

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

IGCSE

IGCSE French (4365)

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Paper 1 - Listening

Candidates' Responses to Specific Questions.

Section A

Questions 1-5

Whereas a significant majority of candidates secured maximum marks for all parts, the item relating to "la nature" proved more challenging than the others.

Question 6

A large number of candidates were successful across all elements of the question. The more common weather phrases were approached very successfully, whereas about one third of candidates did not recognize the term "brouillard".

Question 7

It is encouraging to report that only a few candidates were unable to deal with the question in 7(a) which required understanding of the 24 hour clock. Equally, most candidates fared well in item 7(b), successfully noting the link between "devoirs" and "travail". Item 7(c) was slightly less well attempted, where some candidates were unable to discriminate between "difficile" and "facile". Many candidates seem to be well accustomed to dispensing with distracters from the list of available responses.

Section B

Question 8

Items 8(a) and 8(b) both required knowledge of numbers. A significant minority of candidates answered both of these items correctly. Nevertheless, many candidates seemed unable to deal with a numerical response. Despite the relative complexity of vocabulary within item 8(c), some two thirds of candidates were successful.

Question 9

It is pleasing to report that candidates tended to score very well in this question, clearly in possession of a broad range of intermediate and more complex vocabulary. They were equally confident in taking account of tenses and a variety of structures. Misinterpretation of the overall requirements of the question was extremely rare. Most candidates did appear to have been well briefed on how to optimize their approach to this task.

Questions 10-11 General

Overall, candidates seem to have been advised to avoid the practice of lifting entire phrases from the recording, thus ensuring a higher degree of relevance within responses. They seem even more adept at processing the relevant language, with a view to ensuring a concise response. This was equally the case in questions 10 and 11. Certain candidates possessed an excellent breadth of expression, allowing for targeted responses. Those who had a clear grasp of the core vocabulary list were at a distinct advantage.

Question 10

Candidates need to be reminded of the importance of producing legible responses. In particular, numerals in 10(a) and 11(a) were often unclear. A number of candidates did however secure maximum marks in all responses. Nevertheless there were numerous instances where candidates seemed to have an excellent grasp of what was said during the recording, only to offer a rather ambiguous response. For example, reference to "aproximate des magasins" or "aproximete des magasins" in 10(b) led to ambiguity, as key language was not recognisable. As in previous series, there remained the need to be specific within responses. eg "beaucoup de magasins" was not a clear rendition of "près des magasins. The majority of attempts at "magasins" were comprehensible, whereas reference to "magazines" was incorrect. Level of detail in responses was usually adequate, although the essential notion of "jardin protégé des regards" in 10 (c) was often conveyed as any type of positive reference to the garden. Some candidates offered a concise and complete response in 10(d), but others omitted to mention the idea of "été".

Question 11

Most candidates succeeded in their attempt at the numerical in 11(a). Responses to 11(b) varied enormously, with many candidates successfully presenting the notion of "décoré" within the appropriate context. However, "Il a fait décorer la maison" indicated a misinterpretation of chronology. In 11(c), most attempts at the spelling of "bruit" were immediately comprehensible, whilst some candidates successfully conveyed the answer in different ways. It was however essential to place the response in the correct column. Many candidates offered rather ambiguous responses to 11(c) such as: "Il n'est pas de bruit". In answers such as: "La maison est éloignée de la ville", the question had not been fully addressed. In 11(d), stronger candidates ensured that the notion of "sans caractère" was sited within the appropriate column of the table. The English spelling "character" was not accepted as part of a response.

Administrative Matters

Centres are to be commended, as in previous series, for the excellent standard of administration during this series.

Paper 2 - Reading and Writing

Question 1

The two most challenging parts of this question were parts (iii) and (iv). In part (iii) candidates may not have associated the image of a fish with the concept of the sea. It is likely that weaker candidates were not familiar with the word *poupée* in part (iv).

Question 2

Many candidates failed to recognise either *jouets* or *par terre* or both, as part (v) of this question defeated a large number of candidates.

Question 3

This question was suited to candidates of Grade D and above. Candidates of that calibre were able to give the correct answer to at least 4 of the parts of the question.

Question 4

Candidates' major failing was to write too much about the qualities of the food in a fast-food restaurant and too little about a physical visit. Many candidates also did themselves a disservice by writing too much or by being too adventurous. This question is designed to give average candidates a chance to do well by writing relevantly, simply and accurately. The following examples will show the qualities required for a good performance.

