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Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

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Introduction

This is the second Principal Examiner's report for 9FR0/03. Candidates have shown that they have good knowledge of French society and culture with many examples of outstanding work. However, there is an area that merits comment. Markers report that frequently candidates fail to achieve good marks not because they are not good linguists but because they lose focus. The point has already been made that they should answer the question as put and not stray into strictly unrelated areas. So, for example, whilst comparisons with other societies may be valuable for the purposes of supporting an argument, as when discussing an educational system, care should be taken to ensure that the bulk of the discussion focuses on the Francophone context. Much of what was said this year about the French private education sector was based on candidates' English experience and because it did not reflect the reality of the French context attracted little reward.

Similarly, discussion of a more general philosophical nature on a specific feature of the society under discussion, such as freedom of the press, is a tempting diversion but one that should be avoided if candidates are to be properly rewarded, as what emerges may well not have the correct focus.

In the main, most centres, though by no means all, have understood that perhaps the major purpose of this paper is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of present-day French society and culture as found not just in France but also in other parts of the Francophone community. Accordingly, candidates should be able to find things to say in response to the compulsory questions and present creditable research projects, by making the right choice of topic. Centres are structuring their teaching to reflect the new emphasis. This represents something of a challenge, as matters that are of concern to societies are constantly changing and colleagues will need to be alert to these changes if their candidates are not to go unrewarded for producing material that is no longer factual. Over-reliance on text books carries its risks. For example, it is not just the name of the party that has changed; the Rassemblement National has also modified several of its major objectives and candidates who have not been made aware of the changes will not score as highly in comparison to those who have.

As important as knowledge is, it is not enough to produce facts and statistics alone. Candidates are required to show they understand the implications of what they are conveying. They must demonstrate an ability to analyse and show insight as these

are rewarded at several points in the mark scheme. This will become evident in the way they express and defend their personal opinions on the issues raised.

The structure of the new test, particularly Part 2(ii), the discussion of the candidates' bullet points means that exchanges can quickly become an exercise in the presentation of facts. The danger here is that candidates operate predominantly in the Present Tense, thereby denying themselves the possibility of accessing the areas of the mark grid that reward high-level complexity in the language and high-level cognitive ability. The role of the teacher-examiner is crucial in ensuring that questions of a more probing nature, both from the perspective of opinion as well as expression are asked to allow candidates to show analytical skills and judgment and competence in the higher-level language skills.

The role of the examiner is *now* that of an enabler trying to assist candidates as they express what they know and understand of aspects of French society. This appears to be generally understood; however, the impression remains that in the process the need to elicit more detailed analysis and opinion may have been overlooked. These are high level abilities and attract good reward in the mark scheme. If they are not to be found they cannot be rewarded.

Part 1

The 5-minute period should be spent preparing an answer to the 2 questions to be asked. Together, the statement and, particularly, the bullet points should allow candidates to predict with a degree of accuracy what questions they might encounter.

As a rule, the first question requires some factual information and the second some interpretation of this information in the form of an opinion but this is not always the case as is shown below with examples from this year's paper: -

1. Selon vous, quelle sera la forme de famille la plus répandue à l'avenir en France et pourquoi ?
2. Quels types de famille trouve-t-on en France de nos jours ?

Candidates are reminded that the questions must be answered as put. They are not just an invitation for them to talk generally about whatever it is they can remember concerning the sub-theme, regardless of how relevant it is to the question.

Regrettably, too often candidates neglect to answer the question and produce answers that, whilst being articulate and accurate, are not what is required to constitute a proper answer and thereby fall into the category of "irrelevance"; an

aspect of the Mark Scheme which will be re-visited during the examination of its features.

