

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE O'Level

GCE O'Level French (7193)

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O'Level French: Papers 1, 2 and 3

Preamble

The examination catered for a wide range of abilities; in each paper there was a mixture of basic language and more challenging items. The greatest difficulty faced by many candidates was their low level of English which limited the marks they could achieve in Paper 2 and on Question 1 in Paper 3.

Paper 1: Dictation

Candidates generally had an idea of the theme of the story and managed to write comprehensibly. The vast majority of candidates lost their two "minor" points by writing *a son hotel* (Box 4) and *son dejeuner* (Box 6). This was disappointing as the spelling of the words themselves were, in most cases, accurate. The main errors from average candidates came in spellings such as *un travaille*; *intelligent*; *meilleur* (for *mieux*); *cheveaux*; *horreur* for *erreur*.

Many candidates successfully negotiated *pourrait* but failed to spot the double consonant in *raccroché* and *rappeler*. The word *mission* seemed to be unknown to many candidates.

The words *renseignements*; *doigts* and *dos* were aimed at the more able candidates, as were expressions such as *ce qu'il cherchait*; *qu'il demandait*; *se sentait* where many candidates did well to spot the imperfect ending. However, those same candidates were inclined to miss the passé composé of *il s'est couché*.

Paper 2: Listening and Reading

The mark scheme of this paper is designed to minimise the impact of poor English.

Examiners were disappointed to see that a significant number of candidates left completely blank answers. Teachers are encouraged to train their candidates to make an attempt to answer each and every question.

Listening comprehension

The numbers which were included in the text were well understood by candidates who recognised both the range 8 - 12 in (a) and 1½ hours in (f). It was disappointing that there were candidates who had been entered for the examination who could not correctly identify (b) *July* and (f) *Sunday*.

The most challenging answer for candidates with poor English was (b) ... *to beat her friend*. The answers most commonly given was *to win* (an incorrect answer) and *to win her friend* (unacceptable English).

More able candidates did well to describe correctly in (h) *she hid behind the curtain* and in (o) that *she was eager / keen to take part next year*.

Many candidates lost the thread of the story at the beginning of Section C. Candidates did not recognise that it was the *silence* (k) that caused the mayor to make his announcement and they misunderstood (m).

Reading Comprehension

Candidates started well, correctly identifying the answers to (a) to (d). After that, for (e) to (h), there were many blank answers, which could not be awarded any marks. There were also many guesses, a few of which, at least could glean a mark or two.

Questions (i) - (o) were a little more accessible, although the slightly longer answers required did create a greater challenge for those with weak English.

Paper 3: Reading and Writing

Question 1 - Translation into English

The accuracy of the candidates' English required for this test is much higher than for Paper 2.

Much of the vocabulary of this passage was accessible to candidates as there were many cognates: *album*; *surprises*; *courage*; *kidnap(per)*; *production*; *images*. There were, however, some seeming cognates which were a pitfall for the unwary; *préférés* (*favourite* not *preferred*); *héros* (*heroes*); *célèbre* (*famous* not *celebrated*); *rester* (*stay* not *rest*); *ennemi* (*enemy* / *enemies*); *humains* (*human* not *humane*).

English spelling was often poor with *suprises* and *visiters* being the most glaring examples.

The Examiners were disappointed to see how many candidates did not know the meaning of *neveu* - a very common translation being *new*.

Tenses were often a problem for candidates. It was not uncommon to see a swing to the past tense for *Goudurix arrived*. In such cases, the past tense was accepted if a candidate later wrote *the Vikings arrived* as this was considered as a repeated error. However, the future tense was often not recognised (*this was not easy*) or it is confused with the present tense: *the boy will be afraid*.

The passive in the last paragraph was recognised by a pleasing number of candidates and surprisingly, the expression *Ne le manquez pas*, was well translated by many of the very weakest candidates and yet was unknown by some of the more able candidates.

Question 2a - Guided Essay

This question seems, as ever, to have been the refuge of candidates who perceived Question 2b as too daunting. It was rarely well written. Candidates seem to lack imagination precisely because so much of the scenario is given to them.

Question 2b - Translation into French

The vast majority of candidates who attempted this question had been well prepared and gave as good a performance as they possibly could. It is to their teachers' credit that they had been so well trained.

Candidates seemed comfortable with the *passé composé* and a large part of the vocabulary was within the range of average candidates.

Centres are reminded that in a translation, unless numbers are given in figures, candidates should write them out in letter. In this case *90* was not accepted for *ninety*.

Essay Questions - General remarks

Candidates have access to the highest marks for "Quality of Language" and "Accuracy" however low the "Communication" mark. On the other hand, an essay receiving 0 for Communication will receive 0 for both "Quality" and "Accuracy"

Centres are reminded that the "Communication" mark can be affected if an essay is over-long. The maximum word count is 130 words. A line is drawn after 130 words and no more of the candidate's writing is taken into account. If, by this stage, the candidate has not included all the necessary facts of his or her account, the "Communication" mark will be reduced.

Question 3a - Free essay

Only a minority of candidates attempted this question. Very few of those candidates were able to express explicitly what effect an action or event had had on their life. The Examiners did not consider that the act of going to see a friend or going shopping constituted a life-changing event. The candidate would have to make a very strong argument to convince the examiners that this was so. There were touching tales of how the death of a near friend had affected the candidate. Such essays rarely explained how the death had changed the candidate's life or life style. The mark for "Communication" was generally low for these essays.

There were, however, some excellent essays in which a candidate described how he or she had decided to work harder at school or had decided to improve his or her health by taking exercise or eating healthily.

Question 3b Picture essay

Essays on this topic ranged from the fluent and interesting to the garbled and confusing. However, it was clear that all candidates had understood the story in the pictures.

The vocabulary needed to tell the story should have been well within the range of an average candidates: *arriver; valises; garçon / fille / mere / père; chambre; lit; tomber; chaise; vase; fleurs; regarder; arriver; partir* for example.

The Examiners were disappointed that virtually no candidates had picked up the word *réceptionniste* (Picture 1) from Paper 1. It was not expected that the average candidate would know the word *sauter* (Picture 2) but the more simple *jouer* was rarely used. Many candidates had correctly used the words *vêtements* and *armoire* but failed to use the simple verb *mettre* to describe what the sister was doing.

In Picture 3, the word *casser* often became *caler* and *chaise* became *chaisse*. Equally, it was rare to see the simple but effective phrase *elle était furieuse* in the last picture.

General comments

Teachers are thanked for preparing their candidates so meticulously for the examination. Presentation of the work was good and handwriting generally very clear and legible.

Statistics

7193 Grade Boundaries

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Marks	57	44	32	28	21

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