

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN-ORAL)

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Paper 0522/01  
Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to engage not only with the wording of each question but also with the connotations of key words within the passage.
- In **Question 1**, candidates are advised to take notice of the number of marks per question as this will help them to focus their responses clearly on how to achieve these – especially in the vocabulary **Question (1 g)**.
- Centres are advised to emphasise the importance of vocabulary building in the years leading up to the IGCSE examination and, in particular, the importance of morphology in helping candidates to achieve a precise understanding of key phrases.

## General Comments

- In general this paper appeared to be well received and allowed candidates of a range of abilities to demonstrate their reading understanding in **Question 1** and writing skills in **Question 2**. The paper and the tasks were accessible for the vast majority of the candidates. As in previous series, some of the more advanced vocabulary and the response to the third bullet point in **Question 2** were the most discriminating elements of the Question Paper.
- There was clear evidence that the subject matter of the passage was interesting and accessible although, in some cases, this interest resulted in an over-concentration on the sections about bears and dangers.
- Overall, the majority of responses to the Reading questions revealed that candidates had a secure general understanding of the passage about Kamchatka. As mentioned in the Key Messages section, it is of the greatest importance that candidates focus closely on the precise wording of the questions and attempt to ensure that they deal with specific details in order to produce complete answers. It is also important that they take note of rubric instructions, such as those indicating that 'own words' should be used to answer some questions, in order to give clear evidence of understanding.
- There was no evidence that candidates felt constrained by any lack of time in which to complete the tasks. Where there were questions where no response was given, the evidence was that this was caused by a lack of comprehension, rather than a lack of time.
- Most candidates wrote to at least adequate length in their responses to **Question 2** and many showed awareness of the requirement to use a spoken register for this task. The most successful responses swiftly established a convincing persona for the speaker and responded both imaginatively and perceptively to the content and implications of the passage, using quite sophisticated writing skills. Less successful responses to this question tended to be over-reliant on the content and language of the original, repeating, rather than developing details.
- Centres are reminded that from June 2015 there will be a revised format for this paper (details can be found in the 2015 Syllabus). In particular, there will be two reading passages with a summary question based on the second passage. From June 2015 the summary will be marked for both

Reading and Writing, and Centres are advised to emphasise to candidates that indiscriminate lifting from the original passage will be penalised under the Writing marking criteria.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### Question 1

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates, with the majority securing at least one mark. The most frequently correct responses were that the writer and his companions were confronted by a large adult bear and that it was a mother that was separated from its cub. Fewer candidates made the equally valid point that the writer and his companions had intruded on the bear's territory although some showed understanding of this by relating the statement 'we were in the one spot humans should never be' to the question. Less successful responses tended to focus on the fact that the intruders were close to the bear or simply made reference to guns/weapons. In some responses, there was confusion as to whether the mother bear was looking at the visitors or beyond them. The more successful responses showed awareness that two reasons had to be offered in response to the question, reflecting that the layout of the paper was generally successful in guiding candidates with regard to both the length and format of the response. This trend appeared throughout the paper.
- (b) Most responses gained at least one mark by focusing on the idea of photographs being taken by the 'intruders', although some took 'huddled together' as indicating fear. Very few candidates referred to the actions of the bears, often interpreting *them* as the intruders, reflecting a misreading of the question and the passage.
- (c) Many responses focused on the area being unpopulated. At times this was combined with a sense of the size of the area. Fewer just referred to the fact that it was the *size* of the area which made gathering information difficult which was necessary for the mark to be awarded. With these answers, 'huge', 'very big', 'vast' and 'massive' were the main descriptions offered. Many responses, however, did not quantify the 'big' or 'large' sufficiently to gain a mark; others cited the size of the bear population as being the source of the difficulty in calculating the size of the population indicating a failure to grasp the significance of the question.
- (d) Most responses identified that the visitors were uncertain where to look or to point their binoculars. There was greater difficulty, however, in providing a clear explanation of 'frenzy', and often the attempt to explain the word consisted of simply repeating it (or by using the related adjective, 'frenzied') which gained no marks. The most frequent successful explanation was to say that the birdwatchers became 'very excited' at the sight of the sea eagles ('excited' without any qualification was not sufficient to gain the mark). Attempted synonyms such as 'happy' and 'shocked' did not gain the mark unless they were qualified but words such as 'crazy', 'astonished', 'amazed', 'in awe' 'beside themselves' were deemed acceptable for the excitement point.
- Some responses did not identify the requirements of the question appropriately, focusing instead on the sea eagles' physical attributes.
- (e) (i) A large number of responses successfully identified a relevant fact about Mount Koryaksky. Some misinterpreted the requirements of the question, however, offering information about the region ('300 snow dusted volcanoes') rather than the volcano itself ('last erupted in 2009').
- (ii) Only a small number of responses correctly interpreted 'decade' as meaning a span of ten years. In a significant number there appeared to be some confusion with the homophone 'decayed', with explanations such as 'worn away' or 'falling apart' suggested as a result. Some answered the question in a circular fashion claiming that the word 'decade' implied that the volcano had erupted a 'decade ago' whereas a significant minority thought that the word referred to one hundred years.
- (f) Most responses answered this question successfully, correctly identifying Alexey's rifle, flare gun and the electric fence as sources of protection. Incorrect responses included references to the bears' relative lack of aggression (compared with the American grizzly), their largely pescovegetarian diet or the metres of scrubland separating the bear from the visitors.

- (g) (i) As in previous series, the questions requiring explanation of vocabulary proved to be demanding although it is encouraging to note that for both 1 (g) and 1 (h) far fewer candidates attempted to write about words or phrases that were not required by the questions. In general, responses were more successful in paraphrasing 'overdue', offering 'late' as the preferred synonym, than they were in explaining 'mauling'. An explanation of the latter word proved more difficult, with many offering 'attack' as an alternative, which did not convey the savagery of the original word and the severity of the potential physical injury. Many chose to paraphrase one of the words only whilst keeping the other in its original form.
- (ii) This proved to be a more difficult question than 1 (g)(i) and a number of candidates omitted it altogether. When responses were offered, many showed that they understood the word 'terrain' but few appreciated that it was 'impassable'. Having noted the impact of the prefix on the rest of the word, some, however, were able to identify the extremity of meaning, suggesting 'too hard to build on' or 'too hard to get through' as a result. This would imply that some Centres have profitably explored key aspects of morphology in preparing their candidates for the examination.
- (iii) In many responses 'positively' was correctly identified as an intensifier even if the meaning of 'menacing' had not been successfully explained, suggesting that some candidates had a grasp of grammatical relationships within the phrase, even though its precise meaning eluded them. In the more successful responses, 'very scary' was the most common phrase offered for which two marks were awarded. Many responses, however, completely miscued on this question, thinking presumably that 'positively' meant good/desirable/nice, and continued on from this misinterpretation to translate 'menacing' as 'worth visiting' or 'beautiful'.

Clearly candidates with an appreciation of grammar were often at a distinct advantage with questions such as 1 (g)(ii) and 1 (g)(iii). It should be emphasised that those who score most highly are those who engage directly not only with the meaning of the passage but also with the precise requirements of each question.

- (h) Full marks were very rare for these three sub-questions. Whereas many were able to offer a relevant paraphrase, relatively few were able to move beyond this by commenting further on how the writer's use of language helped to convey the nature of the bears' behaviour. Some responses used some of the wording of the question to focus their answer as in, 'This gives me the impression that they are laid back'. While this strategy was partly successful, it sometimes resulted in candidates commenting on their impression at the expense of giving a clear explanation of the bear's behaviour which engaged with the precise wording of the passage. Both elements were needed in order to gain full marks.

With regard to the phrases explored, most candidates understood that 'barging' indicated strength. Whereas 'strolling' was regularly understood as 'walking', giving, as one candidate suggested, 'an impression that the bear is relaxed and calm'; others interpreted the word as meaning 'patrolling', suggesting that the bears were guarding the perimeter, either in the search of predators or even looking for a way to escape which showed a less secure understanding of the passage. 'Gorging' was often correctly interpreted as 'eating to excess', although some interpreted it as 'goring', thus giving rise to responses which commented on the bear's vicious, deadly behaviour. 'Lumbered out from behind a bush' was the most problematic phrase for many as they interpreted this as an indication of the bear's predatory instincts and consequently missed the reference to the size, plodding nature and slow movements of the bear, and concentrated instead on inventing a sly bear, lying in wait for victims, and dashing/rushing out of the bush with homicidal intent. A few, perceptive responses saw that the four phrases complemented and reinforced one another to present a composite picture of the bear in its various moods.

- (i) Most responses gained between 4 - 7 marks for this question with many instances of full marks being awarded. The least successful responses came from those who apparently did not register fully that the summary required details of the *geographical* features of the area and consequently focused on such details as the size of the bear population and the flight time from Tokyo. However, most responses were able to identify appropriate geographical features, stating the location and name of the mountain as a minimum. The relevant points listed in the mark scheme were as follows:

1. A peninsula / Kamchatka Peninsula / a fish tail attached to the mainland / nearly an island
2. in Far East Russia / Siberia / Eurasia
3. between two seas / between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Bering Sea

4. very large
5. sparsely / unpopulated region / less than one person per sq km / half of residents (200,000) live in the capital / 400,000 live in the area as a whole
6. has a lake / Kurilstoye Lake
7. has (open) meadows
8. (crystal-clear) rivers
9. no roads / impenetrable terrain
10. (designated) wilderness reserve
11. 300 (snow-dusted) volcanoes / 29 active volcanoes / Land of Fire and Ice / Mount Koryaksky is 28 km from the capital

## Question 2

### Reading

The responses indicated that most candidates seemed to have understood the passage quite well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task, although some concentrated on creating an appropriate register at the expense of the question's reading requirements. Almost all responses were able to comment on what the writer enjoyed about the visit. Although many showed a good understanding of the passage, not all aspects of the question were addressed fully. Often one bullet point was addressed at the expense of the others, which meant that a top band mark could not be awarded, although nearly all responses fell into Bands 1 - 4 with very few in Bands 5 - 6 for either element of the question. Although the requirements of bullet points 1 and 2 were often addressed relevantly, bullet point 3 proved more problematic as despite referring to 'the need to maintain wildlife habitats' in their final paragraph, the subsequent information in many responses often reflected a lack of understanding of the phrase's implications. Some responses interpreted this bullet point as the need to protect oneself or the residents of Kamchatka from a potential bear attack. Others took the need to express information in their own words to extremes by giving details of trips to other locations, encountering a completely different range of animals, thus limiting the marks available.

