

Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2015

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 2015.

General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment¹ rates in different papers. The attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 87.8%; Writing 60.5%; Listening 86.3%; Speaking 54.8%; Classroom Language Assessment 97.2%.

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. In several cases, however, no attempt had been made to answer a number of questions for a particular passage, suggesting that those candidates may have run out of time to complete the paper.
 - 4.2 Understanding what a question was specifically asking and therefore what was required in a response
Overall, candidates' responses indicated that they had understood what the questions asked. Questions which were less well-handled included the following:
 - 4.2.1 Passage A, Question 9 asked 'What did Gregory Nagy do...'. Candidates who responded correctly recognised that the question asked for *actions* taken by Nagy, not his ideas or thoughts. 'Subdividing every lesson into smaller segments' and 'dramatizing the instruction' were what Nagy *did* to stop his students being distracted.
 - 4.2.2 Passage C, Question 41 asked why Caroline would seek out the company of the 'most unknown' boys if she could. Candidates who responded with 'she wants to run her own life' or 'to show that she was in control

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.

of her own life' demonstrated their understanding of the text: Caroline was not in a position to run her life *yet*.

4.3 Drawing inferences from the writer's words

- 4.3.1 Passage A, Question 1 asked 'What does the phrase 'in theory' suggest about access to moocs?' The word 'suggest' here signalled a need to understand the *implication* of the use of 'in theory', which implies that anybody with an Internet connection can sign up to a mooc, but that, in fact, this may not actually be possible.
- 4.3.2 Passage B, Question 29 asked what the writer implied by using 'so it is claimed'. Candidates who answered the question correctly recognised the implication that the writer expresses scepticism of the statement or does not think the statement is true. Wrong answers such as 'many people have made a claim' or 'many people think the statement is true' suggest that some candidates simply explained the literal meaning of the word 'claim'.
- 4.3.3 Passage C, Question 34 asked what James' use of 'No' tells us about his attitude to what Caroline has just said. Candidates who performed well on this question recognised the rhetorical function of the exclamation that James was surprised or found it hard to believe what Caroline had just said about her mother, instead of focusing on the literal meaning of 'did not believe'.

4.4 Identification of referents

In general, candidates performed quite well on questions requiring identification of specific information in the passages. Examples are Passage A, Questions 10 and 14, and Passage C, Questions 35 and 36. Questions that were less well-tackled include the following:

- 4.4.1 Passage A, Question 2 asked 'to keep pace with what?' Candidates who performed well on this question correctly identified the reference to be 'moocs' or 'the mooc course'. Many candidates, however, mistakenly took the reference to be 'assessment', 'assignments' or 'tests'.
- 4.4.2 Passage A, Question 13 asked why Gregory Nagy called his book 'The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours'. Candidates who answered this question correctly recognised that '24 Hours' in the book title refers to the fact that the course consists of 'twenty-four lessons of less than one hour each', not the book being available online 24 hours a day.
- 4.4.3 Passage B, Question 22 asked what was considered to be 'an extraordinary amount of sentimental rubbish'. Many candidates mistook the response as being 'the views of listeners' or 'the BBC program that tried to defend the value of disappearing languages', rather than the correct answer 'defending the value of disappearing languages'.

4.4.4 Passage B, Question 26 asked ‘Objection to what?’ Some candidates indicated that the objection refers to ‘getting rid of most of the world’s languages’, not to ‘the keeping of many languages’. Understanding the two viewpoints on language loss and which is being represented here required candidates to carefully read both the question and the text.

4.4.5 Passage C, Question 32 asked ‘What are doing ‘great things’ (line 4) such as playing the piano and getting fantastic exam results, examples of?’ Strong candidates recognised that the examples referred to ‘mothers’ ambitions for their children’. The common answer, which paraphrased the information presented in the preceding line, ‘mothers having ambitions for their children’, was incorrect.

4.5 Grasp of global meaning – reading beyond the sentence level
Candidate performance in this area was mixed.

4.5.1 Passage A, Question 19 (multiple choice) asked for the best title for the passage. Many candidates correctly identified option B ‘Is the future of college education online?’ as the correct response. Candidates who chose option A ‘The future of college education is online’ appeared not to recognise the fact that moocs are still controversial, and that they are not fully supported by all colleges yet (as mentioned in the paragraph beginning on line 18).

4.5.2 Passage B, Question 28 asked why the writer mentions that Denmark is a relatively rich country. Many candidates focused on the fact that ‘Danes are rich because nearly all of them can speak both English and Danish’. Candidates who performed well on this question were able to read beyond what was stated in the text and correctly identified the point that ‘a country that speaks a minority language can still be successful’.

