# IGCSE

## Edexcel IGCSE

## English as a Second Language (4357)

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# 4357/01

## General Comment

This was only the second administration of this qualification and both teachers and candidates are still getting to know the tasks and the requirements of the examination.

Generally candidates performed well and with some tasks were clearly more knowledgeable about what was required of them. However, there is still a need to make sure that candidates are aware of the different focuses that tasks can have and to have had plenty of practice with different reading texts and different writing tasks.

## Part 1

Candidates seemed to find this part challenging. Although this is a matching task, in order to accomplish it, candidates had to be able to get the gist of each of the short texts in order to be able to match the most suitable title to each. Unlike in the May 2006 session, they were not looking for detail. This is something which seems to have thrown some candidates. Matching tasks like this can focus on both detail and general gist and candidates need to be able to identify what is required of them and have had practice in dealing with both kinds of focus.

On occasion, candidates did not write the required letter but copied out the whole heading. Candidates were not penalised for this. However, this can be a waste of time and can lead to spelling errors. Giving candidates letters to identify their chosen answer makes the task simpler for candidates and they should be encouraged to use the letter. This is a familiarisation and training issue. In the reading paper it is equally important to read the instructions and follow them as it is to deal with the task itself.

## Part 2

### Questions 11-18

Most candidates performed well here and managed to grasp the requirements of the task – matching comments to information given from each person interviewed in the text. However, as in part 1, some candidates insisted on writing out the full name of each person rather than using the letters to identify their answers.

### Questions 19-25

Most candidates did well on these questions. Obviously here candidates need to concentrate on detail rather than gist and look carefully at the information being conveyed throughout the text. Candidates seem to find it difficult identifying cases where the information is Not Given in the text. Tasks like this can be quite difficult though often help us differentiate between weaker and stronger candidates. It is important that they get lots of practice in identifying information that is false from that which is not present in the text. They also need to be able to put aside their expectations of what information might be present and actually look for what is given and not given.

## Part 3

### Questions 26-29

It is important with open questions like these that candidates read the instructions carefully. Some candidates did not adhere to the word limit and were penalised for this. The purpose of the word limit is to help candidates focus on the answer rather than copying our long texts or having to formulate answers which will need to be grammatically accurate. It is also important to remember that the answer is always present in the text. Candidates need to find it and transfer it across. When copying answers from the text, it is also important that candidates pay attention to any spelling errors they may make, so they should have plenty of practice checking their responses and making sure that they are no spelling errors.

### Questions 30-40

Candidates still don't seem to quite understand the purpose of note taking tasks like this. Here the essential information from the text was translated into a set of notes in the form of sentences. Together the sentences make a summary of the information in the text and have features of notes such as bullet points. The responses that candidates are asked to give often deal with core information and must fit in with the sentences grammatically. As such aspects such as $ signs are important because they convey core information and should be correct. Some candidates did not adhere to the word limit and were penalised. Others did not read the notes carefully enough to make sure that their responses were logical and made sense within the given context. Here too the answers are in the text and candidates do not need to transform the information in any way. However, they must make sure that their responses fit in with the sentence and are grammatically accurate.

## Part 4

This task was generally attempted well. Candidates interpreted 'facilities' in a variety of ways. All responses were accepted as long as they fitted in with the context and situation. Some candidates had not thought carefully enough about the tone of their report and were not sufficiently formal. In some cases this was an issue as their response would not have achieved its communicative purpose. Some candidates presented their report in the form of a letter. Where the tone, register and content was appropriate to the task set, they were not penalised. However smileys and other such emoticons should generally be avoided.

## Part 5

Candidates generally dealt well with the requirements of the task. They were all able to appreciate the situation and could describe their bikes and give reasons for wanting to sell it. Some candidates were not familiar with the email format. However, this should not have affected the content of their response. In essence the email format in informal tasks such as this should have no effect on candidate writing. There would be very little different in content, tone and register, whether this was an email or a note/letter to their classmates. In some cases the email was directed at one specific person rather than the whole group. It is important that candidates take time to read the instructions carefully and underline if necessary, those requirements of the task that have been given to them. These can include audience, purpose and so on and can provide a context for the writing.

Another aspect of this task is tone and some candidates produced pieces of writing which were far too formal in tone and organisation. This is an important element of the examination and the purpose in parts 4 and 5 is to see whether candidates can produce texts which vary in tone and register.

Part 6

This part proved to be the most challenging. Candidates needed to read the instructions carefully to identify what information they had to include in their summaries. They had to select this information from the text, group the information into sensible chunks and organise these chunks into a coherent piece of writing. Some candidates did not read the instructions carefully enough and had not identified the information that the summary required from them. This led to responses that included irrelevant and unnecessary information. It is important to bear in mind that summary texts will always include information which will not be required for the writing task and candidates need to be able to ignore such information no matter how interesting it might prove to be. Other candidates had clearly read the text carefully and underlined information they needed to transfer to their summary but then copied this across rather than paraphrase the information using their own words. Candidates need more practice in analysing texts, selecting information and ideas that they need to include in their summary and then writing this without copying from the text. Irrelevant information will not be marked by the examiner and often can lead to responses which are more than the required maximum 150 words.

Finally with all writing tasks candidates should be taught how to check their work and should make sure that they have left some time at the end of the examination for proofing and checking.