The Presentation

The following is a selection of topics presented at this year's examination session: -

La famille Curie - la rafle du Vél d'Hiv - Immigration - les effets positifs - La musique arabe - Les émeutes 2005 - Vichy - Jeanne d'Arc - Emmanuel Macron - Coco Chanel - Amélie Poulain - Didier Drogba - Tintin au Congo - Euthanasie - Front National - SDF à Paris - Mariage pour tous - Interdiction de voitures essence et diesel - Mai '68 - Le rap - les banlieues - Le Petit Prince - La langue inclusive - le Sexisme - la Loi Veil - Gastronomie - quel avenir? - le festival de Cannes - Louis Pasteur - Madame Bovary - Edith Piaf - la Laïcité - Neymar et le PSG - L'Etranger - Meursault aimable? - le rap français - Yves St. Laurent - la philosophie de Michel Foucault - Sartre et l'existentialisme - Simone de Beauvoir - les fromages français

Whilst there is clearly a link between these choices and French culture and society, it is not always self-evident and invariably in these cases the subject becomes more important than its relationship to wider society. The point of the research project is to show the impact of the subject under discussion on French/Francophone society. Whilst it may be fascinating to discuss the errors made by Napoleon at Waterloo, it will be of little merit if a link cannot be made between them and society of the time - or even later. Candidates should keep to the forefront of their minds the following: **“How does this topic/aspect throw light on French/Francophone society?”**

“It is important to understand that the Presentation is a formal exercise in reporting on 2 of the sources used during the research undertaken by candidates and their comparative usefulness in arriving at a judgment on the topic. It is not about the topic itself. That will be discussed subsequently with the aid of the bullet points.”

This was the advice given in last year's report. It is disappointing to have to record that significant numbers of candidates did not adhere to this formula

A model presentation could look like this: -

- confirming the title
- giving very brief reasons for choosing the topic
- identifying both sources - which must be **written in French** precisely: - what they are - book, article, website; who wrote them; when; where they were found
- giving the main points of each

- providing a personal assessment of the relative impact of each on the candidate's appreciation of the topic
- concluding briefly

It is to be stressed that no marks are awarded for content in this section of the test. It is a formal exercise. If all elements are included and executed satisfactorily, the full 12 marks will ensue.

The most common misunderstanding is that candidates give their personal response to the topic and not the written sources. This is not what the specifications require. The best candidates select sources that present differing viewpoints, thus presenting them with a perfect opportunity to say which of the two was the more helpful.

Too many candidates fail to nominate their sources or clearly identify them. Candidates who quote only one source cannot score more than 3!

Generally speaking, candidates summarise their sources well. What is sought here is clarity and cogency. A few sentences on each source should suffice.

Examiners have remarked again this year that bibliographies were often poorly written and thus difficult to decipher for the purposes of checking; also, that no indication of which of the sources would form the basis of the presentation was provided. It is therefore, again, requested that candidates isolate or identify numerically the 2 written sources they will be referring to during their presentation. If a marker cannot identify which of the sources listed are being used, for whatever reason, this will be reflected in the final mark.

Bullet points

There should be 6 – 10 of these. They should be used as pointers to areas for further discussion. They should be short and not be full paragraphs in 7pt font. They should not be used exclusively as triggers for rehearsed material to be “parroted” but equally, they are indicators of what candidates have prepared to talk about and as such may be used as starting points for further exploration. Some examiners appear to want to avoid mentioning them and in so doing they unnerve their candidates who struggle to understand what the point is of certain questions. As stated elsewhere, it is the responsibility of the examiner to ensure that they are used in a way that allows understanding and analysis of information to emerge rather than just the information itself.

When choosing a topic, the ones to favour are those that enable knowledge and understanding of Francophone societies to be shown.

The Four Assessment Objectives

AO1 – Interaction (6 marks)

This grid is applied for each task **except Task 2 Part 1**.

It is a reflection of how much the candidate participates in the discussions. It assesses their ability to understand both the surface and deeper meaning of utterances; react appropriately, sustaining, initiating and ultimately directing the conversation; their articulacy; their ability to use strategies to overcome temporary inadequacies and ensure that communication is not broken, such as checking to see whether they are being understood or what the examiner's opinion on a matter is. Candidates should be careful not to overdo this as it quickly appears a contrivance. AO1 allows a judgment to be made on candidates' confidence in using the language, how independent they are as speakers or how much they rely on the examiner to sustain the exchanges.

Advice to candidates

When asked to respond to a question, prompt or remark, candidates should seek to provide an initial response that shows they have understood the question but then should develop this and expand into related areas of the same topic, offering up further possible areas for discussion.