4.6 Appropriateness of responses
Strong candidates identified, either in parts of the passage or in their own words, 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, monitor and use your time carefully so that you can respond to all questions. Note that the length of passages and the number of questions for each will vary. Remember that you may tackle the passages in any order; start answering questions that you feel most confident with and aim to work reasonably quickly so that you will have time later to review any questions where you are least certain of your responses. Check your progress at intervals to ensure that you are most effectively demonstrating your competence within the time available.

- 5.2 Pay attention to how ideas are constructed in a passage. Sometimes, you may need to read back and forth in a passage to build your understanding of the points made by the writer.
- 5.3 Be aware that your first answer to a question is the one which will be marked; do not copy out a list of items or information in the hope that something within that list or information will attract a mark.
- 5.4 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:

- 5.5 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 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.
- 5.8 Pay attention to the grammatical structure and spelling of your responses. While errors in structure and spelling are not taken into account in the mark scheme, you should recognise that markers cannot give credit to responses that are not intelligible or to mis-spellings where they create a different word from the one you wish to use.
- 5.9 If the best response to a question is contained in words from the passage, use those words. If you choose to use your own words, check that you have expressed your meaning clearly so that the marker can understand your answer. If you choose to paraphrase something from the passage, ensure that your meaning is the same as suggested by the passage. In this paper, for example, in Passage B, Question 20, the correct response includes ‘they bemoan(ed) it’. Phrasing this as ‘they feel bemoaned’ is an incorrect response because the meaning of expressing their dislike or sadness about language loss is not retained in the rephrased answer.

Finally:

- 5.10 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. Doing so will broaden your comprehension of lexis, structure and meaning and thus your appreciation and understanding of the nuances of written English.

- 5.11 Reading fiction provides an opportunity to ‘hear’ English as it is spoken, in the dialogue within the text, and to appreciate descriptions of character and emotion. Reading expository writing builds an appreciation of the ways in which points of view unfold in a text and a stronger understanding of cohesion and coherence. The opportunity, appreciation and understanding provided by engagement in extensive reading can, in turn, positively inform your teaching and, most importantly, your students’ learning.

Paper 2 (Writing)

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

Part 1: Composition

7. In Part 1 of the paper, candidates are required to write a text. The 2015 task was to write a speech about ‘Kong kids’ aimed at young people, teachers and school leaders attending a regional youth conference. In the speech, candidates were asked to present a more positive view of young people in Hong Kong giving at least one example of why the label ‘Kong kid’ is an unfair one. Candidates were then invited to suggest ways to develop young people’s sense of independence and maturity with particular reference to how schools and/or parents might play a part.
8. Markers noted that the test paper was well designed; the theme of ‘Kong kids’ provided candidates with the opportunity to present their views on a local news topic that has received a lot of attention in recent years. To help candidates who may not have had knowledge on the issue of ‘Kong kids’, an extract from a news article was included in the question. The task allowed candidates to demonstrate their English language ability and markers commented that candidates were able to show a good understanding of the different views around the issue. Candidates wrote knowledgeably about the important role that parents play in the formative years of their children as well as the many accolades young people in Hong Kong have received for their achievements across a range of areas including voluntary services, NGOs, academic work, scholarships, global competitions, sports, and engagement with social and political issues in Hong Kong and abroad.
9. Candidates’ performance is graded on three scales for Part 1: (1) Organisation and Coherence, (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, and (3) Task Completion. Most candidates completed the task successfully, with a very pleasing number of candidates attaining Level 3 or above.
10. The performance in scale (1) Organisation and Coherence was very strong with most candidates achieving Level 3 or above. Some markers did comment that candidates’ organisation of ideas and information sometimes required more planning. At times there

were too many points being presented and given that the task was a conference speech, markers felt that some points lacked coherence and made the speech harder to follow. Candidates needed to prioritise their points more and organise their points in a more natural and fluid way. The use of cohesive devices and discourse markers could also be improved so that the candidates' writing flows more easily.