Centres should continue to emphasise to candidates that, of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. The third bullet point proved to be a key discriminator for the higher bands and its omission in some responses serves to emphasise how important it is for candidates to read the instructions for this question very carefully and to incorporate this guidance in their planning. Less successful responses to this question often comprised excessive lifting from the passage resulting in a lack of organisation, with random information about bears and volcanoes being lumped together with no clear reference to the guiding bullet point. The most successful responses seamlessly incorporated such references, usually in the candidate's own words, and included a credible conclusion to the speech as well as a suitable beginning, while at the same time sustaining a convincing oral register.

In general, the third bullet point proved to be successful in distinguishing the more successful responses with candidates referring to the fragility of the ecosystem, the significance of the salmon for the bears and the importance of animals enjoying their natural home. Less successful attempts remained focused on the view that 'wildlife habitats *should* be maintained' and did not develop their response any further than this. The least successful tended to repeat much of the passage, sometimes simply copying phrases and sentences with little sense of order or understanding.

### Writing

The talk format was sufficiently accessible to allow all candidates to write at length and most wrote enthusiastically, managing to include some hints of a spoken register through ellipses, parenthetical phrasing, tag questions and direct address and successfully tailored their responses to the target audience. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In the most successful responses, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and responses at this level contained vocabulary choices which were both pertinent and sophisticated. Less successful responses, however, revealed an absence of paragraphing with a failure to paragraph even when moving from one bullet point topic to another one. There were frequent spelling errors despite many of the misspelt words being printed in the passage and serious limitations in sentence structure (largely through comma splicing). Other punctuation marks – the question mark for example – were rarely used when needed. Many responses which were otherwise praiseworthy were spoiled by the failure to punctuate correctly.

In conclusion, it would appear that this paper allowed for successful discrimination across the full range of performance and that each candidate was able to respond to it at her/his own level. The overall performance was of an encouraging standard and the vast majority of candidates approached the tasks with seriousness and commitment and with clear evidence that they had been well prepared for the examination. Perhaps the key point to bear in mind for those sitting this paper in future series is to remember that 80% of the marks are awarded for reading skills and concentration on these should be central to all preparation.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN-ORAL)

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Paper 0522/02  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read the passages very carefully – avoiding skim-reading
- read the questions carefully
- give equal attention to all sections of each question
- spend time planning responses, especially in **Questions 1 and 3**
- use their own words and not lift whole phrases or sentences from the passages
- select only the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- only make a point once in a response
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task, different for each question
- make sure that responses to **Question 1** are sufficiently developed
- practise note-making, sequencing and concise expression.

## General Comments

Candidates in this session seemed familiar with the layout of the paper and the demands of each question. There were still some responses that depended too heavily on the wording of the passage in **Questions 1 and 3** and centres are reminded that candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passage for higher band marks, and that copying from the passages is to be avoided.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Most candidates had been entered for the appropriate tier, though some clearly would have benefited from being entered for the core tier. There did not seem to be many significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, although at times finer details were confused – whether Jed or Sammy was the manager, for example. Careful reading is essential to ensure that such details are teased out and used to support ideas firmly and securely.

Copying was sometimes evident in **Question 1**, especially in response to the first bullet point: there is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting whole sections of the text or key phrases. The description of the dormitory was often copied, in particular. Candidates must change the language of the passages in response to **Question 1** and **Question 3** in order to achieve a higher Reading and Writing mark.

For **Question 2**, in order to achieve higher marks, candidates must make appropriate choices of words and phrases and need to make specific and detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice. Candidates should avoid using a grid or table format to respond to this question, as it usually limits their ability to explore the choices they have selected and often leads to repetition.

In **Question 3**, many candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points. There was a noticeable improvement in candidates' use of own words in **Question 3**, however, candidates must be aware that the meaning must not change so that the summary is factually inaccurate.

An example is changing 'cheap Internet access' to 'free wifi' in Passage A. Inclusion of material outside the passages is also not rewarded and is distracting. This happened more frequently in **Section A** on why people use hostels where candidates wrote at length about gap year candidates. There were fewer examples of excessively long responses, but this is still an area that sometimes leads to a lower Writing mark. Most lengthy responses were due to inclusion of unnecessary material, indiscriminate copying of the passages, or repetition. There were noticeably fewer responses offered in note-form; where a candidate has included a plan, they should put a line through it to indicate clearly that it is not part of the response.

On this Reading paper 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing and avoid using lifted material from the passages. Most responses were written in an appropriate register, but some Writing marks were affected by awkward expression or limited style, over-reliance on the language of the passages, or structural weakness and incoherence. Candidates should ensure that they pay attention to the length guidelines for their response these questions, particularly **Question 3** where lengthy answers cannot score highly on the Writing mark.

It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in this paper. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. Candidates should aim to plan their responses. Effective planning ensures that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, and that there is a coherent and logical structure to the response. It also helps for example to ensure that the response in **Question 1** addresses the three assessment objectives: the use of ideas to demonstrate explicit understanding; the use of detail to show close reading; the development of ideas to prove implicit understanding.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### Question 1

**Imagine you are Mrs Wilkie. Write a letter to the Public Health Department of the city, demanding that 'Sammy's Place' be shut down. In your letter you should write about your concerns about the conditions at the hostel, the mismanagement of the hostel and the likely consequences of allowing the hostel to stay open. Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words (20 marks)**

Stronger responses to this question selected and condensed the events in the passage and modified the ideas to create a suitable style for a formal letter, and a highly convincing voice for a loud, controlling mother whose outrage about the intolerably dirty and badly run hostel she has discovered her daughter staying in is palpable in every line. They were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response, firmly tethering any development to details in the passage. The second bullet allowed them to infer Mrs Wilkie's personal response to her disgust with Jed and his over-relaxed management style, and the third to use the numerous clues in the passage to develop suggestions of the potential dangers and consequences of the hostel remaining open.

The best responses firmly linked their ideas for the third bullet to details in the passage: the faulty wiring leading to fire, lack of escape routes from crowded dormitories, possible gas leak leading to an explosion, illness caused by food poisoning or lack of hygiene, rat infestation and dangers arising from the lack of security, are some examples of ideas used to highlight the threats posed by the hostel remaining open. A feature of better responses was full and equal attention paid to the three bullet points with clear modification of the ideas, but the responses always remaining firmly tethered to the passage.

Middle-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, with some attempt at own words, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas in the passage, and to present them in the same order as in the passage, often using some of the same words. A noticeable feature of such responses was far more attention paid to the first bullet where the passage was very closely paraphrased than only the more obvious ideas suggested for the second and third bullets – for example, Jed leaving reception, and rats infesting the hostel. This often led to an uneven response. At times the third bullet was evaded or even misunderstood, some responses simply stating that the hostel must be shut down but offering no suggestions as to what may happen if not, or others actually listing all its redeeming features such as a free food box. The latter was clearly a misread of the third bullet. Opportunities were also missed for the development of ideas and the drawing of conclusions in bullet 2, for example, Jed's responsibility for the part-time workers, or the crowded and unsupervised noticeboard.

Less successful responses copied out parts of the passage without recognition of the need to select, develop and modify the content, structure and language of the original. Although they used the format of a letter correctly, they generally took the form of giving an unselective narrative retelling Mrs Wilkie's (or even Sacha's) experiences at the hostel as a response to the first bullet, rather than choosing only the details that would be required to focus on the poor conditions. These responses would often include Sacha's gap year, her need to escape from her parents and her avoidance of going home, which were unnecessary and inappropriate. Some careless reading was evident in the misuse of facts, which dormitory Mrs Wilkie was staying in, which sink had plates piled up in it, or how Sacha herself felt about the hostel and its management. Sometimes these responses ignored bullets 2 and 3 completely.

A minority of responses did not write from the perspective of Mrs Wilkie, as was asked for in the question. Whilst this did not limit the success of a candidate's response in itself, candidates needed to ensure that they used an appropriate tone and persona for a letter of complaint. A few recognised the need to complain but chose to write as Sacha, a small number as Mr Wilkie and some began as Mrs Wilkie but signed off with their own names.

The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. A few invented their own material, a smoking father who blows the hostel up, for example. Others focused so completely on expressing Mrs Wilkie's feelings of anger that they did not use the passage at all. Where almost the entire response was copied from the passage there was very little option but to award Band 5 marks.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to capture Mrs Wilkie's character and unwavering determination to get the hostel closed down. The better written responses adopted a formal but very dominant and over-bearing tone and judiciously used the overwhelming evidence in the passage to support her purpose. These responses used language appropriate for Mrs Wilkie's character and status and were often very entertaining and convincing.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 1

- read the question carefully to determine its voice, style and purpose
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- answer in your own words, adapting material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the required style
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- select the most appropriate ideas from the passage
- develop and modify some of the ideas relevantly
- create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.

#### Question 2

**Re-read the descriptions of (a) the dormitory in paragraph 5, beginning 'Her dormitory was actually rather unpleasant...' and (b) Mrs Wilkie in paragraph 8, beginning 'Later that evening, Sacha suddenly became aware...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**(10 marks)**

It was expected that the response would take the form of continuous prose to allow candidates to explore their choices fully. Marks were given for the relevance of the words and phrases chosen to answer the question, and for the quality of their explanations. Credit is given for a range of appropriate choices in each section. Responses that also gave the meanings of the words were awarded further marks, depending on how specific and contextual the meanings were. Responses that also explored the effects that the use of particular words had on the reader could score up to the highest mark of ten. The majority of candidates found this question the most demanding of the three, as it requires a wide vocabulary, close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning. It was noticeable in this series that fewer candidates approached **Question 2** using a grid or table format. This benefited candidates greatly, as when using a grid often the same material is duplicated in two of the three columns. This approach also often forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form and does not allow for varying development of comments according to the complexity of the language choice being discussed. It is also rare for responses offered in a grid format to consider meanings.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They selected carefully, including images, put the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able, for example, to explain the huge scale of the toothpaste mounds in the sink stressed by 'mini mountain ranges' or the robotic, deadly threat posed by Mrs Wilkie in 'laser eye soon pin-pointed' or 'wheeled around'.

