FRENCH

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Paper 1342/01
Speaking
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Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- choose a topic which gives them plenty of scope for discussing ideas and opinions
- use the 1-minute presentation to introduce the topic that they wish to discuss
- make use of a range of grammatical structures.

General comments

There were some excellent performances this year. Many candidates brought clear enthusiasm and energy to the examination.

At the beginning of the examination, candidates are invited to give an introduction to their topic which should not exceed one minute in length. The best introductions were concise and simply provided a brief overview of the subject chosen and of the reason(s) why the candidate chose it and thinks it is an interesting topic. Some candidates tended to go into too much detail, missing the opportunity to introduce their choice of topic. Where candidates seemed to be delivering material learnt by heart, there were sometimes problems with intonation.

This year there was quite often a correlation between the number of headings provided by candidates on their topic form, and the depth of their coverage of the chosen topic. Candidates are reminded that if they list only five headings, it is important to make sure that they have enough material to sustain an 8-10 minute conversation and to support the analysis and ideas that the Examiner will seek to elicit.

Factual knowledge and opinions

Candidates' topic knowledge varied widely this year. At the higher end of the range, candidates showed impressive knowledge of such topics as the French Revolution, independence movements in Corsica, Charles Trenet and Napoleon's military campaigns. At the lower end, there were candidates who had not explored their subject in the requisite depth and therefore had difficulty developing the discussion.

Once again this year, films and literary works proved fruitful as topics, lending themselves well to the analytical approach that allows candidates to demonstrate high levels of understanding, illustration and opinion. In a few cases, candidates had not read the literary works listed in their headings: it is important that candidates are prepared to discuss topics listed on their form. A few candidates chose topics which were too descriptive in nature and lacked scope for analytical discussion. Where candidates wish to discuss a literary topic, preparing to discuss one or two works in some depth tends to be a more successful approach than focusing solely on the biography of a chosen author/artist.

Language

There were performances across the whole of the ability range. Well-prepared candidates brought an impressive range of appropriate vocabulary and idiom to the discussion of their topics, while less strong candidates tended to include a number of anglicisms and invented words. It was pleasing to note that quite a number of candidates had clearly been well trained to use a variety of phrases and structures to express their ideas, e.g. *il me paraît que*, *il me semble que, je dirais que*, *j'estime que*, *je suis d'avis que* and *je ne pense pas que* followed by the subjunctive.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation and intonation were generally good and quite often very good. Among a number of recurrent mistakes were the sounding of the final *s* of *ils*, nouns ending in *-tion* pronounced with a *sh* sound, and confusion between the pronunciation of *jeunes* and *gens.*

FRENCH

| Paper 1342/02 |
| Reading, Listening and Writing |

Key Points

- In the Listening exercises, it is usually a good strategy for candidates to try and link the sounds they hear to words which they know and which make sense in the context, rather than relying on phonetic transcription.

- To perform well in the Reading exercises, it is important to provide answers which are based specifically on what the text says, rather than writing down an answer which seems plausible in the context but is not backed up by information in the text.

- For the Writing element of the paper, the practice of tackling the five bullet points in five separate paragraphs is strongly recommended. It is also advisable to keep to the suggested word limit in order to sustain quality of language and argument. Candidates are advised to avoid over-reliance on stock 'essay phrases' and to consider whether the expressions used are appropriate to the context.

General comments

Once again this year, there were many strong performances in the examination and the majority of candidates were well prepared to handle the various exercises. A few candidates had more difficulty with elements which tested productive skills.

Candidates managed their time well and completed the paper in the time available. Responses were generally succinct, though a few weaker candidates included longer chunks of text in their answers.

There were a very small number of instances of candidates answering comprehension questions in a different language to the one specified at the start of the exercise. Candidates are reminded that no marks can be given for answers which are not in the language specified.

Listening

Questions 1–5

The questions in the first listening exercise were generally handled well. Most candidates found **Questions 1** and **5** straightforward. *Tous les jours* in **Question 2** tempted a few candidates into giving *toute la journée* as their answer, and some others were misled by *nos agents* into choosing *la police passe régulièrement chez vous* in **Question 3**. A small number misunderstood *supportent mal* as *se comportent mal*, resulting in the wrong choice for **Question 4**.

Questions 6–15

Most candidates answered the questions in this exercise quite successfully. Attempts to transcribe phonetically sometimes led to incorrect answers, for example *campagnes* appeared for *compagnies* in **Question 6**, and *autrement qu'en voiture* was sometimes distorted as *autrement qu'on/comme voiture* in **Question 7**. **Questions 8** and **9** were answered well. Some candidates wrote *user* for **Question 10** and did not score the mark. Most understood the fact that participation was free (**Question 11**), but some interpreted *s'inscrire … sur note site* (**Question 12**) as the need to go to the *mairie*. For **Question 14**, some had difficulty with *mairie*: a number of candidates wrote *la maire, la mariée* or *Marie* instead. Misunderstanding of *le lendemain* gave rise to some incorrect dates in answers to **Question 15**.

