

TELT November 2016

Examiners' Report

1. Introduction

59 candidates sat for the TELT November 2016 examination session. 43 candidates were awarded Pass grades or higher. This is the equivalent of a 72.9% pass mark compared to 52.9% pass mark of the candidates who sat the examination in May 2016. This means a considerable increase of 20%.

The grades for the written paper are listed below:

0 Distinction
20 Pass with merit
23 Pass
11 Narrow Fail
5 Fail
0 Unclassified

44 Oral Test sessions were held. The results were as follows:

5 Distinction
14 Pass with merit
23 Pass
2 Narrow Fail
0 Fail
0 Unclassified

2. General Remarks

The November 2016 TELT session has seen a high improvement in candidate performance when compared to the previous sessions held during the same year. Candidates performed strongly overall with Section D in Part One, Transcription into Phonemic Script, still being the section that candidates struggle with most. The Writing Section still poses a challenge for many candidates who struggled with the format conventions of the text they selected; any weakness when it comes to lexis and structure was more noticeable in this section. Candidate performance during the Speaking Test reinforced the findings in the written paper, namely that the crop of candidates this time round was of a high calibre.

3. Section Analysis

Part 1 Language Description, Sensitivity and Awareness

Part 1 Section A – Language Terminology

In Section A Part 1, the average pass mark was 71%, but it was noted that, as for previous sittings, some candidates could not tell the difference between basic language awareness terms. It is advisable for all candidates to adequately prepare themselves for the exam in terms of learning the grammar and terminology. Candidates who did well were likely to have studied the grammar terms or followed a TELT course. Two candidates failed.

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 session sees a considerable improvement in candidate performance in these sections registering an average 82% pass mark. This has far exceeded previous performance levels registered this year: 61% in March 2016 and 69% in May.

Candidate performance was quite good in Section B (71%). Candidates performed very well in Section C (87%), indicating that candidates can recognise/decipher words transcribed phonemically. Surprisingly, there was quite a high number of candidates who misspelt some of the five words, especially ‘museum’ and ‘exhibition,’ for which they lost marks. Section D remains the most challenging examination task for TELT candidates with the lowest result (56%). Some candidates did not even attempt this task.

Once again the examiners would like to impress upon centres and trainers preparing candidates for this exam the importance of teaching pronunciation and using the phonemic script as a teaching aid in the classroom, especially to reinforce learner autonomy.

Part 1 Section E – Odd One Out

Overall, performance in this section was far better than in previous sittings with an average pass mark of 72% in comparison with the 51% pass mark of May 2016. Some candidates continued to struggle with terminology. In particular, candidates were generally unable to correctly distinguish between types of conditionals. A few candidates did not identify the use of ‘must’ – obligation or deduction – within the context of the question. Some were unable to distinguish between adverbs and adjectives.

There was an improvement in candidates following the rubric. Candidates who partly responded to the questions had a chance to gain marks if their parts were correct. A few candidates did not volunteer any answers in some instances. Candidates who did not select the correct odd one out but delivered a justifiable description of what they identified as being in common and odd had a chance to gain points.

Part 2 Language Proficiency

Part 2 Section A – Identifying and Correcting Errors

The average pass mark for this section was 72%, which is a considerable improvement from 58% in May 2016. Candidates did well to follow the rubric and, in most cases, wrote down only the correct word, phrase or punctuation in the space provided. Errors include candidates attempting to correct sentences which were already correct, having difficulty identifying and correcting the wrong use of tense structure and use of preposition.

Part 2 Section B – Word Formation

With an average pass mark of 73%, candidates performed well in this section, yet slightly underperformed in comparison to the May 2016 session which had registered an average 76% pass mark. On this occasion, apart from some words which were not reformulated correctly, valuable marks were lost with the majority of the candidates due to poor spelling, particularly with the following words: *sovereignty*, *authoritarian*, *incessant*, *concession*, and *spontaneity*.

Part 2 Section C – Cloze Test – Selective Deletion

The majority of candidates performed well in this section with an average pass mark of 68%. Candidates who read regularly and broaden their range of collocation and commonly used phrases would fare well in this section. This time round, the topic might have been more appealing than previously for younger candidates as examiners noted a lower frequency of errors in this section.

Part 2 Section D – Sentence Transformation

Candidates performed strongly in this section evident by the 80% average pass mark. There were, however, unanticipated problems with numbers 1, 3, and 10. Candidates who got this wrong often made errors with collocation in the reformulated answers. It was surprising that candidates were unfamiliar with what are deemed to be common idiomatic expressions.

Part 2 Section E – Writing Section

Overall, the majority of essays were adequate with the task being addressed and all points being covered. In many instances, essays were coherent with good control of language and cohesive devices. Task completion in the form of answering what was specifically requested of them in the rubric was good. However, examiners noticed a lack of knowledge regarding the layout of many of the written texts.

Many candidates had problems with format, displaying a disregard to paragraphing and the elements of a paragraph. In some isolated instances, the essay was one long paragraph. The few candidates who chose the proposal did not adhere to the appropriate format. Specific formatting and the use of specific conventions in the cases of the report were usually absent. For example, there was no attempt at using headings in many of the reports, nor was there control of appropriate sections.

Apart from errors with format, candidates who struggled in this section had a weak range of lexis, amplified with several instances of repetition. It was noted that there was very little display of imagination or creativity. The narrative essay was often the predictable robbery. Ideas were very repetitive and not always logically organised. Some attempts at using idioms were inaccurate: idioms were sometimes mixed or there were errors with collocation.

Accuracy and range of grammar was adequate amongst the students who performed well in this section. Candidates who did not perform as well were limited when it came to structures in range and complexity. For example, there were some examples of candidates writing without articles as well as instances where there were errors between subject and verb agreement. Phrasal verbs suffered too, with the wrong preposition being collocated with the verb.

Examiners are surprised yet again at the high incidence of spelling errors and a disregard for punctuation at this level of examination. Commas, for example, were regularly omitted. In some cases, presentation was far from what is expected with writing that was hardly legible, words and paragraphs that were crossed out, and a combination of pen and pencil within the same text.

Some candidates disregarded the word count.

Examiners suggest that candidates dedicate more time to reading, with reading being a model for writing as well as a means by which candidates broaden their range of lexis and structures. Reading would also serve to help students develop their creativity and come up with ideas for their writing. Examiners encourage trainers to provide candidates with opportunities to read and develop their writing using a variety of texts.

4. The Speaking Test

Overall, candidates performed very well in the oral component with the pass rate being 95% this time round. There were only 2 Narrow Fail instances with a high incidence of Distinctions (5). The Distinction candidates were in full command of the language. Questions were answered cogently and they were able to easily expand on the topics provided. Candidates who achieved high marks displayed excellent usage of discourse strategies and, in one particular case, rhetorical devices. These linguistic features were particularly useful in the second part of the examination and contributed well to the overall cohesion and coherence of extended speech. In some cases, applicants were able to communicate well in English; however, a limited display of lexical range hindered their performance.

5. Recommendations

As with previous reports, more focus and attention to phonology is encouraged, in particular the phonemic script. The necessity to spell correctly needs to be impressed upon candidates as well as correct combinations of collocated words. Trainers are encouraged to provide candidates with opportunities to improve their writing skills in the various text types and their respective writing conventions. Lastly, candidates should be encouraged to dedicate time for regular reading practice as this may serve as a valuable model for their own writing.