

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/01  
Reading Passage Core

## Key Messages

1. Questions such as 1 (g) require candidates to provide definitions of six italicised words in total with one mark being awarded for each correct definition. It is important that candidates attempt to define all italicised words and focus their responses closely on those words.
2. It is important that candidates attempt to use their own words whenever a question requires them to do so in order to make clear their understanding.
3. Questions such as 1 (h) require explanation of *how* a writer's choice of words helps to produce a particular response from the reader and, therefore, a complete answer to such questions involves more than simply defining the meaning of the quoted phrase. Centres are advised to focus on developing effective strategies for tackling the specific requirements of key words within the question, particularly *how*, in order to explore nuances of meaning resulting from the words used by the writer.
4. Candidates should ensure that their responses to **Question 2** are closely linked to the context and content of the Reading Passage. They are also advised to spend some time proof-reading their responses and, in particular, focus on checking that they have separated sentences correctly by using full stops.

## General Comments

Candidates responded well to this paper and the overall impression is that the Reading Passage was both challenging but accessible in terms of understanding but also a very good stimulus for the journal writing in **Question 2** which produced a large number of thoughtful and well-focused responses. Nearly all candidates responded conscientiously and diligently to all questions and made creditable attempts to confront the more demanding sub-questions of **Question 1**; although such responses did not always gain the full marks available for these questions, there were many occasions where partial marks were gained as an emerging sense of understanding was apparent from candidates endeavouring to express a complex point.

There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most answers were of adequate length for all questions; overall presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard. Nearly all responses gave clear evidence that the examination was being taken seriously and that all candidates were trying their very best to do well.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this correctly by identifying the word *discouraged*, although a significant minority chose the word *permitted*. There were a few responses consisting of whole sentences rather than just the one word required - it was not possible to reward such responses unless the correct word was clearly identified, such as by underlining.
- (b) Most candidates answered this correctly with 'his father's employers' although some misread or misspelt this as 'his father's employees'.

- (c) The question asked for candidates to explain in their own words and most did or engaged in selective lifting of phrases which was acceptable. However, no marks were gained by those who gave a verbatim lift of the complete section of the passage containing the relevant details. There were three points required to gain the 3 marks on offer for this question.

The first bullet point required candidates to name *vessels/ships* in their answers but quite a number referred simply to naming the paintings and not the features within them, with the result that they did not gain the available mark. Many candidates successfully answered the second bullet point that Christopher found the game highly amusing although significantly fewer gained the third available mark by stating that he would not stop until every ship/vessel was named or until the game was finished. Candidates are advised that the use of text language is best avoided in response to questions on this paper - there is no guarantee that referring to Christopher's 'lol' would be understood by all who mark the paper!

- (d) This four-mark question asking for Christopher's comments about his mother's character proved to be demanding, with only a very small number of candidates gaining more than two of the available marks. In fact, a significant number answered that Mrs Banks was not moody in the least and was a very happy-go-lucky woman. Such responses would appear to be the result of confusion caused by a misinterpretation of the double negative in the sentence, "It was *not* even *unheard* of for my mother to switch moods abruptly", leading to the erroneous assumption that the mother was very good at not switching her moods abruptly. Those who did manage successfully to identify her mood swings often did so without any reference to her short temper or her tendency to reprimand Christopher for something done at a different time. Very few candidates indeed noted the final point that Christopher was in some way frightened of his mother's capacity for anger.
- (e) This question was answered successfully by the vast majority of candidates who quoted correctly from the passage that the father was "slumped over his bureau". Responses that focused on *how* the father was positioned as opposed to *where* and those which repeated the words of the question by saying that he was "in his study" were not rewarded but those who translated "bureau" into "desk" were.
- (f) This question was one of the least well answered on the paper. The key points required were to show an understanding of what was meant by "hindsight" and the phrase "shape that memory". "Hindsight" in particular caused great difficulty and would appear to be an expression outside the vocabulary of most candidates, although some were able to work out from the context that Christopher had had trouble in recalling events from that day accurately from an adult standpoint, and thus were able to suggest that he had created his own version of events. However, answers that gained 2 marks for this question were rare. In general, candidates found "shaped" easier to paraphrase than "hindsight". Encouragingly, although many found this question very challenging, some were able to isolate the key words to explore in their responses, even if they were unable to offer a clear explanation and were rewarded with one mark in total.
- (g) As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, this question proved demanding and it is essential that candidates focus their responses on defining the italicised words in the phrases quoted.
- (i) Comparatively few candidates gained two marks for this question with the explanation for 'abiding' as being lasting or well-remembered being more commonly answered correctly than 'slumped', which was often merely repeated or understated with "leaned" or "sat" without any qualifying adverb to indicate the despair and/or heaviness in his position. "Slouched" was a popular synonym and there were other occasional pointers to understanding such as "hunched", "draped", "spread" and "sprawled" over his desk.
- (ii) This also proved to be a demanding question with only a small number of candidates gaining even one mark. Although many understood that the father's "frustration" involved an element of anger only a few developed this point further to include a reference to the context in which the father found himself and the fact that his anger and upset were the result of his powerlessness to do anything about it. Very few also managed to find own words for "contorted" although "scrunched" and "distorted" were identified and rewarded.
- (iii) The word *reprimand* proved difficult for most candidates in that "ordered" and "told him to" did not convey the notion of being told off. The "pull himself together" was frequently and successfully explained often through a range of colloquialisms such as, "get a grip", and "calm down".

(h) This question also proved to be demanding with only a small number of responses going beyond explaining a content detail for each phrase to examine the effect of the language used, and how it contributed to Christopher's view of his father. This resulted in very few two mark answers. Some candidates did little else than paraphrase the original wording which gained one mark if the answer revealed that the phrase had been clearly understood. A few candidates ignored the instruction to select three of the four phrases quoted in the question and simply chose their own phrases to explain; such responses could not be rewarded and nor could those that offered roughly the same explanation for each of the different phrases or which used one given phrase to attempt to explain another.

- **“as though he had hurled them there in a temper fit”**

The majority of candidates established the “throwing’/chucking” of the books on the floor but did not consider the considerable force and loss of control conveyed, for example, by the words “hurled” and “temper fit”.

- **“said in a voice that rather shocked me”**

Most candidates correctly identified Christopher's surprise at the change in his father's voice but failed to investigate the use of “shocked” and “a voice” to convey how marked this change was.

- **“my father did collect himself a little at this point”**

Again, many candidates were able to comment on Mr Banks “pulling himself together” but failed to explore the lack of success in doing so.

- **“his face creased again with despair”**

Candidates were not so successful in explaining this phrase with little explanation of the intensity of feeling conveyed through the word “creased” or, indeed, the word “despair”. Again, as with “frustration”, “despair” proved very difficult for most to explain precisely but a few did manage to convey the depth of his feeling with suitable qualifiers. Only a small number of responses successfully commented on “creased”; perhaps it was felt that the word was too straightforward in meaning to require comment.

(i) Most candidates managed to score between 4 -7 marks for this summary question although some responses focused on Mr Banks rather than Mrs Banks, and quite a few focused on her mood swings and Christopher's worries about being told off rather than describing what she actually did. Sometimes the ‘paintings game’ point was not always clearly identified as such but, in general, most points were identified in some form or other. Less successful responses were the result mainly of the mother/son game outside the study being treated as the focus for all or a significant part of the summary or to explain the *concerns* of the mother rather than her *actions*. Candidates in general seemed to be well prepared for this question and it would appear that many Centres have concentrated successfully on summary techniques as part of their preparation for the examination.

