

FRENCH

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Papers 8682/01 and 9716/01

Speaking

General comments

The great majority of Centres this year submitted tapes for moderation. Most of these were audible and accompanied by the correct paperwork, though a few caused some difficulties to Moderators. Centres need to be aware that the taping of oral examinations should take place in as quiet an area as possible, in order to avoid external noise. Tape recorders should be tested in situ with, if possible, an external microphone positioned to pick up the voices of both the Examiner and the candidate. Passing a microphone back and to between candidate and Examiner is not a satisfactory solution, as one or other often becomes inaudible.

Examiners should introduce each candidate on tape, by name and candidate number, and since each examination is expected to last approximately twenty minutes, no more than 2 candidates should be recorded per side of a C90 cassette, and only one per side of a C60. The tape should not be stopped and started between different elements of the examination – it should run without interruption from the introduction of the candidate to the end of his/her general conversation. The cassette should be checked to ensure that recording has taken place and is audible, and the cassette itself and the box should be labelled to show where candidates can be found on the tape.

Each examination should last about twenty minutes: three to three and a half minutes for the uninterrupted presentation, seven to eight minutes of conversation developing the same subject, and eight to nine minutes of general conversation, on different themes and topic areas. It is of no noticeable advantage to candidates to extend the length of the examination, as they tend to show signs of tiredness rather than any improvement.

Examiners should note that candidates are expected to ask questions in both conversation sections – where they do not do so, no marks can be awarded. It is often difficult for candidates to insert a question naturally in the course of conversation, and the Examiner should give them the opportunity to score marks by prompting for questions towards the end of each conversation section. Where the candidate has asked a question, the Examiner should take care not to answer too expansively as this restricts the time available to candidates.

Comments on specific conversations

Presentation

Candidates offered a wide variety of topics for presentation, from the artistic and literary to the historical and political, and most remembered to make reference in some way to France or its culture. It is interesting that it is often difficult to anchor themes of topical interest, such as drugs, or genetic engineering, within francophone culture, though some candidates managed to do this by making use of studies and statistics from the French press.

It was noticeable that many candidates had researched their presentation through the Internet, though they had not always made a wise choice of topic. There is a huge volume of information available on the Internet, but candidates still need to make their choice based on personal interests and think about the possibilities of developing the subject. They also need to present the material in a style of their own – there is often great disparity between the language and material of the presentation and the language which the candidate is able to manipulate effectively in conversation. The best advice to give on the presentation would be that candidates should aim to deal with francophone issues rather than just facts – they are expected to be able to express ideas and opinions.

Topic conversation

In the majority of cases, Examiners tried to explore the abilities of the candidates facing them, and asked for explanation, clarification and justification. Under the constraints of an examination, it is difficult to achieve a natural conversation, but this should be the aim of an Examiner. There should not be a list of prepared questions, each of which the candidate answers in turn, but rather an open question such as “tell me about...”, where a candidate may expand beyond a simple answer and give opinions to which the Examiner will react. A few candidates seemed over-rehearsed, with conversations lacking any spontaneity. Most Examiners remembered to prompt candidates to ask questions, though some had been well trained to ask the Examiner for his/her own opinions throughout the conversation.

General conversation

This section covered a wide range of themes, from universal problems to topics of particular interest in the Caribbean, or in Europe. The French elections received a lot of coverage this year, and it is evident that candidates expect questioning to be wide-ranging. Candidates in the main showed themselves able to hold their own in a mature conversation, and the very best were able to lead the conversation to areas of their own particular interests and ask the Examiner very natural questions on the topic under discussion.

Conclusion

Overall, Moderators have been impressed by how well candidates have been prepared for the examination and by the level of performance, and fascinated by the views expressed from all corners of the world.