Example 1

J'ai visité un restaurant fast-food et j'ai passé des moments mauvais. D'abord il y avait beaucoup de monde et l'atmosphère n'était pas calme. Le repas était horrible et le viande n'était pas bien ~~cuite~~. En plus la salade n'était pas fraîche. Après cette visite j'ai devenu malade.
(47 words)

Score 5 + 4

The essay is clearly about a visit to a fast-food restaurant. Who was there and what was eaten. An opinion is not necessary. Instead of expressing an opinion, the candidate could have described the colour or the chairs and tables, or mentioned the uniform of the serving staff.

The language is simple. The past tense is not required. All that is required is accurate verbs in any tense. The candidate could have talked about a future event. In the example above, the candidate has used both the *passé composé* and the imperfect. The vocabulary is adequate: there are basic nouns and adjectives. There is "added value" in the use of adverbs (*d'abord; en plus*) and an idiomatic expression *de monde*. The language is very simple and had it been perfectly accurate, could well have qualified for a mark of 5. However, the candidate has made errors even in such simple but adequate language. The mark was therefore awarded 4 and not a mark of 5.

Example 2

Samedi dernière je suis allée avec ma famille au resto fast-food, mais ma mère et moi préfèrons manger des plats traditionnels. Je crois que dans un repas fast-food il n'y a rien pour manger sain et équilibré. Ils préparent notre dîner très rapide et il coûte moins cher. Il est vrais que c'est bon marché mais ça devrait être interdit.
61 words

Score 2+5

The Quality of Language mark of 5 is well justified.

The candidate has been inspired by the original text (*il n'y a rien pour manger sain et équilibré*). This is not ideal, idiomatic French, but shows a good mastery of a sophisticated negative form. The candidate has used a conjunctions (*je crois que* being copied from the original text / *il est vrais que* being the candidate's own words). It is not necessary to use conjunctions in such essays, but does, of course, enhance the piece of writing. The vocabulary is not particularly rich, but there are adjectives and one well placed adverb.

The mark for Communication is very low. There are two reasons for this:

1. The candidate has copied a considerable amount of the original text (*manger équilibré* - although as mentioned above, the candidate has made a great effort to use a negative and to combine the phrase with another word gleaned from the text ; *je crois que; c'est bon marché; ça devrait être interdit*). So, 13 of the candidate's 62 words have been lifted from the original text. However, this alone would not automatically reduce the candidate's mark to 2 out of 5 as the candidate
 - (a) has still used more or less 50 of his/her own words - the required amount of writing
 - (b) has made some attempt to adapt the text.
2. The second element to take into account is the extent to which the candidate has responded to the task set. In this case, there is very little about a trip to a fast-food restaurant: when and with whom are covered, but nothing else.
These two factors combined reduce the Communication mark to 2.

Example 3

Mon amie Sarah et moi, nous sommes allées à un restaurant fast-food la semaine passée. Nous avons mangé beaucoup de choses savoureuses comme des frites. Après la visite au restaurant, nous étions très fatiguées car le repas était très lourd. alors nous sommes retournées à la maison pour dormir.

50 words

Score 5+5

The essay above was awarded 5+5. It is simple and accurate, despite some poor punctuation.

Every word that each candidate writes is marked in Both Question 1 and Question 7. Over-long essays are frequently self-penalising as the rate of error and the tendency to wander off the subject increase as the candidate writes on and on.

General remarks about Question 4 and Question 6

Questions 4 and 6 both demand that the candidates avoid using phrases copied directly from the original text. Teachers are advised to practice transforming simple sentences, for example (from Question 6) pupils could be invited to find a different way of saying *c'est bon marché*. It is to be hoped that they would be able to find *cela ne coûte pas cher / ce n'est pas cher / on ne paie pas beaucoup*.

Question 6

It is pleasing to see that candidates are gaining confidence in attempting this difficult question. There are now far fewer blank answer sheets than in previous sessions. Teachers are to be congratulated in their training of their candidates. The following comments will be of help in further training candidates:

(i) *Utilisez vos propres mots pour dire : « comme Maman était occupée ».*

Virtually no candidates recognised the need to explain the word *comme*. There is still much need for practice for this type of question. The imperfect tense was required to convey the exact equivalent of *était*. Most candidates who hoped to reach a high B grade and above should have been able to cope with *parce que* for *comme* and for the second element: *elle travaillait* or *elle n'était pas libre* or *elle n'avait pas de temps*.

(ii) *Où est-ce que Tom est allé ramasser des pommes ?*

This question was well answered. Weaker candidates safely put simply: *dans le verger*. More able candidates wrote : *Il est allé dans le verger*. The transposition from *Tom* to *Il* is recognised as Quality of Language.

(iii) *Quelle est la première chose qu'il a fait en entrant dans le verger ?*

Several versions of this answer were quite acceptable: *il est monté dans un arbre* as well as *il a monté un arbre*. However, inaccurate copying (*il a grimpé dans un arbre*) reduced marks for both Comprehension and for Quality of Language. It is essential that weaker candidates check their work very thoroughly to ensure that they have copied the original text accurately in order to gain the Comprehension mark.