# 4357/02

The form and structure of the paper was similar to the previous paper which was held for the first time in May 2006.

## General comments

Generally candidates did well or very well on this paper, many scoring over 20 marks. Marks tended to be in the mid-teens to mid-twenties range. Of the three parts of the paper, Parts 1 and 2 were found to be the most challenging for candidates. Most candidates coped well with Part 3.

## Detailed comments

There were two general types of questions on this paper: multiple choice and table/sentence completion.

## Multiple Choice

As a rule, candidates followed the instructions given in the rubric for this type of question.

## Table/sentence completion

Generally these questions were well attempted, although there were some candidates who did not adhere to the three word limit given in the rubric. Two issues arose out of these types of questions which require candidates to provide the word or words for the answer themselves.

### Spelling

This proved to be a problem for many candidates. The general rule applied during marking was that if the answer affected communication, candidates were not awarded a mark. Candidates were not penalised for misspelling a word if it sounded like the target word. For example Q29, (answer: quality) spellings such as 'quility' were accepted. However, if the word sounded like a different word (e.g. Q29 'quinity'), candidates were not awarded a mark.

### Grammar

In several questions, e.g. Q9 and Q27, candidates were required to complete a sentence using the correct grammatical forms. Although these forms were given in the recording, many candidates made errors in their answers. These were the most demanding of all the questions on this paper.

## Advice to centres

It is recommended that centres prepare candidates for the listening examination by familiarizing them with the style of the tests and with the types of questions they can expect to find on the paper.

Candidates should make good use of the time before the tape is played to predict possible answers and consider the context when providing their answers.

Candidates should be advised to follow the instructions in the rubric when answering questions and to adhere to the word limit.

Candidates should consider the grammatical fit of their answers in sentence completion questions.

Candidates should consider the spelling of words when providing their answers.

# 4357/03

There were no changes in the requirements of the paper compared to the last session in May 2006.

## General comments

Generally the candidates did well on this paper. The paper is designed to become increasingly difficult, and this proved to be so for less able candidates, who struggled the most with Part 3. Candidates responded well to the structure of the test and seemed engaged by the content. The topics were ones which were familiar to them and they could call on their life experience to answer the questions.

## Detailed comments

### Interlocutors

Several of the interlocutors carried out their functions most effectively. However, there were others who did not follow the instructions contained in 'Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations'. All of the wording and questions were provided either in the instructions or on the frame cards, yet some interlocutors did not keep to the questions in Part 1 and Part 3.

In Part 1, some interlocutors extended and developed the theme here and then allocated a short time for Part 3. The aim of Part 1 is to try to put the candidate at his/her ease by asking questions on a familiar topic.

In Part 3, some interlocutors did not ask questions in groups as indicated on the frame card but selected questions somewhat haphazardly. Each group of questions is generally based around a theme and questions become gradually more challenging as they progress through the group. When interlocutors jumped about between groups of questions they overlooked the advantages of graduating the questions they asked, and how the abilities of stronger candidates could be exploited by giving them the opportunity to answer some more challenging questions within the groups.

In Part 3, some questions had a follow-up question to encourage candidates to talk more. Some interlocutors failed to ask the second part of the question and this prevented candidates from developing their ideas more fully and thereby displaying their ability to use more complex language.

### Equipment

Some of the recordings were of very poor quality and it was hard for assessors to hear what candidates were saying. Sometimes there was a lot of machine noise, particularly when the recording level was set too high. On occasion, the interlocutor was more audible than the candidate.

### Room

The room selected for the examination was not always a quiet one, and many distracting noises can be heard on the tapes. Some candidates were also distracted by people moving into, out of or within the exam room. Such situations have the potential to disadvantage the candidate.

## Recommendations to centres

### Interlocutors

It is recommended that interlocutors spend more time preparing for the speaking examination so that they have a clear understanding of how it is organized and what the questions are before the start of the test. Time should also be taken to examine the structure of the examination and thereby gain an insight into the function of the various parts of the test.

Interlocutors are requested to adhere to the questions and wordings contained on the frame cards and in the 'Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations'.

Interlocutors should avoid using words of encouragement such as 'that's good' and 'that's nice' as these mislead candidates about their performance.

For reasons of fairness, all candidates should receive the same amount of preparation time (1 minute) in Part 2.

Interlocutors should listen to what candidates are saying during the test to avoid irrelevant and repetitive questions being asked.

Interlocutors should not alter the speed at which they speak when conducting the interview. They should talk to candidates at their normal speaking speed. When interlocutors reduce their speaking speed they can become rather stilted and this effect can rub off on the candidates.

### Equipment

Prior to the start of recording, interlocutors should conduct thorough pre-checks to ensure that the position of the microphone favours the candidate and that the volume on the tape is checked so that the best possible recording of the candidate can be obtained. It is further recommended that the best quality recorder and microphone available be used for the speaking test.

### Room

Centres should allocate a quiet room for speaking examinations where extraneous noise is at a minimum and where there will be no interruptions during the course of the examination.

# Statistics for IGCSE English as a Second Language 4357

| Grade | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boundary mark – Overall | 87 | 77 | 67 | 58 | 51 | 44 | 37 | 30 |
| Bondary mark – Optional Speaking | 19 | 17 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 |

**Notes**

**Boundary mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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