There were ten points (stated below) from the passage about the mother's actions which could have been identified up to a total mark for the question of 7:

- 1 Stood in corridor / outside study/on attic floor.
- 2 Had been/may have been playing the paintings game / naming the vessels.
- 3 Suddenly stopped / became still.
- 4 Listened at study door / conscious of/heard father's sobbing/something from the study.
- 5 (Quickly) pushed open (study) door / went in to study.
- 6 Stared / looked at papers on floor.
- 7 Reprimanded/made a comment to father under her breath.
- 8 Spoke to him (in a quiet, angry voice) / became cross with him.
- 9 Walked out of study/closed door.
- 10 Led Christopher away.

## Question 2

This question elicited some very successful responses; candidates selected salient points from the extract and were able to develop convincing thoughts from Mrs Banks about her family's welfare and situation. In general, candidates were very comfortable when writing a journal entry. There were a few responses which were written in the third person or even from Christopher's and the Father's viewpoint, but the vast majority of candidates addressed the question correctly.

Overall, the marks for Reading and Written Expression were of similar quality with the average mark for Written Expression being marginally higher than that for Reading. The best responses showed a mature and perceptive understanding of the characters and situation described in the passage and convincingly entered the head of Mrs Banks and identified the likely concerns she would have had, mainly about Christopher's experience in seeing his father in distress, although some went even further to deal with her justifiable concerns about Christopher's future in China in terms of education and friends. There was no common standpoint contained in responses at this level - those which focused primarily on the relationship between the mother and her son mainly presented her as a loving and caring parent very much concerned as to how the father's "breakdown" might emotionally scar a sensitive and imaginative child (there was appropriate reference made to the paintings game to support this inference). On the other hand, responses that focused on Mrs Banks's attitude to her husband drew their inspiration either from her reprimanding him to pull himself together or developed on the points made by Christopher about his mother earlier in the passage. The former presented the mother as being scornful and dismissive of her husband's behaviour whereas the latter presented her more sympathetically. Either of these responses could be justified by reference to the passage and neither was seen to be either "right" or "wrong".

The less successful journal entries comprised mere retelling (often in great and some unnecessary detail) of events that day or of an internal stream of consciousness from the mother, with little or no reference to what had actually occurred. However, most candidates displayed a good general understanding of the family and the predicament which they faced, although there were some who failed to pick up on the clues contained in the passage about the character of Mr Banks and embellished the material to such a degree that he was presented as none other than a desperate car thief, an abusive father and husband, and an all-round thoroughly bad lot!

The written accuracy of journal accounts was considered, overall, to have been an improvement on responses in previous sessions. Spelling of basic words still represents a challenge for many and there is still a lot of uncertain sentence punctuation, but in general, candidates attempted both to select vocabulary that was precise and wide-ranging and also to use varied sentence structures for effect. There was a noteworthy attempt in many responses to write in a tone fully appropriate to a journal kept by an Englishwoman in the 1930s, although, at times, the tone was undermined by the use of contractions such as "alot", "gonna" instead of going to, and "could of" instead of "could have". Grammatically infelicitous structures such as "Me and Chris was playing the painting game" also jarred somewhat.

However, as mentioned above, most candidates responded enthusiastically to this question and it would appear to have allowed them the opportunity to write to the best of their ability. There were only a small number of very short responses; in fact, many were sustained successfully over three or four sides of the answer booklet. The most successful of these addressed each of the bullet points in some detail; the less successful addressed one or two of the points with either no reference to the others or at, best, only a cursory one. It should be emphasised that the most successful answers dealt with the bullet points in turn, using them as a paragraph framework for their answer.

Most responses scored within bands 2 or 3 for both elements of the question, with at least as many responses achieving band 1 marks as those gaining marks in bands 5 and 6. Many candidates gained a higher percentage of their marks on **Question 2** than on **Question 1** - a detail that reinforces the point made in the Key Messages section; it would help those taking this examination in future to ensure that they follow precisely the requirements of the wording of the sub-questions in the first section of the paper. In conclusion, this proved to be a successful paper which allowed the majority of candidates to produce work of a satisfactory to good quality.

# 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 carefully and purposefully more than once
- remember to consider both explicit and implicit meaning within a passage
- take note of any extra information offered e.g. in an introduction to a passage
- read questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- plan the content, structure and sequence of answers ahead of writing the response
- give equal attention to each section of each question
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- use the facts, ideas and details in the passage to inform answers
- not copy whole phrases or sections of the passages and use own words as far as possible.
- avoid repetition of points but ensure ideas are complete
- leave sufficient time to read back through answers and edit as required

## General comments

Candidates in this session generally 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 & 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 a surprising number of candidates could not differentiate the whale and the submarine and, consequently, there were some confused references and consequences. Some candidates misinterpreted the number of characters featured in the passage where the professor's friend and Ned were often confused. Ned was variously incorrectly represented as the Professor's friend, the helmsman or the captain of the stricken vessel, and even the professor himself. This demonstrates the need for candidates to re-read the passage carefully to tease out finer details and incorporate them in their responses. A number of candidates had not read the introduction to the passage which helpfully explained the setting and characters involved as well as the context of the passage. It is crucial that candidates read all the material to pick up important detail that can be used to inform the best answers. Copying was often 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. 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 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** the majority of candidates managed to find a reasonable number of content points, but many responses contained repeated ideas. There were many repetitions of the physical and mental

rewards of freediving points in **Section (a)** and of the cramps/numbness point in **Section (b)**. It was pleasing that the majority of candidates are trying to use their own words in **Question 3**, however, they must be aware that the meaning must not change so that the summary is factually inaccurate. Inclusion of material outside the passages is also not rewarded and is self-penalising. This happened frequently in **Section (b)** on the causes of drowning. There were some examples of excessively long responses, and this is still an issue that often leads to a lower Writing mark. Most lengthy responses were due to inclusion of unnecessary material, indiscriminate copying of the passages, or repetition. Some responses were 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 final 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 all three questions on 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 to ensure that the response includes 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.

### Question 1

**You are the professor. Write a report for the marine society after your release from the submarine. The report should explain: how you and your companions fell overboard and came to be on the submarine; how you feel about the discovery of the truth about the 'monster'; your concerns about the captain and the existence of such a vessel.**

**Base your report on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words. Write between 1½ and 2 sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.**

[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 report, and a convincing voice for a learned professor whose belief in a legendary creature has been challenged and contradicted by the extraordinary discovery of a man-made submarine. 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 the professor's personal response to the shocking discovery through a full exploration of his feelings, and the third to develop their ideas on the possible threats or advantages posed by the submarine and its captain. The best responses firmly linked their ideas for the third bullet to details in the passage: the violence of the collision with the ship, the rough handling of the sailors and professor by the submarine's crew, and the secret existence of the vessel are some examples of details used to support the notion that the submarine may be used for criminal activities in the future. A feature of better responses was the reordering the events of the passage in line with a report written after the event – beginning with details such as the time of the collision for example. 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 the detail of the collision occurring at 11.00pm coming later in the response (as it does in the passage), or the inclusion of direct speech from the passage, which is not in keeping with a formal report. An attempt to address bullets two and three was usually evident, but often these responses focused largely on the first bullet leading to an uneven response. At times the third bullet was evaded by repeating the questions posed in the passage about the vessel and its crew rather than by attempting to answer them through the development of the ideas offered. Opportunities were also missed for the development of ideas and the drawing of conclusions in bullet 2. For example, the professor's reaction to the truth about the monster would be limited to shock and fear, rather than curiosity about its structure or amazement at its design.