(iv) *Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé quand Thomas est tombé au sol ?*

The "easy" answer is *Il a commence à paniquer*. Weaker candidates did well to choose this answer although such an answer was not well rewarded for Quality of Language. The answer *Il s'est foulé la cheville* shows good knowledge of how to adapt a reflexive verb from the first to the third person. Unfortunately, many candidates chose the third option: *il s'est fait mal*. This was extremely difficult as it involved manipulation of the original text from the imperfect tense to the passé composé as well as a change of person. *Il se faisait mal* was accepted for Comprehension but did not figure very highly on the Quality of Language scale.

(v) *Pourquoi Madame Mouret, ne pouvait-elle pas l'entendre ?*

Examiners are looking to see whether candidates can answer such a question naturally as well as accurately. It is natural to start with *parce que* and it is natural to replace *Madame Mouret* with the pronoun *elle*. This then means that, for Quality of Language, the examiners expect to find correct elision *parce qu'elle*. In such a case it is quite unnecessary to repeat the second clause of the question as that would be clumsy and unnatural.

(vi) *Expliquez qui est Dani.*

The vast majority of candidates correctly identified Dani as *le chien de Tom*. A weak candidate would do well to limit his/her answer to those four words. Using the pronoun is a step forward, but the very best candidates should be able to use *C'est le chien de Tom* rather than the clumsy *Il est le chien de Tom*.

(vii) *Comment Dani a-t-il compris que Thomas avait besoin d'aide ?*

This was a very testing question and many candidates admirably saw that it was Tom who made the signs and not Dani. The best candidates who had thought the answer through used the shortest reply: *Tom a fait / Tom faisait des signes* and would have been rewarded with a good Quality of Language mark. Candidates who were able to correctly retain the pronoun from the original text (*Tom lui a fait / Tom lui faisait des signes*) made an good contribution to their overall Quality of Language mark. *Il a compris les signes que Thomas faisait* was an excellent answer and would, of course, given the candidate a very high Quality of Language mark.

(viii) *Quelle était la réaction de Dani quand il a compris Thomas ?*

Again, for weaker candidates the shortest answer was the best: *Il est parti immédiatement*. Some Quality of Language credit would be given for the use of the pronoun. More able candidates showed their range of language by changing the adverb to *rapidement* or *vite*. Such a transformation of the adverb improved a candidate's Quality of Language mark considerably.

(ix) *Le narrateur a passé combien de temps chez le médecin ?*

Weak candidates could score an easy Comprehension mark with *3 heures* (there is no need to write the number in letters for Comprehension). *Il a passé trois heures chez le médecin* does not significantly improve the Quality of Language mark and weaker candidates might even lose a mark if they copy any part of the sentence inaccurately from the question. However, many of the better candidates proved in other parts of the examination paper that they were quite capable of using pronouns - and yet not one candidate thought to use the pronoun *y* in his/her answer to this question. *Il y a passé trois heures* should have been well within the capabilities of A and A* candidates.

Question 7

The two major weakness amongst candidates, apart from their level of French, were:

- i) over-long essays; quality rather than quantity should be the candidates' watchword;
- ii) inattention to the bullet points (content of the essay).

Question 7a Weaker candidates frequently started with expressions such as : *J'ai visite à un membre de votre famille*. Essays written from the wrong perspective were awarded a maximum of 4 marks for Communication.

Many candidates omitted to mention their preparations. Generally, the description of the host/hostess was very well done and the past and future events clearly covered.

Question 7b Only a very small minority of candidates (approximately 10%) attempted this question. It was generally not well done as candidates attempted to write an impersonal account of what should be done to protect the planet rather than talking about their own (possibly imaginary) experiences. Teachers should ensure that they train their candidates to analyse carefully the requirements of the question.

Question 7c Too many candidates wasted time simply comparing town and country. Generally this is well done but, in itself, inadequate. After this section, when candidates attempted the other bullet points, Quality of Language and Accuracy declined.

The following example may clarify the way the marking grids are used by the examiners.

Moi j'habite en ville. Je crois que dans la ville les maisons sont petit et il y a beaucoup des voitures. Il y a beaucoup des gens gentil et c'est facile pour voyager.

Dans la ville il y a beaucoup des bruits et pollution s. Cependant il y avait beaucoup des distraction et travail. Sur la campagne il y a des arbres, des animaux et plus plein air. C'est beau mais il n'y a pas beaucoup des gens. C'est ennuyeux C'est difficile pour trouve son destination. Moi, j'adore la ville parce que il y a très distraction.