11. In terms of scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, markers reported that there were sometimes expressions which were inappropriate to the task. Grammatical problems were also identified, some of which impeded understanding. These included unnecessary spelling mistakes, errors involving tenses, subject-verb agreement and prepositions, all of which could have been avoided with a more careful proofread at the end of the writing process. Once again there was an overreliance on clichés such as 'young people are the pillars of our society'.
12. In scale (3) Task Completion, markers felt that most candidates were able to address the task in the question. The majority of candidates wrote a speech and considered their audience very carefully. It was pleasing to see a range of speech formats from very formal speeches to some lively, more creative presentations. Some candidates drew on personal examples to introduce the topic to 'hook' the audience, while others adopted a series of rhetorical devices. However, there were still some candidates who wrote an argumentative essay or an article. There were also candidates who failed to offer appropriate justification for their suggestions and some who made clear suggestions but then failed to expand on them. For example, suggesting that schools, or the government, 'should do more' to help address the problem does not offer anything concrete and measurable. Candidates should avoid making hollow and empty statements. The task did not require candidates to overly criticise Hong Kong's youth, and candidates are reminded to read the task carefully so that they can strike an appropriate balance in their response.
13. Candidates are reminded to follow the guidelines regarding the number of words to write, use other names when referring to schools as well as themselves, not write in the margins and leave sufficient time to proofread their writing at the end of the test.

Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems

14. Part 2 of the Writing Paper is divided into two parts: Task 2A, Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems and Task 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems. Candidates are given a composition that contains errors/problems and are asked to correct those that appear in the first part of the composition for 2A, and to fill in incomplete explanations of some of the errors/problems in the remainder of the composition in 2B.
15. Markers considered the instructions for Part 2 to be clearly stated and felt that the composition contained a balanced and fairly comprehensive range of testing items.
16. Candidates generally performed well in Part 2A, but some candidates struggled with the following questions:
 - 3(a): noun form 'arrival'
 - 6: structure of '...suggested... (that) I (should) join/me/my joining...'

- 13(b): addressing the problematic run-on line by adding a semi-colon or full-stop before 'Instead' or providing a connective/conjunction such as 'and' or 'but'.
17. In Task 2B, candidates were given incomplete explanations of errors/problems. Candidates were asked to fill in the blanks with one or more words so as to make the explanations complete. Many candidates did this successfully, but below there are some examples of common problems identified by markers in Task 2B:
- 17(d): A number of candidates did not adequately explain the difference between defining and non-defining clauses
 - 19(c): Candidates misspelt 'auxiliary'
 - 20(b): Many candidates had difficulty explaining the difference between 'scary' and 'scared'. Many answers were simply too vague (or were true in some cases but not all)
 - 21(b): Many candidates were unable to provide the correct linguistic term 'anaphoric' and some confused it with 'cataphoric'
 - 23(b): Candidates often failed to give a clear enough explanation. More specific answers are required. For example, it is not enough to say that 'Living' has a consonant or 'Living' does not start with an a,e,i,o,u.
18. Candidates are reminded to check the spelling in their responses very carefully and to review their answers to make sure they are logical and grammatically correct. It is crucial that appropriate metalanguage/terminology is used. Candidates are also reminded to demonstrate their understanding of the linguistic problems with complete linguistic terms and not abbreviations.

Paper 3 (Listening)

19. This year's paper consisted of three sets of items relating to three different listening texts. The first text was a discussion between the host and his two guests on the topic of positive psychology and its introduction into schools. The second was a conversation on a radio chat show between the presenter and her guest who spoke about his travels in Mongolia, and in the third a talk show host interviewed a surgeon and a reporter on the topic of America's obesity epidemic. There were male and female speakers in the test, with a variety of accents, speaking at a speed normal for the type of interaction.
20. The Moderation Committee considered the content of the three texts to be appropriate, allowing for interesting listening and for setting 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; and with the topics, which were varied and interesting.
21. 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. With the exception of questions requiring paraphrasing (see below), there was no evidence that any of these formats was generally markedly more difficult or easier than others for candidates.

22. Relatively few items were found to be particularly easy and fewer still proved very difficult. While none of the three texts stand out as having proven very markedly more difficult for candidates, the first two texts had fewer difficult items.

22.1 Five questions were answered correctly by more than 80% of the candidates.

22.1.1 Only one question was answered correctly by more than 90% of candidates – Question 9(i). The answers for this and the following two items were signalled quite clearly by the speaker and were presented in a context that would have been familiar to the candidates.

22.1.2 Question 13(i) was a text completion question the answer for which, although not easily guessable, would not have been completely unexpected given the familiarity of the context for the candidates.

22.1.3 Given that the topic of the text was ‘horses’ and the answer to Question 18(i) was ‘Hero horses’, this was not considered to be a difficult question and so the high mean score was not unexpected. The item discriminated well, however.