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. There was no sense of a report and they generally took the form of giving an unselective narrative retelling of the story as a response to the first bullet, rather than choosing only the details that would be required for a formal report of the events. These responses would often include descriptions of the sea at night which were unnecessary and inappropriate. Some careless reading was evident in the misuse of facts, with confusion about Ned's role in the sequence of events, in particular. When responding to the second and third bullets weaker responses often displayed a confused understanding of the vessel itself, some still thinking it was a monster rather than a submarine. Such responses were unable to demonstrate any significant understanding of the passage. It was common for these responses to ignore bullets 2 and 3 completely.

The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. Some invented their own material describing a huge storm which led to the sinking of the ship, or a ride on a submarine and then being left on a deserted island. 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 the importance of the discovery and the urgent need to convey the information to the marine society. The better written responses adopted a formal but urgent tone and a mixture of informative and reflective content with the professor's own suggestions over what the discover may mean for the future of marine exploration.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the question carefully
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- answer in your own words and adapt 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 sea in paragraph 6, beginning 'the monster had...' and (b) the vessel in paragraph 11, beginning 'I hoisted myself...'. 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 explanation. Credit is given for offering a range of appropriate choices in each section. Responses that went on to give the specific meanings of the words in context were awarded further marks. 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 session 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 doesn't 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 submarine stressed by 'hoisted myself to the summit' or the calm and beautiful reflection of movement and/or artistic imagery used in 'shimmering sheets spattered'.

The following response was written by a candidate in this examination session 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, and although this candidate defines the literary devices used in the passage, it is not necessary to do so to achieve marks in Band 1.

**(a) the sea in paragraph 6**

*The descriptions of the sea are mysterious and eerie, combining a sense of danger with beauty and calm. 'Shimmering sheets spattered' uses sibilance to create the thrash and movement of the waves. When read aloud the 's' sound uses onomatopoeia to sound like the ocean as it rises up all around them. The simile 'plunged into a pool of quicksilver' creates the idea that the sea is dangerous and against them and that the men cannot stay afloat in the slippery liquid. The adjective 'phosphorescent flickers' again suggests the idea of the supernatural by creating an unknown, mysterious, almost magical mood. The metaphor referring to the sea as 'dense gloom' makes the water seem unwelcoming and dismal, almost as if there is no way out for them. 'Gloom' sounds eerie, and as though the ocean has a dark, threatening, almost murderous side to it.*

**(a) The vessel in paragraph 11**

*The phrase 'hard, impenetrable substance' suggests the immense power and superiority of the 'monster' and that the creature cannot be harmed or damaged and that the crew are unprotected and vulnerable compared to the protected beast. The term 'metallic resonance' shows how the vessel is armoured and makes an echoing sound that stresses its strength and magnificence. 'An immense steel fish' again shows its power and 'steel' stresses how it cannot be defeated. It is an underwater soldier. The use of the word fish with 'immense steel' suggests that the small generic fish is enhanced and now stronger than anything else in the sea, thus the vessel itself is superior to any other boat in the sea. This reiterates the idea of power and it being the most feared thing in the water. The adjectives 'smooth and polished' suggests the vessel is well cared for and deliberately streamlined for life under the sea which suggests sinister motives. The phrase 'half submerged creature' suggests it may have come up to attack and is threatening and waiting to inflict suffering on its victims.*

Less successful responses often ignored the wording of the question failing to focus on the sea in (a) or the vessel in (b). This often led to indiscriminate selections of words and phrases, for example 'rammed' and 'monster' 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 alliteration in 'shimmering sheets spattered' or onomatopoeia in 'blotches'. 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 the vessel is powerful 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:**

- read 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 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there', 'this creates as 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 themselves
- 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 attractions and benefits of freediving, as described in Passage B; and (b) the possible causes of drowning, as described in Passage A.**

[Total: 20]

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-two 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 less 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)** due to the more informative style of the passage and a reduced need to adapt the material. 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)**.

Some 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. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able candidates changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage B the physical and mental effects of freediving required reorganising to avoid repetition. The better candidates, for example, recognised that pushing one's body to its limits and physical achievement were the same point whereas the weaker ones did not. 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 session, makes over 15 Reading points, but if handwritten would easily fit onto one page. It offers an example of how a successful response may be presented.**

#### **Section (a)**

*Freediving is exciting as it's an extreme form of diving that often takes place in stunning places. You experience a sense of independence and can be more self-reliant than in any other sport as you learn to control your breathing and discipline your body. It's a real mental and physical achievement where you can learn about yourself and creatures of the ocean, like sharks. You may also get to swim with amazing creatures like dolphins and whales whilst you demonstrate the natural bond that humans have with water and become aware of the ocean and planet's health and the danger it is in.*

#### **Section (b)**

*Drowning is easily possible in the ocean. Wet clothes become heavy and can drag you down, and it may be hours before you are found, meaning your energy gets drained making it difficult to stay above water. Cold temperatures may numb body parts and if salty sea water is swallowed dehydration may arise. If dark it may be difficult for people to find you and being alone is consequently more tiring. If your mouth swell up you can't call for help. You could lose consciousness and be submerged.*

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 the collision, the time spent in the water and the ride on the submarine with little focus on the possible causes of drowning. Often characters were referred to in detail. In less successful responses to **Section (a)** there was frequent copying of the phrases 'the diver learns a lot about him or herself', 'conquer something you thought was impossible' and 'stunningly beautiful places in the world' 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 Tanya's background and upbringing despite its

complete irrelevance to the attractions and benefits of freediving. 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 freediving; 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

The majority of scripts showed a sound understanding of what was required in both sections of the paper and Examiners were pleased to see that most candidates managed their time well, producing developed, purposeful responses in the directed writing and the composition. Examples of rubric infringement, particularly where candidates attempted too many questions, were much rarer in this session and candidates gave themselves adequate time to develop their ideas and achieve better marks.

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, at all levels of attainment, wrote in their own words and Examiners noted that there was very little lifting of substantial sections of the writer's expression in responses. Better answers here often discussed the Headteacher's perception of his role as an educator, with specific reference to the proposed happiness lessons and their possible impact on the candidates. Weaker candidates tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, sometimes agreeing or disagreeing with them rather than evaluating their validity. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the points in the passage, where responses drifted into a general consideration of candidates' own experience of School, with limited reference to the central idea of happiness lessons.

