

TELT May 2016

Examiners' Report

1. Introduction

34 candidates sat for the TELT May 2016 examination session. 18 candidates were awarded Pass grades or higher. This is the equivalent of a 52.9% pass rate compared to 55.4% of the candidates who sat the examination in March 2016. This means a drop of about 2.5%.

The grades for the written paper are listed below:

0 Unclassified
6 Fail
10 Narrow Fail
15 Pass
3 Pass with merit

One candidate submitted his request for a revision of paper. The external examiner reconfirmed the result and the grade was not changed.

18 Oral Test sessions were held, with the following results:

0 Fail
1 Narrow Fail
6 Pass
10 Pass with merit
1 Distinction

There was therefore a 94.4% pass rate for the Oral session.

2. General Remarks

The TELT May 2016 session reconfirmed that the use throughout the paper of the exact rubric suggested in the new syllabus document certainly 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. The examiners note the rather disappointing overall results which demonstrate a low percentage of the candidates, i.e. 52.9%, were well-prepared for and/or performed satisfactorily in this TELT examination session.

3. Section Analysis

Part 1 Language Description, Sensitivity and Awareness

Part 1 Section A – Language Terminology

In Section A Part 1 there was a 70% pass rate but it was noted with surprise that some candidates could not tell the difference between basic language awareness terms like passive

and active, contraction and conjunction, infinitive and present tense, comparative and superlative, and modal and state verb. Maybe this could be attributed to L1 speakers who did not think they needed to follow a course or study grammar terms. On the other hand, L2 candidates tended to do well in grammar terms but suffered when it came to lexis, mainly synonyms and antonyms of difficult words, as this is something they could not study or prepare for. There seems to be a pattern of either doing well in Section A, usually meaning candidates have taken a course but are weak in terms of lexis, or, with those seemingly L1 candidates, getting most of Section A wrong but doing well in the vocabulary questions and cloze test. This phenomenon is recurrent in all recent TELT examination sessions.

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 very satisfactory performance in the phonology sections registered in the November 2016 session (69.94%) fell by almost nine percentage points, registering a poor 60.6% in March 2016. In this May session performance returned to a 69% pass rate. Candidates performed very well in Section C (a good 93%). This means that candidates can at least recognise/decipher words transcribed phonemically. As usual, **Section D – Transcription into Phonemic Script** comes out as the most challenging examination task for TELT candidates with a very disappointing result. The examiners noticed with concern that the tendency of candidates who deliberately shy away from this very useful classroom tool is now becoming very common with as many as 16 out of 34 of the candidates either ignoring the Phonemic transcription task completely or failing to score any marks in this section.

The examiners warn against this tendency becoming the norm and 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, an aid which encourages learner autonomy.

Part 1 Section E – Odd One Out

Candidates appeared to struggle with terminology and often could not express the similarities and differences coherently. A few did not attempt to answer some of the questions. There was a pass rate of only 51% in this section.

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

Many candidates lost a mark for not following the rubric and saying what all the items in bold had in common. In spite of this, candidates were awarded a mark when they managed to select the appropriate answer. In many cases, candidates did not even attempt to include a reason whatsoever for their choice of answer.

Candidates are once again reminded to provide answers according to the rubric provided, to focus on the words in bold and not the rest of the sentence when identifying conformity and contrast, and to include a rationale for each of their answers.

Part 2 Language Proficiency

Part 2 Section A – Identifying and Correcting Errors

Candidates struggled with lower frequency words/structures and idiomatic expressions. Strangely a few candidates did not answer number 20. There were two mistakes in question 1 – ‘begun’ and 1970’s. Both answers were accepted as correct. Candidates are advised to stick to the rubric and write down only the correct word, phrase or punctuation in the space provided. Examiners have once again noticed that 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 an overall poor attention to detail. The pass rate for this section was 58%.

Part 2 Section B – Word Formation

Candidates performed well in this section as demonstrated by a pass rate of 76%, with, however, some marks lost for outlandish spelling (e.g. for *collision*, *unmanageable*, *inflatable*) and/or imaginative answers (e.g. for *apologetic*, *unprecedented*).

Part 2 Section C – Cloze Test – Selective Deletion

This time round this section had a good pass rate of 71%. This important task sheds light on the candidates’ familiarity, or in many cases, lack of it, with common English collocations and fixed expressions. It would be interesting to see how many native speakers sat this exam. Usually, as pointed out earlier tend to do well in this section and suffer in Part 1 Section A. The examiners feel that they need to continue to reiterate that the only solution to this problem 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

Section D – sentence transformation task – quite disappointing with a low Pass rate of 57%; lots of candidates had real difficulties with numbers 1, 3, 4, and 7.

Part 2 Section E – Writing Section

In the writing section there were very common mistakes that a lot of candidates made with words that L1/ L2 speakers easily confuse, for example, ‘there’ and ‘their’. While there were instances of good control of grammar and expression at times, there were a lot of spelling mistakes. In some other cases, there were clear examples of awkwardness of expression. Some of the candidates lost marks for not following an appropriate report format. Candidates should be reminded that they do need to write the question number at the beginning of the essay – there were some candidates who neither wrote the number nor the question at the beginning of the text, and the examiner had to work out which question the text answered.

Overall, the majority of the essays were adequate. Essays were, in general, coherent and cohesive. Range of grammar and vocabulary was adequate. Accuracy of grammar and vocabulary was adequate. Task completion in the form of answering what was specifically requested of them in the rubric was good.

Specific points that were noted include the following:

Disregard for punctuation was high. Commas were regularly omitted.

Specific formatting in the cases of the report and the letter was usually absent. There was no attempt at using headings in the report, for example. Letter formatting was also poor with mismatched salutation and ending. Task completion in the form of sticking to the requested word count of 180 to 220 was disregarded in many cases.

The Examiners' overall impression is that the level of essay writing was rather low and simplistic with candidates also demonstrating a dearth of ideas. It is therefore being suggested that TELT Examination course providers should perhaps dedicate some time to sessions which would include and encourage a brainstorming of ideas, linked with an exposure to a wider range of relevant, topic-related vocabulary.

Candidates are also encouraged to allow time for revision. As has been remarked in previous examination sessions, a considerable number of papers were submitted with handwriting that was barely legible. Examiners have to read and understand the written tasks – consequently, clear handwriting is imperative.

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. This is often clear evidence of bad planning and a certain degree of carelessness.

4. The Speaking Test

A cursory look at the Speaking Test results on page 1 reveals that the pass rate this time round is very high, in fact very close to the 100% mark. There was only 1 Narrow Fail candidate. The Speaking Examiners had very positive comments, and this clearly demonstrates that the May 2016 'crop' of candidates was very well prepared for the Speaking Test.

5. Recommendations

Candidates and TELT preparation course providers are to be commended for their continued efforts to prepare candidates well for this exam. It is evident that more focus and attention still need to be given to phonology, in particular the phonemic script, spelling, and especially to increasing candidate recognition of language patterns and familiarity with collocations in English, areas which continue to present real problems to most candidates, especially in the 'Odd Man Out' and Cloze tasks.