

FRENCH

Paper 1342/01

Speaking

General comments

The candidature displayed an impressive level of linguistic competence resulting from enthusiastic and outstanding teaching and learning. Generally, candidates were very successful in engaging in a mature conversation on a very wide range of topics. All candidates had clearly researched their topics well and many were able to communicate their ideas using a wide range of structures and vocabulary. Communication was rarely impeded by grammatical slips and errors of pronunciation and all candidates responded well to the Examiner's questions.

The initial group briefing by the Examiner served a useful purpose as it gave candidates the opportunity to see and hear the Examiner and ask one or two final questions about the format of the exam. Candidates were also reminded that *they* were expected to be the expert on their chosen topic, not the Examiner! Although very few candidates needed to refer to their topic title sheets once they were underway, it is well worth reminding them to bring a copy of their sheet, as several candidates arrived without it. It was also pleasing to see the supporting use of visuals which were clearly vital to the discussion of certain artistic topics. All Centres are thanked for providing good and quiet examining locations and organising timings which were well adhered to by candidates. Centres are reminded to provide the Examiner with the working mark sheets completed with candidate names and numbers on the examination day as this was not always the case.

It was gratifying to see that candidates had been able to pursue and research topics which they clearly found intellectually stimulating and in which they had a personal interest. Nearly all candidates had made their own choice of topic. Pleasingly, all fell within the requirements of the specification and all candidates were able to relate their topic to francophone culture. Among the literary/philosophical topics chosen were Baudelaire, Hugo, Camus, Ionesco, Becket, Descartes and Rousseau. Film study was less popular this year but if well chosen, a film such as *Entre les Murs* can give rise to some interesting areas for follow-up discussion. Historical choices included the Indo-Chinese war, Charlemagne, Oradour, Jean Moulin and Léon Blum and several candidates chose contemporary political figures such as Sarkozy and Chirac. Artists, musicians and sports players, also proved popular, with several candidates choosing to talk about different rugby and football players. Such topics can become far more interesting when a player such as Thuram is chosen as they can open out into wider cultural issues. Some candidates chose to talk about the impact of tourism on a particular area or town. Most candidates recognised the need to go beyond the factual and express their views and were usually able to give these without too much prompting from the Examiner.

Factual Knowledge and Opinions

Presentation technique varied amongst candidates. Some well organised candidates used their initial presentation minute to give a broad overview of what they intended to cover whereas other candidates plunged straight into their first topic title – a less successful approach. The pace of presentation is something which candidates can practise and time. It can make the transition from presentation to discussion smoother. Most were able to shift register between the presentation and discussion without too much difficulty but candidates should be reminded that if they choose to present initially in the Past Historic (which is not an examination requirement) they should be prepared to answer questions in the Perfect Tense.

Candidates should be reminded not to limit themselves by choosing a topic which is purely factual as they then have fewer possibilities to give reactions and air their opinions. Most seemed clearly aware that their views and justifications and the explanations of these views were required but there was a marked tendency with some candidates to want to spend too much time on outlining biographical / factual details which did not always have huge relevance to the later life or works of the chosen person.

Most were able to talk articulately and in an enthusiastic way and managed to communicate effectively with the Examiner. The need for the Examiner to rephrase and reformulate questions was rare.

Language

Nearly all candidates handled tenses securely. Many could make confident use of the subjunctive and passive but some candidates were less comfortable with verb endings when discussing in the third person singular. An area which still poses problems to some is in the use of adjectival agreement, particularly when used in comparisons.

Pronunciation and intonation

Generally, pronunciation and intonation were sound to very impressive. It was pleasing to hear so many candidates who had managed to master interference from their mother tongue. Vowel sounds and in particular the u/ou distinction were good and in some cases outstandingly so. However, some candidates still find it difficult to manipulate numerals and there were frequent errors when expressing dates and statistics.

FRENCH

Paper 1342/02 Reading, Listening and Writing

General comments

Most candidates were well equipped and well prepared to handle the various exercises in this paper. This meant that the overall standard of the answers produced was highly commendable, although there were a few examples of candidates whose general linguistic competence appeared over-stretched at times.

There was little evidence of candidates having been under undue pressure of time, due no doubt at least in part to the fact that they were happy to make the necessary point(s) in the comprehension exercises succinctly and without unnecessary preamble, and to proceed to the next question. Although some candidates did try to include as much material from the text as possible in their answers to the Reading Comprehension section in the hope of getting some of the required information, this was relatively rare. The Reading Comprehension questions in French were designed to discourage wholesale copying/lifting word-for-word from the text (as indicated in the instructions) and candidates generally avoided the temptation - but see specific comments in **Questions 22-33** below.

Listening

Questions 1-6

This first listening test was generally well handled. Misunderstanding *se ressemblent* may have accounted for the choice of *se revendent* in **Question 4**. Less understandable was an occasional failure to identify *sept jours* as *semaine* in **Question 6**, but generally candidates got off to a confident start.

Questions 7-12

Un quart d'heure sometimes appeared as *quatre heures* (which would hardly have been a selling-point for the new service), or even *un cadre d'heures* in **Question 7**. Unacceptable answers to **Question 8** included *chercher une place* (tout court); *une station pour la voiture*; *on peut stationner où il se plaît* and *on ne peut pas trouver une place pour stationner*. The quite common *le nombre de kilomètres par couru* suggested that *parcourus* had not been understood in **Question 10**. English intruded on occasions: *remplacer* was sometimes offered for *remplacer* in **Question 9**, *insurance* for *assurance* in **Question 12 iii**, *les repairs* for *réparations* **Question 12 ii**. *Il n'y a pas le facteur garagiste* may have been tempting to reward but indicated a misunderstanding of *factures*.