22.1.4 Question 21(iii) was part of a text completion task. The preceding text – ‘crossing from Kazakhstan to...’ – ensured that this was a relatively easy item. It was included to ensure the coherence of the paragraph.

22.1.5 The one-word answer (‘sugar’) to Question 31 meant that this was an easily answered question. It was included primarily to ensure that candidates were following the logic of the unfolding argument about the possible causes of obesity.

22.2 Overall, few items were found to be particularly hard, with only one item answered correctly by fewer than 20% of candidates and only three by fewer than 30%.

22.2.1 The hardest item in the assessment proved to be Question 6. The difficulty this presented to the candidates lay both in the fact that they were required to paraphrase the speaker’s comment and in that this comment followed on quite quickly from the answer required for the previous item. Although difficult, this item discriminated fairly well.

22.2.2 Question 32 discriminated well but proved challenging to candidates. As with Question 6, candidates needed to paraphrase the speaker’s viewpoint, which in this case was prefaced by two questions and reference to others’ opinions before the speaker stated her own view (that the answer to her question is actually unclear). The listener needed to process quite a lot of information in order to correctly paraphrase the entire section.

22.2.3 As an item type that often proves challenging, Question 33 required candidates to identify what the pronoun ‘it’ was referring back to. This meant that they needed to have understood the gist of what the speaker

had said in the previous two sentences. Although difficult, it did discriminate well.

- 22.2.4 Question 35(i) was answered correctly by only 25% of candidates but it discriminated well. A reason for the difficulty experienced by the candidates may lie in the need for them to either identify and understand the reference to the Tour de France cycle race or to have understood a number of fairly low-frequency vocabulary items such as ‘amass’ and ‘calorie-burning’.

23. Advice to candidates

23.1 When addressing items that required only short answers (the majority of items), some candidates struggled to express themselves coherently but succinctly. 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 writing down a word or phrase that they think they have heard as this may turn out to be correct.

23.2 As in previous years, candidates are reminded to:

- Check the number of marks allotted to a particular question as this will give an indication of the number of points to make.
- Make sure responses are comprehensibly written and that spelling is as accurate as possible. Candidates should be aware that if a proper noun is required the spelling needs to be correct to gain a mark.
- 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)

24. 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 only one task in Part 2: Group Interaction.
25. 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.
26. 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

27. The passages that candidates were required to read for Task 1A were drawn from a wide variety of sources and covered a range of topics. Care was taken to ensure that the texts were meaningful and contextualised, and provided candidates with an opportunity to read aloud a description, narration and dialogue/conversation.
28. Each passage presented a wide enough range of words and phrases to discriminate between the different levels of candidates in terms of enunciation of individual sounds, words and phrases. The chosen passages were sufficiently long to allow for an accurate assessment, but short enough to ensure that candidates had adequate time to complete the task.
29. The passages were also chosen to allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to read aloud meaningfully through chunking thought groups to convey meaning and varying pitch and tone over segments of text to evoke voice (narrator/character) and mood.
30. Overall, Task 1A was well managed. Those candidates who performed well in the Reading Aloud with Meaning task were able to effectively demonstrate clear understanding of the passage and awareness of the audience throughout the reading. Intonation, pace and volume as well as variations in pitch and tone were employed effectively to convey meaning and mood. Higher levels of sensitivity towards the text were achieved by candidates who were able to vary and pace their delivery to convey changes in mood or modulate pitch, pace and volume to signal shifts in the text, for example from narrated description or action to character dialogue. Most candidates were also able to chunk language into meaningful thought groups, use strong and weaker forms in context and link items.
31. In terms of the discrete aspects of speech, stronger performances were marked by consistently clear enunciation of individual sounds and consonant clusters, the ability to distinguish long from short vowels and accurate word and sentence stress. Consistent clarity of final sounds, plural forms and past tense endings was also an indicator of a strong performance.
32. Less successful performances were usually due to a lack of clarity in the language produced in several aspects of pronunciation. Common problems included difficulty articulating vowel length, consonant clusters and final sounds. Substituting words in the text for alternative, incorrect items occasionally occurred. Candidates were also sometimes unable to chunk words and phrases to create meaningful thought groups by using linking, pitch and intonation. When combined, these issues might cause undue strain on the listener.
33. When candidates encountered difficulty in grouping stretches of language meaningfully, it was often because of misunderstanding lexical items or nuance or being unable to sustain accuracy at the discrete level of individual sounds (consonant clusters at the beginning and ends of words, distinction between consonants, vowel length and vowel

quality). At these points, there would be a breakdown in the rendition, resulting in some confusion for the listener.

