

# Commentaries on Marking - Unit 5751, Interactions, Presentations & Follow Up Questions

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## Commentaries on the marking

### Introduction

When approaching the marking criteria some teacher-examiners find it helpful to start at the extremities and work 'inwards'. Other prefer to start in the middle and work 'outwards'. The commentaries below take the latter approach.

When assessing a candidate, look first at the criteria contained in the 'mid-range' box and decide whether the candidate you are listening to is better or worse than what is described there. If better, go to the next box up and see if that is a more apt description. If worse, go to the next box down and see if that one is more apt.

Remember that assessing oral performances is never an *exact* science. We need to decide which of the boxes is the *best fit* for the performance in question. Sometimes it is very obvious, and the phrases in the marking criteria fit the candidate's performance very closely. At other times *some* of the descriptions seem to match whereas others do not. However, if we go to another box we find that the 'fit' is worse still. In that case we need to decide which box is the *best fit*: it may not be an *exact* match, but we have to decide where it fits best.

Having started in the middle, we move up or down depending on whether the candidate is better or worse than what is described there. We then need to decide whether to move up/down even further, or whether to stick with the box we are now in. Sometimes, having started in the middle, we move up/down and then discover that the 'middle' box was, in fact, better after all. It really is a question of moving between the levels and deciding where, on balance, the performance fits.

Take care to mark the candidates' performance *as a whole*. Some candidates start very well and then tail off as the examination progresses. Others do the opposite. It is very easy to be influenced by the latter part of a performance and to award the mark on the basis of what is freshest in our minds at the end of the examination. We sometimes need to remind ourselves of what the performance was like at the beginning so that we are awarding the mark on the performance *overall* and not just on one section of it.

## The samples

### Interactions Candidate 1

#### Communication

If we look first at the 'mid-range' box, ie 3 out of the maximum of 5, we find a description of a performance which is not as good than the one we hear. The candidate 'responds to straightforward tasks' but also manages to cope, albeit in a fairly basic way, with some more complex questions. She conveys opinions, and expands a little. There is some hesitation, but she shows herself able to deal with unpredictable elements. We therefore need to look in the next box up, ie 4 out of 5.

Here we find a better fit. She copes - just about - with the news that there is an increase in the price, and she is able to make herself understood when asked about British preferences. She manages to convey an opinion ('l'anglais aime le vin rouge') and sustains the interaction with little or no prompting.

As a check that this is the appropriate box, it is a good idea to look in the next box above. Here we find 'takes the initiative', 'expands opinions and attitudes', and 'justifies opinions', all of which would be too generous a description of this performance. This confirms that the appropriate mark is therefore 4.

#### Application of Language

We now turn to the 'Application of language' mark, looking first at the 'mid-range' box, ie 3 out of 5. Does she offer examples of subordination? Yes, she manages to use a 'si' clause successfully, but this is the sole example. Does she use different tenses? She uses the *passé composé* as well as the present accurately on several occasions ('nous avons commandé', 'nous avons vendu', 'le prix a augmenté', 'Monsieur Harrison a visité', etc).

Is her vocabulary 'mostly predictable' or does she use words and phrases which strike us as being particularly good at this level? The vocabulary is appropriate to the task, but does not stand out as being particularly impressive or striking.

We turn to the box above to see whether this might be a better fit. Here we find 'generally at ease with subordination'. Given that this candidate only offers one example of subordination, this would seem to be too generous a description. Also, her 'structure and lexis' cannot be described as 'reasonably wide'. Her use of tenses is not entirely unambiguous ('je vais parler, for example). We therefore return to the '3' box.

As a further confirmation we look at the box below. Here, 'little or no awareness of tense concept other than the present', and 'deploys a very limited/repetitive range of structure and lexis' are too harsh for this candidate. We therefore return to the '3' box. 'Some inconsistency in structures' matches this candidate well, as does 'communication unaffected despite a fair number of errors'. The appropriate mark is therefore 3.

#### Marks awarded :

Communication 4

Application of Language 3

Total 7

## Interactions Candidate 2

### Communication

We start, as before, in the mid-range' box, and again find that this is quite a good fit. The candidate manages to sustain the interaction, and is not 'unduly reliant on the teacher-examiner'. Despite a number of pronunciation errors, he is able to convey simple opinions although he does not expand. He responds to straightforward tasks but does not show that he can cope with more complex question forms. As a check, we look in the next box up. Here the criteria do not appropriately describe this candidate's performance:

'Able to respond to unpredictable element(s)',

'Extends replies and takes initiative',

'Develops more elaborate responses'.