<p>Papers 8682/02 and 9716/02</p> <p>Reading and Writing</p>
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General comments

There was a wide range of performance on this paper. At the higher end, candidates responded well to questions and wrote fluently and accurately. But there were numbers of candidates for whom the paper was just too difficult and where the quality of comprehension and written French were just not up to the standards of this exam. It is important for Teachers who prepare candidates for this paper to know the approach of Examiners when assessing questions on this paper. Although more specific comments are made later, it is worth repeating some points of a general nature, which have already been made in the report on the previous examination.

With regard to **Questions 3 and 4**, where candidates are required to answer in French, they should not waste time repeating the question as part of their answer. No marks can be gained in this way, and a good deal of time is lost.

Candidates should not copy extended sections verbatim from the texts in answers to these questions. The rubric asks candidates to answer *sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. Although candidates may use material from the passage in their answers, they are required to answer in a way that demonstrates understanding of the text. Copying wholesale from the text does not show such comprehension. Therefore, the candidate must demonstrate:

either: some ability to manipulate the linguistic material of the text. Even quite small changes will usually show that the candidate can handle the ideas as well as the language;

or: some explanation, by adding to or extending the quoted material.

Other questions may be asked by Teachers preparing candidates for the exam.

How is copying from the text penalised? Examiners are, of course, concerned with a positive marking system and not looking for penalties. If an answer consists of an extended quotation with no indication of understanding as explained above, the marks may not be awarded.

What about irrelevant material? It is, of course, an old technique of exam candidates that they practise 'carpet-bombing', i.e. provide a complete paragraph from which the Examiner is asked to extract the point required for the answer. It is very likely that such an unselective answer will fail because of copying from the text. It is probably always the case that a candidate who follows this technique has not understood the specificity of the question or the relevance of the text and therefore is not demonstrating understanding.

What about the link between 'content' and 'quality of language'? Quality of language marks are given globally for the whole performance on a set of answers. There must necessarily be a link between content and quality of language. If a candidate scored 0 for all content, it would be impossible to give any mark for language. (If this were not true, any irrelevant or faulty set of answers could be rewarded.) Therefore, if individual questions score 0 for content, the final mark for language is adjusted accordingly. The mark scheme gives more details of the way in which the balance of credit for language and content is achieved.

With regard to **Question 5**, candidates lose marks if they write a general essay rather than a summary of specific points in the original passage. More will be said about this later in this report.

The same 5 point language grid is used for assessing quality of language in each of **Questions 3, 4 and 5**. This means that candidates must maintain a good level of accuracy throughout the paper if they are to score high marks overall. The categories for Quality of Language are as follows:

5 Very Good Consistently accurate. Only very few errors of minor significance. Accurate use of more complex structures (verb forms, tenses, prepositions, word order).

4 Good Higher incidence of error than above, but clearly has sound grasp of the grammatical elements in spite of lapses. Some capacity to use accurately more complex structures.

3 Sound Fair level of accuracy. Common tenses and regular verbs mostly correctly formed. Some problems in forming correct agreement of adjectives. Difficulty with irregular verbs, use of prepositions.

2 Below average Persistent errors in tense and verb forms. Prepositions often incorrect. Recurrent errors in agreement of adjectives.

0-1 Poor Little or no evidence of grammatical awareness. Most constructions incomplete or incorrect. Consistent and repeated error.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This task provided a wide range of responses. Some candidates had no real problems relating the words given from the text to one of the definitions proposed. Others found great difficulty and were clearly guessing wildly. There were significant variations between 9716 and 8682 particularly for item **1 (a)**, requiring candidates to equate *différence entre deux faits* with the word *décalage* and **1 (e)**, which required locating the word *frais* as defined by *somme dépensée*.

A point worth bearing in mind is that Examiners always choose these items in the correct sequence as they occur in the text. Therefore, item **(a)** *différence entre deux faits* relates to *décalage* in l. 5 of the text. Item **(c)**, *divisions, séparations, inégalités* refers to *clivages* in l. 12. The other item which was generally found to be most difficult was **1 (b)** which related to *débrouille* in l.6. A point which may be made here is that candidates should be encouraged to use the information present in **Question 1** to help them answer other questions on the paper. If they do not know *débrouille*, an explanation is actually provided here which may be used in later questions.