34. Inappropriate pacing was another key characteristic of less successful readings. A slow delivery often resulted in the loss of meaningful thought groups. By contrast, a very quick reading led to distorted pronunciation. Overly brisk readings also had a negative impact on intonation, pace and volume, all of which help establish mood.
35. 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, managing thought groups and employing effective sentence stress and intonation patterns to communicate effective meaning. 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

36. Task 1B takes place immediately after candidates complete Task 1A; both tasks are completed in the assessment room within 5 minutes. Task 1B assesses candidates on their ability to speak on a topic after a short preparation period. It provides candidates with the opportunity to use their own language resources to demonstrate their ability to produce meaningful, cohesive spoken English.
37. The topics chosen for Task 1B were intended to be relevant to the candidates' personal or professional experience. Many of the topics called for candidates to voice their opinion about current issues in Hong Kong and in education.
38. The two scales for this task are Organisation and Cohesion, and Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range. Candidates performed well on these scales.
39. Candidates adopted different approaches to the task in terms of register employed. Some candidates' turns were informal and conversational in tone. Less explicit signposting was used to order ideas and show relationships between points. Others, however, adopted a more formal approach, with clear introductions and conclusions and explicit markers to help the listener navigate the argument. Both approaches were acceptable as long as a cogent argument was presented with the relationship between ideas clear.
40. This year most of the tasks involved presenting an argument. Candidates who performed well on this task generally were able to indicate clear shifts in topic and/or employ a range of devices to signpost ideas and create cohesion within the text. This helped the listener identify stages in the text and follow the flow of the argument. Some candidates were able to present logical and persuasive arguments and access a wide range of cohesive devices (such as ellipsis, parallel structures and lexical chains) resulting in highly coherent and cohesive texts in which meaning was easily accessible to the listener.
41. Less successful performances were marked by a lack of relevant ideas to substantiate claims or ideas that did not relate to each other. Candidates who were unable to structure their thoughts into an argument frequently relied on a limited range of

connectives to link ideas. This resulted in a 'list-like' spoken text with arguments difficult to identify and the relationship between ideas unclear.

42. A small number of candidates read aloud from a script written during the preparation time. This then became a 'Reading Aloud' task, rather than a spontaneous speaking task. Candidates are encouraged to note their ideas in bullet-points and to speak spontaneously from these rather than rely on a script.
43. This task also assesses the range and accuracy of use of vocabulary and grammar in semi-spontaneous speech. This scale is sensitive to the topic of the task given and the register that has been selected by the candidate (from less formal to more formal). More successful performances were by candidates who were able to make use of words, phrases, collocations and grammatical phrases that were appropriate to the topic and also conveyed their own views. Candidates who performed well in this task were able to access diverse and varied lexis and grammatical structures to convey concepts, values and attitudes.
44. Less successful performances were from candidates who had difficulty producing language that showed range in meaning, who relied on a limited repertoire of vocabulary or grammatical structures to introduce or convey their ideas, or who failed to sustain some level of accuracy at the phrase or clause level across their spontaneous turn. In terms of grammatical accuracy, areas for attention included subject-verb agreement, reference, use of grammatical phrasing and tense in context, and confusion of singular and plural forms.
45. 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.

Part 2: Group Interaction

46. In Part 2 of the paper, candidates discuss an education-related, school-based issue, plan or project. The task is designed to give candidates an opportunity to take part in a professional, collaborative, focused discussion during the course of which they contribute their own views and ideas, extend and develop these and consider, explore or challenge the ideas of others, all while working constructively with each other.
47. Candidates participated well in this task, contributing relevant ideas and accessing a range of functional/situational language. This year, the vast majority of candidates attained level 3 or above on scales 5 and 6.
48. The scales for Part 2, Group Interaction are Interacting with Peers and Discussing Language Matters with Peers.
49. Candidates who performed well on this task understood that an engaged discussion involves collaborative meaning making rather than individuals just contributing their own ideas. Whereas most candidates were able to make claims and provide some level of exemplification or support for their points, stronger candidates were also able to build on each other's ideas through clarification and extension, and move the discussion

towards a focused outcome. Stronger candidates were able to access a wide variety of discussion strategies. Such strategies include: making claims and suggestions; asking for the views of others; constructively elaborating on the points made by others; and demonstrating an ability to keep the discussion focused and on-track.

