

Examiners' Report /
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE French (5FR01) Paper 1H

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Examiner Report

Candidates performed well across the paper as a whole. The questions that were intended to discriminate did so but the majority of candidates understood enough, and felt confident enough to attempt the whole paper. As such, there were very few blank answers. There was evidence of some good listening and examination skills. Many candidates had used the five minutes reading time well (underlining key words in the title, rubric and questions, annotating questions), using the time well to anticipate what they were about to hear. The performance of weaker candidates was characterised by lack of attention to detail, poor reading of the questions, 'snatched' listening based on the identification of single words rather than listening to the extract as a whole, mishearing and imagination. There were some candidates who were unable to cope with the demands of the Higher paper and for whom the experience must have been demoralising. These candidates would have possibly benefited from taking the Foundation rather than the Higher paper or from having greater practice of the various test types particularly those used for questions targeted at grade B and above.

The performance on the overlap questions (Questions 1, 2, 5 and 8) was generally better than at Foundation level. However, the performance of weaker candidates was similar to that of Foundation level candidates on these questions. Many candidates scored well on Question 1, giving them a confident start to the paper and to Question 5.

Many candidates scored at least two marks on Question 3 with the better candidates scoring full marks. This is an A* question and does require candidates to listen to the whole extract in order to recognise detail, negation, opinions, points of view and to draw simple conclusions, all of which are skills required for grade A and above. In part (ii), answers C and F were the most common correct answers. Some candidates lost marks in part (ii) through ticking too many choices, ie choosing four instead of three choices. Candidates may have not read the instructions carefully and assumed the question was similar to all the others, which require four answers.

Question 7 was also well done by many candidates. The least well done part was part (ii) with candidates failing to match Frank, *Tous les week-ends on va visiter quelque chose ensemble* with *We often go out together as a family*.

Question 6 was also well done by the better candidates, with parts (iii) and (iv) proving the most accessible. In part (i), many weaker candidates were caught out by snatched listening; upon hearing "*de mauvaise humeur*" they immediately ticked answer D, *The shop assistants are bad tempered* even though the full statement they heard was *ça me met de mauvaise humeur*. In part (ii), only the better candidates were able to understand the inference to connect *ça manque d'ambiance, c'est froid et c'est triste* with *They are not very welcoming*. Drawing simple conclusions is a skill required for the higher grades.

Question 4 also required careful listening to distinguish between the three speakers and again was more successfully done by better candidates. Part (ii) proved the most accessible with many candidates successfully matching it to *Nolwenne*, (*moi et mes copains nous avons tous notre portable en classe. On s'envoie des textos*). Many candidates had the answers to part (i) and part (iv) the wrong way round, failing to match *Gad*, (*ils pensent que les élèves vont les utiliser en classe mais on ne le fait pas*) with part (i) and *Samir*, (*les profs le savent*) with part (iv). In this particular type of question the level of the French is not necessarily difficult but what is difficult for weaker candidates is the recognition of familiar vocabulary in unfamiliar contexts.

The open-ended questions requiring answers in English were a good discriminator and Question 9 and Question 10 proved difficult for weaker candidates. There were some excellent performances from the better candidates but only the better candidates were able to supply the detail and accuracy required at this level. Many candidates did understand the gist of the extract, but lack of attention to detail often cost them marks. The unfamiliar context seemed to have thrown weaker candidates. Again, the performance of weaker candidates is characterised by mishearing, lack of attention to detail, inability to write clearly and unambiguously in English and overuse of their imagination. There was some evidence that despite the fact that the recording made reference to Question 9 and Question 10, some candidates filled in answers for Question 9 and Question 10 upon hearing the extract for Question 9. The format for the questions in English is familiar and candidates should know that the extract will be in two distinct sections and two separate questions.

Question 9(a) was generally well done with many candidates scoring two marks for this question from the possible four. The most common correct answer was *It does not use paper* and many recognised the word *leger* and the concept of *portable*. The word *poche*, whilst correctly identified by better candidates, led weaker candidates to write the English cognate, *posh* and, by extension, *looks classy*. Many candidates didn't recognise *télécharger*, which is in the minimum core vocabulary, and answers for this part of the question ranged from *charge the batteries* or *it doesn't cost much* to *it can be charged from your telly*. The word *mettre* in *on peut le mettre dans sa poche* was heard by weaker candidates as *métro* which led to answers such as *you can use it on the tube/ on the way to work* etc and by extension *you can use it whilst walking*.

Question 9(b) was also well done with many candidates scoring the one mark available. Weaker candidates relied on their knowledge or own experience of electronic equipment with incorrect answers such as: *is it complicated to use/ where can you charge it/ how much does it cost/is it easily broken*. Question 9(c) proved the most difficult and only better candidates scored on this question. The confusion of 2 and 12 was a problem in *seulement 12% sont recyclés*, highlighting the need to practise numbers regularly. Many candidates took the number and then built answers around them eg *2/12 people can use it/ it's good for the environment because two people can share it/12 people have ereaders*. Many rendered *recyclés* as *recyclable* and even *rechargeable* which led to incorrect answers. Again, many answers were based on experience rather than listening to the French with answers such as *gives off carbon fumes/ you can reuse the metal parts/it's easy to recycle* etc

Question 10(a) again highlighted that many candidates are not confident with their numbers, the most common rendition of *mille* being *million*, although many wrote 7 or 700 and even 6,000 /6 million/ 200,000. Others gave vague answer such as *you can store lots of books on it*. Many heard the number 7 and then made up answers such as *It takes 7 hours to recharge*. In part (b), many candidates did not recognise the cognate *encourager* in *un e-reader va encourager leurs enfants à lire* and wrote answers such as *It will teach children to read/ so that the parents can read to their children*. Disappointingly, the word *jeux-vidéo* was not well known in part (c), many heard the word *vidéo* but not the *jeux* and wrote answers such as *Children prefer videos/ DVDs*. *Jeux-vidéo* is a very common item of basic vocabulary. Many wrote the answers they thought might be probable like *Reading is better for children than videos/ It will stop young people watching videos*, which are answers based on invention rather than the actual French. Weaker candidates failed to recognise familiar vocabulary in an unfamiliar context.

The performance of the better candidates on the paper was characterised by:

- careful reading of the rubric
- listening to the whole extract rather than honing in on individual items of vocabulary
- attention to detail, giving full rather than partial answers
- expressing themselves clearly and unambiguously when writing in English and relating their answers to facts in the extract
- applying logic
- reading over and correcting their answers.

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