

TELT March 2014 **Examiners' Report**

1. Introduction

101 candidates sat for the TELT March 2014 examination session. **53 candidates** were awarded Pass grades or higher. This is the equivalent to 52.5 % pass rate compared to 57.6% of the candidates who sat the examination in November 2013.

The grades in detail are listed below:

19 Fail
29 Narrow Fail
48 Pass
4 Pass with merit

Six candidates submitted their request for a revision of paper. The external examiner reconfirmed the results for all of them and the grade was not changed.

60 Oral Test sessions were held in May 2014, with the following results:

1 Absent
0 Fail
3 Narrow Fail
23 Pass
26 Pass with merit
8 Distinction

There was therefore a 95% pass rate for the Oral session.

2. General Remarks

The TELT March 2014 session was the seventh 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.

As the rather disappointing overall results show, only just above 52% of the candidates were generally well-prepared for and/or performed well in this exam, with successful candidates once again generally performing very well only in the sections for which they were able to study.

3. Section Analysis

Part 1 Language Description, Sensitivity and Awareness

Part 1 Section A – Language Terminology

The March 2014 candidates performed fairly well as in previous exam sessions in this section. The average mark was just above 27/40 indicating an acceptable 69% in this important area.

Generally, candidates demonstrated that they can cope adequately with this section (one for which they can ‘study’) but many still had clear problems with basic terminology like, for example, *names of tenses*, *auxiliary verbs* and *definite and indefinite articles*, while others came up with obscure (and from the practical classroom point of view) less useful linguistic labels and terms.

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

The November 2013 candidates’ improved overall performance in the phonology sections (70%) was not repeated this time round. In fact, the percentage that emerges in this exam session is just below 56%. Candidates performed well in Section C (75%), and just adequately in Section B with a 53% rate (although marks were again lost due to inaccurate spelling). However, as usual, **Section D – Transcription into Phonemic Script** comes out as the most challenging examination task for TELT candidates with a disappointing 40%. Once again, examiners noticed that candidates shy away from this very useful classroom tool with a good number of them (26%) not scoring any marks in Section D or actually leaving it out altogether.

The examiners’ feel that, once again, they have 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 just above 15/30 indicating a very narrow pass rate at 51.62% for this task.

In general, candidates seemed to have been prepared adequately for this section. Candidate knowledge was strong in areas relating to tenses, such as the use of the Present Continuous for a present or future meaning; and the Conditionals.

Observations of candidates who struggled with this task are indicated below:

Those candidates who used the same answer as provided in the rubric had more chances of scoring highly as they covered all areas. Few candidates identified the tag question in number 1. While many candidates identified the odd one out in number 2, most of them did not identify the difference between the passive and active voice. Surprisingly, many candidates had difficulty with number 4 and the identification and use of subject and object pronouns. Many candidates found number 5 challenging and only a few identified the conjunction being the common feature and the difference lying in the coordinating or subordinating function. Candidate knowledge of adverbs was too basic with many narrowly focusing on 'ly' as a feature of form.

Candidates are reminded to focus on the words or phrases in bold and not the rest of the sentence when identifying conformity and contrast.

Part 2 Language Proficiency

Part 2 Section A – Identifying and Correcting Errors

The average mark was 12/20 indicating a satisfactory pass mark at 70% for this task.

Overall, candidate performance was quite strong in this area. Many candidates did not recognise that the structure 'so desolate was she' was correct in number 14. Few candidates recognised the error in the double negation of 'unless the heat is not lowered' in number 20. Several candidates correctly identified the error in number 15, but wrongly provided 'disconcerting' as opposed to 'disconcerting'. Likewise, quite a few candidates correctly identified the error in number 12, but were unable to provide the correct form of 'far more intriguing' - many of those who did spelt 'intriguing' wrong. Candidates lost marks for spelling errors, such as 'heared' instead of 'heard'.

Candidates are advised to stick to the rubric and write down only the correct word, phrase or punctuation in the space provided; candidates who wrote the whole sentence, sometimes made spelling errors in other sections of the sentence, and although marks were not deducted for this, it indicated carelessness and overall poor performance.

Part 2 Section B – Word Formation

The average mark was just below 8/10 indicating a very satisfactory pass mark at just above 76% for this task. The examiners team noted once again that they were repeatedly constrained to deduct marks for careless spelling mistakes in this section.

Part 2 Section C – Cloze Test – Seletive Deletion

The average mark was just above 4/10 indicating a very bleak and particularly low 43% average for this important task. In this cloze test section, candidates once again demonstrated clear difficulty with common English collocations. This area continues to present real challenges for TELT examination 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 just above 14/20 this time round indicating an acceptable 71% pass mark for this task. A number of candidates often came out with incorrect, and at times, ‘creative’ and very awkward sentence transformations and were guilty of careless spelling errors.

Part 2 Section E – Writing Section

The average percentage pass mark in this section was identical to that recorded in the November 2013 session at 69%.

Examiners felt that many candidates were adequately prepared for the essay writing part of the exam. However, the examiners’ team also feels the need to comment on the aspects below:

Some candidates displayed poor control of punctuation. There were isolated cases of run on sentences: no use of full-stops nor capitalisation to indicate the start of a sentence.

Many of the weak candidates demonstrated poor spelling skills and a few careless spelling errors with words from the rubric. There were a few isolated cases where candidates only wrote one essay, leaving out the second essay entirely. In cases of weak expression, there were errors with collocation, as well as formulaic or rehearsed structures that were not embedded appropriately or seamlessly. In some instances it was apparent that candidates had erased words, only to forget to insert the correct words.

Candidates are therefore encouraged to allow time for revision. Moreover, there were a few papers with handwriting that was barely legible. It needs to be reiterated that TELT Examination course providers would do well to emphasise that candidates should avoid presenting shoddy work and crossed out paragraphs, which is often evidence of bad planning and a certain degree of carelessness.

Candidates are reminded that examiners have to read and understand the written tasks - clear handwriting is imperative.

4. The Speaking Test

A cursory look at the Speaking Tests results on page 1 reveals that 3 candidates actually failed while another 23 were only awarded a PASS grade in this session.

The Oral Examiners once again have to report a certain lack of fluency and especially accuracy, as well as an inordinate use of 'Maltesesisms'.

The 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 reported in recent TELT Speaking Tests are still evident and common among a number of candidates.

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.

5. Recommendations

Candidates and TELT preparation course providers are to be commended for their continued efforts to prepare well for this exam.

However, It is evident that more focus and attention still need to be given to phonology, in particular the phonemic script, and especially to increasing candidate familiarity with collocations in English, an area which presented real problems to most candidates overall but especially in Part 2 Sections D and E in the March 2014 examination session.

Specific training for the Speaking Test by centres preparing candidates for TELT is strongly recommended. It is felt that this area tends to be generally neglected during TELT preparation courses.