

## **TELT March 2013** **Examiners' Report**

### **1. Introduction**

**118 candidates** sat for the TELT March 2013 examination session. **70 candidates** were awarded Pass grades or higher. This is the equivalent of **59.3%** of the candidates who sat the examination, a 6% drop when compared to the November 2012 session.

### **2. General Remarks**

The TELT March 2013 session was the fifth sitting using the newly revised syllabus and followed rigorously the format, recommendations and sample sections therein. The team of examiners once again agreed that the use throughout the paper of the exact rubric suggested in the new syllabus document benefitted the majority of the candidates in that it eliminated doubts as to what was exactly required of them in any given part of the paper.

A good number of candidates were generally well-prepared for this exam with candidates once again generally performing well in the sections for which they are able to study. This session, moreover, upheld the recent general positive trend in Part 2 Section E: the essay writing section where, again, a considerable number of candidates demonstrated adequate writing skills in a variety of genres.

### **3. Section Analysis**

#### **Part 1 Language Description, Sensitivity and Awareness**

##### **Part 1 Section A – Language Terminology**

Once again, candidates performed well in this Section. The average mark was just below 30/40 indicating an encouraging 75% in this important area.

As in recent TELT examination sessions, the Examiners' team notes that candidates generally do very well in this section. They seem to be well prepared, but at times unfortunately some tend to miss the wood for the trees. They demonstrate a knowledge of a number of fine aspects in the jargon connected with language awareness, but then have problems with basic terminology like, for example, *auxiliary verbs* and *definite and indefinite articles*.

### **Part 1 Section B – Primary Stress Identification**

### **Part 1 Section C – Transcription of Phonemic Script into Normal Spelling**

### **Part 1 Section D – Transcription into Phonemic Script**

Taking the three Phonology sections together, it clearly transpires that Phonology is still quite a problematic area for many would-be EFL teachers. The overall percentage that emerges here is just below 64%. Candidates performed very well in Section C (82%), and generally well in Section B with a 67% pass rate (although marks were lost due to inaccurate spelling even of fairly common words like *ritual*, *belief* and especially, *atheist*). However, as usual, **Section D – Transcription into Phonemic Script** comes out at a very disappointing 41%. Once again, TELT exam candidates seem to shy away from this very useful classroom tool with a small number of them actually leaving out this section altogether.

The Examiners' team once more wishes to reiterate their conviction with exam preparation centres regarding the importance of teaching Pronunciation and using the Phonemic Script as an important teaching aid in the classroom.

### **Part 1 Section E - Odd One Out**

The average mark was 15/30 indicating a narrow pass rate at 50% for this task. 44% of the candidates scored within the top 15 points. Observations of candidates who struggled with this task are indicated below:

Some candidates selected the wrong answer and gave insubstantial and inadequate reasons to justify the oddity. An example of this is number 1 where some candidates argued that one example was remote past whereas the others were more recent past. At times candidates selected more than the highlighted part which led them astray. Surprisingly, a lot of candidates struggled with the timetable use for a future event of the Present Simple in number 7. Many candidates had particular difficulty with identifying the clause of contrast in number 5 and some candidates failed to identify the mixed conditional clause in number 8; both of which indicate that candidates needed more training in this area. Some candidates failed to recognise the passive structure in number 7. Candidates preparing for the exam are advised to cover all the grammatical and lexical items in the syllabus.

## Part 2 Language Proficiency

### Part 2 Section A - Identifying and Correcting Errors

The average mark was 12/20 indicating a satisfactory pass mark at 60% for this task. 73% of the candidates scored within the top 10 points. Observations of candidates who struggled with this task are indicated below:

In this part of the test, candidates are asked to identify errors and correct them without having to give an explanation, so that aspects of this section call for an intrinsic knowledge of the English language. Many candidates struggled with correctly identifying the error in number 2 and often missed the phrasal verb *drove off without paying the bill*. Sentences which had spelling errors such as *knife* (sic) in number 13 and the grammatical error *You're* in line 8 were sometimes left unnoticed. There were some instances where candidates not only identified the error and corrected it, but also rewrote parts of the remaining sentence. In such cases, candidates were penalised. Correcting other parts of the sentence which are already correct indicates that the candidate thinks they are wrong. Candidates must adhere to the rubric at all times.

### Part 2 Section B – Word Formation

The average mark was 11/20 indicating a satisfactory pass mark at just below 60% for this task. The Examiners' team noted that they were time and again constrained to deduct marks for careless spelling mistakes, especially in the case of *fictitious* and *disbelief*, while many candidates failed to come out with the correct word *emphatically* in sentence Number 9.

### Part 2 Section C – Cloze Test - Seletive Deletion

The average mark was 7/10 indicating a good pass mark at 72% for this task. In this cloze test section, candidates could have even done better were it not for a certain clear difficulty with common English collocations. This area still seems to present a challenging problem to candidates. The examiners feel that the only solution to this is that Maltese candidates should read regularly, as well as expose themselves to and exploit more English language opportunities in their every day activities.

### Part 2 Section D - Sentence Transformation

The average mark was 17/20 indicating an excellent pass mark at over 83% for this task. Candidates demonstrated an adequate dexterity and familiarity with the language and came out with correct sentence transformations.

## Part 2 Section E - Writing Section

The average and percentage pass mark in this section was an acceptable 69%.

There was a considerable improvement with regard to register with many students showing a good knowledge of the format of a letter and the formal register required, as well as cohesive devices. This was also seen with the candidates who opted for the competition entry form. Many candidates who wrote the discursive essay in number 2 indicated a good understanding that they should consider both sides of the argument as laid out in the title. Candidates were penalised for very bad handwriting which rendered the essay almost illegible, incorrect or lack of adequate punctuation, spelling errors, inappropriate turn of phrase, grammatical errors and for writing very long essays, often surpassing the maximum word limit by as many as 200-250 words.

Examiners felt that many candidates were adequately prepared for the essay writing part of the exam. However, TELT Examination course providers would do well to emphasise that candidates should also avoid presenting shoddy work, and crossed-out paragraphs which is often evidence of bad planning or no planning at all.

## 4. Recommendations

Candidates and TELT preparation course providers are to be commended for their efforts to prepare well for this exam. This led to an acceptable Pass rate this time round.

It is evident that while candidates are preparing/being prepared for grammar tasks quite thoroughly, less effort and attention still seem to be given to phonology, and especially to increasing their familiarity with collocations in English.

Specific training for the Speaking test is recommended as it was noted that a small number of candidates struggled to cope with the speaking task largely due to a poor range of vocabulary and a certain lack of fluency. Three candidates actually failed the Oral exam, while 26 others were only awarded a Pass grade. Given that these candidates are prospective teachers of EFL it was felt that this need should once more be highlighted and properly addressed.