Questions 13-22

Question 13 required some mention of 'this year' to earn the mark. Mis-hearing *les gens* as *les jeunes* accounted for a number of marks lost in **Question 14**, as did the fairly common translation of *corps* as 'core' in **Question 17**, further complicated by some who offered 'keep the body in form' for *garder le corps en forme*. The influence of *voler* presumably accounted the misunderstanding of *s'envole* as 'is stolen/taken away' in **Question 18**, whilst the influence of English surfaced again in 'are convenient' for *conviennent* in **Question 20**.



Reading

Questions 22-27

Vigoureusement was insufficient on its own to earn the mark for **Question 23**, as were the rather vague *Ils sont contre le reportage* or *ils n'étaient pas heureux / étaient fâchés/contre le reportage*. There was a good deal of clumsiness in attempting to express the idea of wanting to start landing procedures in **Question 25**: *elle a voulu pour l'avion d'atterrir; donc ils peuvent faire les procédures d'atterrissage*. A number resorted unsuccessfully to the word-for-word 'lifts' here: *voulant* ..., as they did in **Question 26**: *C'est en envoyant...*. **Question 26** asks what the controllers did, so answers such as *Avec un signal électronique (tout court)*, or *Une alarme a réveillé les pilotes*, or *il y a une alarme dans the cockpit* remained unrewarded. **Question 26** produced some answers which were either insufficiently precise or comprehensible: *Ils ont changé leur direction; ils tournent par un demi*, but was generally handed well.

Questions 28-33

Question 28 was answerable by the very straightforward *Elle est confortable et économique*, although some decided to offer more complex versions, usually successfully. Similarly, all that was required in questions **30(i)** and **30(ii)** was to transform *coupage* into *il se coupe* and *ouverture et fermeture* into *ils s'ouvrent et se ferment*, but *il se coupage* and *ils se fermentent* both featured in the work of some candidates. In **Question 31**, neither *reducer* nor *décroisser* scored, nor did *utiliser moins de gaz*, and quite a number of answers were insufficiently specific: *réduire la pollution/les effets de gaz (tout court)*; *trouver d'autres moyens de produire l'énergie*. Some candidates resorted to the straight 'lift' of *sensibles à l'environnement* and *anxieuses de limiter leur consommation* in **Question 32**, as did others with *l'économie d'énergie utilisée* in **Question 33**. Others still appeared to misread *l'économie d'énergie utilisée* as *utiliser de l'énergie économique*.

Questions 34-41

Que les parents lui fassent confiance was quite widely misinterpreted as parents 'giving him confidence/making him confident' in **Question 34(ii)**, whilst 'supportive' was not really adequate for *disponibles*. **Question 35(i)** proved demanding, but both *saine* and *étouffante* were handled by a good number of candidates, although the influence of English claimed some victims over *prétendre* in **Question 35(iii)**. *En sécurité* had a similar impact in **Question 36**. **Questions 37-39** were generally successfully answered, but in **Question 40** 'become a recluse' was rather excessive for *se taire* and 'turn/get defensive/angry' suggested guessing rather than real comprehension of the text.

Writing

Questions 42 (a) and 42 (b)

Content

Both topics (Recycling in **Question 42 (a)**, and Gender Equality in **Question 42 (b)**) appeared to be of interest to candidates and to provoke some lively responses. The issue of Gender Equality perhaps generated more passionate responses, but whichever topic they chose, most candidates had ideas and opinions which they were able to express in a coherent and convincing manner.

The better candidates both made direct reference to the texts to provide evidence for their arguments (whilst resisting the temptation simply to regurgitate the given material) and supported their views with relevant evidence from their own experience. They were also generally willing to use the opportunity offered in the final task to broaden the range of the issue under discussion. Less confident candidates were wary of moving away from the vocabulary and structures provided by the text.

Nearly all candidates covered at least to some extent all the five tasks required in the instructions, and helped themselves considerably by working through them sequentially and systematically. There was evidence of ability to organize an answer and to use paragraphs appropriately. They also helped themselves considerably by observing the 220-250 word requirement and organizing their material succinctly within it rather than producing over-wordy and rambling essays.

Language

The overall standard was very encouraging and nearly all candidates could use the language sufficiently accurately to convey most of the intended messages. The stronger candidates displayed a most impressive range of vocabulary and idiom.

There were predictable errors in verb forms, but tenses and modal verbs were generally manipulated with a good degree of confidence and competence. Impressive too was the confidence with which many candidates handled the subjunctive and incorporated it (usually naturally enough) into their essays.

Some candidates' work was marred by basic errors of agreement and pronoun usage, a somewhat phonetic approach to spelling and a reliance on anglicized vocabulary and structures. Elsewhere though, an encouraging proportion of candidates demonstrated a pleasing level of security in their handling of the language, and an ability to add variety through the confident use of adverbs/adverbial phrases and adjectives.

It was sometimes hard to escape the conclusion that whilst many candidates wrote with a spontaneous flair and fluency which made their essays a real pleasure to read, a few appeared over-anxious to press into service as many pre-learned stock phrases as possible, even if they were sometimes somewhat repetitive and of questionable relevance to the point being made. *Il faut peser le pour et le contre, mais après y avoir mûrement réfléchi, je pense que tout bien considéré, nul ne saurait nier que ... etc.*