Question 2

Many candidates find this sort of restructuring of sentences difficult, even when their performance in other aspects of the paper is sound. Often, bits of the sentence are strung together with a complete disregard for grammatical connections between words. The other main failing is to omit significant parts of the restructured sentence. This type of reformulation task is quite a severe test of grammatical knowledge.

Item 2 (a) was found to be rather more difficult by 8682 candidates than 9716 candidates with all candidates finding item 2 (b) difficult. The grammatical point tested in 2 (b) was the use of the subjunctive after *bien que*, and the results show that only a limited proportion of the candidates could handle this point. Item 2 (d) was the most accessible to all candidates, gaining over 65% of correct answers. Here, candidates were required to demonstrate use of the infinitive in the following construction: *Patrick Sottejeau ne cesse de pester contre le manque de formation*.

Question 3

Candidates should be reminded that the rubric means what it says. Those who copy *des phrases entières du texte* are not demonstrating comprehension and cannot be given marks. The first part requires an explanation. As already indicated, the explanation of *débrouille* was provided in **Question 1**, and numbers of candidates made use of that information. For others the explanation of *débrouille* and *don de soi* proved to be demanding. Parts (b) and (c) were purely factual and required the candidate to find information in the text. Here, the candidate's aim should be to include any relevant items, for example, the reference to *écoles rurales* was a point to be made in (b) and to *salle séparée* in (c). Part (d) has the formulation *à votre avis*, so there is a certain amount of freedom of choice in the answer. A number of candidates misunderstood the question and took *enseignant* to refer to the pupils. Part (e) also required some deduction and reasoning beyond the text and candidates did not score so well.

Question 4

Parts (a), (b) and (c) were factual, in the main, with answers clearly located in the text. For example, the line reference ll. 6-8 for (a) points the candidate directly at terms such as *société d'information; l'employabilité future de l'élève*. Clearly, the candidate needs to find ways of conveying this information without quoting whole sequences directly from the text, but the facts are there. Part (c) was quite well answered as candidates realised the parts of the text they needed to concentrate on – *vieillesse des logiciels* etc. Part (d) is more demanding, asking for an explanation of terms used and therefore testing comprehension at a deeper level than just asking candidates to locate an item. Part (d) proved to be difficult, because of the phrase *sauf si cela nous berce de l'illusion que*. Only the best candidates realised that the speaker was saying that we should not imagine that the use of computers is tackling the fundamental problems of the education system.

Question 5

It is important that candidates stick to the word limit in this question. Part of the exercise is to get the candidate to focus on a summary of main issues. It would be unfair to candidates who do find ways of summarising succinctly, if lengthy essays in excess of 200 words were given full marks. Therefore, 140 words is the aim, and only limited latitude allowed to complete a sentence beyond that figure. Clearly, this is of great importance to candidates, and given the amount of information to be summarised, they should not waste words on general reflections. It is also important to recognise the importance of the wording of the rubric defining the task. There were three clear areas indicated for the summary here:

- *Résumez la situation actuelle...*
- *quels sont les espoirs?*
- *quels sont les doutes?*

The mark scheme is constructed to take account of this structured task. Candidates will gain no marks for the summary part of the question if they do not refer in detail to aspects of the passages which are concerned with these issues. They should not treat this as an invitation to write a general essay. Ten marks are available for specific points made in this way. The remaining five points for content require the candidate to make a brief personal response to the theme, which is marked as a mini-essay, taking account of ideas, personal point of view and interest of the response. To be able to score the full 5 marks for personal response, the candidate must have enough words left. The last 40-50 words might be an acceptable proportion, relating to the marks awarded. Language is marked on a global assessment out of a possible total of 5. (See the language grid given earlier in this report). The detailed mark scheme gives more information about the ways in which Examiners reward achievement on this question and on the paper as a whole.

