

EFL Monitoring Board's English Language Examination, November 2007 examiners' report

Very few papers reflected a thorough knowledge of grammatical terms. Such knowledge is essential if one is going to teach a language. A person can go through life very happily speaking perfect English without knowing, for example, what the Present Perfect is, but it is impossible to teach the use of the tense and the difference from other tenses if one cannot give them names and understand their uses.

Candidates performed much better on the section on phonemic script than in past sessions but worse on the section on stress. Candidates must bear in mind that learners of English as a Foreign Language must be taught not only the sounds of the language but that the sounds are dependant on stress. One cannot pronounce a word correctly without first knowing its stress. Furthermore, English phonemes might be totally different from those in students' mother tongues and it is not possible to impart this information if one has not trained oneself to hear the differences and identify the sounds.

The examiners inserted a section on error identification and correction in section B as it was felt that as this is an important part of a teacher's role in class, it should be reflected in the examination. Many candidates were unable to identify glaring errors in sentences and, conversely, 'corrected' sentences that were already correct. This showed a lack of linguistic sensitivity and depth of language. It is envisaged that this section will be retained in future exams so candidates should prepare themselves in this regard.

The writing paper showed that a number of candidates could tell an interesting story, write a powerful letter and discuss a given subject with enthusiasm. While in some cases the standard of writing was high, in others the work reflected little attention to the craft of writing. Examples of this were reflected in lack of cohesion and lack of consistency where register was concerned. Candidates are expected to understand that it is not only what they write but how they write it that is important in an examination such as this. They must pay attention to the use of grammar, use variety in their vocabulary and give due weight to each word. These are things they will be expected to bring to the attention of their students in the future and candidates were heavily marked down for errors in basic grammar, spelling and punctuation, e.g. 'he don't'; 'their' instead of 'there'; 'i' instead of 'I', etc.

Although results on this examination were better than in past sittings, the results of this examination still showed that a significant number of candidates did not seem to comprehend that a pass in this examination would partly qualify them to stand in front of a class and teach all the basic skills and language systems which include reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, lexis and phonology and that they would, therefore, have to understand the workings of the language in considerable depth. The examiners would, therefore, once again advise future candidates to attend a preparation course prior to sitting for this examination.