

Oral component

Most students were well prepared for the oral examination and handled the two sections of the assessment with confidence. Students who scored well were those who were able to keep the conversation going without being prompted by an assessor.

Overall, the less successful students demonstrated lack of confidence in using the basic linguistic elements such as gender forms, personal pronouns and tenses and their vocabulary was limited. Sometimes the hesitation in choosing the correct words and unnatural pauses, adversely affected the flow of the conversation. This year there were fewer instances of using an incorrect sentence structure or a wrong word.

Advice to teachers and students

Students, particularly those who are not especially strong, should avoid choosing a sub-topic which is emotive or difficult to handle. Students should select a topic they are interested in and which is within their language capabilities. This year many students chose a sub-topic about grief and bereavement caused by war or another war aspect.

- students are reminded that although the whole class may be introduced to one sub-topic, each student should provide an individual response in the discussion
- students should avoid learning by heart, but rather practise discussing the chosen sub-topics and expand on relevant vocabulary
- students should be able to make reference to at least three different types of texts they have studied and to show how these relate to the chosen sub-topic
- students should actively engage in a discussion and demonstrate understanding of the topic, and present their own opinions and ideas – not only those expressed in the texts.

General conversation

Most students performed well and were able to talk confidently about their personal world (home/family, school/studies, hobbies, work and personal aspirations) for the prescribed 7 minutes. The more capable students were able to conduct a free-flowing, interesting conversation relevant to the topic presented and showed initiative in expanding the dialogue. The vocabulary used was more extensive and the linguistic errors less frequent than in previous years.

The less successful students were not confident in their choice of appropriate words and sentence structures. This resulted not only in a slow and hesitant delivery but also in incorrect structures, and utterances that were difficult to comprehend. Such students had difficulty expressing their ideas and the conversation tended to become stilted.

Discussion

Most students introduced their chosen topic well, stating the topic, the sub-topic and the three resources related to their chosen topic. The description of the text was sometimes too vague. 'Internet' and 'pages provided by the teacher' are too general to be quoted as a reference. Students should quote the title and author of the resources. If one uses Internet material, the relevant website should be mentioned.

The chosen sub-topics were mainly those related to the Holocaust, the absorption of immigrants, Zionism and wars fought by Israel. Most students had prepared their topic very well, and were able to analyse the ideas expressed in the resources, to compare and contrast aspects of different texts and to voice their own opinions. Some students found it difficult to expand on what they knew about the sub-topic. A few became obviously uncomfortable when asked to provide their view on a particular issue related to their topic, but which was not directly related to the texts they had studied. When students prepare for the examination they need to be aware that they will be assessed on their ability to carry out a spontaneous discussion in correct Hebrew on their chosen topic, and not on the detailed knowledge of the topic.

Some students were unable to explain the meaning of sub-topics; others made statements which they could not support. Other students learned the topic by heart and therefore found it difficult to carry out a spontaneous discussion and to advance an idea beyond that given in the resource material.

Compliance with assessment criteria

The score the students achieved for each of the five assessment criteria was nearly identical for both parts of the oral examination. Students are reminded that the oral examination assesses their knowledge of the language and not the knowledge of details and information.

Criterion 1 Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Most students carried out the conversation confidently and without any unnatural pauses. They gave extended responses to questions and willingly introduced new material into the conversation, while less successful students had to be prompted. When they could not find the appropriate word they had difficulty in finding a substitute phrase which slowed down the conversation and made it rather stilted.

Criterion 2 Relevance, breadth and depth of information and ideas

Successful students prepared thoroughly for the topics discussed in both sections. They continuously introduced fresh relevant information and ideas and were sufficiently confident to expand on their own opinions. The conversation with less successful students was less interesting, sometimes boring, particularly if they tended to answer in a single, short sentence.

Criterion 3 Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

The vocabulary used by the students was broader than last year. The language of the more successful students was richer, more idiomatic and used appropriately. The vocabulary of the less successful students was more limited and they made more grammatical and linguistic errors. Some students used an inappropriate sentence structure, giving an impression of a literal translation from English.

Criteria 4 Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Only a few students were not confident in their choice of appropriate words and sentence structures. Such students found it difficult to converse on the personal topics of Section 1 and to have an in-depth discussion of their chosen topic in Section 2. The scores the students achieved for these criteria were lower than those for the other three, which indicates that the students' specific linguistic skills are lower than those demanded by the more general criteria.

Criterion 5 Clarity of expression

This criterion is closely related to Criteria 3 and 4. Students who satisfied Criteria 3 and 4 above had no difficulty in clearly expressing themselves.

Written component

Overall, students coped with the examination well. Most students carefully read the instructions for the sections and gave well thought out responses in the appropriate language. However, when students responded in Hebrew, particularly those who scored below average, mistakes in grammar, syntax or even spelling were quite common. Some students made elementary mistakes such as using in the middle of a word, the type of Hebrew letters used only at the end of a word (*sofit*).