**The following response was written by a candidate in this examination series and is given as an indication of what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question. It is not intended to be a model answer.**

**(a) the dormitory in paragraph 5**

*Paragraph 5 informs the reader that the rooms in the hostel are very dirty and of poor quality. The bulb 'flickered spasmodically' which tells us that the light did not remain constantly on but went on and off as it pleased. It gives the impression that it is faulty and could cause health issues. It is annoying and out of control. The beds are 'crammed' in the room giving a sense of claustrophobia as it is so over-crowded. Also the window sill was 'encrusted with years of dead flies' suggesting that the flies have been there for so long they have become part of the window frame. This emphasises how many of them there are and how thick the layer is. The sink has 'river-like cracks meandering' suggesting that the cracks curve in all directions and are different sizes. A river is not easily controlled so it gives the impression that the cracks are unstoppable and are becoming deeper as they erode into the landscape of the sink. 'Meandering' suggests that the cracks twist and turn and are spreading all over the sink. The toothpaste blobs are described as 'mini-mountain ranges' suggesting huge lumps of uneven toothpaste over the sink. 'Moulded' gives the impression that they have been carefully crafted into mountainous shapes over a long time.*

**(a) Mrs Wilkie in paragraph 8**

*Mrs Wilkie is seen as threatening as she 'Drew back her shoulders in readiness for battle'. This emphasises her fury and shows that she sees the situation as a war to be won. She also has a 'thunderous voice' which emphasises how loud her voice was. Thunder is heard from a long distance so this tells the reader that Mrs Wilkie is very powerful and controls things. Thunder can also be associated with immense anger. Also 'laser eye soon pin-pointed' gives the impression that she is scouring the area and is mechanical and robotic. The term 'pin-pointed' shows that she has located what she was looking for. This also adds to the impression that she is frightening. Furthermore Mrs Wilkie's movement is also described as non-human. It says she 'wheeled around'. This suggests that she can spin around quickly like a machine and adds to her danger. It also says 'her eyes blazing' which is linked to fire and adds to the effect that she is furious and about to explode with rage.*

Less successful responses often ignored the wording of the question failing to focus on the dormitory in **(a)** and Mrs Wilkie in **(b)**. This often led to indiscriminate selections of words and phrases, for example 'thin, worn mattresses' or 'rather unpleasant' in **(a)**. These were often followed by lengthy comments that could not be credited as they did not focus on the question. Other candidates adopted a 'technique spotting' approach identifying literary techniques, such as onomatopoeia in 'flickered' or use of simile in 'like a relief map'. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example, that Mrs Wilkie is very angry in **(b)**. These less successful responses often took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each half of the question, containing some relevant choices and some brief explanation of them. Occasionally candidates offered an extremely sparse number of choices or simply lifted the whole paragraph and offered a general comment. These responses were usually awarded marks in Band 5.

**Advice to candidates on Question 2**

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that all your choices are relevant
- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first
- choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful. Do not write out whole sentences, but also do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for the Examiner to identify them and makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them

- avoid general comments such as ‘this creates a strong visual image’, or ‘this draws the reader in and makes them want to read on’. Such comments will not earn any marks at all
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- remember you do not get any marks for identifying techniques unless you focus on the meaning and effects of the words you have chosen
- to explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase, because of the connotations and associations of the language
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them.

### Question 3

**Summarise (a) the reasons why travellers might use hostels, as described in Passage B; (b) what back-packers may appreciate about Sammy’s Place, as described in Passage A.**

**(20 marks)**

To answer this question successfully, responses needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly and in their own words as far as possible. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point, and in a different form from the passages. There were twenty-three content points available in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. The content points were evenly spread across **(a)** and **(b)**.

The majority of candidates’ demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, with few examples of wholesale copying or responses written in the style of a commentary. The majority of candidates read the question carefully and attempted to select relevant material using their own words where possible.

Generally **Section (b)** tended to be more accessible than **Section (a)** as candidates found it easier to select what backpackers may appreciate about Sammy’s Place. A small but significant number of candidates based their answer to both **(a)** and **(b)** on Passage B which meant that there was nothing to reward for Reading in **Section (b)**.

A small number of candidates wrote in partial or complete note-form, despite the instruction on the question paper to write in continuous prose and full sentences. Where the notes were partial, all content points were credited but the Writing mark was reduced. Where the response was entirely in note form candidates were penalised by a reduction to both marks.

The most successful responses selected and re-ordered the relevant information from the passages, with a clear focus on the actual questions, and wrote them in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary, more or less equally balanced over the two sections. More able candidates carefully selected only the relevant points, re-grouping and reorganising them as necessary. For example, in Passage B the history of youth hostels did not provide any relevant points to explain why they are used today and the stronger responses recognised this. Passage B also contained a number of examples which stronger candidates were able to condense into a single point, for example, learning unusual or specialist skills. In Passage A, a significant degree of selection was required to exclude unnecessary information and ideally the style adopted needed to be far more informative and objective than the original passage. The strongest candidates were able to do this successfully.

**The following answer, produced by a candidate in this examination series, makes over fifteen Reading points, but if handwritten would easily fit onto one page. It offers an example of how a successful response may be presented. It is not intended to be a model answer.**

**(a) the reasons why travellers might use hostels**

*Hostels may be used by travellers for a variety of reasons. There is a wide range to choose from with some accommodating trips for children whilst others provide luxury cuisines. Many benefits are to be had, such as experiencing the world and exotic cultures, or visiting locations of historical value. This is in addition to meeting people from other backgrounds, or partaking in exhilarating sports. Temporary hostels at international events such as a world cup, or having an exclusive experience such as witnessing the migration of whales, are also incentives. Providing private rooms and free access to the Internet is also an attraction.*

**(b) what back-packers may appreciate about Sammy's Place**

*Not only is Sammy's Place cheap, there are many other benefits backpackers will appreciate. The relaxed attitude of the management allows for an easy-going atmosphere – chores are not enforced and are optional as is going to bed. You can get a job to earn money there. Socialising with many interesting people provides enjoyment for backpackers. Daily bus tours leaving from the hostel, combined with cheap Internet and free food creates an experience a backpacker will enjoy.*

Less successful responses were more confused and did not adopt the correct focus for this question, instead presenting **Section (b)** as a narrative story recounting Sacha's experiences of Sammy's Place, often including irrelevant material about her gap year and the length of her flight. In less successful responses to **Section (a)** there was frequent copying of the phrases 'doing chores to keep down costs', 'outdoor pursuits like hill-walking, windsurfing and bike touring' and 'guests are able to learn specialist agricultural techniques' despite these phrases being easy to paraphrase to demonstrate understanding. Some candidates included an unnecessary introduction to both sections thereby adding to length and reducing concision. Some candidates went into great detail about the history of hostelling. The inclusion of irrelevant or repeated material diminished the focus and depressed the Writing mark. Other candidates wrote in a persuasive style as though writing a brochure on hostelling; although it was still possible to gain high marks with this approach, a factual style is the best option for the summary question.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3**

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading each part of the question, in order to find the precise information to answer it
- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences; refer only to your notes rather than the passages
- do not write an introduction
- do not use quotes in your answer to **Question 3**
- do not write a narrative, or in the first person
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- write in an informative style and never add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/03

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision

## General Comments

Examiners found that in the great majority of scripts a secure understanding was shown of the tasks undertaken and of the different skills required in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, at all levels of achievement, were developed and there were relatively few very brief scripts. There were also fewer scripts than in some previous series where more than one composition question had been attempted, with one from each genre being the most common rubric infringement. While each response was given due regard by Examiners, there was inevitably some deleterious effect on the marks awarded because insufficient time had been devoted to the task.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the issues addressed in the passage. Most candidates, across the mark range, expressed their ideas in their own words and were not overly dependent on the passage for the wording of their answers. Better answers here also tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. Weaker candidates tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence, and although they sometimes agreed or disagreed with the points made in the transcript, there was limited evaluation of their validity. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material, and responses drifted into a general consideration of animal rights or anecdotes derived from the candidate's own experience.

Better responses paid attention to the audience and style required for a speech for broadcast, with some accomplished responses addressing the original broadcaster in a similarly ironic tone to challenge the exaggerated claims made in the passage. Many, however, showed only a limited awareness of the intended audience or format and missed opportunities to present their views on the ideas in the passage in the formal but engaging style characteristic of radio broadcasts.

In the compositions, the three genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers in this series. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged. Discursive tasks were addressed thoughtfully – often quite philosophically on the topic of 'success' – and although there was some narrative content in the descriptive writing, most responses here showed a clear awareness of the need to create atmosphere. Weaker narrative writing was characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, sometimes with simple storylines which were largely a series of events. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in particular genres, such as the conscious shaping of

narratives to sustain the reader's interest, the use of detail in descriptions and the organisation and cohesion of ideas in discursive/argumentative responses.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Section 1**

**Question 1: Read carefully the transcript of a radio broadcast about people's attitudes to animals in the Reading Booklet. Then answer Section 1, Question 1 on this Question Paper.**

**You have been asked to write a speech to broadcast in response.**

**Write the words of your speech.**

**In your speech you should:**

- **identify and evaluate arguments in the transcript**
- **explain why you do or do not agree with the broadcaster's views.**

**Base your speech on what you have read in the transcript. Be careful to use your own words.**

**Begin your speech: 'The recent broadcast about people's attitudes to animals raised important issues...'**

**(25 marks)**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks were awarded where the ideas in the passage were scrutinised thoughtfully and where the speech was both accurate and appropriate in style. Better responses here tended to adopt a considered style and handled the ideas in the passage confidently, often selecting and discussing specific points in a cohesive argument. The broadcaster's own views were distinguished from those reported by him and responses showed a clear understanding of the underlying issues in the passage, such as the inter-dependence of humans and animals. In the middle range of marks, one or two ideas were discussed more critically, most often the role of zoos in conserving endangered species and the rights of humans to protect their lives and livelihoods against animals. In tracking through the passage, however, rather than understanding the overall arguments, some contradictory statements were sometimes made. Weaker responses showed some grasp of the competing interests of humans and animals although specific reference to details in the passage were sketchy or revealed a limited understanding of the arguments. For example, candidates at this level showed some general empathy with animals in zoos but wanted all dangerous animals removed from the wild to protect humans.