We might want to argue that 'little or no prompting necessary to sustain interaction' *is* an appropriate description of this candidate's performance. On balance, however, the 'best fit' box is '3'. A quick check at the box below confirms this because the following are all too harsh:

'Conveys *some* information without ambiguity',

'Responses invariably limited and restricted to straightforward questions',

'Hesitant and reliant on the teacher- examiner'

'Does not attempt some of the tasks'.

We might want to argue that 'Pronunciation affects communication at times', is applicable, but overall the '3' box is the 'best fit. The mark awarded is therefore '3'.

### Application of Language

Again, we start in the middle.

'Communication unaffected despite a fair number of significant errors' immediately stands out as being 'spot on' for this candidate. When we look at the rest of the '3' box we find other criteria that seem to fit well:

'Uses different tenses with some ambiguity' ('Nous avons commandé', 'nous avons payé', 'nous avons vendu', 'Je parlerai', BUT 'Je travailler...je travaille', 'vous pouvez', etc)

'Mostly predictable lexical items deployed' - the candidate does not use anything 'out of the ordinary' or particularly impressive.

'Some inconsistency in structures' - verbs constructions, pronunciation, and sentences such as 'Je trouve que ça aimer le vin du sud de France' (which is just about comprehensible) fall into this category.

However the candidate does manage one example of subordination ('une compani qui s'appelle les Vins du Monde').

'3' would seem to be the appropriate mark. As before we look into the boxes above and below to check whether either of them would be a 'better fit'. In this case, however the appropriate mark is '3'.

Marks awarded :

Communication 3

Application of Language 3

Total 6

## Interactions Candidate 3

### Communication

Looking at the '3' box, we find too generous a description of this candidate's performance. We cannot say that he 'responds to straightforward tasks', nor that he 'conveys simple opinions'. There is more than 'a degree of hesitation', and he does not always cope with the predictable elements successfully. We need, therefore, to look in the next box down, ie the 2 box.

In the candidate's stimulus we see that the task requires him to 'ask at least one question yourself'. He fails to attempt this task, therefore the criterion in box 2 'does not attempt some of the tasks' is particularly pertinent. Other phrases in the 2 box seem relevant: 'responses invariably limited and restricted to straightforward questions', 'pronunciation affects communication at times'. We need to check whether the next box down, ie the 1 box, would be an even better fit. Here, 'conveys little relevant information' and 'produces minimal responses' could be said to be applicable. 'Mainly one word replies' is, however rather harsh, as are 'limited comprehension of basic questions' and '*extremely* hesitant'. On balance, then, although the candidate is pretty much on the cusp, 2 seems to be the 'best fit' box. The mark awarded is therefore 2.

### Application of Language

We start, as before, in the '3' box. The descriptions here are too generous for this candidate. There is possibly one example - just about - of subordination ('Je préférer le PE parce que c'est cool'), and he also says 'parce que c'est intéressant', but the other criteria in this box are not met. We turn, therefore, to the next box down.

Here we find a more appropriate fit:

'Inappropriate lexical items may impede communication at times': He uses some English words which may not be intelligible to a non-English speaker, and his pronunciation means that at times he does not communicate adequately. On a couple of occasions he appears not to understand the examiner's question and his last string of words is barely comprehensible ('je voudraiz, er, je voudrais parce que un autre travalleur est provaquant').

All verbs are in the present tense, so there is 'little or no awareness of tense concept other than the present'. He also 'deploys a very limited/repetitive range of structure and lexis' and his utterances are brief and limited in scope. The appropriate mark is therefore '2'.

Marks awarded :

Communication 2

Application of Language 2

Total 4

## Presentation and Follow-up Candidate 4

### Communication and Content - presentation

Starting, as before, in the 'mid-range' box, it is apparent that this mark is too low for this candidate. We therefore look in the 6-7 box where we read, for example,

'Very relevant coverage of topic with minor omissions', 'Confident delivery', which seem to be a better fit. However, this box also contains 'Occasional hesitation' and 'Occasional prompting needed to sustain presentation', which, again, seem to be too harsh a description of this performance. We therefore look into the box above to see if this is a better fit.

'Comprehensive coverage of topic' is appropriate, as is 'highly confident delivery', even if the candidate 'overdoes it' at times in her attempts to put on a French accent. Her presentation also has a 'logical and coherent structure' and there is 'no hesitation'. Even though her performance is not faultless we can place her in the top category and award 8 marks.