They should ensure that at all times they remain relevant to the point being discussed. Wandering into unrelated areas where they may feel more confident, will attract no reward.

The need to check whether the examiner has understood the candidates' answers should be treated with some circumspection and resorted to only when appropriate – if ever.

Advice to examiners

The good examiner listens to what their candidates say and reflects back to them the import of what they are saying in an attempt to get them to expand the scope of the discussion, offering them the opportunity to display deeper knowledge and greater understanding.

AO4 – Knowledge and Understanding of society and culture (12 marks)

This is applied twice. Once in Task 1 where it assesses the candidates' knowledge and understanding of French / Francophone society and culture and again in Task 2 Part 2 where it assesses the candidates' knowledge and understanding of the research topic. **It does not apply in Task 2 Part 1.**

Candidates score for the degree of knowledge they display; the illustrative examples they supply; their ability to remain focused on the subject under discussion; their analytical powers; their opinions and the underpinning arguments; and their ability to draw pertinent conclusions consistently.

Advice to candidates

Candidates should listen carefully to the questions or comments from the examiner and make sure that they have fully understood what is required of them before embarking on an answer. This may entail requesting a repeat. This should not deter candidates as no penalties are incurred in this process. They should then formulate their answers so that the point raised is addressed directly in an initial response and exemplified through further, more detailed information. They should not be content just to provide an answer to the question but should try to expand into related areas that can provide further avenues for discussion. An easy way of doing this is to pass judgment on the facts under discussion and also give opinions that can be justified.

It should always be remembered that the speaking test is not a "right or wrong" type of examination. Giving the correct answer is only part of the story – and sometimes not even a very big one! What is perhaps even more important is how this answer is provided and for how long. Candidates should seek to show the fullest range possible of the language resources they have acquired over their years of study. They should do this whilst being aware of the need not to lose focus and stray into areas that are not relevant as these carry no reward. It is important to keep to the point.

Advice to examiners

The role of the examiner in allowing candidates to demonstrate the full range of their linguistic, as well as rhetorical, skills has already been addressed but it is worth returning to the subject to reinforce the need to select lines of questioning that encourage candidates to do more than just relate facts. Opportunities to express opinions and argue in favour of these and against those of others should be provided to enable candidates to access the upper reaches of the grid.

A03 – Accuracy and Range of Language (12 marks)

This grid is applied twice. Once in Task 1 and again in Task 2 Part 2. **It does not apply in Task 2 Part 1.**

This grid provides a profile of candidates' grasp and mastery of the language showing how able they are at conveying a message without its meaning being compromised in some way. So, it assesses the extent of their linguistic resources – vocabulary, structures and idiom; their ability to marshal these into coherent utterances; the level of accuracy achieved when doing this; the length of time this can be maintained and the authenticity of their pronunciation and intonation. The emphasis is on their competence in making themselves understood rather than on perfection of form. Thus, a candidate will be judged to have given an adequate performance if they have enough resources at their disposal to express the thoughts they may have and can do this in a way that is coherent and accurate enough for there to be only the occasional moment of incomprehensibility. Candidates should therefore be taught that engaging in conversation actively is the best way to maximise marks for this particular assessment objective.

A02 – The Presentation (12 marks)

It should be clear from what has preceded that this grid rewards the ability to summarise the experience of conducting individual research into the impact of a chosen topic on a Francophone society and nothing else.

Candidates are rewarded for properly identifying 2 written resources; summarising the main points of these; stating which of the two they found particularly useful and why.

Done correctly, this exercise can be very productive in terms of marks. Failure to observe the requirements can be severe even, on occasions, resulting in no marks being awarded at all, for this section.

Advice to candidates

Candidates are advised to adhere closely to the prescriptions above: identify the sources – summarise them clearly – say how they were helpful and why. They should remember that markers will only listen to their test once. There is not time to try to decipher what has been said because the delivery was poor. Candidates should rehearse presenting their findings in a measured manner, preserving the

regular intonation and stress patterns of French rather than allowing themselves to lapse into their native equivalents, which is what tends to happen in the excitement of the moment, and results in loss of communication when words and phrases become distorted.

Task 2 – Independent Research Presentation (12 marks)

There are 2 parts to this task. The first is a presentation by the candidate of the research conducted into their chosen topic, concentrating wholly on the written sources.

