

Paper 1 Dictation

Marks were evenly spread right across the range from 1 to 30.

The text contained relatively few liaisons (*ils allaient; avait été; très heureux; Ils étaient; ils ont commencé; s'est assis; les yeux; sont apparus; ne les a pas*). For this reason, candidates should have been able to distinguish between *ils allaient* and *il allait*. This was not always the case, even with some of the better candidates, and yet very many candidates successfully differentiated between *ils étaient donc* and *il était perdu*.

Teachers might like to attempt the following exercise with their students to help them distinguish the sounds:

On the board write:

①	il allait
②	ils allaient

Then pronounce one of the phrases and ask the students to call out « un » or « deux ».

For weaker candidates the exercise could be extended:

① il allait	③ il était
② ils allaient	④ ils étaient

After you have pronounced the word, students can call out « un », « quatre » etc as appropriate.

Many successful candidates had thought carefully about the use of the infinitive and recognized *passer; apprendre; par visiter; avant de dîner; que faire; pour pleurer*. The one infinitive which escaped detection was *commençait à tomber* – candidates often confused the preposition *à* with the auxiliary verb *a*.

Good discriminators between the more able candidates and those who had not really reached a good O Level standard were:

- the present participle *en criant*
- the agreement of the adjective for *tous les monuments*
- the spelling of the imperfect *croyait*
- the ability to recognize the need for a doubled consonant in *abandonné*.

Paper 2

Please note that candidates are now allowed to make notes during the second and third readings of the Listening Test.

There were many very sound attempts at both the Listening and the Reading tests. Scores were generally higher in the Reading test, despite candidates now having the possibility of taking notes during the second and third readings of the of the Listening test. Very few candidates seem to have taken notes. The taking of brief notes should be practised in class prior to the examination.

Paper 2 requires answers to be written in English and candidates' level of English was often inadequate for Paper 2. The mark scheme allows for a wide variety of English to be used. Incorrect English used by a candidate is not penalised in any way if the incorrect expression falls outside the scope of the answer printed in the mark scheme. Despite this, many candidates had difficulty writing correctly expressions such as:

- *toasted bread (grilled or more often, just bread);*
- *jam (marmalade);*
- *lessons (sessions; courses);*
- *going to say to her friend (going to tell her friend);*
- *she gets her books out (she removes her books without mentioning a specific place: i.e. her bag);*
- *has/had stolen (stole);*
- *knew how to read French (knew to read French);*
- *he pulled at his sleeve (he pulled from his sleeve);*
- *he was working (he worked).*

A major problem for many average candidates is that where a question requires two pieces of information they attempt the first 'half' but not the second 'half' of many questions. In the Listening test this applied particularly to Questions (f), (i), (m) – candidates generally understood that Marianne was *behind the narrator / her friend* but did not recognize the need to state that she was *trying to hide*.

This problem arose less in the Reading test, although Questions (h) and (i) taken together posed a problem for candidates. The two correct answers *he was healthy* and *he was working* were often considered to be the one, first piece of news, in which case *he was able to send some money* was included as the second piece of news. Teachers should bear in mind that the answers to most of the comprehension questions can be extremely brief (often one or two words). They should train their students to write brief answers. This will clarify the concept that *two items* can often be expressed as two extremely short answers, as in this example.

Paper 3

Question 1

Many candidates found this text beyond their range, often because of poor knowledge of English.

Prepositions: The exact translation of many prepositions caused considerable problems for many candidates:

- *à côté de* ≠ *near*;
- *depuis* – in this context – must be *for*, not *since*;
- *en* ≠ *on*;
- *au-dessous de* cannot mean *below* given the context;
- *chez moi* must be more than just *me*; *entre* ≠ *from*.

Adverbs: The precise meaning of many adverbs also escaped many good candidates:

- *Debout* was either completely omitted or translated as *At first*;
- the adverbial phrase *de plus en plus mal* was, understandably, very testing - however, it was felt that many candidates were not thinking of what they were writing: *more and more bad* and *from bad to bad* revealed a poor command of English;
- the adverb *souvent* was commonly translated as *usually*.