### Communication and Content - follow-up questions and answers

We can fairly quickly move out of the 4-5 box because it is obvious that she does 'expand', conveys more than 'simple opinions' and is not dependent on the teacher-examiner's structured language'. Is the 6-7 box appropriate? She certainly 'responds well to a wide range of question types' and she 'takes the initiative and develops more elaborate responses'. To say that she needs 'occasional prompting', however, is to sell her short and to say that she 'conveys opinions without *undue* difficulty' does not really do her justice. We therefore look in the top box to see if this is a better fit.. Here, all the criteria apply, so, again, even though her performance is not faultless, we can award her a mark of 8.

### Application of Language

This candidate is not one whose performance in the presentation differs markedly from her performance in the follow-up questions and answers. The fact that we have to mark her performance *globally* in for application of language does not, therefore, present too much of a problem. Starting in the mid-range box, we see that the criteria there are too harsh. There is no 'ambiguity' in her use of tenses, and she uses some impressive vocabulary which is more than 'mostly predictable'. In the 5 box we read 'generally at ease with subordination'. She offers several examples of subordinate clauses ('Bien que le travail était fatigant', 'Quand je suis moins âgée et très petit') and she 'uses a reasonably wide and mostly appropriate range of structure and lexis'. She offers many unambiguous examples of tenses other than the present. Should we place her in an even higher category? When we look at the '6-7' box it does seem to describe a performance which is better than this. The 'best fit' mark is therefore 5.

### Accuracy

Again, marking globally across the presentation *and* the follow-up questions and answers, we start with the 4 box. Can we say that there are a 'fair number of significant errors' or is this too harsh? Her performance is by no means flawless, but her errors are relatively few and far between so to describe them as 'a fair number' would seem harsh. Is her 'pronunciation generally accurate'? Yes, it is, despite the sing-song nature of her delivery. Can we say that she is 'less accurate in less familiar language situations' or does this, also do her an injustice? We turn to the next box up to see if this is a better fit. 'Pronunciation and intonation *generally* good' seems appropriate. 'Generally accurate in straightforward language' also applies, but does 'errors made, possibly basic' apply, or is she better than this? We turn to the next box up to see if there is a better fit. Here, 'very accurate indeed' would seem to be rather too generous a description of her performance, and 'isolated, insignificant errors' also does not quite hit the mark. We conclude, therefore that the 'best fit' is 5 and this is the mark she receives.

### Marks awarded :

Communication and Content - presentation 8

Communication and Content - follow-up 8

Application of Language 5

Accuracy 5

Total 26

## Presentation and Follow-up

Candidate 5

### Communication and Content - presentation

Starting, once again, with the mid-range box (4-5), we find that the statements here generally seem to fit: Despite many grammatical errors there is 'generally relevant coverage of the topic' and it is generally comprehensible. There are 'lapses' but there is a 'good attempt at a logical and coherent structure'. There is 'some hesitation'. If we look in the next box up and the next box below, this confirms that the 4-5 box is the appropriate one. Should we go for 4 or should we go for 5? To answer this question we need to ask whether the performance *tends* towards the upper box or the lower box. Does it *tend* towards, for example 'very relevant coverage of topic with minor omissions', and 'mostly logical and coherent structure with minor lapses', or does it *tend* towards 'limited coverage of topic', and 'significant prompting needed to sustain presentation'? In the example here it tends towards the upper box and is therefore awarded 5.

### Communication and Content - follow-up questions and answers

Starting in the mid-range box (4-5), should we remain there, or should we move up or down? We can confidently say that the candidate 'responds well to familiar, straightforward questions but experiences problems with more complex question forms' and that the candidate 'deals with open questions but rarely expands'. If we look in the 6-7 box we find too generous a description of this performance ('takes initiative and develops more elaborate responses', 'conveys opinions without undue difficulty'). If we look in the 2-3 box we find too harsh a description ('invariably limited, short and very hesitant', 'very dependent on teacher-examiner's language and prompts'). It seems that the 4-5 box is the best fit. Is it 4 or 5? Again we look to see whether the performance *tends* toward the upper box or the lower box. In this case it *tends* towards the lower. The responses are invariably short, and, at least on one occasion, the candidate is tongue-tied until prompted. The mark awarded is therefore 4.