#### **The marks for reading**

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance towards the ideas expressed in the passage and recognised the deliberately provocative tone and exaggerated claims of the speaker. The debate in these responses often centred around the assumptions behind the ideas expressed by the speaker and the larger issues of the relationship between the human and animal worlds, rather than the specific viewpoints of 'conservationists' and 'sentimentalists'. The inter-dependence of people and animals was addressed thoughtfully, with reference to the speaker's views on the extinction of species, and this in turn was linked to the idea of the dangers posed by animals whose habitats had been encroached upon by humans. The views of the broadcaster on the role of zoos, for example, were seen by one candidate as 'characteristic of his generally dismissive attitude to animals as commodities to be exploited'. At the highest level, a cohesive argument emerged, encompassing the specific points made by the broadcaster, and showing a clear overview of the passage.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 where the ideas were evaluated to some degree. A mark of 7 was awarded for many responses where there was clear evaluation of one or two ideas in the passage although some points were reproduced with limited critical comment. At this level, responses tended to identify the two arguments presented by the broadcaster as representing the views of 'conservationists' and to take issue with his reactions to them. For example, some responses argued that enclosing endangered species

in zoos and safari parks would not address their extinction in the wild or that delicate eco-systems required a mix of predators and prey in wild habitats. These evaluative points, even where other ideas were accepted at face value and reproduced, were often enough for Examiners to award a mark of 7, but a more sustained critical approach was needed for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the evaluation mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding of the specific points made in the passage and of the broadcaster's general view that animal rights should not be allowed to overwhelm those of humans. Candidates at this level tended to agree with some points and disagree with others, often showing some empathy for animals in zoos but agreeing that in some cases it was necessary to allow species to become extinct. There was often some inability to see specific points in the passage as part of a wider argument by the broadcaster and sometimes the different views of the broadcaster himself and those of the different lobbies he described were not well understood. A mark of 5 or 6 could be given where there was more straightforward reproduction of a range of points with some overall understanding of the issues shown.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some at this level misread the broadcaster's point of view and saw him as a supporter of zoos because of the cost of travel to wild habitats or relied on simple assertions of empathy such as 'How would you like being locked up in a cage...?' Naïve or contradictory solutions to the problems associated with animals in the wild were sometimes offered where an examination of the issues involved would have gained more marks. Some agreed with the broadcaster that the extinction of animal species would make no difference to them and advocated the mass slaughter of dangerous animals to protect humans. Fences around forests, warning signposts or placing all wild animals in zoos, even in responses where zoos were denounced as cruel, were mentioned at this level. Some responses began reasonably well, showing some grasp of the ideas in the passage but were diverted into more general comments about the rights of animals or the value of pets.

A mark of 2 or 3 was awarded where there was some connection with one or two of the ideas in the passage but limited understanding of them, with 4 given for responses which covered the material thinly but showed some grasp of ideas considered. A clearer grasp of the points of view represented in the passage and how each idea contributed to the whole argument, would have improved some candidates' performance here.

### **Marks for writing**

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Style and audience**

A formal tone was required for a speech to be broadcast and most responses were written in an appropriate register. Most candidates chose to write in their own voice, as listeners responding to a programme heard on the radio, although a few adopted a different approach, responding as an 'expert witness' with scientific or ecological knowledge to bring to the argument. Some directed their comments to the individual broadcaster, which was acceptable, although most high-scoring responses tended to frame their speeches as a 'right to reply' broadcast which dealt with the issues raised rather than the specific broadcaster.

Relatively few responses adopted the rhetorical techniques of a speech, although some excellent responses sometimes adopted a nicely balanced ironic tone which mocked the extravagances of the broadcaster's claims in a similar vein to the passage itself. Better responses also signalled their own point of view early in the response, often by expressing their indignation or appreciation in the opening section of the speech. These were rewarded for their sense of audience, even where there were technical weaknesses.

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience and although the tone adopted was formal there was limited sense of the response as a speech for public airing. Introductions to the topic at hand were more perfunctory, sometimes launching straight into the views of 'conservationists' and 'sentimentalists' without reference to the earlier broadcast or to the subject under review.

### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their own arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a convincing argument

which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given. The discussion focused on the nature of the relationship between humans and animals. Ideas about equality, inter-dependence and humanity's stewardship of the natural world were addressed with appropriate support drawn from the details in the passage.

Responses given 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. Candidates tended to agree with some points and disagree with others, with a concluding paragraph which summarised the extent to which they concurred with the broadcaster's views.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of paragraphs in the passage. If the passage was sketchily understood, this often led to a confused and contradictory sequence of ideas.

### Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Precision in the control of a subtle and provocative style resulted in some very high marks in this component.

Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. 'Comma-splicing' of sentences began to creep into writing at this level and apostrophes were commonly misused or omitted. 'Zoos', for example, was almost invariably spelt with an apostrophe while 'conservationists' arguments' was often written without an apostrophe. 'Conservationist' and other key words in the passage were also often misspelt.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures often kept writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which meant that Examiners could not award in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Incomplete sentences were frequent and the use of capital letters for proper nouns was insecure.

### Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Consider the point of view of the writer of the passage and how that affects their opinions.
- Think about the key arguments in the passage as well as the specific points being made.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the right style for a speech, an article or a letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops or misspelling of key words, as these will inevitably reduce your mark.

### Section 2: Composition

#### Question 2: Argumentative/Discursive writing

(a) Discuss the role of music or dance in young people's lives. (25 marks)

OR

(b) What do you think makes a person successful in life? (25 marks)

Both questions were popular choices at all levels of achievement and most candidates were able to convey their views on the topic and offered developed, relevant ideas on both topics. Some candidates addressed both music and dance in their answers to the first question and although Examiners accepted these responses without penalty, there was sometimes less development of ideas on each subject or candidates' knowledge of one more than the other tended to unbalance the response as a whole.

In the second question, the idea of success and how it could be measured was addressed in better responses while in the first, good candidates often wrote with some passion and engagement about the value of music in their lives. Average responses were characterised by relevant, valid ideas with perhaps less range and a more straightforward style and structure. In the first question, weaker responses tended to rely on a personal, anecdotal style and in the second, some rather general exhortation rather than discussion predominated.

There were some engaged and thoughtful responses to the first question in terms of their content and structure. The majority, across the mark range, wrote about music. Better responses focused on why young people in particular were drawn to music and what its effects were, both good and bad. Many wrote about music's power to lift the spirits and inspire creativity and self-expression in young people who, they felt, were particularly beset by emotional traumas. The common ground found between devotees of the same musical genres was also discussed, described by one candidate, with some feeling, as 'a short cut to friendship and understanding that's like a code that all young people know'. Opportunities for fame and fortune in the music industry were also discussed by some as a practical outcome of young people's love of music. Some balanced their essays with comments about possible pitfalls to young people's obsession with music, citing inappropriate or violent lyrics or the chaotic lifestyles of celebrity musicians which young people sometimes aspire to. Marks in Band 2 or above for content and structure were given for these thoughtful, often quite probing responses.

Examiners gave 7 or 8 for responses where there was relevant material and most were properly paragraphed but there was some uneven development of ideas or limited overall cohesion. These were often rather pedestrian in style, with less to engage the reader. Similar ideas, about the power of music to change mood or to calm nerves were made but there was less range of ideas.

Weaker responses tended to repeat material or to return to the same ideas or, in some cases, listed the different genres of music popular amongst young people, sometimes matching them with the stereotypes of young people who are attracted to them.

The alternative question elicited some strong responses, particularly where candidates considered the idea of success and how one might measure it. Better responses discussed with some sensitivity the 'usual' models of a successful life, such as wealth and status, often progressing on to address other possible interpretations of a successful life and Examiners found much to reward here in terms of content and structure. Interestingly, many candidates at this level considered that service to others and a sense of responsibility towards family and community were as important as good grades and well-paid jobs in judging how successful their lives were. Success, by its very nature, was thought by some to be something one earned and it could not be inherited or easily won. There were also thoughtful responses in which ideas about missed opportunities and the potential for regret were explored, sometimes ending with statements about the need to 'embrace life in all its colours, reaching to grab whatever chances it offers', as one candidate put it.

Average responses tended to focus less on the concept of success but to offer relevant, sometimes developed ideas about how to achieve a successful life. Determination, resilience and hard work were fairly common qualities deemed to be necessary for success at this range and responses given marks in Band 3 usually organised these qualities into paragraphs, with sometimes illustration of each in practical terms offered. Successful figures such as Bill Gates and Richard Branson were often included as evidence that good business acumen/determination/confidence rather than academic achievement was necessary to make a success of oneself. While there was often a range of ideas, overall cohesion was lacking at this level, with 'ingredients' for success tending to be listed rather than linked between paragraphs.

Weaker responses were characterised by the simplicity of ideas or the assertiveness of the comments made and there was some repetition and returning to the same idea. Although relatively few in number, responses given marks in Band 4 or below tended to run out of ideas quickly or rely on exhortations to 'never give up' or to 'work hard'. Some were brief, simply identifying the signs of success such as a big house, an expensive car and, in one case, 'plenty of women'.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range in both questions, with the higher marks given for writing which accurate, stylish and authoritative. Some rhetoric and sense of audience in the style often lifted a Band 3 response into Band 2. A clear voice which challenged and engaged the reader sometimes compensated for minor errors in accuracy but equally, there were responses which were otherwise clear and competent which slipped into Band 4 because of persistent comma-splicing or faulty sentence construction.

Limited, simple vocabulary also kept some fairly accurate writing in Band 4. Commas used instead of full stops, sentence structures which lacked control, as well as a range of minor errors kept many responses out of Band 3. Where errors were sometimes less damaging in themselves, they were often too basic and too frequent for a mark in Band 3. Punctuation within sentences was weak at this level, as well as the spelling of quite common words, such as 'successful', and the prevalence of unnecessary capital letters was also noted by Examiners.

### **Ways in which the writing of arguments and discussions can be improved**

- **Make sure you have enough ideas to sustain your response and try to link them together to form a cohesive argument/discussion.**
- **Avoid simple assertions – explain your ideas to convince the reader of your point of view.**
- **Check for basic errors, especially misused commas and capital letters, misspelt common words.**
- **Try to develop ideas into paragraphs and avoid repeating the same point.**

### **Question 3: Descriptive Writing**

**Describe a small group of people relaxing, and then the moment that destroys the atmosphere of calm.**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

**Describe a party in full swing, and then what the place is like when all the visitors have gone home.**

**(25 marks)**

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. In both, contrasting descriptions were invited by the question and most candidates used this to help them structure their responses. In the first question, a wide range of 'calm' scenarios was in evidence and the moments which disrupted the calm were equally varied, often surprising and even shocking. In the second question, although there were some clichéd descriptions of a typical teenage party, descriptions of the aftermath were often more effective and evocative.

