



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

In general, the results of the oral examination were pleasing. Students' speaking ability varied from satisfactory to nearly flawless. The less successful students made basic linguistic errors, such as using incorrect gender forms, nouns, adjectives and tenses. To improve their performance students should pay greater attention to grammatical structures.

It was apparent that a number of students were reciting pre-learned responses instead of conversing spontaneously. This practice should be avoided as it adversely affects the student's ability to communicate with the assessors, which is one of the key marking criteria.

Section 1 – Conversation

The students were highly competent in conducting a general conversation on everyday topics such as family, school, work, leisure and personal aspirations. Most students confidently and effectively participated in a conversation, reflecting their thorough preparation. Only a few students, although encouraged by the assessors, were unable to advance the conversation beyond basic answers.

The high-scoring students had substantial vocabularies and were capable of handling the syntax of complex sentences. Sometimes, students used language or a phrase that was unsuitable for oral expression; however, this did not affect the communication as the assessors could usually understand what the student was trying to say. Nevertheless, such inappropriate use made the whole sentence sound odd and exposed the student's insufficient knowledge of the spoken language.

Section 2 – Discussion

The sub-topics chosen for the Detailed Study were similar to those of last year: the Holocaust, absorption of immigrants, Jerusalem the capital, and wars in Israel and the hope for peace. Most students had learnt their sub-topics well and showed an in-depth knowledge of the resources studied. The better students introduced their sub-topic well and cited at least three resources. They were able to maintain the discussion by confidently expressing and elaborating upon their own ideas and opinions relevant to their sub-topics.

The less successful students usually demonstrated sufficient knowledge of their sub-topics and resources. However, too often they struggled to express original thoughts or to respond to questions they were not prepared for. To sustain the discussion, the assessor sometimes had to intervene and help by expanding on the chosen subject. It is important for students to know their topics well, but they must also be able to discuss related matters. Less confident students were often hesitant and slow to find suitable utterances or expressions.

Sometimes a student chose a sophisticated word that was not relevant, which suggested that their knowledge of its meaning was rather poor. It is important for students to have a rich vocabulary, but they should avoid inappropriate usage. They should be made aware that words might have different meanings depending on the context. Students' scores were also affected by numerous grammatical mistakes.

Written Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Most students attempted all sections of the written examination and the overall results were pleasing. The responses were in the appropriate language and were well thought out, indicating that students had carefully read the instructions. However, when the responses were to be written in Hebrew, the less successful students often had some difficulty with the language. A few students made elementary spelling mistakes, or even confused letters of similar appearance. Evidently, such students had not mastered even the rudiments of the Hebrew script.



SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Students' comprehension of the spoken texts was satisfactory, and they were able to identify and analyse the relevant information. Not all students are aware that some Hebrew words have several possible English meanings and vice versa. To use the correct meaning, students have to consider the whole sentence carefully and the context in which the particular word is being used. For example, some students confused diligence with physical fitness.

When students prepare for the Hebrew assessment, they should be specifically instructed not to use any information that is not provided in the texts, as no marks will be awarded for such details. For instance, when asked in Question 2c. 'What words in the text best described Elvis Presley's popularity?', instead of 'the star' or 'archetype', some students wrote 'the King', although 'the King' was not mentioned in the text.

Students' marks in Part B, where they had to respond in Hebrew, were slightly lower than those for Part A. The deficiencies in responses were similar, but in Part B there were more linguistic and spelling mistakes.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A – Respond in English

The aim of this section was to assess students' capability to understand and analyse the content of written Hebrew texts. In this section the majority of students scored well, usually better than in Part A of Section 1. They understood the questions well and their answers reflected good identification of the key information. The analysis and the comparison of contrasting aspects in Texts 6 and 7 were competently carried out.

Part B – Respond in Hebrew

In Part B, students were required to write Sarit a personal letter in Hebrew, advising her on some issues and attempting to persuade her to return home. The high-scoring students wrote well-structured letters and dealt with the important issues in depth. Some students addressed only a few points, dwelling on them in a lengthy and repetitious manner, while ignoring other issues raised in Sarit's letter. Contrary to the task's requirements, some students even advised Sarit to stay in Israel.

In many letters the grammar and sentence structures were poorly handled. Overall, however, students' vocabulary was adequate. The good students had a rich vocabulary, which they correctly and relevantly employed to good effect. However, some students resorted to anglicisms or used words and expressions that were inappropriate to the idea they were trying to convey. The use of anglicisms was particularly common in letters to Sarit.

Section 3 – Writing in Hebrew

The difference in language skills between the strong and the weak students was particularly pronounced in this section. The propensity to make linguistic errors significantly increased, as students had to write an original piece and compose original sentences without being guided by the content of given texts. Many responses were well written, but some contained errors in the use of verbs and syntax, particularly when attempting a complex sentence or trying to express an abstract concept. Often students were inconsistent in using tenses and, without reason, changed from past to present and back again within a paragraph, or even within a sentence.

Question 9

Most of the responses to this question were written in good, clear language. However, the text type, a lecture, was not always evident and in some responses essential information was not included. Sometimes only one or two aspects of the effect of computers on our lives were dealt with.

The good students pointed out the invasion of computers in the various areas of modern life, societies' dependence on computers and the dangers of such dependence. These responses dealt with both the positive and the negative aspects of using computers in depth. Generally, the vocabulary used was extensive and the linguistic structures were correct and accurate.

Question 10

Only a few students attempted to write the imaginative story required for this question. Some responses were extremely interesting and well written, but others lacked creativity and imagination and as a result were rather dull.

2005 Assessment Report



Question 11

This topic was the least popular. By and large, students who chose this question handled the task well. They discussed the lifestyle implications of being a vegetarian, its perceived advantages and practical problems. The content of their writing was coherent and the language was relevant and appropriate.

Question 12

Many students wrote excellent pieces for this question. In the diary they expressed the emotions and the anxieties of newcomers during their first week in the new country and described interesting experiences and meetings with the locals. They used good and accurate language to convey to the reader their personal feelings.

Some students took the opportunity to use pre-learnt material about touring Israel and gave the impression that the writer was a tourist rather than a new immigrant. Such an approach was not quite relevant as the student did not describe the feelings and difficulties experienced by a person living in a new country. There were students who did not read the task's requirements carefully, and instead of writing about the personal experiences of an immigrant, discussed at length the general, and largely irrelevant, problems of absorbing immigrants into Israel. Responses that contained irrelevant information usually exceeded the word limit considerably.