### Application of Language 4

This mark is awarded globally across the presentation *and* the follow-up questions and answers. Starting, as usual, in the middle, we read 'offers some examples of subordination'. The candidate says, in the presentation 'Si vous aimez le sport', and 'si vous pouvez aller à la pêche ou faire une promenade' and these are the only examples of subordination. What about 'uses tenses other than the present with some ambiguity'? In the follow-up questions and answers we have 'j'ai visité' a couple of times, as well as 'C'était bon' and 'J'ai trouvé'. The quality of the candidate's pronunciation makes for 'some ambiguity' so this criterion seems to fit well. Still in the 4 box we read 'mostly predicable lexical items deployed'. There is nothing here which stands out as being out of particularly impressive in any way, so this criterion, too, would seem to be applicable. A look in the boxes above and below confirms that 4 is the appropriate mark.

### Accuracy

Marking globally across both the presentation and the follow-up questions and answers, we start in the 4 box. There are, indeed, a 'fair number of significant errors'. These occur in 'straightforward utterances as well as in less familiar language situations. Also, the criterion 'pronunciation generally accurate' is too generous here. We therefore turn to the next box down. Here the criterion 'communicates the main points despite a high incidence of errors' fits quite well. 'Frequent and basic inaccuracy in manipulated language' is also an apt description. We look in the next box down to see whether this would, in fact be a better fit, but here 'pronunciation impedes basic communication most of the time' and 'only isolated examples of accurate language' and 'pronunciation very poor' are all too harsh. (There may be *parts* of the performance where any one of these criteria might apply, but we need to mark the performance *globally* and look for the box which fits best.) The most appropriate mark is therefore 3.

Marks awarded :  
Communication and Content - presentation 5  
Communication and Content - follow-up 4  
Application of Language 4  
Accuracy 3  
Total 16



## Presentation and Follow-up Communication and Content

## Candidate 6

We start, as always, in the 4-5 box. It is apparent that this is too high a mark for this candidate. The brevity of her presentation means that we cannot credit her with 'relevant coverage of topic'. There is not a 'generally confident delivery' with a 'good attempt at logical and coherent structure'. There is more than 'some hesitation'. We turn, therefore, to the next box down. 'Limited coverage of topic' seems to fit, as does '*some* coherence in the presentation of ideas'. 'Significant prompting needed to sustain presentation' does not really apply, but the brevity of the presentation means that this box is likely to be the 'best fit'. We look into the box below. Here, 'minimal coverage of topic', 'halting delivery', 'reliant on prompting of teacher-examiner' are too harsh. We return, therefore, to the 2-3 box. Should we go for 2 or for 3? As before, we need to ask whether the performance *tends* towards the lower box ('1) or towards the upper box ('4-5). Does it *tend* towards 'relevant coverage of topic' or 'minimal coverage of topic'? Does the delivery *tend* towards 'generally confident' or towards 'halting'? Does the structure *tend* towards 'logical and coherent structure' or towards 'disjointed, unconnected use of ideas'? In this case it tends towards the lower box and is therefore awarded 2.

## Communication and Content - follow-up questions and answers 2

The mid-range' box is again too generous. We look, therefore in the 2-3 box. The answers are 'invariably limited, short and very hesitant' and the 'responses are restricted to very straightforward questions' so this box looks promising. We look in the next box down by way of confirmation. Here 'mainly one-word replies or very short phrases' is too harsh, as is '*totally* dependent on teacher-examiner's structured questions'. This performance *tends* towards the '1' box rather than the 4-5 box ('responds well to familiar, straightforward questions', 'deals with open questions'), so the appropriate mark is 2.

## Application of Language 2

Looking at the performance globally, as before, we discard the 4 box as being too generous. There is one 'parce que' used without success, and there is one example of the *passé composé* (J'ai visité). We therefore look at the 3 box. Here, 'little or no awareness of tense concept other than the present' would seem to be appropriate, and 'inappropriate lexical items may impede communication at times' is also apposite. However, if we look in the box below, we find an even better fit:

'Operates only in most basic structures'

'Rarely offers complete sentences'

'Resorts frequently to non-target language'

She does *tend* towards the 3 box rather than the 0 box, however, so the appropriate mark is 2.

## Accuracy 2

As before we start in the middle but discard it immediately as being too generous. The 3 box is closer but this also seems to be too generous. Can we say that she 'communicates the main points', for example? Looking in the 1-2 box we find a much better fit:

'Pronunciation impedes basic communication most of the time'

'Offers only isolated examples of accurate language'

Again she *tends* towards the 3 box rather than the 0 box, and so is therefore awarded 2.

Marks awarded :

Communication and Content - presentation 2  
Communication and Content - follow-up 2  
Application of Language 2  
Accuracy 2  
Total 8