Questions 16–29

Questions 16 and **17** were successfully negotiated by the majority, although some candidates had difficulty rendering *des quatre coins du pays* (from four different regions/parts of France). Some relied on guesswork to answer **Question 17**, with answers such as 'wash their hands before being served' (rather than stand in *la file d'attente*). The large majority of candidates answered **Questions 19-25** correctly. Quite a few candidates missed the correct answer to **Question 26** (peach tart) and a range of alternatives were offered, including *fish tart*. Some candidates also relied on guesswork in answer to **Question 27**. Not all candidates understood 'fireworks' for the answer to **Question 28**; those who did not know the meaning of *ça vaut* had difficulty with **Question 29**, but most answered this question correctly.

Reading

Questions 30–34

Questions 30–31 required the idea of Tania and her two older children (i.e. three people) getting on the train with the luggage, leaving her husband holding the baby on the platform, which was not always understood. A good number appreciated Tania's reluctance to pull the emergency handle (**Question 32**), but for **Question 33** the motivation of the *contrôleuse* in giving Tania a 10-euro voucher was often misinterpreted as a gesture of sympathy. Some candidates included *pourtant* in their answer to **Question 34**, which suggested that they had not fully understood the text.

Questions 35–44

Stéphane's future career was successfully identified by most, but *coiffage* and *une coiffure* also appeared in **Question 35**. A few candidates thought that he lived *en Italie* (**Question 36**) because his flat was *à deux pas de la place d'Italie*. Some misunderstood *en train de se diriger vers son appartement* as catching a train (**Question 37**). The request for a cigarette and its refusal were generally well explained in answers to **Questions 37** and **38**. In **Question 39**, responses such as *le revenge, défendre leur ami* and *se battre Stéphane* could not be rewarded. Inclusion of *qui* in some answers to **Question 40** suggested incomplete comprehension of the text. In **Question 41** *ils le trappent / il y a un grillage/envers un grillage* did not receive credit. *Photos* or *photographies* often appeared as *photographes* in **Question 43**, but the idea that it was the boy who gave the names of his companions was generally well understood in **Question 44**.

Questions 45–53

Most candidates understood the relevance of an increase in time on the Internet (**Question 45**), but some had difficulty with **Question 46**, which asked where TV now ranked. Stronger candidates understood *piège* in **Question 47(a)**, but those who wrote 'a waste of time' were also awarded the mark. *J'ai emmené le poste à la déchetterie* was rendered by a few candidates as *sent it by post to the rubbish dump* (**Question 47b**). In **Question 48(i)**, most understood that a DVD has a limited running time (or that it can be rented only for a specific period) but quite a few candidates misunderstood *on se passe de la pub* as *you can go the pub/you can watch it in the pub* (**Question 48(ii)**). Rachida's action and her husband's reaction were well dealt with in candidates' responses to **Question 49**, but *unhappy* was too vague for *exclus*, as was *by other means/on other occasions* for *ailleurs* in **Question 50**. Many candidates had difficulty with *Enseignante* in **Question 51**. Florence's separation from her husband was well communicated by candidates (**Question 52**), but her separation from the TV set was not always as well expressed – answers such as *unhooked the set* were quite frequently given. A variety of incorrect answers were given for *repasser* in **Question 53**.

Writing

Questions 54 (a) and 54 (b)

Content

Both topics (battery hens in **Question 54(a)** and the re-sale of unwanted Christmas presents in **Question 54(b)**), provoked lively and thoughtful responses from candidates. They were chosen in roughly equal number. Whichever topic they chose, most candidates had ideas and opinions which they were able to express in a coherent and convincing manner.

Candidates expressed a range of views about the rights and wrongs of re-selling Christmas presents – for example, that it was a disgraceful thing to do, but they would be happy to do it themselves; or that they would

never speak to anyone again who did it with a present they themselves had given them. Presents given by grandparents and aunts appeared to be particularly vulnerable to the risk of being re-sold.

A wide range of views were also expressed about battery hens, covering ethical and commercial angles. The more cynical felt that supermarkets were acting to improve their image and boost sales rather than making decisions based on ethics or animal rights. A few candidates missed the point in the stimulus text that supermarkets had already decided to stop selling such eggs.

In general, candidates' responses showed evidence of an ability to organise an answer and to use paragraphs appropriately. Most candidates organised their essays into the five paragraphs suggested by the questions/prompts, which is strongly recommended. A number of candidates did not structure their work in relation to the questions/prompts, and their essays tended to flow less well and to be less coherent. Nearly all candidates gave at least some coverage to each of the five bullet points, and most observed the word count of 220-250. Some responses were over-long, and these were often self-penalising due to reduced linguistic accuracy and a loss of focus.

Language

The overall standard was very encouraging, and nearly all candidates were successful in conveying their intended messages. Stronger candidates displayed an impressive range of vocabulary and idiom and wrote in an appropriate register for the task. Across the ability range, in some scripts there was a tendency to over-use pre-learned essay phrases which did not necessarily fit the context, for example *autant que je sache*.

Handling of tenses and modal verbs was generally good, though weaker candidates tended to make a number of errors in this area. There was also some successful use of the subjunctive.

In general, adverbs, adverbial phrases and adjectives were used well by candidates. In weaker scripts, the most frequent errors were in the areas of agreement and pronoun usage, spelling and vocabulary.