There then follows a 7 – 9-minute discussion focusing on the 6 – 10 bullet points provided by the candidate indicating in more detail the areas studied.

Advice to centres

The situation regarding preparation for this part of the test is as follows. Teachers may discuss in a general way with pupils what may be the best type of topic to be researched. They can draw their attention to the exemplars on the Pearson website illustrating model presentations and discuss these in general terms as part of the pupil's key skills learning. They are allowed to give instruction on how a summary and a presentation may best be approached. They may even comment on the candidate's initial choice as to whether in their mind it is a suitable one for the purposes of this part of the test and whether the candidate has adopted the best approach. However, once the candidate has embarked on the research, they may take no further part in the exercise and neither should any other member of staff, including Foreign Language Assistants.

The Themes and sub-themes will clearly be dealt with in the classroom but candidates' individual topics should not.

It is the intention of the examining body that the first time the teacher/examiner and the candidate discuss the IRP is in the examination room. This is to ensure that what too frequently happened in the old specification, namely "scripted" tests where candidates and examiners had rehearsed to such an extent that all spontaneity was absent from the exchanges, should not occur in the new one.

The bullet points exist to assist the examiner in moving around the IRP topic. They are short indicators of aspects candidates want to discuss and as such should be used as a "jumping off point" to a more profound investigation of the area. Examiners should endeavour to lead their candidates into, not exactly unexpected areas but more unpredictable ones that require them to manipulate what they know in novel ways, thus ensuring that they achieve the necessary spontaneity to access the top box in AO1. They should also exploit them in a way that allows

candidates to display not just knowledge but also understanding. Therefore, prompts such as: -

“pourquoi /comment/ dans quel but/ quelles ont été les conséquences de... »
« expliquez-moi ... » « vous êtes d'accord avec ... » « vous comprenez pourquoi ... »
« supposez que ... » “imaginez que” are to be preferred over ones such as
« parle-moi de .../qu'est-ce tu sais sur ... ».

The 2019 Stimulus Cards

Theme 1

Changing family structures

Candidates showed good knowledge of the types of family found in France and the reasons for the demise of the traditional one and the rise of others. The loi Taubira was well understood as was the opposition to it from certain quarters. Many had valid opinions as to the continued existence of *la famille nucléaire*. Many produced good statistics in support of their arguments. There were interesting insights into the problems arising within the new types of family, such as sibling rivalry or the disruption caused by the arrival of a new member of the fraternity. Little if any mention was made of the possible points of conflict concerning inheritance.

Hardly any candidates attempted the option on surrogacy and yet this is an important subject especially in respect of the campaigns by homosexual couples to be allowed to have children.

Education

Very few candidates chose A, which focussed on the changes to university admissions in France. It is a subject that is of great importance to French students, has already caused some upheaval and is bound to feature widely in the future.

Declaration B was the preferred choice. It was apparent that whilst some candidates were translating what they knew about the English system into a French context and produced answers that were too general, such as the assertion that teachers were better in the private system because parents were paying, others were aware of the personal and religious reasons for parents making this choice. It was surprising to hear that the Grandes Ecoles were part of the private system. The role and status of these institutions does not seem to be fully appreciated.

Question 2 was not done well as most candidates misinterpreted the word “importance” and talked about how private education was the route to university and a good job rather than how big a sector it was.

The world of work

The reforms introduced by Edouard Philippe’s government were not the favourite choice, and those candidates who attempted this statement were often short on material. The statement did prove more challenging than other statements and so candidates were rewarded for knowledge of these reforms, without necessarily knowing specific aspects of the legislation.

However, it must be noted that the reforms are an important element of President Macron’s plan to make the labour market more flexible and as such will be an important part of this theme for some time. The position of the unions in French society is being scrutinised and their ability to command support for strike action has been weakened of late. Unsurprisingly perhaps, candidates saw the role of unions as calling for strikes but most of them felt that they were necessary to protect workers’ rights. Disappointingly, very many of them thought that “les gilets jaunes” were strikers.