General comments

The level of difficulty of this paper was similar to that of previous years. The choice of titles enables the candidate to determine to some degree the level of difficulty encountered.

The spread of essay titles chosen was well balanced, with only **Question 1** being largely ignored by candidates. Very few candidates' work was of an A standard whilst a sizeable minority had difficulties in achieving 10 marks for language. Some candidates wrote below the minimum number of words recommended, which means that it was difficult to cover the topic in any depth. Others wrote far beyond the word limit. This in no way advantages the candidate, as Examiners must have regard to the fairness of the examination, and must compare like with like.

While the best essays were well-planned and well-structured, there were many that showed no clear line of thought and even strayed from the topic by bringing in irrelevant material from previously practised essays. Quotations learned during the year sometimes figured as an introduction, but the impression was that, in some cases, these were rather '*tiré par les cheveux*'. There was repetition both of the title and sentences written by the candidate, often used to sum up arguments at the end. Only the best essays showed a breadth of vocabulary, highly accurate syntax, interesting constructions and a well-developed sense of written style which paid attention to such matters as inversion and sentence rhythm.

There was much influence from the spoken language, with *y a* replacing *il y a*, *que* replacing *ne...que*, and inaccurate transcriptions of what candidates hear in their heads while writing, e.g. *il dise* for *ils disent*. It was strange to note that candidates mis-spelt words given in the title, or failed to determine the gender of words given in the title, despite grammatical indicators which would lead them to the correct gender.

The influence of English was clearly visible in candidates' work, resulting in the creation of many words which do not exist in the French language: *implimenter*, *victimiser*, *enforcer*, *implausible*, *par instance*, *résolver*, *la clonification*, etc.

Common language errors included:

- *grâce à* being used with a negative cause instead of *à cause de*
- confusion between *puisque* and *depuis*, *entre* and *parmi*, *puis* and *alors*, *comme* and *si*, *connaître* and *savoir*
- confusion between *personnes* and *gens*
- confusion between *emplois* and *travaux*
- the use of *comme* to replace *que* in comparative constructions, e.g. *un emploi aussi bien bien payé comme celui d'un médecin*
- spellings in which the wrong choice of *a* or *e* is made for a nasal vowel: *indépendance*, *exemple*, etc.
- single letters where double letters are required: *littérature*, *milénaire*, etc.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was the least popular, possibly because it was the most intellectually demanding. Candidates interpreted '*la société francophone*' in various ways. Some limited themselves to contemporary France or chose Québec as an area on which to concentrate. Some wrote about discrimination between those who spoke French and those who did not. *Liberté* and *égalité* were discussed in relation to race and gender, as well as economic development. *Fraternité* was often ill-defined or omitted altogether.

Question 2

This question produced a wide variety of choices for the most important school subject. The principal subjects chosen were '*l'informatique*' and '*l'anglais*', but other topics included '*la sociologie*' and '*l'histoire*'. Some candidates chose to discuss their own preference and ignored '*la société actuelle*'. Some considered four or five subjects, but failed to specify which was the most important. It was very common to find '*le sujet*' in place of '*la matière*', in spite of the title.

Question 3

Most candidates concentrated on information technology with specific reference to computers and the Internet, detailing both the advantages and the disadvantages to be had from these innovations. Other aspects examined including cloning and genetic modification, together with the moral and ethical questions which these raise. The verb *créer* frequently appeared, but its spelling in both present and perfect tenses caused problems, e.g. *l'homme créé, on a créé*.

Question 4

Candidates sometimes wrote quite passionately about the folly of war, but some essays were unbalanced, failing to consider the technological and medicinal advances which inevitably come out of wars. It was not uncommon for the word *bénéfice* to be used instead of *bienfaits*, despite the title. Candidates found '*jamais*' difficult to interpret. There were sometimes historical overviews of war in human society, or attempts to list various types of war. The events of September 11th 2001 were sometimes included as a new type of war. Some candidates set out to prove that the real benefit of war is the peace that follows, while others wrote in favour of war on poverty and famine. Historical knowledge was sometimes inaccurate: '*Le Président des Etats-Unis, Winston Churchill...*', '*Les Américains ont jeté une bombe nucléaire, nommée Hiroshima...*'.

