literature in order to present extracts that were meaningful and contextualised. Passages generally included description of setting, character and mood, and included a range of voices: narrative voice, reported speech, and direct as well as indirect speech modes.
37. Other considerations were to provide passages that would allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to read aloud meaningfully through varying pitch over segments of text to evoke voice (narrator / character), tone and mood, as well as to display their ability to chunk sense groups to convey meaning effectively using prosodic features of speech.
38. Task 1A was the weakest of the three tasks, but still more than 56% attained Level 3 or above on scales 1 and 2. Candidates who performed well in the Reading Aloud task were able to effectively establish an awareness of the needs of the

audience and attend to meaning and mood, using effective intonation, pace and volume, grouping of segments of language and modulations in pitch to convey meaning. They were able to signal the moments when, for example, narrated setting or action changed over to character dialogue or the inner thoughts of a character through the use of pitch, pace and volume; they were able to signal reflective, emotional passages through modulations in pitch, and changes in emphasis and pace. Features such as catenation, where the end of one word links smoothly to the beginning of the next, were in evidence, as were features of junction, where an extra sound is introduced to smooth the way between two vowel sounds in two different words.

39. With regard to discrete aspects of speech in action, stronger performances were characterised by clarity in word stress, in consonant clusters (for example, ch; cl; th; dr), in the pronunciation of individual consonantal phonemes (for example, l/n; th/d; th/t; r/w; sh/s), in the ability to distinguish short vowels from long vowel sounds and produce easy-to-distinguish vowel sounds within words. Stronger performances were those that attended to word endings, be they singular / plural distinctions or consonant clusters such as those in past simple formulations, for example, ‘-ched’; ‘-pped’; ‘-ked’.
40. In sum, stronger readings were those which quickly established mood, character, and event through effective use and modulation of the features mentioned without veering into overly-dramatic readings. They were those where the candidate was able to attend to the audience and the meaning in the text and effectively chunk, intone, pace and deliver a narrative without demanding excessive effort from the listener.
41. Less successful performances were characterised by difficulty in establishing meaning through modulation of pitch, tone and intonation, resulting in what some examiners described as ‘monotone readings’, which were contourless and flat, providing little access to meaning and mood. This may have been an outcome of lack of pitch-sensitivity or lack of engagement with the text.
42. Specifically, candidates may have found it a struggle to group stretches of text together in one tone group to establish meaning, and may also have been challenged at the discrete level of individual sounds (consonant clusters at the beginning and ends of words, distinction between consonants, vowel length and vowel quality).
43. Candidates who attained a Level 3 or above were those who were able to attend to the needs of a listening audience by consistently correct pronunciation of easy-to-recognise sounds. They were also able to meaningfully group phrases and clauses for intonation or sentence stress modulation to achieve effective meaning without putting any strain on the listener. Individual sounds, connections between sounds and, at the discourse level, sense groups and pitch changes were used to establish an appropriate voice, mood and tone.

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

44. This task takes place immediately after Task 1A. Both Task 1A and 1B are completed in the assessment room within 5 minutes. Whereas Task 1A assesses candidates on their accurate and meaningful reading of a prepared passage, Task 1B assesses candidates on their ability to speak on a topic after a short preparation period. It provides candidates with the opportunity to put to use their own available language resources to demonstrate their ability to produce meaningful, flowing spoken English. The task was generally done well, with more than three-quarters of candidates achieving Level 3 or above on scales 3 and 4.
45. In order to provide candidates with accessible tasks, the topics chosen for Task 1B were intended to be relevant to the candidates' personal experience. Many of the topics were opinion questions about issues in Hong Kong and in education.
46. Candidates took different approaches to the task in terms of register (formality). Some candidates gave informal, chat-like presentations, as indicated by less explicit signposting of ideas and views, while some candidates presented quite formally, topping and tailing their speech with a distinct introduction and summary and signposting their points predictively and summatively. They also used more formal means to connect their thoughts ('therefore' as opposed to 'so', for example).
47. The difference in approach may be due to the weighting candidates themselves give to audience and task, with some attending more to achieving a relationship with the listeners and others prioritising the conventions of genre. All approaches were acceptable as long as they were logical and the semantic relationships between points were easy for a listener to follow. When candidates did not achieve Level 3 on this scale, it was largely because they produced flows of speech that were a struggle to make sense of or were confusing.
48. A small number of candidates presented with few initial ideas or little to say, suggesting lack of preparation. Comments were also made on candidates over-preparing Task 1B by writing out a script to read from. This then becomes a 'Reading Aloud' task, rather than a spontaneous speaking task. Candidates are encouraged to write bullet-point notes rather than a script to help with their own navigation.
49. More generally, when candidates struggled, it was due to their inability in the moment to use resources to clearly introduce, refer to, and to relate ideas to one another.
50. Task 1B also assesses the range and accuracy of use of vocabulary and grammar in semi-spontaneous speech. Once again, this is related to the level of formality with which the candidate approaches the task and so is driven by the speaker's framework. Stronger performances were characterised by an ability to capture and convey ideas using lexical phrases, collocations with appropriate grammatical frameworks (colligation), as well as individual items of vocabulary that express specificity with regard to concepts, values, attitudes and feelings. In doing this, candidates were able to demonstrate diversity and variety in the language they