The best responses to the first question were evocative and original, with the calm atmosphere carefully evoked, whether it was induced by relaxing on a beach, sailing or more unusual settings such as dancing on a stage or playing computer games with friends. At this level, sometimes minutely observed details or sounds were used to create a hypnotically peaceful atmosphere. One response described how the narrator watched a group of friends chatting 'as if with the sound turned off, just basking in their familiarity and friendship' and another wrote about the 'mesmeric pulsation of the ripples in the lake.' There was usually a strong focus on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator as well as on descriptive details and better responses made good use of the idea of a shattered peace, building the calm atmosphere until the moment it is disrupted. Again, the reason for this interruption varied. Some were very dramatic – tsunamis, volcanoes and storms – while some were more prosaic, such as the arrival of a noisy family on the hitherto blissful beach. All of these scenarios were successful where responses showed skill in evoking a contrasting atmosphere. Originality and clarity of detail, as well as the use of evocative and subtle imagery in creating atmosphere, were characteristic of responses given marks in Band 1.

Middle and lower range responses tended to be a little more stereotypical in the scenes described. Beaches scenes predominated, often interrupted by violent storms. While there was some descriptive focus in the middle mark range, responses relied more on predictable details such as 'crystal clear water' and 'clear blue skies' with 'candy floss clouds'.

Some confusion between the features of narrative and descriptive writing was evident here, with sometimes rather cursory description of the 'calm' scene sometimes followed by more narrative writing about what happened to disrupt it. In some cases also, the need to evoke the changed atmosphere was neglected in favour of a series of actions or events. Perhaps candidates' marks could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of the differences between narrative and descriptive writing, particularly with regard to the need for 'some attempt to create atmosphere' in order for Examiners to award marks in Band 3.

Good responses to the second question were also characterised by originality and careful realisation of the scene selected. Some responses focused very effectively on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator, often someone on the outside and rather detached from the more abandoned partygoers and in others the sense

of freedom and abandonment itself was strongly evoked. The senses were used skilfully to create a detailed and vivid picture of the party and these images were strongly contrasted with the sensations evoked by the aftermath of the party. Some descriptions were stronger here and more original, detailing a sense of eerie emptiness in the anti-climax of the following day or later the same evening.

In the middle range, there was more clichéd content, although often there was a clear attempt to evoke atmosphere and some effective details were included. Descriptions at this level tended to focus on what people at the party were doing, or how they were dressed, but there was usually a range of detail and the description of the aftermath sometimes lifted a rather predictable description into Band 3 because it was more effective.

Band 4 responses were more narrative than descriptive in focus, relying on a rather basic account of the preparation for the party or the narrator's approach towards the house where it took place. Some listing of foodstuffs and drinks was offered, or a kind of itinerary as the narrator travelled through the house,

Marks in Band 1 and high Band 2 for style and accuracy were awarded for the most controlled writing in which a wide range of descriptive vocabulary was used precisely and often sparingly. Band 1 responses were characterised by an assured and effective style in which surprising and striking effects were achieved using carefully chosen language and imagery.

In the middle range and below, a more straightforward vocabulary was employed and where there was sufficient control and accuracy a mark in Band 3 was awarded. In some cases, the writing was overwhelmed by strings of verbless sentences – one of the pitfalls of descriptive writing for some in this range – so that Examiners were precluded from awarding marks in Band 3. Few responses were too weak or faulty for Band 5, although Examiners noted that simple, limited vocabulary and style, combined with frequent errors, often kept marks low even where the content was well-chosen and appropriately descriptive in focus.

#### **Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved**

- **Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.**
- **Remember the key features of descriptive writing.**
- **Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.**
- **Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.**

#### **Question 4: Narrative Writing**

- (a) **Write a story called 'The Path that led to Nowhere.'** (25 marks)

OR

- (b) **Write a story that involves your attempt to cook a meal for others.** (25 marks)

The first question was the more popular of the two options although there were relatively few which merited marks in Band 1 for content and structure. Those that did usually interpreted the title in a metaphorical or figurative way, recounting narratives that focused on a spiritual or sometimes moral 'path' which had led the protagonist to some dark areas involving drug use, deceit or other criminality. These responses sought to reveal the deterioration of the narrator or protagonist in some way, such as the descent into addiction depicted effectively in one Band 1 response. In some cases, the realisation that they had taken the wrong path became the springboard for the resolution of the story in a more positive way but often the thoughtful examination of the decline itself was the main content of the narrative.

Average responses tended to adopt a more literal approach, mostly involving hitherto unknown or hidden paths home, usually in the dark, which led them away from their intended destination or sometimes to fantasy landscapes. The description of the journey itself was often quite effective at this level although most struggled to resolve the story satisfactorily. Having delved deep into a forest, one narrator slipped and was knocked out, only to be found the next day by his anxious father. Some responses described quite ordinary-seeming paths which transported the protagonist into the future or into some other dimension and although these ideas were interesting they were rarely well executed. Where responses showed some skill in creating characters and establishing settings, often building some tension in the main body of the response, it was possible for Examiners to award marks in Band 3, even if the story itself was poorly resolved. Weaker responses lacked real narrative content and drive. Most of these simply created a series of events with limited attention to the story's credibility or shape.

The second question was quite rarely selected although there were some responses in which a dry, self-deprecating humour emerged, adding life and colour to otherwise fairly straightforward stories about attempts to cook a meal for family or friends. Quite a few of the guests in these stories arrived with pizzas or take-away meals to replace meals that were burnt, dropped or otherwise ruined. Some meals were successfully cooked, to the surprise of the narrator's family but disastrous attempts were more popular and generally more successful. Although few responses showed the development and shaping of plot and effective characterisation needed for Band 1, many were awarded marks in Band 3 and low Band 2 where the story was well-shaped and controlled.

Quite a few responses were based on the 'Come Dine With Me' format, involving some disguising of pre-prepared meals as home-made and again there was often some humour and engagement, if not sophistication, in these storylines.

Weaker responses tended to be more prosaic and mechanical in their use of the task, listing ingredients and recounting the various steps in the preparation of the meal as a series of events with less attention paid to characterisation and setting.

Marks for style and accuracy varied considerably among those who chose the narrative option. Better responses used a range of sentence structures and well-chosen vocabulary to help create specific effects and to add colour and pace to their narratives. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks for style and accuracy below Band 3. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

#### **Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved**

- **Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way.**
- **Consider more creative interpretations of titles.**
- **Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.**
- **Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.**

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0522/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and semi-colons;
- proof-read their work carefully, as marks may be deducted for typing errors.

## General comments

There was again an significant increase in candidate entries for this component, particularly for syllabus 0522. Many Centres successfully took the coursework option for the first time.

While the choice of tasks, much of the writing and the assessment by Centres were competent, many opportunities to gain higher marks were lost.

## **Good Practice:**

- There was an understanding that coursework provided an opportunity for candidates to learn to be better writers over a period of time, by expressing their own ideas and experiences of the world about them.
- After initial, brief guidance by teachers as to the nature of tasks, candidates were left to write as individuals and to think with originality for themselves.
- Teachers monitored their efforts, checking for authenticity and offering general suggestions on early drafts, but remembering that their advice should not constitute corrections.
- Candidates were encouraged to proof-read their work, looking particularly for errors of punctuation. Successful candidates were correct in their use of full stops at the ends of sentences and were sparing in their use of semi-colons, showing understanding of where they were appropriate.

Candidates aiming for the highest grades demonstrated independence as writers, formulating their own versions of tasks and thinking inventively and at a high level of maturity. The best Centres used at best only a small amount of stimulus material for the first assignment, briefly introduced tasks capable of flexible responses, allowed a short time for candidates to discuss possible approaches and then set candidates to work on their own. Some Centres prepared for coursework by teaching skills, such as how to structure an effective speech and the type of language that was appropriate, or how a short story works, studying the presentation of characters, the build-up of tension and the provision of an effective climax. They were careful to ensure that tasks were appropriate and that they required a suitable level of thought and the opportunities to demonstrate skills. They understood that coursework was provided for educational reasons so that by practice, each candidate could improve as a writer and thinker.

Many Centres clearly understood the rationale behind coursework and approached it with enthusiasm and energy.

## Bad Practice

It sometimes appeared that coursework had been undertaken without an understanding of the work that it entailed. Some of the points listed below are detailed further in later sections of the report.

- Candidates were frequently not left to work independently of published material or undue guidance by teachers. They are reminded that marks are awarded for content, structure, style and accuracy. Moderators reported that in one particular task, that set on WaterAid, too much guidance had been given on both the content and the structure. This resulted in similar responses that showed little if no originality of thought. While the style and accuracy may have been satisfactory, the overall mark was frequently too high. This task proved unsuitable for CIE coursework.
- It appeared that a writing frames had been used by some Centres for Assignment 3. Since this was a test of reading, it was for the candidate to understand the main drift of the chosen text and to make individual selections for comment, and this should not have been provided in any way by an external source. Please note, therefore, that writing frames are not allowed. Where guidance had been given as to the selection of ideas and opinions the mark for reading was commonly too high.
- For reading, it was clear in some cases that the mark scheme in the syllabus had either not been used or had not been understood.
- Some of the tasks set were potentially too simple for the candidates. An example of this was 'Don't get me started...' which led to poor choices of content, uncertain structure, and insecurity of language register. This proved to be a task that was suitable for candidates at the middle or lower end of the marking criteria. Only a few candidates were able to make something effective out of it.
- A disturbingly large number of candidates were unaware of the need to place a full stop at the end of a sentence or to use an appropriate conjunction to join sentences into a fluent pattern of thought. As a result they wrote groups of short sentences with commas between. In addition, some candidates used virtually no commas at all. There were many examples of the wrong use of semi colons, sometimes splitting a simple sentence into two halves for no reason. Often there were far too many semi colons in a piece of work. What was more concerning was that frequently there was no indication that these errors had been noticed, or if they were, had not been taken into consideration when awarding marks. As a result, many Centres had their marks adjusted. Given the excellent opportunities for drafting and redrafting and for considering the effectiveness of one's work that candidates do not have in examinations, it was expected that these errors would have been corrected.
- There were also some issues with drafts. Please see the comments given below.

Centres are strongly warned about providing candidates with too much support, particularly about the content and structure of assignments and about specific corrections made on drafts.

Details regarding the educational aims and objectives are set out in the Syllabus, in all published reports to Centres and in the Coursework Training Manual. It is vital that all Centres offering the coursework alternative read these documents and understand and follow the advice.

