

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2009

IGCSE

IGCSE French (4365) Paper 2

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Paper 2: Reading and Writing

As in previous series, it is encouraging to report that virtually all candidates were able to access all sections of the paper, seeking to secure marks across a full range of question types.

Section A Part One

The vast majority of candidates secured full marks in question 1, with very few difficulties being encountered. In only a few cases was there confusion relating to “boucherie” and “boulangerie”. Knowledge of opinion based terminology tended to be secure, in respect of question 2. It would however be useful to remind candidates that these early sections of the paper should be approached with the necessary degree of care, to avoid losing marks through momentary inattention to detail. In question 3, candidates displayed clear evidence of having been taught to be most discerning in ruling out distractors from the list of available responses, carefully circumventing incorrect options. They did so by ensuring that their final choices of response were based on evidence from the text, rather than just being grammatically plausible.

Section A Part Two

Once again, a large number of candidates achieved maximum marks for both components of the question. In only a few instances did candidates overlook the importance of reference to “routine du soir”. A very small number seemed to focus on the notion of morning routine. It is clear that teachers are training pupils to focus their attention on the specific question. Equally, most candidates continue to adhere to a length of about 50 words, totally adequate for securing full marks. By resisting the temptation of composing unnecessarily long responses, candidates increase their focus on the relevance and accuracy of their response. Whereas some candidates took the opportunity of writing complex and original responses, many still accessed full marks without even using more than one time frame. Stronger candidates did tend to deploy a range of linguistic structures, but need to ensure that the response remains coherent. Some attempts were somewhat over ambitious.

Section B

Question 5

Despite the relatively broad range of structures and vocabulary encountered within the text, candidates are to be congratulated on their overall excellent performance. Large numbers of candidates secured maximum marks. Knowledge of vocabulary based upon the topic of recycling was generally in evidence. Candidates are becoming more discerning and respond well to the challenge of ruling out certain implausible responses from the choices presented. The way some candidates annotated the text revealed the extent of their ability to discriminate between potential answers. By the way candidates placed notes beside the script in question 5, it would equally seem that they have been advised to begin by attempting the slightly less challenging items.

Question 6

Whereas the level of this question is aimed principally at stronger candidates within the A* to B range, others often managed to secure some marks for both components of the question. This indicates a high level of perseverance and application. There was significant evidence of candidates having been trained to offer responses deploying differing levels of language.

Less confident candidates tended to focus on the comprehension based component, offering minimal albeit correct responses. More confident candidates presented responses which tended to attract a higher mark for Application of Language. Ten available marks relate to comprehension of a passage containing some complex language. The five remaining marks reward candidates' ability to express the answers in accurate French. There are cases where the correct response can be largely lifted from the text, but every question needs to be approached with caution, to avoid ambiguity. Complete sentences are not required, but candidates wishing to secure a high mark for Application of Language need to be familiar with the related Assessment Criteria.

In item (a), candidates needed to deploy the appropriate time frame, without ambiguity. Item (b) was the most successfully approached task within the overall question. This was an excellent example of where less confident candidates achieved a successful outcome, by perseverance. Item (c) tended to be successful where candidates circumvented the use of "notre" and "nos". Even amidst slightly weaker candidates, it was clear that significant progress has been made in training on how to deal with this issue. In respect of item (d) candidates were only successful in cases where they really understood that section of the passage, taking care to avoid lifting language directly from the text. Item (e) proved to be more successful in instances where candidates adopted a more global view of the article, rather than seeking the response within the near vicinity of the highlighted phrase. In (f), most candidates successfully avoided reference to the idea of tourists regretting only spending a few days in Bruges. However, it was equally necessary to exercise caution in respect of "nous" and "nos". In item (g) there was a need to address the second half of the question which referred to Bruges. This was often overlooked by candidates. The nature of item (h)(i) and (ii) allowed candidates some latitude in respect of the range of available responses. Much depended upon how candidates phrased the beginning of their response to (h)(i), simpler responses often being the least likely to confuse.

Once again, it is vital to indicate that the ability to transfer verb endings (often to the third person) was a major discriminating factor in the awarding of marks. Whereas this proved inevitably too difficult for certain candidates, there was clear evidence of most candidates having been taught how to at least attempt it. Whereas mainly stronger candidates secured successful outcomes in question 6, less confident candidates are nevertheless advised to attempt all parts. There does remain the need to ensure that sufficient time is reserved for the purpose of optimizing performance in the more accessible question 7.

Question 7

The essay question is worth a potential total of 15 marks and the time candidates allocate to this piece of writing should reflect the value of the question. This needs to incorporate time needed to check the relevance and accuracy of the completed task. Where essays were rather short, it was unlikely that all bullet points had been addressed. **However, candidates can achieve maximum marks by producing about 150 words of French.** Candidates who offered excessively long essays tended to self-penalise, as the focus on the task set was less sharp and there was little time left to check over work.

All bullet points in the question need to be addressed. Omissions or misinterpretations affect the Communication mark. However, there is no requirement to write an equal number of words on each bullet point.

Specific Observations:

7(a) A significant proportion of candidates chose this essay title. The first bullet point clearly required reference to a specific time frame. A number of candidates seemed to overlook this part of the stimulus, missing the opportunity to refer to a past time frame. In reference to the second bullet point, most candidates clearly stated feelings about school routine. Only a few omitted the idea of "si vous aimez". The most original and accurate responses were often in reply to the final bullet point, with most candidates clearly conveying the future time frame. Whereas most candidates were reasonably secure in their use of different time frames, they were not always deployed at the appropriate moment. Even some more able candidates misinterpreted the time frame used in specific bullet points.

7(b) The first two bullet points tended to be addressed with a high degree of confidence. A range of tenses and structures were offered by a large number of candidates in response to the third bullet point. In fact, this bullet point often dominated the piece. This was quite acceptable in instances where the other three stimuli had been addressed to at least some degree. There were cases where the final bullet point was omitted or misinterpreted. In respect of the final bullet point, stronger candidates usually responded in an extremely spontaneous and original manner to the notion of shopping in the future.

7(c) The first bullet point required some acknowledgement of "souvent". This was spotted by most candidates and addressed accordingly. Only a few candidates were unable to deal with the past time frame in the second bullet point. Candidates tended to devote several lines to this task and did so with some confidence. On the other hand, there were often much more closed responses to the item concerning

sport. The final bullet point tended to attract more discursive language, with a generally broad range of linguistic structures.

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