Nouns: Above all, teachers should be aiming to widen their candidates' range of vocabulary:

- abstract nouns in particular caused difficulties (*arrivées / arrivals ; départs / departures ; période des vacances / holiday period ; les règles / the rules ; la loi / the law ; le bruit / the noise*);
- few candidates were able to translate into English *bâtiments; voisin; murs* and, most worryingly *petits-enfants*;
- candidates who successfully rendered *pistes* (*tarmac* was gratefully accepted by the examiners as proof that the candidate had been thinking about the context of the piece under consideration), *compagnies aériennes* are to be congratulated;
- the word *plâtre* was virtually unknown by candidates.

Tenses: Far too many candidates attempted to render the some text in the past tense, but without any consistency, so there was an unpleasing mixture of past and present tenses. Most commonly, the aeroplanes *passed* over Raymond's home or Raymond *commented* that the situation was awful.

Whereas candidates are required to use the past tense in Questions 2a, 3a and 3b, they should not assume that the rest of the paper will test the past tense. In future sessions Question 1 could, in theory, be written entirely in the present tense or even entirely in the future tense.

Question 2a

26% of all candidates attempted question 2a. Marks ranged from 3 to 40 (full marks).

As a new mark scheme is being implemented for the marking of this question, it is hoped that the following typical essays and the commentaries on them will help teachers to prepare their candidates for future examinations.

Sample 1

Chère Anne

Lundi matin, j'ai eu une surprise quand J'e suis arrivée à l'école. Il y a été une fete dans notre lycée et puis on peut prendre le petite déjeuner avec les profs. Entre sept heures et quart et huit heures chaque matin ; la cantine est ouverte et on nous sert du chocolat chaud, du pain grille, croissants, tout. Ce n'est pas du tout obligatoire, mais sur 1,800 eleves, au moins 700 y mangent. **Les élèves sont parlés en français et ils sont rencontré et voir les amis. Nous riront à les profs qui manger. On s'est amusé par jouer tous les jeux et nous sommes allées** en retard pour les cours. (115 words)

Grid A 2 marks

The candidate has used only 51 of her own words and cannot be credited with anything copied directly from the question paper. There is some relevant information, but the reader has to work quite hard to understand what the candidate is trying to convey. A mark of 2 was awarded. There was some doubt as to whether a mark of 1 or 2 was more appropriate. As in all such cases of doubt, the candidate is given the benefit of the doubt and awarded the higher of the two marks.

Grid B 2 marks

The candidate has a fair idea of tenses. The story is clearly intended to be in the past tense. However, as the candidate's own text is so short, s/he has not proved to the examiners that s/he is competent to sustain this usage. It is not clear if the candidate is attempting to use reflexive verbs (*sont parlé* for *se sont parlés?* and *sont rencontrés* for *se sont rencontrés?*). This ambiguity brings the mark down into the 1-2 band.

The range of vocabulary is necessarily extremely restricted. This would fall into the 2 band.

Despite two attempts as subordinate clauses, the extremely restricted use of adverbs and adjectives to flesh out the story puts the mark firmly in the 2 band.

Grid C 3 marks + 3 marks

Had the candidate given more proof of her ability to continue to write as accurately as s/he does in the first sentence, the mark would, of course, be in the 9-10 band. No such proof is available. The sentences in the candidate's own words which remain fall clearly into the 3-4 band. The lower mark was chosen because of the limited amount of language on which to form a judgement.

Total mark 10

How, then, can an average candidate achieve a passable mark?

The candidate below has made every attempt to tell the story in her own words. The words used on the question paper are underlined.

Sample 2

Chère Anne,

Recement mon ecole à organisé un matin français. C'était un inoubliable jour parce que il etait très exciting.

Nous nous sommes levé tôt et nous sommes allé a la cuisine d'école pour, preparer le français café, et moi avec ma meilleure amie sommes allé a la boulangerie pour acheter des croissants. A huit heure les enfants ont venu. Nous avons parlé des français mais nous n'avons parlé pas bien et nous avons ris. beaucoup !

Je me suis amusé avec mes amis parce que il y avait tres long temps de lui voir et nous avons parlé de tout et de rien.

Finallement nous sommes allé en retard pour les cours et les prof a crié de nous.

