

EFL EXAMINATION – MARCH 2006

Examiners' Report

Section A – Language Description

1. Performance varied greatly in this section. It was evident that knowledge of terminology was poor in the majority of cases and few candidates scored more than 50% of the marks. In many cases the selection of the descriptor appeared to be based on guesswork rather than on a careful linguistic analysis of the word or phrase concerned.
2. Again few candidates appeared to be comfortable with how English words are stressed. One wonders if, when listening to spoken English, candidates actually hear how the words are being stressed.
3. and 4. It was clearly evident that some candidates had not prepared for this part – they showed no knowledge of what the phonetic symbols stood for. However, these were the exception rather than the rule. Several candidates performed well in this exercise.

Section B – Language Sensitivity and Awareness

1. This reflected the performance in Section A Part 1 – the majority of the candidates did not have adequate knowledge of grammar and terminology to be able to answer in sufficient detail. They thought that all they had to do was to apply the phrases used in the rubric, i.e., grammatical meaning, grammatical form, and so on to the sentence they picked out from the set provided. What in fact they were being asked to do was to say why, using linguistic terminology, the particular sentence is different from the others.
2. Performance was of a high standard in this part.
3. Section A was well tackled but in Section B many candidates did not follow the instructions carefully enough, with the result that they discovered 'errors' of a kind that differed from what they were asked to look for.

Section C – Language in Context

1. Most candidates managed to obtain more than 50% of the marks allotted. However, there was evidence of lack of awareness of standard letter writing phrases and collocation and of careless reading, such as ignoring the two weeks mentioned in the e-mail and asking for accommodation for periods ranging from three to several weeks. Few appeared to be familiar with the phrase tea/coffee making facilities and instead enquired whether tea/coffee making machines were provided.
2. High success rate showing good awareness of commonly used phrasal verbs.
3. Candidates exhibited a strong ability to define the meaning of the given idiomatic phrases. However, there was a decrease in the number of candidates who could accurately produce the required idiomatic phrases. This indicated an awareness of the existence and meaning of idiomatic phrases, but insufficient knowledge of the exact form.

Section D – Writing

The most popular title was the short story. Although a narrative appears to make fewer demands on a writer than does, for example, a title that calls for a discursive treatment, the danger is that the events are made to follow one another through the use of such phrases as 'later on', 'some time later', 'after this', and so on. It is difficult to use language vividly and dramatically when events follow one another as in a procession. A few candidates, however, were aware of this danger and combined narration with reflection on what they were going through. Others brightened up their account by switching between the particular event and its future consequences and thus bringing in a sense of 'if only I could have known...'

On the whole, with a few exceptions, there were no gross grammatical errors in evidence mainly because many candidates kept within very limited vocabulary boundaries and used compound sentences rather than the more grammatically demanding complex sentences.