

Examiners' Report of EFL November 2009 examination

Once again, it was encouraging to note that generally speaking, a number of candidates have been well prepared by existing EFL Exam Preparation courses.

In fact, on the whole, candidates performed best in Section A, particularly the Grammar section where focused teaching is possible. The performance in the Phonology section was also adequate, though the phenomenon of a small number of candidates completely ignoring this section still exists.

Unfortunately, EFL exam candidates do not seem to realize that competent and effective teachers of EFL need much more than an acceptable knowledge of grammar and phonology.

Section B, for example, evidenced a certain dearth of lexis, especially when it comes to collocation patterns. The error correction section, on the other hand, was quite adequate.

The main problem that clearly emerged from this examination session though was the lack of familiarity with real, everyday language especially when it comes to the recognition and production of exponents of colloquial English, phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions. A general dexterity with 'handling language', e.g. the need to perform correct language transformations in Section C, especially, was also sadly lacking.

The Essay Writing slot which made up Section D also presented the examiners with, we understand, a common and recurring problem in this exam: the majority of the essays were not of a sufficiently high standard (some would have been barely acceptable at a Matsec level), especially where it concerns matters of style, vocabulary range, organisational ability, punctuation and, often, spelling. Certainly much more was expected from would-be EFL teachers who, among other things, would be expected to develop their learners' writing skills. Blind marking of all the scripts in this section was done independently by at least two examiners. It is worth pointing out that there was considerable agreement on the part of the examiners in the marking of most of the scripts.

The Speaking part of the examination was, on the whole, rather disappointing as many candidates, although they demonstrated a good mastery of the spoken language, lacked ideas and the skills to develop an argument or train of thought that went beyond a few sentences.

All the problems mentioned above determined the overall poor results that emerged from the November 2009 examination session.

In conclusion, examiners feel that they need to stress that EFL exam candidates need to be exposed to the language in all its forms: reading, writing, listening and speaking as well as grammar, lexis and pronunciation before attempting this examination.

Our impression is that there seems to be too great a focus on the knowledge of grammar to the detriment of the language as a whole.