Sexual harassment at work produced some very uneven responses. Perhaps candidates saw this as too difficult a question. In fact, the law says that any form of harassment is illegal and punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment. An acquaintance with current affairs in France would have been enough to say that the level of reaction from French women was such that it was clear that the law needs to be reinforced.

Too often it was interpreted as meaning inequality, with candidates talking about glass ceilings, wage disparity and “congé de maternité”. Some candidates mentioned #balancetonporc but very few knew the law. This may appear somewhat surprising in the age of Harvey Weinstein and the counter-movement led by Catherine Deneuve among others.

Theme 2

Music

This was generally rather less well done. Whilst what candidates had to say about the attitude of French youth to contemporary music was correct in the main, it was often not an answer to the question. Very little knowledge was shown of the music of the regions.

Statement B was generally chosen over A probably because of the political nature of the question whereas in fact the loi Toubon would have provided a good starting point for a wider more general discussion of the state's responsibilities. Those who chose A produced some interesting discussions, with the merits and defects of trying to influence people's taste through legislation being clearly highlighted. Whilst "rap" is indeed very popular with the young, there is still a strong popular music vein in France (les variétés) and previous generations of stars still fill concert halls.

It is hard to accept that Edith Piaf and Johnny Halliday belong to the "traditional" music scene. What was being referred to here was the music of the Basque Country, Brittany and Corsica to name but three. They have seen a significant increase in popularity lately.

Media

A was generally well done with candidates frequently producing statistics backing up their claims that the written press is dying under the onslaught of online material which is cheaper and more easily accessed but fraught with snares in the form of "infox". Apparently only old people read newspapers. Very few knew much about the press other than the daily press although some used this as an opportunity to talk about Charlie Hebdo and freedom of expression.

Equally, there was the danger that candidates could stray into a general discussion of censorship or the right to say what one wants, forgetting the French context.

B was largely avoided and candidates appeared not to know much about the state of the cinema apart from the fact that young people preferred going to see Hollywood blockbusters which may be true but is only a partial answer to the problems of finance and retention of creative talent.

Festivals and traditions

Few candidates were given this theme and of those who were the majority favoured Question B. It was perhaps the more obvious choice. Although there is general agreement that religious festivals are declining as a result of the overall loss of faith in certain sections of the population and that those that remain do so largely because of their commercial value, these are remarks that could be made about any European society and are not specific to France. Candidates need to investigate more deeply. There are still many festivals, especially in rural France but not exclusively, that are well attended such as Cannes, Montreuil, Menton, Avignon etc. "Les fêtes de la musique" were often quoted but with little actual information given as to what they actually are.

Question A provided an opportunity to discuss social media, the rural exodus, medical "deserts" amongst other features affecting traditional ways of life adversely.

The positive impact of immigration

Answers to Declaration A showed that candidates were interpreting "ouvriers immigrés" in too wide a sense. "Immigration" has a special sense for French people and typically that has not included lawyers, IT consultants and doctors. Whilst there can be no denying that immigrants feature in those areas, the thrust of the question was not in that direction.

Similarly, in declaration B, while pizza is a popular dish, it is not associated with "immigrés" in the popular imagination to the extent that cous-cous or kebab are and these were rarely mentioned.

The challenges of immigration

This card was not often selected. "Laïcité" is still not well understood. For too many it is just a way of stopping people wearing what they want and discriminating against religions in general and one in particular. More attention needs to be paid to the finer points of this fundamental tenet of republican belief.

On the other hand, Question 2 of A produced some well-informed answers showing good understanding of the discriminatory conditions and practices encountered by immigrant families.

Declaration B was generally well done with candidates showing good awareness of conditions in the "banlieues" and the reactions of the inhabitants, especially towards

the police. There was less detailed knowledge of the measures taken by the government to remedy the situation although several were familiar with ZEP's and the problems they face recruiting teachers.

The Far Right

This sub-theme appeared infrequently and when it did, candidates preferred A to B by a large margin.

There were many good analyses of the state of the Far Right with candidates showing a real appreciation of the current and possible future situation for the party of Marine Le Pen. Her change of tactics and emphasis were well understood but no-one took into account the impact of Macron's emergence and his shattering impact on the parties of the right in general.