In the compositions, the descriptive writing options proved popular and there were some detailed, strongly evocative and often original responses here. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and how to engage the reader. There were some weaker scripts in which the style and content required for the genre were less well understood. Some descriptions of 'paradise', for example, became brochures advertising holiday destinations and some of descriptions of abandoned buildings slid quickly into narrative. These would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in particular genres, such as the use of detail rather than events in descriptive writing and the kind of narrative shaping which engages the reader in stories.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Read carefully the article on '*Why I'm teaching happiness*' in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Section 1, Question 1** on this Question Paper. Write a letter to the Headteacher, expressing your views on teaching about happiness. You may agree or disagree with the Headteacher's arguments.

**In your letter you should:**

- explore and evaluate the Headteacher's views
- use your own ideas to support your comments on the Headteacher's views.

(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.

The format and style required in this task were generally well understood, so that most responses adopted an appropriately formal tone and candidates wrote letters which had a sensible structure and sequence of ideas. As candidates were not specifically required to write as candidates, Examiners accepted responses where a different voice was adopted, such as that of a concerned parent or teacher, and these were often successful in presenting a particular viewpoint. High marks were awarded where the ideas in the passage were scrutinised thoughtfully and where the letter was both accurate and appropriate in style. In the middle range of marks, one or two ideas were discussed more critically but there was less range in the reference to points made in the passage. Weaker responses repeated some of the points in the passage and the style and format of a formal letter was not adopted consistently. At this level, for example, there was no proper ending to the letter or the intended audience (the Headteacher) was unclear.

**The marks for reading**

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance towards the ideas expressed in the passage and scrutinised critically the impact that the proposed happiness lessons would have on candidates' lives and academic success. At this level, the assumptions behind the ideas tended to be discussed, such as the Headteacher's assertion that happiness can be taught or that there is an inevitable correlation between high academic achievement and poor emotional intelligence as adults. Some candidates wrote convincingly about how 'negative emotions' are not only 'an inevitable part of life', as mentioned in the passage, but are an essential ingredient in a teenager's maturity and, as one astute candidate said, that happiness is 'an often transitory feeling, not a skill which can be taught like maths'. Many also made thoughtful use of the distinction between the vagueness of happiness lessons compared with the practicality of teaching candidates to 'manage money, accommodation and [being able] to look after themselves' and questioned why the Headteacher did not offer lessons in these skills.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 and above 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, but some points were reproduced or did not appear in the response at all. For example, many responses took issue with the Headteacher's claim that 'happiness lies in knowing one's limitations' and suggested that striving hard to achieve rather than settling for less was a valuable life lesson in itself. Often, the same critical scrutiny was not applied to other points made. Glimpses of evaluation appeared where a particular point annoyed the candidate but this kind of evaluative stance needed to be sustained across more of the ideas expressed in the passage for higher marks.

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 different points made and candidates sometimes agreed or disagreed with them but the underlying questions about the nature of a good education or whether happiness can or should be taught were not addressed. 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 opening paragraph as if the Headteacher had realised that producing happy young adults was 'an unachievable aspiration'. Some lack of understanding was also shown in responses where the Headteacher was berated for replacing Maths and Physics lessons with happiness classes. Perhaps a closer reading of the passage was needed to avoid these errors.

Some responses began reasonably well, showing some grasp of the Headteacher's views about an 'ill-balanced' education system, but drifted into anecdote or polemic about the weaknesses or strengths of their own school or education, sometimes not referring to the idea of happiness lessons at all. In some cases, there were alternative suggestions offered which showed some implied grasp of the passage, such as the need to offer happiness lessons as well as, rather than instead of, conventional subjects. Some advice to the Headteacher was less rooted in the passage, however, such as lists of the kinds of emotional problems

which teenagers commonly have or the danger of poor behaviour in happiness lessons. Examiners gave 3 or 4 marks where responses were insufficiently rooted in the passage or where only a few key points were touched upon. A better understanding of the demands of the directed writing task, as well as the skills required for marks in the different bands, was needed for candidates to improve their marks for reading.

### **Marks for writing**

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

### **Style and audience**

The majority of responses were appropriately set out in letter form and used the polite, objective, formal register and style that would be expected in a letter to a Headteacher. It was possible, as was shown in many accomplished responses, to signal a strong disapproval of the Headteacher's ideas while maintaining a suitably formal register throughout. There were some responses where the style became a little too strident or personally insulting, though these were rare.

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of the letter, though better responses showed a strong sense of audience from the beginning, often expressing controlled outrage that a Headteacher would be willing to compromise academic standards for an 'unproven, untested theory,' as was written in one opening paragraph. Some effective responses started appreciatively, complimenting the Headteacher on his caring attitude towards his candidates.

In the middle and lower mark range, responses showed less consistent awareness of the intended audience and some referred to 'the Headteacher' and his ideas as if unclear about the recipient of the letter, even though the style was largely appropriate. Introductory paragraphs here were more perfunctory, sometimes without reference to the article, and weaker responses lost sight of the letter format altogether by the end, with no closing paragraph and no valediction. A stronger sense of purpose and audience when writing a formal letter could help to improve performance at this level.

### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their own arguments cogently. The issues addressed and questions posed in the article were assimilated into a convincing argument which was clearly derived from, but not dependent on, the way the ideas were organised in the passage. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given. The nature of a good education or good teaching and how its quality can be judged were discussed purposefully but often without discrete repetition of the points in the passage and these ideas were coherently linked with the potential for happiness to be taught in School. A sense that there were conflicting priorities in educating young people was conveyed by these successful responses which were often subtly argued and clearly structured.

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, often with some concluding agreement or disagreement with the Headteacher.

Responses given marks below Band 3 were often quite well-sequenced and Examiners generally found more serious weaknesses in the accuracy than in the structure of the writing in **Question 1**. Some weaker responses were less coherent in structure, returned to the same idea in different sections or had very brief, unconnected paragraphs which made one simple point with little development.

### **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.

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. Particularly, key words which appeared in the passage itself and were inevitably repeated in responses were often misspelt, such as 'happiness', 'education', 'relevant' and 'relationships'.

Responses given marks in Band 4 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. Commas used where full stops were needed were quite common at this level and the use of capital letters was insecure. The personal pronoun 'I' was often not capitalised whereas many capital letters appeared where they were not needed.

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

- Think about the broader issues being addressed 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 genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for 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) Should a government influence people's diets? What are your views? (25 marks)

OR

(b) 'Combat sports, where the aim is to injure one's opponent, should be banned.' What are your views on this subject? (25 marks)

These questions were popular choices at all levels of achievement and most candidates were able to convey their views on the topic and to discuss developed, relevant ideas on both topics. A rather narrow reading of the first question was found by Examiners to restrict some candidates in the range of ideas they used, although in the second question better candidates engaged well with the subject and often offered informed and interesting ideas in a sensible debate. Average responses were characterised by relevant, valid ideas with perhaps less range or argument and a more straightforward style and structure. In the first question, weaker responses tended to be repetitive or brief and in the second there was sometimes some confusion about the kinds of sports under scrutiny.