50. Less successful discussions came from candidates who did not engage in the interaction, either because of a lack of conversational resources or of relevant ideas. These candidates often took shorter turns and could not move beyond contributing their own ideas. Some candidates seemed to lack the strategies needed to genuinely engage in the discussion, such as follow-up questions or comments, or paraphrasing other views to show engagement in the discussion and to move it forward.
51. Group discussions characterised by sequential turn-taking, without any attempt from candidates to collaborate in the task, were less successful. These interactions were often mechanical and superficial, lacking the sense of meaningful, professional collaboration that the task seeks to engender.
52. In preparation for Part 2, candidates are encouraged to take part in meaningful professional exchange and dialogue by discussing learning and teaching issues with their colleagues.

Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment)²

53. A total of 287 candidates were assessed between November 2014 and March 2015. The attainment rate was very high, with 97.2% 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.
54. Overall, candidates' performance was satisfying, with the majority of them demonstrating a good sense of language awareness and confidence. The strongest candidates showed an outstanding level of competence in all scales. They were accomplished English speakers who were highly proficient in the language.
55. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range
 - 55.1 Candidates in general demonstrated a good grasp of basic grammar and were able to use language that was appropriate to the level of the students. The outstanding candidates demonstrated a natural and idiomatic use of a very complex range of structures and wide vocabulary.
 - 55.2 While most candidates manifested mindful use of grammar and syntactic structures, some systematic errors were still present, though communication was clear and unimpeded most of the time. Common mistakes included missing plurals; inconsistent use of tenses; preposition errors (e.g. 'What happened about them?'); confusion over the articles 'a' and 'the'. When complex structures were attempted, word order problems occurred, particularly, in indirect questions, such as 'Do you know what does it mean?' Other lapses included unidiomatic forms as in 'look at here'.

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

55.3 Apart from grammatical accuracy, the range of syntactic structures and vocabulary also proved a factor differentiating candidate abilities. The stronger candidates were able to employ a wide range of grammatical and lexical complexity to good effect, providing students with a language-rich environment. Weaker candidates tended to use simple and repetitive language, with some having problems using natural and spontaneous classroom language.

56. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

56.1 Pronunciation of sounds, sentence stress and intonation patterns were generally accurate. Most candidates displayed the ability to speak with clarity and fluency. Stronger performances came from candidates who demonstrated fine variations in tone, pitch and voice to differentiate emotions and convey the intended meaning, making the speech fully comprehensible.

56.2 Articulation of individual vowel and consonant sounds was generally accurate, but consonant sounds at the end of words proved to be tricky for some candidates. They tended to drop the ending consonant sounds as in ‘finished’ and ‘stopped’ or failed to make distinction between the different ways to pronounce the ‘ed’ ending of regular verbs. Confusion over /eɪ/ and /ɪ/ as in ‘cake’ and ‘kick’ was also noted in less successful performances.

56.3 Inappropriate stress placed on the weak and unstressed syllables/words was a recurring problem in the speech of average candidates. For example, the weak syllables/words in ticket, number, continue; and in sentences such as ‘Do you think Ann and Maple are going to study hard?’ were pronounced as strong syllables/words.

57. Language of Interaction

57.1 Language of interaction was generally good. Most candidates were able to interact with students through asking and responding to questions and providing feedback and encouragement. Nevertheless, candidates, on the whole, could have demonstrated a wider repertoire of functional language (e.g. probing and elaboration of answers) to engage students in more extended interaction. Stronger performances came from candidates who were able to use precise comments and appropriate follow-up questions to sustain a conversation with individuals or class.

57.2 Less successful performances occurred when candidates tended to ask display questions, which required very short and simple answers. Their range of interactive language was rather limited too. In some cases, interaction lacked spontaneity and appeared to be unnatural as candidates failed to address students’ unexpected questions or answers and just carried on delivering their prepared lesson.

58. Language of Instruction

58.1 In most lessons, candidates were able to give clear instructions on classroom

routines and conduct learning activities using appropriate language. In general, there was appropriate use of signalling devices to draw students' attention to various stages of the lesson. When explaining vocabulary and language items, the instructional language used by the stronger candidates was characterised by detailed and extended explanation with a logical flow of ideas and good use of examples.

- 58.2 It was noted in some lessons that explanation was rather brief without due elaboration, when necessary, to facilitate students' understanding. Another problem spotted was the use of 'rehearsed' and 'scripted' language in lessons where candidates relied too much on prepared notes or textbooks. In these lessons, very often, valuable language teaching opportunities were not exploited to the full and teaching effectiveness was undermined.