## Task setting

In general, task setting was appropriate and there were very few examples where the choice did not meet the requirements of the syllabus. The only exceptions were where the genre of Assignment 1 was too similar to that of Assignment 3, which occurred when candidates had been set an argument based on a stimulus article for Assignment 1. Where an informative piece had been set for Assignment 1, such as an account of a School visit, there had to be a marked difference in style between it and whatever was set for Assignment 2. This was normally achieved by writing a fictional narrative.

Overall, the more variety of language, genre and content that could be achieved in the three responses, the higher the mark might possibly be, in balancing strengths and weaknesses.

There were some problems in Assignment 2. There were too many stories that were depressingly violent or which dealt with dramatic tragedy. Where these were personal and sounded convincing, they could be moving. However, many stories were gratuitously unpleasant even to the point where the reader was disengaged by the absurdities of the stories.

There was also a great increase in the writing of monologues. These are difficult to do well and come with inherent problems. For more details, please see the comments below.

On the whole the choice of article for Assignment 3 was suitable for the exercise and appropriate to the age group. There were some inappropriate news reports and some very poor articles from the Internet written in disconnected short paragraphs and frequently having very few ideas and opinions for candidates to engage with. Many of the articles were the same ones that have been appearing for some time, and teachers are advised to keep a look out for something new and original. After all controversial articles appear almost daily in the newspapers.

## Assessment of coursework

### Writing

In nearly every case, the rank order of candidates within the Centre was satisfactory and often good. Most candidates were placed in the right Band, but there was a reluctance to use Bands 4 and 5. Some Centres' distribution was too heavily skewed to Band 3.

An unreliable system of annotation leading to assessment has become common. It consists of writing in the margin whenever a candidate appears to hit a targeted objective in a particular Mark Band. For example, a candidate may use an apt phrase that deserves some note, but unfortunately the rest of the response may be written in disappointing vocabulary. The problem with this is that the achievement is often only partial and not sustained, so it is only a slight indicator of where the assignment is to be assessed. The only safe procedure is to list achievements against the Mark Bands that have been made throughout a large part of the response. It is not clear where this system has come from, but it is not sound.

Some Centres were severe in marking writing. This was almost always because the responses were largely accurate but more specifically were written in a good range of language and used fluent sentences.

The chief reason for reducing Centres' writing marks was as follows:

- Punctuation errors, particularly of full stops, commas and semi colons (see above)
- Straightforward, sometimes limited range of language
- Insecure structuring of sentences and lack of fluency
- Simplistic responses to undemanding tasks
- Failure to proof read
- Poor use of the spell check leading to the use of wrong words and wrong spellings.

Of the last two bullets, it is fair to say that some candidates made little use of their time to read their work and to make positive alterations.

### Assessment of reading

The mark scheme was frequently applied correctly. It was comparatively easy to score a mark of 5 or 6 where the selection of ideas and opinions was sound and where there was some value in what were usually simple and undeveloped comments.

It was less easy to score a mark in Band 1. Here there was the expectation of an overview of the text as a whole and an intelligent selection of ideas and opinions to support that view. The best candidates did this and sometimes cleverly used brief quotations of words and phrases taken from various parts of the text to tie together a general argument. They were clearly worth 10 marks. Credit could also be given for candidates who clearly covered the main arguments in the whole text and developed their responses consistently at some length.

A number of Centres were too generous in their award of Band 1 marks. Band 2 was achieved by evaluating at least some of the ideas and opinions. However, a feature of Band 2 was a lack of consistency. For example, one candidate awarded a mark of 9 had only dealt with two ideas at any length and two or three more were tacked on at the end. The mark hovered between 6 and 7. Another feature of Band 2 was that the responses were to ideas and opinions that were not arranged in any obvious order of importance or relevance, and unfortunately, in some cases candidates had obviously been guided as to which ideas to use, which is not allowed because it undermines the principles of the assessment.

Centres should use the published mark scheme which is found in the syllabus under 6: *Appendix*.

## Administration by Centres

The work of the Moderators was not merely to scrutinise the quality of the work but also to make a number of clerical checks on the marks submitted by Centres.

The first document that was needed was the **Coursework Assessment Summary Form**, or CASF (otherwise known as WMS). This was required for all candidates and not just those in the moderation sample. The Moderator noted all the changes that had been made at Internal Moderation and also used the document to check the range of marks awarded for reading. The document also gave some guidance as to the marking of different teachers in the Centre.

The Moderator then checked the marks on the CASF against those on the copy of the **MS1** (or electronic equivalent). Where there was a discrepancy, this was recorded on the CIE marks system. A check was also carried out against the marks on the folders in the sample. There were frequent discrepancies that were discovered during these checks.

For the reasons given above CASFs (also known as WMS) were required for all the candidates in a Centre and not just for those in the sample.

Copies of all articles used for Assignment 3 were required by the Moderator who had to read them before addressing the work. There were several cases where these were not supplied.

An early draft of **one** piece of work was also required. This was usually included and in some cases there was a draft for all three pieces of work. The Moderator needed the draft to make two separate checks, although this did not normally affect the marking of the folder.

Many Centres did not include the top and bottom folder from their mark range in addition to the sample that was requested.

Finally the regulations stipulated that each folder in the sample should be securely fixed and that it should not be in plastic folders, which only added to the complicated handling job that the Moderator had to undertake. For example, where a large number of folders were submitted, the Moderator had to make an initial sub-sample across the mark range and then a subsequent choice of folders to examine certain points in the range. It was not always safe to use paperclips, and a few folders were not fixed together at all. The most convenient method was by stapling.

## Summary of the contents of the folder

- 1: The folders required from each Centre by CIE
- 2: In addition, the top and bottom folder in the Centre's mark range
- 3: The CASFs (WMS) for all the candidates in the Centre
- 4: The Moderator's copy of the MS1 or electronically submitted mark list.
- 5: An early draft (see below) of one of the assignments
- 6: A copy of the article used for Assignment 3, preferably with the candidate's annotations.

## Annotation

Many Centres were meticulous in their recording of errors on the final versions of the assignments and it was clear that the marks awarded reflected this. Teachers also provided evaluations of the work at the end of each assignment or in Centre-generated report forms. These annotations and the comments at the ends of assignments gave the Moderator confidence in the work of the Centres.

Moderators make no marks on the samples they receive. However, they are aware of the errors of accuracy and the shortcomings of style in the work. A frequent complaint was that there were few or no indications that such errors had been taken into consideration in awarding the marks, or had even been noted and accepted as errors. Some work bore no marks or comments at all.

Good practice was to comment on content and structure, and style and accuracy, and to balance strengths and weaknesses for the benefit of each candidate's progress as a writer. It was important that positive comments were balanced by suggestions where improvements could be made. In many cases all the remarks were positive as if shortcomings were not important in assessment. This often led to over-marking.

## Drafts

Some Centres were meticulous in commenting on drafts at the end of the assignment.

The reasons for a draft is that candidates should be prepared to make amendments by

- Revising and making improvements to whole sections, for example changing an ending or altering the length of a particular section;
- Editing, by changing words and phrases to improve the effectiveness of their communication;
- Correcting punctuation, grammar, proof-reading errors and so on.

These changes should be made in the candidate's handwriting and in a different colour from that of the teacher's notes.

The teacher's notes should be at the end of the work, not in the margin or in the body of the text. There were still examples of teachers who circled individual errors in the text or who corrected them. This is specifically not allowed because it is the candidate's responsibility to make alterations and corrections to a draft, not the teacher's.

There were a number of infringements of this rule, and too many drafts appeared unchanged in their final versions and had no comments from the teacher or indications of alterations by the candidate.

## Internal moderation

In most cases, internal moderation or other forms of standardisation provided a reliable rank order. However, there were occasions where the Moderator could not make a judgement because of lack of agreement with the order. For example, in one Centre there was one set that was severely marked, another generously marked, three inconsistently assessed and a final set that was correctly marked.

Internal moderation must take account of all the candidates in the Centre. The easiest way is for two senior assessors to agree their own marks first and then to sub-sample all the other sets. If they agree severity or leniency of marking, all the mark range or some of it can be adjusted. Where they cannot agree because the marking is inconsistent, the teacher has to be instructed to re-mark at least some of the candidates. The set is then re-moderated.

The reason for disagreement with the rank order is usually because individual set teachers mark to different agendas, giving undue attention to one or more of the objectives.

The results of internal moderation appear on the CASF and a common comment was that there was no evidence that internal moderation had taken place. There must be such evidence.

## Authenticity

Centres will be only too aware that coursework is always under attack because candidates may copy work from a source that is not their own. They should also be aware that Moderators are often able to identify pieces of work that do not seem right. In order to counteract this, it is important to plan the work so that it is monitored and the possibility of copying from elsewhere is diminished. The easiest way to do this is to set tasks that reflect the candidates' personal experiences and thoughts and to create the first draft in class. This can be checked. The next stage, presumably the second draft, can be done at home and can then be checked against the first draft. The final draft can be done in class, (or the second and third stages can be reversed). In any case, monitoring should ensure that teachers feel confident that the work is original. If the work is suspicious, it is wise to check by using an internet search engine. Where cases of copying are discovered the offending work must be removed before the folder is assessed.

While there was no doubt that the work was largely that of the candidates, there were several examples of copying that were detected by Moderators. These included pieces by two candidates that were the same and pieces that could be traced to websites on the Internet.

All suspect cases are always forwarded to the Regulations Team at Cambridge.

## Assignment 1

Once more there was some excellent work in the form of speeches, addresses and talks. This allowed candidates to escape from over-formal English and demonstrate an engaging sense of audience. Where the

choice of topic was the candidate's own, there was usually a sense of individual interest and some energy in the writing. There was a good deal of rhetorical language, but sometimes the use of the question was excessive and interrupted the flow of the argument. Most of the work was well structured and avoided any traps such as the use of non-standard English.

This was not true of the topic 'Don't get me started', which was often given to weaker candidates. The problem lay in the choice of content. Very often it was limited and development was slight, or even immature, as in the case of the rant about not being able to wear trainers at School. Versions of this topic dealing with School, individually named teachers, referees and buses also descended into argument without logic and sometimes abuse.

Writing a rant usually involved a very insecure range of language, some of it non-standard, and there was often little structure and too much repetition. This was the sort of thing that candidates in lower year groups might have written and was typical of marks far lower down the range than may have been intended.

Of course it was possible to provide a very good response. One candidate wrote about males in a well-structured and entertaining way that constituted good writing, while another wrote a most original piece about abortion; a third attacked homophobic attitudes. These candidates were not tempted by the topic's title to under-estimate their abilities.