There were some highly polished and persuasive responses to the first question in terms of their content and structure. Better responses focused on the broader ideas implied by the question. The function and role of governments, particularly with regard to the private choices of individuals, were discussed thoughtfully by some at this level, with ideas about personal responsibility and choice expounded in some depth. Some candidates combined these more philosophical concerns with practical observations and saw the rising levels of obesity or anorexia in their own society as a good enough reason for governments to intervene on behalf of citizens by taxing fast food outlets or unhealthy food. 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 still relevant material, though at this level a narrow interpretation of 'diets' as 'slimming diets' or 'healthy foods' sometimes limited candidates in their range of ideas. The intervention of government was not discussed in as much depth although most candidates gave a straightforward view about whether an attempt should be made by the authorities to curb unhealthy eating. Some responses largely took the form of advice to the reader about healthy foods and the need to eat less fat to avoid obesity, with a little acknowledgement of the role of government in doing so. Occasionally, both sides of the debate were represented fairly briefly in different sections of the response, with no clear point of view given, and although the points made were often relevant, there was too little argument or cohesion to justify a mark in Band 2.

Weaker responses tended to show some confusion or naivety about the issues involved in the question. Comments were assertive rather than argumentative, such as 'We don't have any say in the government's diet so why should they tell us what we can eat?' or 'If I want to kill myself by eating the wrong things that's up to me'. The question was almost always understood narrowly, as suggesting that the country's authorities were considering restricting its citizens' food intake by law or by force. Although some simple opinion on the

topic was given, there was often confusion about who or what the 'government' was: quite a number of responses referred to 'him' with reference to the government, for example.

The alternative question elicited some strong responses, particularly where candidates brought their own experiences of different sports to the issues involved and many showed a good grasp of the ethical dilemmas implied by the question. Good responses argued cogently and persuasively and Examiners found much to reward at this level, on whichever side of the debate candidates concluded their arguments. Some mustered their arguments consistently on one side or the other, while others included some counter-arguments which were then rebutted with rigour and passion. Some candidates took issue with the terms of the question, considering whether the real aim of combat sports is to injure another person and illustrated their point with examples of protective clothing or the regulation of such sports to prevent injury. For some candidates, the channelling of aggression or the focus on self-discipline in such sports was identified as a positive benefit for participants and many cited the respect shown to skilled sportsmen and women as indicative of the advantages of taking part in them. The idea of risk was confidently handled in good responses too. Some comparison was often made with other sports where injuries were more frequently suffered and quite a few candidates suggested that some form of controlled risk-taking was essential for many young people and these sports prevented much riskier, possibly criminal behaviour.

Average responses tended to focus less on the idea of deliberate injury though offered a range of valid comments on the dangers of boxing, wrestling or other sports and gave their own opinion. Personal freedom and responsibility featured strongly as an argument, as did the potential health benefits of participating in such sports and the practical concerns of jobs and livelihoods dependent on them. Responses given marks in Band 3 for content and structure generally made sensible comments, often on both sides of the debate, although there was patchy development of ideas or there was a lack of overall cohesion in the argument.

Weaker responses were characterised by confusion about the focus of the question, and often by the simplicity or assertiveness of the comments made. Some became very general, focused on sport in general with limited grasp of the idea of combat sports or the idea of injuries, while some gave brief, assertive opinions without explanation or justification. A tendency to return to the same point or to offer only a narrow range of insubstantial ideas which were not really focused on the issues in the question resulted in marks in Band 4 for content and structure in many cases, although few responses to the argumentative/discursive questions were weaker than that.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range in both questions, with the higher marks given for writing which was varied, controlled and precise. 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 and allowed Examiners to nudge the mark into the higher band.

Conversely, responses which were clear and otherwise competent often slipped into Band 4 because of the seriousness and frequency of errors. Limited vocabulary and a simple, unvaried style also depressed some marks in the middle range. 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, 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 understand and address the key ideas in the question.
- 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

- (a) You come across an abandoned building you never knew existed. Describe its exterior and surroundings before giving details of how you enter. Describe the atmosphere inside and everything your senses experience as you explore the building. (25 marks)

OR

- (b) Describe a place called 'Paradise on Earth'. (25 marks)

The descriptive writing questions were very popular choices throughout the candidature. The first gave some guidance on how to structure the response, which was used to good effect by many candidates across the mark range, while the second offered freedom to interpret the concept of 'paradise', which candidates sometimes did in surprising and original ways.

The first question produced a great variety of responses across the range of ability. The best responses were evocative and original, some candidates having selected specific and unusual buildings and locations to describe, such as old factories or churches. Many good responses effectively evoked a sense of menace or threat, although those given marks in Band 1 tended to be more varied and subtle in the atmospheres created. A frightening or ugly outward aspect of a building sometimes revealed a shockingly beautiful or pristine interior, for example, and Examiners noted how often responses at this level used personification and imagery effectively to give life to their descriptions. Some chose a building which evoked hitherto forgotten personal memories of long-dead family members and there were some highly accomplished descriptions of ancient castles in which the echoes of soldiers' marching feet or other imaginative details were evoked by a narrator whose senses were finely tuned to history and 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 range responses were more predictable in the scenes and atmospheres depicted. Although there were often effective details, the location and the type of abandoned buildings tended to be more limited in range and the atmosphere was very commonly tense or frightening. Haunted houses predominated and the use of the senses was more mechanical, leading to some rather clichéd creaking of doors and stairs, cobweb-filled hallways and old portraits whose eyes followed the narrator around the room. In some responses given 8, the content was often predictable but there were flashes of effective images or details and even quite weak responses were sometimes lifted by interesting personification, such as of the trees around the building 'grasping and reaching for me' or the house 'doing its best to keep me out and keep its dark secrets'.

Weaker responses very often lapsed into narrative fairly quickly or did not effectively describe the scene and relied on phrases such as 'like a horror movie'. The preamble was sometimes too long, giving a narrative introduction to the scene which continued throughout. The senses were listed, with limited effect, and events predominated over descriptive detail, almost always resulting in the narrator fleeing from the scene after the discovery of bodies or other grisly finds. Confusion between the features of narrative and descriptive writing was evident here and Examiners commented that this was more prevalent than in recent series. Perhaps candidates' marks could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of the differences between narrative and descriptive writing.

Good responses to the second question were also characterised by originality and careful realisation of the scene selected. Among several engaging and thoughtful responses at the highest level were some which focused on moments in time, rather than place, such as a reunion with a loved one or falling in love, while others chose unusual locations such as a library, a secret hideaway or their own homes or bedrooms. The idea of paradise was internalised in many good responses, making the location a reflection or an evocation of the narrator's state of mind. Peacefulness and the absence of pain or pressure were evoked strongly in Band 1 and Band 2 responses, both in the descriptive detail of the surroundings and of the narrator's feelings.

In the middle range, despite some clichéd content, there was a clear attempt to evoke atmosphere and some effective details were included. White sandy beaches and clear blue skies were much in evidence, although Examiners awarded 8 for content and structure where there was less reliance on standard details such as these and where the narrator's own state of mind became clear. There was some drifting into narrative in



some responses, particularly where the location was identified as a holiday destination, but where there was enough focus on descriptive detail a mark in Band 3 could be awarded.

Band 4 responses were more narrative than descriptive in focus or in some cases an inappropriate style and genre was adopted. Some basic narratives recounting holidays in exotic locations contained sufficient description, albeit clichéd, to warrant a mark in Band 4. In quite a few responses, the style was more appropriate for a holiday brochure with many of the conventions of persuasive writing attempted, such as lists of attractions, nightclubs, restaurants, which often meant that the response lacked atmosphere and impact. Another less productive approach was where a fantasy holiday destination was imagined such as 'I would have all my best mates with me and we'd go out every night to all the best clubs.'