could deploy for meaning, thus showing that they were able and well-resourced in the means of expressing themselves.

51. Less effective performances were those typified by an inability to sustain a basic level of accuracy at the phrase or clause level, and those which were over-reliant on a small range of linguistic resources.
52. 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 practical to make note of how much can realistically be said for Task 1B in a period of approximately one to two minutes, and make full use of the time available. If candidates exceed the 5 minutes allowed for Task 1A and Task 1B, examiners will ask candidates to stop. Equally, where candidates complete Task 1B and have time left, examiners will (visually or verbally) check that candidates have said all that they intended to.

Part 2: Group Interaction

53. In Part 2 of the paper, candidates discuss an education-related, school-based issue, plan or project often connected with English language learning or learning through English. The task is designed so that candidates have an opportunity to take part in a professional, collaborative, focused discussion during the course of which they contribute their own views and ideas. They extend, develop, consider, investigate or challenge the ideas of others, working constructively with each other from the task agenda. In general, candidates were able to take part in this collaborative, professional discussion in a way that was focused and relevant.
54. The scales for Part 2, Group Interaction are Interacting with Peers and Discussing Educational Matters with Peers. Candidates performed very well in this part of the assessment, with 85% attaining Level 3 or above on scales 5 and 6.
55. Candidates performing well in Task 2 where those who demonstrated an understanding of the features of engaged discussion beyond the ability to contribute individual ideas. Most candidates were able to make claims and provide some level of exemplification or support for their points. They were able to create a discussion conducive to give-and-take, concession, working with another's points and clarifying, extending or appropriately offering an alternative approach to them while at the same time showing an understanding that they were working towards a focused discussion outcome within a professional teaching setting.
56. Very strong performances were those which were able to take on other perspectives, explore them, and manage a conversation where everyone was involved as an active stakeholder. This was done in addition to providing their own ideas, exemplifying them, modulating them and justifying them. Many teacher candidates were able to bring their own personal experiences of pupils' differentiated and diverse needs to these discussions, which was highly relevant; they were also able to comment on points related to teacher-parent relationships and responsibilities, as well as the socio-economic factors that may be relevant in schools. Successful candidates were able to participate cumulatively and

collaboratively, together constructing the issues that would need to be addressed in the topic under discussion.

57. In addition, more successful performances were typified by the language resources candidates were able to deploy to show their awareness that school-based activities are situated, nuanced by values and attitudes, and are shared by multiple individual stakeholders who may have differing concerns and levels of responsibility and influence. They were able to include relevant methodologies, points on motivation and student engagement, and points on styles of feedback or encouragement for pupils.
58. Less successful approaches to participation were those where the candidate was either unprepared to comment, or was limited to providing their own ideas, even where those ideas were exemplified. These may have produced shorter turns or turns that were unrelated to the previous comment, demonstrating insensitivity to, or lack of ability to undertake, collaboration in shared communicative settings.
59. In addition, weaker participation was characterised by an inability to extend, relate to, modulate, and develop others' contributions through engaged dialogue, which may have been indicated by lack of follow-up questions or checking, and lack of some attempt to recap or reformulate others' views in brief in order to move on to the next stage. This resulted in a perceived lack of engagement and involvement with the group discussion and with the topic at hand. This may have been due to lack of familiarity with the task and its intended outcomes or because of vocabulary, confidence or conversational strategy issues.

Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment) ²

60. A total of 288 candidates were assessed between November 2012 and March 2013. The attainment rate was very high, with 98% 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.
61. Overall, the performance of most candidates was satisfying, with the majority of candidates demonstrating a good sense of language awareness and high level of fluency. The strongest candidates displayed an outstanding level of competence in all scales and were able to exhibit exemplary language skills as good classroom models of spoken English.
62. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range
 - 62.1 Candidates in general demonstrated a good grasp of grammar and were able to use appropriate language that was well targeted at the level of the students. The outstanding candidates were able to use an extensive range of syntactic structures, vocabulary and idiomatic expressions accurately with ease.

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

- 62.2 While most candidates manifested mindful use of grammar and syntactic structures, some systematic errors were still present when attempting complex structures. The problem with subject-verb order in indirect question forms remained prevalent, such as ‘Do you remember who is student A?’ and ‘Can you tell me what is his name?’ Other lapses including the wrong use of articles, inconsistent use of tenses and problems with singular/plural forms were also spotted though communication was mostly unimpeded.
- 62.3 Apart from grammatical competence, lexical range also proved a factor differentiating candidate abilities. The stronger candidates made good lexical choices. They were not only able to produce utterances of varied length and syntactic complexity, but also capable of deploying appropriate idiomatic expressions that were relevant and concise, providing students with rich language exposure. Weaker candidates tended to use simple and repetitive language, with some having problems with word collocations.

63. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

- 63.1 Pronunciation of sounds, sentence stress and intonation patterns were generally accurate. The stronger candidates displayed fine variations in tone, pitch and voice to differentiate emotions and convey the intended meaning, making the speech fully comprehensible.
- 63.2 Consonant sounds at the end of words sometimes caused problems. Common errors included the omission of the consonants as in ‘might’ and ‘kick’; and the confusion in pronouncing ‘-ed’ correctly, such as /d/ as in ‘planned’, /t/ as in ‘picked’, and /ɪd/ as in ‘wanted’. Occasional inaccurate articulation of vowel sounds was also noted. This often involved the schwa /ə/ being mispronounced as /ɔ:/ in words like ‘method’ and ‘collect’ or /əʊ/ as in ‘police’.
- 63.3 Other recurring errors among the weaker candidates included the wrong syllable stress in multi-syllabic words like ‘Japanese’ and ‘superlative’.

64. Language of Interaction

- 64.1 Most candidates were able to employ appropriate language to interact with their students. There was always an obvious effort to elicit responses from the students, especially through prompting and hinting. Stronger candidates were able to use a wide range of functional language spontaneously to enable most students to be involved, whether working in groups, pairs or as individuals. They were able to clarify, give specific feedback and repair communication breakdowns whenever necessary.
- 64.2 It was generally felt that the language used by weaker candidates was

rather mechanical and minimal. Instead of using a range of functional language to facilitate interaction, they tended to ask repeated questions which required very short and simple answers. In some cases, distracting speech mannerism was also noted, such as the overuse of 'understand?', 'OK?' without a genuine intention to check the understanding of students. Though generally acceptable, the overuse of unnecessary expressions sometimes affected the flow of communication.

65. Language of Instruction

- 65.1 Most candidates were able to give clear instructions on classroom routines and conduct learning activities using appropriate language. When explaining new words and language items, the stronger candidates also made a commendable effort to give clear and precise presentations characterised by a logical flow of ideas and suitable examples. When prompting students who were hesitant in their responses, these candidates were able to address the problem, paraphrase and provide clarification spontaneously.

- 65.2 While the majority of candidates demonstrated both confidence and competence in the scale of language of instruction, some failed to exhibit their ability due to the inappropriate choice of lessons. Some lessons consisted largely of controlled practice or choral repetition of a limited set of language items, listening exercises or student presentations. The inappropriate choice of lessons limited candidates' language input for the assessment and thus undermined the opportunity to use spontaneous language for giving clear and effective instructions as required in different circumstances.