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Most students clearly understood the spoken texts and were able to respond to specific and general information. Some students did not realise that some questions required two responses and gave only one. Before responding, students should read the questions carefully. Sometimes students confused the names of an institution they heard with a name of an institution they knew; i.e. Beth Weitzman instead of Weitzman Institute, or Masada Hospital instead of Hadassa Hospital. Most of the mistakes in Part B, the Hebrew written responses, were mainly in sentence structure, grammar and spelling.

Part A (20 marks)

Respond in English

Criterion The capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspect of texts

Question 1

a.

There is a need for further snow to fall and cover the whole mountain in order to make skiing safe/there is not enough snow to cover the whole mountain.

b.

Mount Hermon has a skiing resort.

Question 2

a.

The event will take place in the public park in Caulfield. The whole community is invited.

b.

The entertainment program will include lighting of the fourth candle of Chanukah and fireworks display/amusement for all the family.

c.

Four candles will be lit.

Question 3

a.

The subject of the research is immunisation for diabetes/cure/treatment.

b.

The research took place at the Hadassa Hospital.

c.

Researchers from the Weitzman Institute and doctors from the Hadassa Hospital carried out the research.

d.

Immunisation will improve the quality of life of diabetes sufferers and allow them to lead a normal life style/prevents the progress of the illness.

e.

Other countries are interested in the research because they also have many people who suffer from diabetes who can benefit from the immunisation.

Question 4

a.

Staying for three days for the price of two.

b.

The promotion price includes free use of the hotel's gym and swimming pool.

c.

The tourist intends to stay in Eilat for three days.

d.

Early October, because then it is not so hot and the weather is more pleasant.

e.

He wishes to consult with his wife.

Part B (10 marks)

Respond in Hebrew

Criteria Capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts

Capacity to convey the information accurately and appropriately

Question 5

The juices are pure and fresh, without preservatives or artificial colours, rich in vitamins and low in calories.

Question 6

a.

Yoram wishes to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and travel around Israel.

b.

Yoram Khen. Born in Australia. Completed his education in a Jewish day school in Australia. Spoken languages: English, Hebrew. Chosen subjects: Jewish History and Archeology.

c.

Yoram's relatives in Israel: An uncle in Beer-Shevah and a grandmother in Jerusalem.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A (20 marks)

Although students scored highly, the results were slightly lower than those in Section 1. This is surprising, as in Section 2 the texts are in front of the student, and could be looked at and checked, while in Section 1 students only listen to the texts twice. Some students did not read the texts carefully, as their responses were irrelevant or included details not available in the texts. Before drafting a response, students are advised to read the texts and the questions carefully.

Respond in English

Criterion The capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspect of texts

Question 7

a.

Because the excessive time he spends chatting on the phone affects the business.

b.

The manager invited Rachel to his office because he is dissatisfied with her work. Every ten minutes she rushes to the phone and that interferes with her work at the museum.

c.

She neglects her responsibility of picking up the children on time from school.

d.

In the meetings you can talk to the counsellor, meet people with similar problems, get help and support from them and give support to them.

Question 8

a.

Students sit for many hours studying and the walk will refresh them, strengthen their muscles, and improve their ability to concentrate and think clearly.

b.

Start with warm up exercises. Walk with a straight posture, maintain correct arm movements and proper breathing.

c.

Walking is an inexpensive sport. It can be done anytime and is suitable for all ages/one may walk anywhere and the exercise is regarded as a good substitute for aerobics/or walk alone.

d.

One may walk with a friend, a dog or with a group, converse and socialise while walking.

e.

Light and comfortable clothing and a hat, particularly in summer.

Part B (10 marks)

Respond in Hebrew

Criteria The capacity to understand general and specific aspect of texts

Capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately

In general, students better satisfied the first criterion (understanding of the text) than the second (conveying the information). Most students succeeded in identifying the points in the text, which had to be dealt with, but some struggled to present the information and their ideas succinctly and coherently. Some students, whose letter to Rachel reached the required length of 150–200 words, had done so by being repetitive. The responses were good and only few students scored poorly. The less successful students made mistakes in elementary grammar structures such as gender, tense, preposition, singular/plural and made spelling errors.

Section 3 – Writing in Hebrew: (15 marks)

Criteria Relevance, breadth and depth of content

Appropriateness of structure and sequence

Accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

In general, the responses were adequate, with some students producing very good work.

As in Section 2, there were numerous mistakes in the use of linguistic elements, particularly among the weaker students. The topic of the trip (Question 12), although not chosen by many, produced some outstanding pieces of writing. These included not only interesting descriptions of unique sites but also the personal impressions of the writer and stirred the readers' curiosity to visit the sites.

The most popular topic was the diary entry (Question 11). This topic was not handled particularly well and not much creativity was demonstrated. Very few works could be described as outstanding and dealt with exceptional events and described emotions. Many students were content to describe everyday events either at home or at school and did not focus on the question's requirement, which was to give a moving account of two significant life experiences.

A student's mark can be adversely affected if a piece of writing memorised during the preparation for the examination is presented, and the topic of the writing piece does not exactly match the topic of the examination. For example, if the topic of the examination requires describing personal events experienced during Year 12, it is not appropriate to describe an event, which happened in a primary school.