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. Occasionally, although a wide range of varied vocabulary was evident, the right word was not always selected to achieve the desired effect or sentences tended to accrue too many clauses. These weaknesses kept otherwise accurate responses in Band 2.

Marks for style and accuracy sometimes helped to keep the overall mark of a response in Band 3 where the content was not well-conceived but equally there were some in which credible content was let down by weak sentence control and basic errors. 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 entitled 'The Great Pretender'. (25 marks)

OR

(b) Write about how an old film had been obtained secretly. (25 marks)

The first question was the more popular of the two options.

The 'Great Pretender' task was selected by many candidates and there were examples of well-planned narratives in which a familiar character was revealed as a sham or a fake in some way. 'The Great Pretender' was often seen as a deceiver – sometimes a criminal posing as a good citizen and sometimes as a friend who betrayed the narrator in a more personal way. On the whole, candidates fared better when the story was based on credible experiences, although there were one or two highly accomplished fantasy genre responses in which the backdrop was vast and the time scale almost epic in proportion. These often involved brothers in arms who became enemies through betrayal and where there was control of the material and effectiveness in the style these were a delight to read.

More commonly, the relatively few responses awarded marks in Band 2 and above were closer to home in subject matter but sometimes quite moving. Some narrators revealed how they covered their terrors and timidity by 'pretending' to be more confident, only to be uncovered in some unforeseen incident and in some stories siblings and friends betrayed protagonists in various devious and upsetting ways. Some added effect was sometimes created by the story being told in the voice of the 'Great Pretender', with his or her malicious intentions revealed gradually. There were, at this level, some spy stories which were managed quite well although the scale of the stories attempted tended to be a little over-ambitious.

Average responses tended to identify the 'Great Pretender' and provide some sense of the character before recounting a fairly straightforward, but complete story. Romances blighted by the intervention of a fake friend were quite popular at this level and the content of the narrative was sometimes a little predictable. In some responses, the character was described quite interestingly but there was little narrative drive and nothing much happened in the story. Despite some evident skill in creating credible characters, it was sometimes difficult to justify a mark in Band 3 because of a lack of narrative content.

Weaker responses tended to lack credibility as tales about spies or other more obvious 'pretenders' in which events overwhelmed the narrative or they contained more discursive features than narrative. Where stories lacked real substance and credibility, the content was based on actions and events but the character(s) were not properly realised. Some oddly conceived responses warned against the perils of telling lies or 'pretending to be something you're not' and although there were sometimes anecdotes included to illustrate these moral lessons, there was no real narrative content and shape and this inevitably affected the mark for content and structure even when they were reasonably accurately written.

The second question was only rarely selected. A few candidates successfully navigated readers through quite complex plots involving political or industrial espionage, although in most cases these scenarios proved difficult to manage. The 'old film' was interpreted in a variety of ways, from plans for a terrorist attack to a proposal of marriage contained in a video, with one or two effective stories created around the idea of long-forgotten family movies provoking strong reactions when the narrator came across them in some illicit way.

Weaker responses sometimes recounted over-complicated plots which became series of events with little to engage the reader or occasionally the plot was difficult to follow. Candidates at this level needed to create more manageable stories and marks for content and structure could have been improved by paying closer attention to character 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. The style needed to be controlled and competent to justify a mark in Band 3 and where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, with occasionally more effective vocabulary, Examiners gave 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, although few responses were so flawed as to be difficult to follow.

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

- Remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader.
- Complicated plots can be difficult to manage – a simple but effective idea often works better.
- 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 (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

In order to aim for high marks in this component, candidates should:

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

## General comments

There were a large number of entries for this component and, in general, the standards of reading and writing were satisfactory. Many candidates wrote from personal interests and experience and their writing was all the better for that.

The Key Messages, printed above and repeated from previous sessions, represent what the Moderators were looking for. The first two of the Key Messages had evidently been followed by many Centres. The third, refers to the choice of challenging assignments, and while the choice was usually appropriate to candidates of average ability, some of the tasks did not always stretch the better thinkers and writers.

An example of this was a package of assignments used by many Centres and consisting of a task starting with the words 'Don't get me started...', a description of the tragedy of 9/11, and a response to an article on the television programme, 'Educating Essex'. The only one of the three tasks that tended to evoke a high quality response was the second. The first misled potential Band 1 and 2 candidates into writing on comparatively trivial topics and sometimes in the form of a rant. The third was often a collection of disconnected responses to the same quotations from the article. There was only rarely an overview of the shortcomings of the article, and no realisation that the picture given of the school was the result of manipulation by the television company. Good candidates did not appear to have been warned that they needed to go deeper into the article as a whole to get reading marks in Band 1. Centres using these tasks might consider whether they are not now rather outworn, and try to experiment with tasks that are suited to the interests and specific abilities of their candidates.

The fourth of the Key Messages refers to one of the most important indications of a good writer. There were those who immediately stood out because they could write fluent sentences in which ideas were clearly related. Candidates at a lower level wrote in repetitive sentence patterns and often their sentences were short, so that ideas did not connect in a coherent pattern.

What was disturbing was the number of candidates, including good writers, who did not understand the conventions of punctuation. The three main problems were as follows:

- sentence separation errors where candidates frequently used commas instead of full stops;
- the omission of commas in more complex sentences, necessary to clarify meaning;
- the incorrect use of colons and semi colons, where sometimes semi colons were placed in the middle of a simple sentence.

The final Key Message refers to proof reading which had very evidently not been carried out by a large number of candidates. This meant that final drafts contained word-processing errors, and there were frequent mistakes where the two words (such as 'of' and 'off' or 'there' and 'their') had been confused

because the spellcheck had not indicated a mistake. Some candidates misused the spellcheck so that the word that appeared in the text was manifestly nonsensical.

Centres are reminded that coursework, which has hugely valuable educational advantages when properly conducted, gives great opportunities to candidates to do their best. However, there are also responsibilities that come with coursework, challenges that candidates must accept if they are to do well.

Despite these comments, the majority of the folders were very worthwhile, and candidates had frequently put a good deal of effort both into planning their work and in presenting it neatly and efficiently. Similarly, much of the administration was carried out well by Centres, the assessment was generally good and internal moderation was carried out with care.

### **Administration by Centres**

Administration was generally sound, and the Moderators extend their thanks to Centres for their efforts in providing accurate and complete lists. However, there were some occasional problems.

- Samples were correctly submitted as required by Cambridge, except that a number of Centres did not include the folders with the highest and the lowest marks. These are essential because of the way in which the moderation is carried out.
- The sample must contain a copy of the mark sheet, either the MS1 (filled in by hand) or an electronic version. It must also contain the Candidate Assessment Summary Form (CASF) for all the candidates in the Centre, and not just for those in the sample. The CASF shows changes made to the original marks at internal moderation. The mark sheet and the CASF must tally, and Cambridge carries out checks on the Centres' behalf to ensure that this is so.
- There were many examples of marks on the CASF that were not the same as the marks on the mark sheet or the folders. The mark on the CASF was always taken as the mark intended by the Centre.
- There were some examples of folders where one or more assignments were not submitted. The Centre did not always follow the procedure. This was to give a mark for writing as if all three assignments were present, and then to deduct one third of the marks for each missing piece. If the missing piece was the third assignment, then in addition, there was no mark out of 10 for reading.
- Some Centres did not provide a copy of the text used for Assignment 3.