Linguistic errors included the use of *victimes* as a masculine noun with attendant agreements.

Question 5

This title produced some interesting answers, many of which were in favour of keeping the present differential in salaries. Comparisons were made with communism, and references to George Orwell's '*Animal Farm*' made their appearance. Most candidates seemed to hint that equal salaries for all would be unfair and would lead to demotivation among those at present earning high salaries. Some candidates analysed equalities in the workplace, concentrating on male/female discrepancies. One candidate wrote that men 'earn a living while women merely contribute to the family budget!' There was considerable linguistic confusion between *travail* (often used in the plural, *travaux*), *emploi* and *poste*, this latter often appearing in the feminine. Some candidates wrote of workers being *plus expérimentés*. The verb *recevoir* caused many difficulties, the infinitive sometimes being spelt *reçevoir*, and the third person present being listed as *il recevoit*. Candidates often wrote sentences such as *Les hommes sont nés égaux* instead of *Les hommes naissent égaux*.

Question 6

This title was very popular. Unfortunately, it was generally taken as a broad essay on the generation gap. Very few candidates took the trouble to examine the wording of the title. It was often the case that '*refaire le monde*' was ignored, or was not taken in a political sense, with candidates merely writing about the need to be allowed to go to parties, drink alcohol and choose their own friends. The expression '*sans écouter les conseils de leurs aînés*' was often turned on its head, with candidates complaining that adults do not listen to teenagers. A few essays examined the question of a renewal of the world by the younger generation and the experience gained by the elders when young which they wished to pass on. The spelling of *aînés* was frequently inaccurate, despite its appearance in the title.

Papers 8670/04 and 9716/04

Texts

General comments

There was a wide range of performance: on the one hand, candidates were extremely well prepared, knowledgeable and capable of writing well in French; however, a significant number seemed to be no more than superficially acquainted with the texts, and found it very difficult to express themselves.

There is now a limit of 600 words for each of the three essays, so that it has become even more important for candidates to spend time planning their answers to the precise questions posed. It is pleasing to report that there was ample evidence that candidates were making an effort to comply with this limit. Failing to do so risks two potential types of penalty. Examiners were not required to assess material beyond the set limit; secondly, those who wrote too much on the first one or two essays left themselves insufficient time to do justice to all three questions.

A particular problem arose with the assessment of guided commentaries, in that some candidates failed to indicate where the subsections of their answers began. Occasionally, it seemed that one part had been omitted altogether, or that the candidate had written a general essay on the text or mixed up the issues raised in the various sections of the guided commentary. Candidates are advised to focus on the passage and to label clearly each part of the answer.

Whilst there was less than in the past in the way of pre-learned material produced regardless of the question, and a welcome absence of stereotyped introductions, Examiners would again point out the need to focus on the question in order to gain relatively high marks. Many candidates have detailed knowledge but seem uncertain as to how to organise it when given a specific angle on which to comment.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Alain-Fournier: *Le Grand Meaulnes*

Part **(a)** was a popular choice and answers generally enjoyed reasonable success. In **(i)**, a frequent omission was Seurel's discovery that Yvonne de Galais was not married. In **(ii)**, whilst many were able to identify Meaulnes' dejection and sense of hopelessness, the 'shattered dream' was rarely pinpointed as the cause. In **(iii)**, a fair proportion of candidates wrongly considered that the friendship between Seurel and Meaulnes was so intimate and of such long standing that Seurel had no difficulty in understanding his friend's reaction. In **(iv)**, whilst it was often recognised that Meaulnes felt guilt and remorse over the Valentine affair, only a small number managed to move from cause to effect, i.e. his loss of purity and sense of unworthiness.