Too many candidates concentrated on the current situation regarding the RN and did not answer the question about its future. As stated above, it is vital that candidates answer the question as asked.

Question B was attempted by very few. Marine Le Pen suffered from the general reluctance of the French to vote for a party that has the reputation of being fascist despite her efforts to change its objectives and focus. Furthermore, there was her poor performance in the debate with Emmanuel Macron where she was exposed as not mastering her papers.

Occupied France

Once again there was ample evidence of good coverage of this theme. Candidates had a sympathetic understanding of the reasons behind the different choices made by the French regarding the occupying forces during the war. They were also well informed of what else they might have done and the reasons why people did or did not act in a given way.

Again, the knowledge and understanding of the Jewish situation and the extent of antisemitism in France confirmed how well this theme has been dealt with. It appears to be an area that captures the imagination of many candidates.

The Vichy government

This card was not much used. When it was, overwhelmingly declaration A was the favoured choice. Of the two, it is perhaps the more approachable. Those who chose it were well informed and had thought intelligently about the period and the

man. They were less clear about the objectives of his government and very few mentioned the Revolution nationale.

The Resistance

Declaration A proved to be a productive offer. It was clearly something that candidates had enjoyed doing as shown by the quality and extent of their answers. Candidates were well informed on the state of the Resistance until the involvement of De Gaulle and Jean Moulin, although they were short on detail as to the reasons for the factionalism of the early days – but that is a complex issue.

Declaration B was hardly chosen at all and therefore comment is not possible.

Overall conclusion

Themes 1, 2 and 4 allowed for some good performances to be recorded. Knowledge on the family and the Occupation is good. Education and the World of Work raise issues because things are changing so fast in these areas that this may bewilder candidates. Immigration allows candidates to show knowledge and understanding of the particular problems that have arisen in France over the years, even if the notion of laïcité would benefit from closer scrutiny. Theme 3 appears to inspire candidates less and therefore results in less impressive performances.

Language mastery

Whilst grammatical accuracy may leave something to be desired in too many cases, it is rare for candidates' misuse of the language to interfere with the ideas they are trying to convey. This does happen. In these cases, it is usually because candidates do not have the vocabulary to express themselves adequately. Often when the conversation moves on to more familiar territory, they show an improved ability to communicate - however imperfectly.

For this reason, Part 1 is much less well done than Part 2.

The noun group

All candidates, apart from the very best, make mistakes of gender and agreement. It is especially noticeable when a personal subject pronoun is substituted for an earlier noun as in -

- *les femmes, ils doit reste à la maison*

but there often appears to be a certain "ad-hocery" about attributing gender, with the same noun being given both genders at different points.

Agreement between noun and adjective - in both gender and number - often appears optional for too many candidates but perhaps more disappointingly, the placement of the adjective is also problematic.

Most candidates are able to produce comparatives but few attempt the superlative. However, this might simply be a reflection of the fact that the nature of the conversations pursued does not call for it. In general, this is a point worth re-enforcing. When reviewing candidates' performance, the absence of certain structures or tenses is probably explained more easily by the nature of the exchanges being conducted - i.e. seeking opinion and explanation - than by a lack of knowledge on the candidates' part.

Substitution of nouns by pronouns, other than in the verb group is rare. *Celui* etc / *Lequel* etc are rare even among the better candidates, although the expression "*la raison pour laquelle ...*" appears much more often than it used to.

The Verb group

A disappointing number of candidates increasingly fail to make subject and verb agree as in the example above and too many still have not understood that when using a verb with a subject, it must reflect both time and number and cannot be used in its infinitive form:

- avant je regarder la télévision, je faire mes devoirs
and similar offerings are not uncommon and are a disappointing fact.

Subordination

Whilst it is common for "qui / que" to be used – although more interchangeably than one might like – "ce qui / ce que; lequel etc: / dont" feature in only the better candidates' register and even then, the last two are still rare.

Too many candidates have not grasped the fact that the major difference between French and English is that one is a concatenated language whilst the other is a juxtaposed one. Phrases such as: -

- mes parents n'aiment pas je regarder trop les réseaux sociaux
are all too common.