### **Assessment by Centres**

This was again generally sound, and there were only minor instances where the overall rank order for the Centre was not accurate. There was a tendency to mark slightly leniently both for writing and for reading, and in some cases this added up to a trend in the overall assessment of -3 or -4. However, by 'slightly' an adjustment of -1 or -2 was normally indicated, and that was not necessarily over the whole mark range. Many Centres had obviously taken advice from previous reports, and their marks were either unchanged or even judged to be slightly severe.

Moderators took care not to make extreme adjustments based on particular candidates, in order not to penalise others in the sample.

### **Assessment of writing**

It was important to achieve a balance in marking between Content and Structure on the one hand and Style (including audience) and Accuracy on the other.

For Content, candidates achieving high marks demonstrated ability to respond to challenging tasks and to use their thinking skills. Candidates in Band 3 responded to straightforward tasks and used competent but less original ideas with less development and illustration.

For Structure, candidates achieving high marks demonstrated order and balance in their responses and in particular, paid attention to the sequence of their ideas within paragraphs. Candidates in Band 3 wrote in an overall structure, using paragraphs sometimes of unequal weight, but were not required to demonstrate skills of sequencing to a consistent extent.

For Style, all candidates were given credit for adapting their language to a supposed audience, but candidates achieving high marks demonstrated a wide range of language which they used with assurance. They also wrote in a variety of sentence types and lengths so that they communicated clearly and effectively. Candidates at Band 3 demonstrated a competent but straightforward range of language and some ability to relate ideas within sentences.

For Accuracy, it was important that at Band 1, errors were either absent or very few, and it was not in order for candidates whose sentences were incorrectly separated by full stops to be given a mark in this range. The same was largely true of marks 34 and 35, where Moderators were looking for a high degree of accuracy as well as an indication of a personal style. Some candidates were placed in Band 3 by Centres, although they made so many errors and wrote in such a simple vocabulary that they should have been in a lower band.

Three points were noticed and, where appropriate, need consideration and appropriate action.

The first was that errors were often not annotated in the text. It was not clear that they had been noticed by the marker, especially when the comment at the end suggested that there were few mistakes. This was at odds with what the Moderator noticed. Final drafts should be annotated to show where there are errors of punctuation, proof reading or usage. The amount of error was often the reason for an adjustment to the marks.

The second point was the practice of annotating in the margin where there was evidence of achieving an objective at an appropriate level in the mark scheme. While this was admirable in that it proved that the mark scheme was being used, it is important when assessing the writing that the various strands of a band description are achieved consistently. In some cases, credit was given for a very slight match with the description. For that reason it was probably better when the summative comment identified those strands that were sustained throughout the response.

The third point was that there was a tendency in the summative comments only to credit what was positive and to ignore what were sometimes quite important weaknesses. Assessment is partly the matching of strengths and weaknesses. Those who ignored the weaknesses usually gave too high marks to the work.

### **Assessment of reading**

Most candidates understood that they were to respond to the text by selecting ideas and opinions and to comment on them. By doing this sufficiently and with understanding they could be given a mark in Band 3. However, it was not enough merely to express disagreement without sound reasoning, and those who made subjective comments were worth no more than 5 marks. Those candidates who entered into mini debates with individual points and who responded with some weight were worth a mark in Band 2. Candidates in Band 1 expressed an overall view of the text, offering a review and criticism before analysing it. They also grouped and structured ideas so that the response had some consistency of thought. Some Centres were too ready to give marks freely in Band 1 to candidates who did not achieve a consistent and overall view of the article. While much of the marking was accurate, there were instances where candidates were over-marked by one or two.

Some candidates used the text as a stimulus and wrote a response that was not directly related to ideas and opinions that they had read. They should not have been marked at more than 4.

The reading mark scheme in the syllabus is clear and should be used carefully in awarding marks.

### **Annotation**

Some Centres did not annotate individual assignments, all of which required the marking of errors and some form of summative comment.

### **Drafts**

Some Centres made very good, educational comments on the drafts. These included matters of editing, such as adjusting the length of sentences or making general changes to language, and changes to the structure of the work, such as shortening some sections or providing an alternative ending. There were also warnings about checking accuracy.

The best drafts had advice from the teacher at the end of the work and notes on the text by the candidate.

It was not appropriate for teachers to make notes in the body of the text, either to correct errors or specifically to draw attention to them. Where this happened, usually only in the case of one teacher at the Centre, it was unfair and defeated a purpose of coursework which is to make candidates responsible for their own work. By advising them with general comments, teachers were able to make the process more educationally valid.

Many drafts had no comments on them at all and there was no evidence that changes had been made in producing the final version. This meant that an educational opportunity had been missed.

### Plagiarism

There was no evidence that there was any widespread abuse, but Moderators are used to spotting what may not be original, and one candidate was discovered copying from the Internet. This was a leaflet about healthy diets and it is this type of assignment that lays itself open to abuse and endangers the future of coursework. Proper supervision and planning of the work can ensure that this type of matter does not occur.

A second type of writing that is prone to copying from the Internet is the research essay. This is where the Centre allows candidates to choose areas of study and leaves them to find their own material. Where this was done there was widespread partial copying of content, largely because candidates did not know how to make notes and use them in their own writing. While this practice should be properly monitored, it would be better not to set this type of essay, which is not the sort of personal writing that is required. The section on Assignment 1 in the Coursework Training Handbook gives guidance on setting appropriately.

### Assignment 1

The choice of topic for this assignment is now much wider than in previous sessions. Candidates were obviously prompted to choose for themselves matters about which they felt strongly. They needed to write about topics that they knew something about, and they also needed to avoid the Internet as much as possible. If they did use it for important facts, it was important that the final response should be as personal as possible and that it should have some strength of intent and persuasion.

Candidates who responded to a single topic set to the whole class by the teacher were often at a disadvantage.

Candidates in one Centre achieved some very competent and lively writing on a variety of topics that included:

- *Comprehensive education*
- *Violence in the media*
- *The pay given to footballers and soldiers*
- *Technology rules our lives*
- *Female empowerment.*

In other Centres, topics looked promisingly controversial:

- *Are all blondes dumb? (written by a girl)*
- *Underage pregnancies*
- *Which is more important, health or grades?*

There were some good words of speeches on, for example, homework, zoos and the jury system. These continued to work well, although it was better to make it clear who the audience was and the occasion on which the speech was given.

The best leaflets were not set out as leaflets but as a series of headings with the words underneath. Without layout, the text was more coherent and sustained. These were best done as descriptions of candidates' schools for new year 7 candidates, for example. Leaflets about endangered species did not read as original work and were done without any personal involvement.

'A Life in the Day of...' is nearly always very unchallenging. One Centre set it to all candidates and in the sample, only one account contained content of interest and thought. Information about waking up in the morning and what one had for breakfast was not engaging.

There were some good factual accounts of activity weekends, and holidays. Provided that the style is different from Assignment 2, these are in order as tasks.

Letters to the council about the provision of public transport or to the Principal about spending money on the college were also effective tasks. These again provided the writer with a voice.