There were other forms such as traditional essays (best when the candidate chose an individual topic of personal interest), letters, for example to the head teacher, and reviews of films and plays.

The WaterAid appeal, used by several Centres, undermined the aims of coursework. These were not original but used the same type of content, restructured weakly to make it sound original. Luckily the style and accuracy made it possible to differentiate the responses, but this was an inappropriate topic because too much had obviously been provided for the candidates so that it was very difficult to assess either content or structure.

It was not good practice to set the same topic to a number of candidates.

Some of the topics showed maturity and were developed well. They included:

*Money can not buy love*  
*Feeding the homeless*  
*The corrupting influence of the media*  
*Improving Schools*  
*How to write an essay*  
*Life in Britain is unfair*  
*Green spaces*  
*The one-child policy*  
*Indian women's rights*  
*Monarchy*

There were some good ideas for speeches:

*A Prime Minister's address*  
*A God speech*  
*Five things I would save*

Personal accounts included:

*Pony club camp*  
*Personal rituals*  
*Motocross*  
*My local area*

## **Assignment 2**

This assignment was an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their range of language in descriptive, personal and narrative writing. However, there were some Centres that encouraged their candidates to use vocabulary too freely, with the result that meaning became unclear through the overuse of adjectives. Some of the best writers certainly used a wide range of language but it was sparing and always appropriate. The

use of the words ‘cacophony’ and ‘engulf’ was generally excessive and they rarely helped in engaging the reader.

More personal writing would have been very acceptable. Centres that set the autobiographical fragment generally succeeded in providing some convincing and moving writing. Although these were often about sad experiences, because they were based on reality, they were engaging. Very few stories of aliens, zombies and violent criminals were. Candidates were carried away with the horrible and the weird and wrote narratives that were scarcely credible. Again it was a matter of maturity, knowing the sort of storyline that was likely to impress or at least knowing how to communicate a storyline.

There were many monologues and these were more challenging than at first might appear. They had to have some structure. Otherwise they became repetitive and often outpourings of emotions that were not always convincing. The language range was not always as good as that of a narrative or description. There needed to be enough content to complete the assignment satisfactorily. There were many monologues based on experiences in the First World War, and while these were readable, they were very similar and it was difficult to find any that were outstanding as writing.

However, Centres frequently set exercise that produced some good writing, for example as follows:

### **Own experience**

*‘What happened when I refused to eat my cucumber at School lunch...’*

*My most poignant memory*

*My mad relative*

*‘The stranger in the photograph is me’*

### **Descriptive**

*In nature’s lap*

*Symphony in yellow*

*The supermarket*

*A moment in time*

*Streets of Thailand*

### **Narrative**

*Piano in G Minor*

*Sinister Street*

*The piercing silence*

*A warm and sticky liquid*

*‘As my own past opened the door...’*

*Snake in the orchard*

Finally, a large number of assignments had no title, which was not recommended.

### **Assignment 3**

Many of the articles chosen for this assignment were appropriate. However there were some exceptions as follows:

- Newspaper stories that just recorded events and did not discuss them
- Internet articles written in short, unstructured paragraphs, with much repetition and little argument
- Multiple articles, usually in twos or threes, that gave candidates too much to deal with
- Overlong articles of more than two sides of A4
- Whole literary texts (for example *Romeo and Juliet*)
- Advertisements where there was virtually no reading material.

Most articles were controversial, contained at least some identifiable arguments, ideas and opinions, and were about themes that candidates could easily relate to. However, several reports on individual Centres mentioned that the chosen article only had a small number of ideas and opinions and that this was not beneficial to the candidates. These included Bill Bryson’s article about walking and Jeremy Clarkson’s blog on airport security.

A number of articles, such as the Bhopal advertisement, had been in circulation for several sessions and some were common to several Centres. It is recommended that Centres try to find some new articles to use.

It was evident that in some cases candidates had been cued as to which ideas and opinions they should discuss, and in one case a writing frame was used to indicate the ideas and opinions. This is not allowed as it is part of the assessment that candidates should understand the text and make the selections for themselves. It was recommended that candidates should respond to ideas throughout the article and not just to a few at the beginning, since they needed to prove that their reading of the whole article had been effective.

However, this assignment was generally done well although it was occasionally over-marked (see above). Some of the articles were well sourced and interesting. These included the following topics:

*Chinese mothers*  
*World cup slavery*  
*Dress code*  
*Gay marriage*  
*Facebook (several different articles)*  
*Sexism*  
*The Syrian crisis*  
*Cruel animal testing*  
*School holidays*

#### **Final comments**

This report has underlined some of the issues that urgently need addressing. However, a good deal of the work was well planned and carried out with an understanding of the educational advantages of the component. Where there were discrepancies, it proved that coursework was not something that could be lightly undertaken and that there was a good deal of commitment and hard work that was necessary to achieve the results that Centres obviously wanted.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0522/05  
Speaking and Listening

## Key messages

The main message:

- to ensure that candidates do not rely too heavily their prompt material. The production and use of a script is not permitted and it is contrary to the ethos of this test. Centres should discourage this at the planning stage and insist on candidates using a variety of bullet-pointed prompt material instead. The syllabus suggests a postcard size prompt card, but other aids could be used, for example, brief PowerPoint slides, flip charts, or smart phone applications.

The test is an assessment of speaking skills in **Part 1**. Over-reliance on scripted material and the use of extended notes promotes reading and writing skills over speaking skills.

Other messages:

- Moderators suggest that some candidates need to prepare more thoroughly for the examination. Success in **Part 1** is clearly linked to researching the chosen topic, planning for a confident and assured delivery, practising the delivery, but also preparing for a strong contribution in **Part 2**.
- Candidates should try to make their **Part 1** presentations livelier, by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles, but certainly by relying less on reciting factual information. There is scope for further creativity in **Part 1** – e.g. taking up a ‘voice’ or presenting a dramatic monologue. Presenting empathic work using literary texts often leads to quality work.
- In **Part 2**, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware of their expected role in the discussion. The candidate’s role should not be that of a passive interviewee, but should be one which is more proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative manner.
- It is permissible for teachers to work with their candidates (once the candidate has decided upon a topic) to help enhance the content and to advise upon the approach taken for the delivery. Differentiation by task setting is therefore encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content - and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this. Moderators recommend more teaching of general speaking and listening skills in the context of a topic-based presentation and subsequent discussion. Over-rehearsal with candidates is not encouraged, but broad-based coverage of useful methodologies is encouraged.
- Teachers should be reminded that, whilst candidates are encouraged to choose their own topic, they should do so with the advice of the teacher. Candidates should not choose, or be guided, to talk about topics that are inappropriate or likely to self-penalise.
- Teachers should advise candidates to restrict **Part 1** to 4 minutes, and **Part 2** to between 6 and 7 minutes - as specified in the syllabus. It is difficult to justify the awarding of high marks to **Part 1** presentations which are short (under 3 minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow **Part 2** presentations to run over 7 minutes. This session again saw problems at some Centres with timings, and problems here often lead to problems elsewhere. The timings for the two parts of the test are distinct - i.e. short **Part 1** presentations cannot be compensated for with longer **Part 2** presentations (or vice versa).
- All Centres should use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common

computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). There is no need to use the blue cassette inserts – a list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself) or on a separate sheet is sufficient. Centres should re-name the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.).

Messages relating to assessment:

- In **Part 1**, Moderators advise Examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a low Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, and a Band 3 mark perhaps more appropriate. Pedestrian presentations should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short **Part 1** presentations or those which rely heavily on a script are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where "delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest" is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.
- Extremely short **Part 1** presentations (under one minute) are likely to satisfy only the Band 5 criteria: "Content is mostly undeveloped....and the audience is generally lost".
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content per se - it is the *development* of the content which is being assessed; in both **Part 1** and **Part 2** of the Test. For example, "What work experience did for me..." could achieve a Band 1, or indeed, a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.

An important message relating to protocol:

- The test must be conducted only once. It is a formal examination and as such, candidates must not be given a second attempt. If a test has been conducted twice, the Centre should inform Cambridge directly of the rationale and reasons for this.

A message relating to preparation by the Teachers/examiners

- It would be a sensible approach for Examiners to obtain a list of the topics that candidates are planning to talk about in advance of the examination. This would allow the Examiner to consider areas which might be productive in the **Part 2** discussion. However, this preparation must not be shared with the candidates prior to the examination and the Examiner must not regard this advice as the go-ahead to use a script - i.e. if the candidate takes the discussion in other, useful areas, these should be pursued. The aim in **Part 2** is for both parties to be involved in an organic discussion - if scripted material appears to be present in this part of the examination, this is likely to result in maladministration of the test.

### **General comments**

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from brief, bulleted notes, about a topic they felt passionately about and which they had researched thoroughly. Some successful tasks included some kind of visual presentation to the Examiner, such as sharing a Powerpoint slide or some photographs. Other interesting presentations were done in the form of a 'muse' or monologue – sometimes in the form of a conversation with an invisible character. The most successful standard presentations were given by candidates fired by a passion who also utilised a variety of devices to maintain their listener's interest. In all the best examples there was a real sense of engagement with the topic. Where candidates chose well, prepared thoroughly and were fully committed to the task the results were always good, particularly where the Centre had correctly understood and disseminated guidance given by Cambridge and the Examiners had been briefed thoroughly with regard to their vital role in ensuring that candidates are able to give their best.

Conversely, where Centres were ill-prepared for the test and Examiners were not fully aware of their role, the candidates were not as successful. In these Centres, the candidates' preparation of their topics was not always conducive to performing successful speaking tasks, and they were often ill-prepared for the discussion part of the examination – and these factors were usually more significant than the choice of topic. There was certainly too much reliance on Wikipedia in cases where topics had been chosen with less care.

Centres are reminded that for **Part 1**, the candidates should be involved in the choice of topics. While Moderators understand that at large Centres, manage the tests may seem easier if generic themes are

followed, the same theme for all candidates is not recommended. It may well be that in larger Centres it makes sense for each classroom teacher to propose a range of themes so that candidates can work in groups and practise presenting their topics to each other. Peer assessment and formative feedback is certainly encouraged. However, such generic themes must allow for individual expression.

Please note that this is a formal examination and as such an appropriate examination room is required. Candidates should not be examined in the presence of other candidates. A quiet, secure room is crucial for the success of the examination. Some Centres are reminded that the test should be conducted by a single Examiner. While a second person may be present, the test itself must be conducted entirely by one Examiner - i.e. it is not permissible for two people to be asking questions or discussing matters with the candidate.

