

TELТ November 2013

Examiners' Report

1. Introduction

The TELТ results following the November 2013 session were published on the 19 December 2013.

118 candidates sat for the TELТ November 2013 examination session. **68 candidates** were awarded Pass grades or higher. This is the equivalent of 57.6% pass rate compared to 59.3% of the candidates who sat the examination in March 13 and 62.25% in November 2012.

The grades in detail are listed below:

16 Fail

34 Narrow Fail

52 Pass

16 Pass with merit

Four candidates submitted their request for a revision of paper. The external examiner reconfirmed the results for 3 candidates and upgraded a fourth candidate from a Narrow Fail to a Pass. The candidate whose revision of paper was successful will do the oral test in the upcoming May sitting.

69 Oral Test sessions were held on the 8 and 9 January 2013, with the following results:

6 Absent

0 Fail

4 Narrow Fail

22 Pass

25 Pass with merit

12 Distinction

There was therefore a 86.8% pass rate for the Oral session (including one oral which was a resit of a previous session).

2. General Remarks

The TELТ November 2013 session was the sixth sitting using the 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.

3. Section Analysis

Part 1 Language Description, Sensitivity and Awareness

Part 1 Section A – Language Terminology

Once again, candidates performed fairly well in this section. The average mark was just below 28/40 indicating an encouraging 69% in this important area.

This percentage is 6% lower than the one in the March 2013 session. Generally, candidates seemed well prepared, but again demonstrated clear problems with basic terminology like, for example, *names of tenses*, *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

It transpires that, probably for the first time, candidates improved their performance overall in the phonology sections. In fact, the overall percentage that emerges here is just above 70%. Candidates performed exceedingly well in Section C (97%), and well in Section B with a 73% rate (although marks were again lost due to inaccurate spelling). However, as usual, **Section D – Transcription into Phonemic Script** comes out as an Achilles' heel for TELT candidates with a very disappointing 41%. Once again, examiners noticed that candidates shy away from this very useful classroom tool with a good number of them actually leaving out this section altogether.

The examiners' team once more reiterates 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 17/30 indicating a rather narrow pass rate at 57% for this task.

In general candidates seemed to have been prepared adequately for this section. Most difficulties were with the following: the auxiliary / main verb in number 1; the transitive / intransitive form in number 2 (candidates who went astray sometimes identified the past participles as the Past Tense); the separable / inseparable nature of the phrasal verbs in number 3; gradable / extreme adjectives in number 7; and the passive / active voice in number 9. Half marks were awarded where partial correct information was supplied.

Part 2 Language Proficiency

Part 2 Section A – Identifying and Correcting Errors

The average mark was 14/20 indicating a satisfactory pass mark at 73% for this task.

The errors in this part of the paper were pretty well spread. There was a tendency to try and correct sentences which had no errors, for which candidates lost marks. The irregular form of *'burst'* was not always identified by candidates. Frequent errors were found with the conditional form in number 17 and the future perfect active form in number 18.

Part 2 Section B – Word Formation

The average mark was just below 8/10 indicating a very satisfactory pass mark at just below 76% for this task. The examiners team noted that they were repeatedly constrained to deduct marks for careless spelling mistakes, especially in the case of familiar words like *'extension'*, *'sufficient'* and *'diversion'*.

Part 2 Section C – Cloze Test – Seletive Deletion

The average mark was just above 5/10 indicating a disappointing 53% average 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 real challenges for candidates. The examiners still feel that the only solution to this is that candidates should read more regularly, as well as expose themselves to and exploit more English language opportunities in their everyday activities.

Part 2 Section D – Sentence Transformation

The average mark was a mere 13/20 this time round indicating a rather low 69% pass mark for this task. A number of candidates often came out with incorrect, and at times, very awkward sentence transformations.

Part 2 Section E – Writing Section

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

The general improvement noted in the March 2013 session 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, was maintained in this examination session. Candidates were, however, again penalised for very bad (at times almost illegible) handwriting, very shoddy presentation, incorrect or lack of adequate punctuation, spelling mistakes, inappropriate turn of phrase, and grammatical errors. Moreover, a certain lack of familiarity with the nuance of the language was clearly evident. Most candidates, for example, failed to recognize the non-literal meaning of the phrase *'Damaged Goods'* in Essay Title 2, and interpreted it literally.

Examiners felt that many candidates were adequately prepared for the essay writing part of the exam. However, it needs to be reiterated that 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. The Speaking Test

A cursory look at the Speaking Tests results on page 1 reveals that 4 candidates actually failed while another 22 were only awarded a PASS grade in this session.

While this is not a new phenomenon, it is still rather worrying. The Oral Examiners reported a lack of fluency and especially accuracy, as well as an inordinate use of 'Maltesesisms' resulting from an obvious tendency of some candidates to think in Maltese and then translate into English.

It was generally noted that there were also marked difficulties in expounding ideas coherently, naturally and effortlessly, a poverty in the range of lexis used, as well as an inability to process replies to interlocutors' prompts and questions in real time.

Examiners believe that these problems stem from a lack of reading in English resulting in an inadequate exposure to and familiarity with both written and spoken English.

What is worrying is the fact that this also points out to a lack of awareness among some candidates, who are potentially prospective English language teachers, that it is essential to speak English effortlessly, fluently and accurately in order to perform well in the ELT classroom and at the same time not render a disservice to students.

5. 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, in particular the phonemic script, and especially to increasing their familiarity with collocations in English.

Specific training for the Speaking Test by centres preparing candidates for TELT is strongly recommended. It is felt that this need should once more be highlighted and properly addressed.