## Assignment 2

Most of these pieces were fiction and gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability with language and vocabulary. Some wrote in a narrow range of vocabulary, which affected their marks. It was important that descriptive language was appropriate. Some responses used language for its own sake and the effect was cloying. The important thing about language is that it must convey pictures that relate to the writing and that engage the reader's attention.

Stories often sounded real and had interesting endings. There were some narratives that used too many events and which sounded incredible. It was normally better to avoid airplane accidents and haunted houses. Some warfare and science fiction stories were tedious, and letters from WW1 were very variable.

Much attention was given to titles which engaged the imagination of the reader. This is a small selection:

- *The Insider*
- *Not just Adam and Eve*
- *The Man in the Street Light*
- *Witch or Princess?*
- *Dangerous Rubbish*
- *The Hybrids.*

One candidate wrote pretending to be a clock and another wrote about a finger that was discovered in a salad bought at a supermarket.

There were comparatively few accounts based on personal experience, which was a pity since these have often been very effective in the past. They have often arisen from autobiographical fragments.

There were quite a few descriptions, for example of the last lesson of the day, the School cafeteria, break time or a snowy day.

This assignment was done well and was often the best written of the three.

## Assignment 3

The assessment for writing almost overlapped with that of reading since Moderators were looking for a well-structured response, and the structure usually revealed an understanding of the article itself.

It was increasingly clear that the best articles were those with which candidates could disagree. It was quite difficult to extend and qualify ideas that no normal person could deny. Most articles that were controversial were also quite silly, so it was easy to express opinions to counter what had been read.

In general, Centres set the same article either for all candidates or one article per class. This was sensible, since individual choices tended to impose unequal standards of difficulty which might not be appropriate. One Centre did set a number of different articles and achieved a similar standard with each one.

There were still examples of inappropriate texts. These included:

- informative texts from the Internet, mostly in paragraphs of two or three lines, rarely containing any opinions of note and were badly structured (with repetition);
- news reports from newspapers;
- multiple articles, or articles that were too long for candidates to absorb;
- literary texts (such as the whole of *Romeo and Juliet*) which led to candidates making inappropriate comments about language (tested elsewhere in Papers 1 and 2).

The majority of Centres set appropriate articles, some of which were on the following topics:

- *The curfew will alienate teenagers*
- *Ask FM*
- *Private Education*
- *Children smoking*
- *Bullying*
- *Corporal punishment in Schools.*

These were all topics that were familiar to teenagers. Less so was the Terry Pratchett article on the right to die.

Moderators again thanked Centres for the efforts they made to produce valuable and often entertaining work. This session continued to prove the educational advantages of coursework.



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/05  
Speaking and Listening

## Key messages

The main message to Centres is to ensure that candidates do not rely too heavily on their scripts or prompt material. Reading entirely from 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 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. Candidates will not be able to score high marks if they simply read from a script; awareness of audience and an attempt to engage the audience is a key skill being tested in Part 1.

## 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.
- Generally, candidates should try to make their Part 1 presentations more lively, 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 and this often leads to quality work.
- In Part 2, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware of their 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.
- Please 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 1s which are short (under 3 minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow Part 2 to run over 7 minutes. This session again saw problems at some Centres with timings, and problems here often lead to problems elsewhere.
- Please would all Centres 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 please) or on a separate sheet is fine. Please re-name the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.). Please, avoid using analogue recording and tapes/cassettes.

## 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.
- More mundane presentations should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short Part 1s 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 1s (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 Parts 1 and 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 should 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.

### **General comments**

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from notes rather than scripts and about a topic they felt passionately about and which they had researched thoroughly. Some very 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 CIE 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 tasks, and they were clearly ill-prepared for the discussion part of the examination – and these factors were usually more significant than the choice of topic. Less successful tasks were usually read from scripts and this tended to detract from the overall effect - appearing to be rather lifeless and certainly monotonous. Weaker candidates invariably read from a script and talked in a monotone about a subject they had not researched sufficiently or which they did not feel particularly strongly about. 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, it is easier to manage the tests if common 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 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 narrower focus; along with a greater range of presentational styles.

Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:

- the experience and impact of living in a different culture
- being a football referee
- the pros and cons of friendship
- feminism - how far have we come?
- the appeals of the boxed set
- why I want to do nothing else but be a musician
- reducing the voting age to 16
- being trapped in a world of social media
- conspiracy theories cannot all be untrue can they?
- celebrities who make a real difference.

#### **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 questions or areas of interest that might be appropriate given the scope of the topic.

However, where this had not occurred, Moderators felt the discussions were lacking. It is not the 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.

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 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, both candidate and Examiner 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 weaker responses, which did 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) describe. 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 (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/06  
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

## Key Messages

It is important for a Centre to choose either Component 5 or 6 before planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered. The two components are very distinct in their format and execution. Component 5 is exam-based and rigid, being suitable for Centres who wish to assess their candidates on one specific topic on one chosen date. 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.

Having chosen Component 6 Centres should pay close attention to both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. In particular, the Individual Candidate Record Cards should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. It is permissible for candidates to fill out these sections themselves but please check the accuracy and amount of detail given. Specific information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful. For Task 1 a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.

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 that have already been sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Each one 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.

Please would Centres use 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 that can be played by standard computer software such as mp3, wav and wma but not AUP. Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge.

It would be very helpful if for each candidate a separate track is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.

Please follow the specific instructions on page 42 of 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 would be helpful if candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.

Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short. 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.

## **General Comments**

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge 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 and it 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.

## **Comments on specific tasks**

Moderators have noted that the tasks which worked most successfully were the ones which had clearly been candidate driven rather than teacher led. Where the candidates took ownership of a topic and genuinely believed in what they were saying, they performed well. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, Tasks 2 and 3 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.

### **Task 1**

Once again Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Some Centres allowed candidates a choice of specifics within a general framework such as 'Room 101' or 'My Family' while others allowed a completely free rein as to the topics chosen. Either approach is acceptable but 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.

Some examples of productive Task 1 activities include:

- My life through the songs/moments/events that define me
- My love of dance/theatre/Guides (or any personal experience that is relevant and thought-provoking)
- My faith
- My participation in...
- The movie/book/television series I love/hate the most.

### **Task 2**

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 role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views on any topic be it football or School rules. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions.

Some examples of productive Task 2 activities include:

- A discussion about how to spend an allocated budget for a School function (e.g. a Year 11 Prom)
- Arguing for and against violent video games
- Acting as co-editors making choices for the front page of their newspaper
- How the School should commemorate a specific event (e.g. the centennial of WW1)
- The merits of one personality over another where each candidate champions one famous person (e.g. Rooney or Suarez, Miley or Beyonce)
- Acting as employers choosing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme).

### 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:

- A trial scene based on a literary text – e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling, Voldemort
- Plan and perform an extra scene from a play
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- A Jeremy Kyle style role play possibly with literary figures as the central characters
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity.

### General Conclusions

The general standard of assessment by Centres is at the correct level. There were fewer administrative problems this November, as opposed to in June 2013, but the need for all Centres to disseminate and follow the specific instructions given by Cambridge regarding the requirements for the sample remains a concern. Centres must be clear as to which of the two available speaking and listening components they are choosing. The vast majority of candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities appear to be enthusiastic about the experience and benefit from careful planning and practise.