C'était un inoubliable jour et je suis tres heureuse pour voir mon amis.
Ecris moi vite

A bientot (139 words)

Grid A 6 marks

The candidate has kept very much to the outline given, but she does add a realistic detail of going to the bakers. The text swings between:

- the easily comprehensible (*it was a "French" morning; it was unforgettable; coffee was prepared in the school kitchen; she went to the bakers; the children arrived at eight; they laughed; she had fun with her friends; they chatted about nothing in particular*)
- and the obscure / ambiguous (*what does "exciting" mean?; were they talking French or about French people?; in what way were they not speaking "well";*

has she not seen her friend for a long time? did the teachers shout at the students because they were late or did they shout out the students' names?)

Because a good number of points had been covered, it was felt that the candidate should be rewarded in the 5-6 band. The higher mark was chosen as the candidate was using her own words and had made a creditable attempt to link the ideas into a fluid passage. Although there was a "marked degree of ambiguity" this was compensated for by the fact that the candidate has gone considerably beyond a minimal response.

Grid B 4 marks

Generally a very sound use of the passé composé and the imperfect. This would put the candidate into the upper part of the 5-6 band. However, there is only one subordinating conjunction (*parce que*). The range of structures is very limited apart from one rather charming idiomatic expression (*de tout et de rien*). Use of both adjectives and adverbs is very weak. Poor spelling is reflected in this grid as it is proof that the candidate does not possess the vocabulary needed to express her ideas.

Grid C 4 marks + 4 marks

In addition to a noticeable lack of accents, the candidate has shown a considerable weakness in grammar:

- not eliding (*que il*),
- not making the past participle agree (*sommes levé*);
- not making noun and article agree (*huit heur; les prof*);
- not making write correctly a relatively common past participle (*avons ris*).

Overall, more than half of what the candidate has written is inaccurate. She cannot be rewarded with more than 4 marks. It might be considered that the candidate should be awarded only 3 marks, but as doubt exists, the candidate is rewarded with the higher mark.

Total mark 18

Question 2b

The majority of candidates attempted this question (74%). Marks ranged from 0 to 36. Many candidates had been well prepared for this kind of test and worked carefully.

Candidates should be reminded that, even if they find some of the more complex language daunting, they should be able to find a few phrases which they can translate and which will bring them up to a passable mark. The two phrases *pour les enfants / de l'école* were generally well known – but then many candidates lost marks as they wrote:

- *enfants* for *élèves*;
- *group* for *groupe*;
- *entre onze ans* for *de onze ans*;
- *idéale* for *ideal*;
- *pour* for *pendant*;
- *ils sont fatigue* for *ils sont fatigués*
- *aujourd'hui* for *demain*.

Very few candidates, could remember how to write correctly *une demi-heure*.

Teachers are reminded that the examination is designed to test the whole ability range. There will always be many opportunities for weaker candidates to pick up enough marks to get a minimum pass. It is also the case that some average candidates put a great deal of effort, before the day of the examination, into revising complex tenses and (sometimes unnecessary) idiomatic expressions. If they neglect to revise the basic grammar and vocabulary they could lose precious marks on the day of the examination.

Question 3

As a new mark scheme is being implemented for the marking of this question, it is hoped that the following typical essays and the commentaries on them will help teachers to prepare their candidates for future examinations.

Question 3a

Words in italics were difficult to decipher in the candidate's handwriting.

Sample 1

Enfin l'année scolaire a finit et j'étais très content parce que mon correspondant français va passer un mois chez moi !

Il aura arrivé après une semaine comme ça j'avais faire beaucoup de choses. Au debout, j'allais avec ma mère dans la chambre où il aura resté pour la preparer et être sûrs que c'était prope !

Puis nous sommes allés dans le salon et nous avons *assis / ossis* pour organiser que nous aurons fait pendant son resté.

Puis nous avons quitté la maison pour faire les courses. Nous avons acheté beaucoup de choses, beaucoup de cadeaux pour lui et des choses pour lui preparer des *repas / repos* couvieux.

Après environ cinq heures nous sommes retournés chez nous pour // [120 words] preparer d'aller à l'aéroport où ils avaient rencontré Pierre.

Commentary

Grid A 5

Clear introduction (paragraph 1) but paragraph 2 not at all clear because of poor tenses (*j'avais faire = j'avai fait* or *j'allais faire?*) and inaccurate spelling. However, a sympathetic native speaker might have some idea that the candidate intended cleaning a room. Paragraph 3 is very difficult to understand. paragraph 4 relies too heavily on the word '*choses*' but the writer's intentions are clear – meals will be prepared.