It is reasonable to expect that candidates at this level will have learnt that when one clause is followed by another in French there has to be some linking device. The ability to do this often enables candidates to be categorized as someone who uses complex and idiomatic language and qualifies them to be placed in at least the 7 – 9 box.

The absence of the preposition before most infinitives is even more flagrant. Which one to choose is also difficult.

In conclusion, subordination is a feature that needs to attract more attention. Perhaps with the advent of the translation question, greater weight will be attached to grammar and this blemish will be removed.

In conjunction with a greater awareness of the need to use the relative pronoun, should come an improvement in the form of the subordinate verb:

- les hommes ont peur (que) les femmes prendre trop pouvoir

is an example of the type of phrase encountered all too often and when there is a second dependent verb, even if the first one is conjugated, it will not be:

- les hommes pensent que les femmes prennent trop de pouvoir et avoir trop d'influence au travail

Candidates' language use is judged on the basis of language complexity, coherence and clarity of expression as well as accuracy of execution. Thus, misuse of language may well be attenuated by other features; however greater attention to grammatical accuracy will pay dividends. Candidates using complex and idiomatic language are precluded from the higher reaches of the mark grid because of their inability to produce sequences of accurate language. Greater emphasis on the need for grammatical accuracy is required.

Tenses

Whilst on the subject of verbs, it is worth noting that all candidates are familiar with:

- the Present; the Passé Composé

in addition, most of them are acquainted with:

- the Conditional; the Imperfect; the Future

fewer will use:

- the Pluperfect
- the Past Conditional and the Future Anterior are the preserve of the very best.

Compound tenses

Many candidates are not able to use compound tenses correctly in conjunction with negatives, object pronouns and reflexive verbs.

In general, reflexive verbs are not well understood in that the 3rd person pronoun is the default position whatever the subject may be: -

- il est vrai que nous devons se protéger contre les mauvaises influences

Remaining with the verb group, apart from compound tenses, negatives are generally correctly used, although there is a tendency to drop the second part.

"Ne ... pas" is often the extent of many candidates' knowledge of this feature. Only the better candidates will use "ne ... plus" / "ne ... que".

"Ne ... personne" and "ne ... jamais" are encountered but rarely and when used emphatically the "ne" disappears.

Direct and indirect object pronouns are largely avoided if it can be helped. There is confusion over where they should appear in the verb group, especially if a negative is involved, and also in which order they should come. The pronouns of place - "y" and "en" feature hardly ever.

There is also confusion over disjunctive pronouns - the most common being "eux" and "leur" as in

- c'est difficile pour leur or ... pour ils

Voice

The Passive continues to mystify – not just candidates but markers too. Here is a construction that can be transposed word for word from one language to the other and yet the majority of candidates are not able to do it.

Before concluding, a few remarks on the more subjective aspects of language use – expressing supposition, hypothesis, doubt etc. – need to be made.

Mood

Most candidates are aware of the Subjunctive and many use it correctly but almost exclusively in stock phrases:

- je ne crois pas que ce soit une bonne idée – il faut que je fasse attention à ce que je dis

They are largely unable to select it in « open play ». Frequent correct use will place candidates in the upper reaches of the mark grid.

As indeed will the ability to use “si” clauses correctly. This is an area that would benefit from greater attention. When done correctly, it is evidence of a greater awareness, knowledge and mastery of the language and consequently is well rewarded. As it is also a feature of hypothetical language, expressing condition or supposition, candidates who demonstrate knowledge of it will be operating in the right areas of AO4 and so the rewards will be double.

Conclusion

This paper has proved very successful. The mean mark is high, as is the percentage of candidates achieving top grades. Quite a few examples of full marks have been recorded. The overall pass rate is nearly 100%.

If, at times, some remarks may appear a little negative, they should not be allowed to detract from the very good work witnessed by markers and examiners. Colleagues are to be congratulated on having produced a cohort of students who have acquired much useful knowledge of France and Francophone countries, which they are able to express in language that, if imperfect on occasions, nevertheless rarely fails to communicate their understanding and feelings on a variety of important topical matters. At the same time, they have acquired useful study and presentational skills that will be appreciated both in the workplace and institutions

of further study. Greater attention to areas such as subordination and accuracy will make this satisfactory outcome even more pleasing in the future.