Very few attempted the alternative and, of those who did, most lapsed into narrative and failed to examine the argument in any depth, ignoring, in many cases, the question '*qu'en pensez-vous?*'.

Question 2

Molière: *Tartuffe*

There was a generally satisfactory response to this scene in terms of the situation and the behaviour of the characters. Surprisingly, candidates fared less well when attempting to deal with the highly predictable issue raised by the use of the word '*typique*'. Very few managed to comment on Tartuffe's insensitivity to the way in which principled people think, or on his supreme confidence in his ability to get away with anything. In **(iii)**, most were able to comment on the farcical nature of the situation, but more could have been said on the absurdity of Orgon's failure to emerge and on Tartuffe's lack of self-awareness.

(b) produced a mediocre response overall, involving many rather superficial character sketches and little evidence of Molière's comic techniques. Some candidates felt that Tartuffe was more frightening than ridiculous. The best comments on both characters focused on what is said about them before they appear, and the way their behaviour exceeds the spectator's wildest expectations as built up by the other characters.

Question 3

Sartre: *Les Mouches*

Most showed a clear knowledge of the situation, but did not grasp Électre's fear of the possibility of her freedom being granted. Many candidates missed the point in **(ii)**, failing to note that the Pédagogue saw one of Oreste's greatest gifts as the knowledge that '*il ne faut jamais s'engager*'. Conversely, most showed a good understanding of Oreste's malaise and answered **(iii)** without much difficulty.

(b) was perhaps the least successful question on the paper. Most who attempted it wrote little or nothing on the theatrical aspects of the play, preferring to give an account of Sartre's philosophy. Candidates may need reminding that answers which appear to ignore the question, however detailed in themselves, are unlikely to score much more than 50% at best.

Question 4

Balzac: *Le Curé de Tours*

This work was studied by only a small number of candidates. The guided commentaries generally displayed a fairly clear awareness of the situation and a reasonable level of understanding of the characters and the society described in the book. Some candidates, however, seemed to be out of their depth with this text.

Few attempted question **(b)**, and those who did were mostly unable to show a detailed knowledge of the places described, let alone an understanding of the implications of Balzac's descriptions.

Section 2

Question 5

Devi: *Le Voile de Draupadi*

Option **(b)** was more successfully tackled than **(a)**. The best answers showed a mature appreciation of the main character, although very few were able to communicate a convincing view as to whether or not Anjali's decision was '*vraisemblable*'. Again, candidates are advised to attempt all aspects of the question set. The topic of fatalism was understood mainly on a narrative level and generated very few perceptive answers.

Question 6

Joffo: *Un Sac de billes*

- (a)** Many candidates understood the issue of Joseph's increasing maturity and *débrouillardise*, and the best answers offered comment on the contrast between the brothers. Those who contented themselves with an account of his adventures could not expect a high mark.
- (b)** Many candidates attempted this question. The weaker answers offered only generalisations about the situation of the Jews in wartime France, with or without reference to this particular story. Some candidates produced unstructured answers referring at random to various unpleasant aspects of Jewish family life. The best answers captured the sense of fear and injustice and gave detailed and relevant examples.

Question 7

Lainé: *La Dentellière*

- (a)** There were some very good answers, the best of which dealt not only with Aimery's part in the tragic outcome, but also the contributions of the other main characters, of the situation, and of the character of Pomme herself. Most candidates seemed very well prepared for this question.
- (b)** Most explanations dealt exhaustively with the 'work of art' theme and the comparison with the painting. Relatively few were able to analyse in any depth the idea of the holes in the lacework. Those who did were rewarded with very high marks.

Question 8

Many candidates who had studied this work had a good knowledge of the lives of the main characters. As is all too often the case, many answers did no more than recount the events. Appropriate credit was given to those few who examined the quotation in a detailed and critical manner.

In **(b)** those who attempted this question did not really show much knowledge of the issue, nor were they able to tackle the assumption in the question that the novel is about this issue '*avant tout*'.