#### *Materials required by the Moderator*

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires three different items in the package sent to the Moderator: 1) the recorded sample on as few CDs/DVDs as possible (or preferably, on a single USB drive) and using separate re-named tracks for each candidate, 2) the Summary Forms for the entire entry, and 3) a copy of the Mark Sheet that has already been sent to Cambridge confirming the final marks. In addition, any letters relating to the work undertaken by the candidates or regarding issues experienced by the Centre should also be placed in the package for the attention of the external Moderator.

- (1) Please note that without the recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a Centre and this will affect the results issued to candidates.
- (2) The Summary Form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The Examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the Summary Form. He or she should sign the form and date it – in effect; this is the form which is the working record of the examining undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form. It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the Summary Form as they appear on the Mark Sheet.
- (3) The Moderator needs a copy of the Mark Sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the Summary Forms.

#### **Comments on specific questions**

##### ***Part 1 - The Individual Task***

The dominant task in **Part 1** remains the informative presentation. Candidates select a topic and provide historical and/or contemporary information about it. A small number of these presentations remain purely factual, but many engage with an issue or controversy relating to the topic. Where the chosen topic relates directly to the candidate's personal situation or their country or location, there is usually scope for more engaging content.

Personal experiences and interests are a common focus - for example, recent trips abroad, reading, sport, music. These kinds of presentations vary in their degree of success, with less successful tasks simply describing likes, dislikes and experiences without further exploration, depth or insight.

Candidates sometimes attempt to use techniques such as addressing the listener and using rhetorical devices, but care needs to be taken so that these approaches are effective and not just a gesture.

Centres and candidates are of course free to focus on topics which lend themselves to standard presentations. However, Moderators encourage topics with a specific focus; along with a greater range of presentational styles.

***Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:***

- the importance of time
- could I survive without my mobile phone?
- multi-culturalism - is it growing or fading?
- what I do not like about the 21st century
- playing the role of a tourism officer promoting own country
- a person I would really like to interview; why, and what questions I would ask
- why the world needs more superheroes
- phobias and how I relate to them
- roadside curbs, and why I hate them
- why the voting age should be lowered to 14.

***Part 2 - Discussions***

Moderators are happy that in many cases, Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and that the conversations were generally productive extensions of the Individual Tasks. This is clearly a strength of this examination.

It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for further discussion. The best way to do this is to imagine being the Examiner and to draw up a list of probable questions, or areas of interest that might be appropriate for further discussion given the scope of the topic.

However, where this had not occurred, Moderators felt the discussions were lacking. It is not the sole responsibility of the Examiner to work hard to sustain discussion - the candidate needs to plan for this and this element of **Part 2** has indeed been built into the assessment criteria for both listening and speaking. It is, however, the responsibility of the Examiner to move the discussion along and to ensure that a 6 to 7 minute conversation occurs. Ideally, this would be a discussion where more challenging ideas and content would be introduced as the discussion develops.

The most effective Examiners clearly took notes as the candidates completed their presentations, and then based the discussions very closely on what the candidates had actually spoken about. This usually led to conversations which arose naturally from the individual task. More work is needed, however, for candidates to take a greater part in developing the discussions. Some candidates, and some Examiners, seemed to be unaware that this is expected. In a number of Centres, there seemed to be an understanding that the candidate would deliver his or her talk and then wait to be formally questioned by the Examiner. This clearly led to a more stilted and less effective discussion. In the stronger **Part 2** performances the candidates were encouraged to take control of the discussion and there was a genuine feeling that it was a two-way conversation based on an equal footing between the candidate and the Examiner.

Examiners should therefore avoid adopting a very formal 'interview' approach in **Part 2**. The aim is to be supportive of the candidate; to share an interest in his/her topic, and to share views, ideas and to work with the candidate to develop the conversation. It is important that the spontaneity of discussion is maintained - it is a conversation which is sought and not an interview.

In general however, candidates and Examiners stayed on task, though there were a few instances of Examiners using the allotted time to involve candidates in discussions about other matters - for example, their future plans - when this was not part of the candidate's talk. Such transgressions are likely to result in lower marks as the assessment criteria assume that content in **Part 2** relates directly to content in **Part 1**.

The least successful discussions were those where the Examiner talked too much - sometimes jumping in too quickly and interrupting the candidate. Some Examiners should be careful not to answer their own questions. A few Examiners asked too many closed questions, which unsurprisingly elicited short and weaker responses, which do not encourage development. Open questions are much more effective.

***Concluding comments***

It is clear that some Centres need to offer further training to their Teachers/Examiners to conduct these task-oriented tests as the syllabus and other Cambridge supporting documentation (e.g. the Handbook for Speaking and Listening) stipulate. Where Centres do not comply with the rubrics, the result is often disastrous and the effect is usually felt by the candidates whose achievement and performance is clearly affected. This is unacceptable and such Centres should seek direct guidance from Cambridge when they receive their individual reports on the work undertaken for the session.

However, Cambridge wishes to commend Centres who have responded well to what might be a new examination for them - Cambridge does appreciate that a different culture is required for what is a new assessment methodology and that this takes time to establish itself. There were many cases where Moderators reported refreshing and lively work, where it was clear that the candidates had enjoyed taking control of their own learning and had responded well to being allowed to be active in the skills of research, oral presentation and subsequent discussion.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0522/06  
Speaking and Listening Coursework

## Key Messages

- When planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered, it is important for a centre to decide which of the two distinct Speaking and Listening pathways, **either** Component 5 **or** Component 6, is to be the chosen route.
- Component code errors, where centres enter for the wrong component, are not uncommon and can cause problems for all concerned. The two components are very different in their format and execution. Component 6 is much more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- To successfully implement the course, Component 6 centres are recommended to use both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide four different items in the package sent to the Moderator. These are a **recorded sample** on CD, DVD or USB drive, the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered, a **copy of the marks** (the MS1) that have already been sent to Cambridge and the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** for the candidates included in the sample. Each of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.
- In particular, the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** should be treated as working documents that are completed as each task is undertaken. Specific information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful.
- Clerical and mathematical errors continue to undermine the moderation process. It is an expectation that the sample presented by a centre has been carefully checked before being submitted to Cambridge. This avoids time being wasted during moderation and allows for a more efficient process to take place.
- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and confirm that the sample requested is the one sent. A sample representing the full range of the centre's marks is expected with both the highest and lowest performing candidates included. We encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format such as mp3, wav and wma, but not AUP, that can be played by standard computer software.
- Please follow the specific instructions in the current syllabus that outline the way in which the recordings of candidates undertaking tasks should be introduced by the Teacher/Examiner. For paired activities it is essential that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the candidates in the activity so that successful moderation can take place. The simplest way of achieving this is for the candidates to introduce themselves and their roles in the activity.
- Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 06 tasks but it is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

## **General Comments**

- Through the syllabus, Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please use these documents.
- It is worth noting that the Component 5 Summary Form is different to, and is not interchangeable with, the Component 6 equivalent. Any choice as to which component to undertake should be made before any assessment takes place.
- For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is again encouraged.
- The same is true of any chosen topic in that the interest of the candidate in the subject matter, the level of preparation and the enthusiasm to perform are the key elements for a successful outcome.

## **Comments on Specific Tasks**

Once again, Moderators have noted that the tasks which worked most successfully were the ones which were candidate driven rather than teacher led. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, Tasks 1 and 2 do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. The balance between preparedness and a candidate's ability to think about changes in the direction of the discussion and to react accordingly needs to be maintained if higher skill levels are to be achieved. It is very difficult to achieve a band 1 response in Task 1 if the performance is heavily scripted.

### **Task 1**

It was reported that a wide range of topics were being undertaken, but the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. When choosing topics it is important to take into account that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. This component allows the candidate and teacher to work together to ensure the topic choice is suitable. Rehearsal and development of the task are encouraged.

*Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:*

- My involvement in .....
- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- Existentialism (or any philosophical viewpoint on which the candidate is knowledgeable)
- Keeping fit and eating healthily
- Body image and the media
- A review of a film or book that is developed beyond narrative to include analysis and consideration.

### **Task 2**

There should be only two participants in Task 2. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a candidate who has been assessed may make up the pair. It is unacceptable for this task to be performed by three candidates. In effect, any Task 2 activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a Task 3 Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes a non-compliance issue and will be treated accordingly.

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively extended role play that allows them to fully demonstrate their discursive strengths. The key element is that candidates should be encouraged to hone their skills in choosing the correct register, particularly formal speech, and to extend their vocabulary. With regard to role-plays, it should be borne in mind that this is an assessment of language skills rather than drama skills. Some candidates are adept at assuming a role, but do not really prepare themselves to fulfil the language requirements as well as they might.

Generally, responses to Task 2 that are teacher-led, either with a teacher interviewing a candidate or with two candidates being led by a teacher, are less successful than a developed discussion between two candidates. It is recommended that this approach is only considered where it is deemed the candidates are too weak to initiate the discussion without external assistance.

A pathway that has become popular for Task 2 is the 'interview' where one candidate acts as the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. This can work well but there is an inherent weakness in the activity if all the interviewer does is ask a set of pre-prepared questions. This restricts the level of performance, particularly for the Listening element. One way to counteract this problem is for candidates to swap roles halfway through so each has the opportunity to demonstrate a wider range of relevant skills.

*Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:*

- Are tattoos and body piercings suitable for teenagers?
- Video games v outdoor sports
- Do we still need the Royals?
- Abortion – for and against
- The influence of reality television on the teenage audience
- Footballers' wages – but this needs careful planning
- Planning an event (where both candidates are enthusiastic)
- Environmental issues
- Should certain drugs be legalised?
- Obesity in children
- The Internet: Good or bad?

### **Task 3**

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and possibly controversial or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. To this end it is advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

*Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:*

- The Birlings participating in a television debate
- Performing an extra scene from a play that has been written by the candidates
- Dangerous dogs (or any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint)
- Time capsule
- Championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite.

### **General Conclusions**

- Moderators continue to report that the general standard of assessment by centres is at, or close to, the correct level.
- Where centres have followed instructions and included the appropriate documentation and sample recordings, moderation has been smooth and successful and this is noted with gratitude.
- Conversely, problems have arisen where centres have not followed the instructions regarding sampling and documentation or where clerical errors have occurred because documentation was not checked with sufficient rigour before being sent to Cambridge. It is an expectation that centres provide the requisite documentation and that it is accurate.