To reach a score of 7 and above the candidate might well have mentioned, unambiguously, **why** he did certain things: *j'ai organisé une visite au zoo parce que mon correspondant adore les animaux* would have been the simplest way to do this. For more adventurous candidates : *j'ai organisé une visite au zoo parce que je savais*

que mon correspondant adorait les animaux. Such a sentence would, of course, achieve a higher mark in Grid B also.

Grid B 4

Grasp of vocabulary was not adequate for the essay: over-reliance on the repetition of *choses, préparer*); mis-spellings; lack of knowledge of *séjour* and details of what was bought.

There is some attempt at subordination and sentence linking (*parce que, où il aura resté; être sûrs que*). This would normally achieve a mark of 5, if it were not for the other severe weaknesses which needed to be taken into account for this Grid

Use of tense is adequate in paragraph 1, the beginning of paragraph 3 and paragraph 4. These might be awarded 5. However, the candidate often has a very hazy concept of tense usage, in which cases 3 would be an appropriate mark (see also Grid A). The examiners therefore awarded the mark between the two.

There are attempts at adjectives (*scolaire, content, prope, couvieux*) and adverbs / adverbial phrases (*enfin, au debout, être sûrs, puis*) but this range is poor and often inaccurate. The mark would be 3 on this criterion.

Grid C 5

Despite some major grammatical errors of tense, the candidate has managed to write some correct sentences. The first line of paragraph 1 is perfectly correct. There is only one error in line 2.

If the lexical item *assis / ossis* were clear, line 1 of paragraph 3 would be grammatically correct. Assuming *repas* at the end of paragraph 4 the whole sentence is accurate apart from the last word.

Total mark 14

Note:

The poor use of tenses has been taken into account both in Grid A and Grid B (ambiguity in time expressions). These errors should not now be considered as grammatical errors. However, the following should be taken into account (*a finit; j'allais* for *je suis allé; nous avons assis* for *nous nous sommes assis;*) as should poor spelling. The candidate can be rewarded for “fairly accurate ... simple language”.

3b

Sample 1

Par un beau jour de printemps à l'école ou Pierre et John étudiaient les enfants jouaient au basketball. Leur professeur était là et il regardait les élèves jouer. Tout le monde était très contents avec le sourire au lèvres. Tout

d'un coup, tous les élèves regardaient Pierre et John. Le prof a froncé les sourcils et il lui a appelé mais Pierre et John ont continué de jouer au basket.

Quand ils jouaient le ball frappé une fenêtre.

Les élèves a eu peur mais John et Pierre avaient de bonne humeur.

Le prof est allé là et il a vu la fenetre et avec de haute voix a appelé Pierre et John.

Le prof a froncé les sourcils et les enfants a eu de mauvaise humeur. (118 words)

Mark A 6 + B 6 + C 7 = 19

See mark grids A,B and C for a description of the criteria used in marking this essay.

It is hoped that teachers will welcome the new mark scheme for questions 2a, 3a and 3b.

Commentary

[A/B/C refer to the Grids A/B/C]
idiom (B ✓), correct grammar (C✓)
imperfect (B✓C✓) (A✓)

excellent idiomatic use of infinitive (B✓)
tout le monde + singular verb (B + C✓)
poor use of pre-learned idiom (B ✗)

touts (C ✗); incorrect tense (B ✗) (A✓)
idiom (B✓), lui (attempted B✓C✗) (A✗)
repeated phrase ignored for marking purposes

Quand (instead of "pendant que" B✗)
imperfect (B✓), le bal (C ✗), frappé (C✗)
(A – incomplete account of broken window)

a eu (B✓ C✗), (A✗ no real evidence of fear)
avaient (B✗), de bonne humeur (A✗B✓),

Le prof est allé là (B✗C✓), (A✗ not clear what
« là » refers to)
incorrect use of idiom (B✗), verb (C✗)
repeated phrase ignored for marking purposes
(A✗) unclear reference to the boys being told off

a eu (B✗C✗), de mauvaise humeur (C✓)

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Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	57	46	35	31	25

Note: Grade Boundaries may vary from subject to subject and from series to series, depending on the demands of the question paper.