Avant de partir nous allons au cinéma. Nous faisait l'équitation avec ma sœur. Puis, à l'après midi nous nagerons avec sa famille.

À la campagne ce n'est pas mal. Tu étai adapter facile. À l'école tu trouveras beaucoup des nouveaux amis. S'adapter n'est pas difficile.

Quand tu visiteras moi dans la vacances nous pourrai voir beaucoup des films et nageras à la piscine. tu pourrai aussi venir dans le weekend parceque ta campagne n'est pas loin de la ville.

176 words

Communication : 3 marks

There are serious omissions in the candidate's work (*vos expériences* and *ce que votre ami(e) doit faire avant de partir* are only implied ; *ce qu'il / elle doit faire en arrivant* is omitted) but the response is more than minimal. There is some ambiguity (*Tu étai adapter facile*) but the piece is comprehensible overall. The "best fit" is therefore the 3 band.

Knowledge of Language: 2 marks

The language is repetitive (*beaucoup de*) and the vocabulary limited. There is very little attempt at the use of conjunctions or other structures. This means that sentences tend to be very short and simple. However, on the whole, communication has not been seriously restricted, and so the "best fit" is band 2.

Accuracy: 2 marks

There are frequent basic errors throughout the essay, but a basic range of verbs have been correctly formed: *j'habite, je crois, il y a, j'adore* all show a sound command of the present tense; there is some awareness of the formation of the future tense, although not always accurate; the candidate has not taken the opportunity offered of using the past tense to explain what experiences s/he has had of the town or the country.

Overall, this candidate would have done well to write a shorter, more focussed and more accurate essay. The candidate is relatively weak, but has not made the best of his/her knowledge of French.

Paper 3 - Speaking

Section A

Candidates tended to present their picture confidently, with very little hesitation, leaving the interviewer the possibility of asking a wide range of related questions. For the most part, centres continue to support the needs of candidates by guiding the choice of image where appropriate, thus ensuring optimal performance within the discussion. This equally enhances the spontaneous quality of interaction between interviewer and candidate. For example, in cases where a cartoon based scene led to more complex questions on contemporary issues such as the environment, stronger candidates were able to rise to the challenge.

They clearly possessed the confidence and breadth of expression required in order to extend the discussion. Where less confident candidates were faced with a similar scenario, they tended to present the picture well, but struggled to cope with questions addressing those broader issues. For example, discussion regarding the environmental impact of tourism proved extremely challenging. Less able candidates usually performed well, as in previous years, when the picture was related to their personal experiences.

The strategy of describing photographs of friends and family served the purpose of placing many such candidates at their ease, as the scenario was drawn from personal experience. Even stronger candidates are generally well served by such images, as they seem able to exploit the scene by extending the conversation to a range of areas. Where all the candidates from one centre used the same picture, it is unlikely to allow interviewers to discriminate in terms of question types.

It is encouraging to report that the vast majority of interviewers refrain from the practice of eliciting information which has already been offered by the candidate during the presentation of the picture.

There were however, a number of instances where stronger candidates had to respond to very basic questions based upon the picture. Instances of candidates being expected to contend with questions beyond their grasp were thankfully extremely rare. In nearly all cases, interviewers gave candidates ample opportunity to deploy a significant range of structures, broadly in line with their individual level of confidence.

There was little evidence this series of unnecessary interrupting of candidates. Where it did occur, candidates were often prevented from incorporating a subordinate clause e.g. explaining why they like science as a subject at school.

Section B

It is a pleasure to report that interviewers continue, in the vast majority of instances, to utilise the specimen questions in a manner which optimizes the benefit to candidates. In a small minority of cases, interviewers adhered rather too closely to the specimens. This particular strategy tended to lead to a very limited range of responses. This can prove frustrating to all candidates, especially those who have a potential wealth of language to convey within the few minutes available. Where interviewers employed the specimen questions as an approximate guide, most candidates were able to access their own optimal level of language and breadth of expression.

Excellent practice was noted from most recordings, as the question types matched both the needs of the candidate and the context. For example, less confident candidates were skilfully drawn into the conversation by straightforward and accessible questions, with the opportunity to extend responses as confidence increased. This is clear evidence of an effective working relationship between candidate and the interviewer. Although the use of closed questions is avoided in most centres, questions seeking to elicit lists and repeated structures remain an area of some concern.

This series, more successful linking clusters of questions was in evidence. This often encouraged candidates to not merely respond, but to develop original responses and show an impressive degree of initiative.

In many cases, candidates did not totally understand the questions, but skilful and spontaneous rephrasing of the question soon placed them at their ease.

Conduct of Examination

Nearly all interviewers adhered to the maximum timings allocated to each component. This excellent practice is in the best interests of candidates, as no marks can be awarded to utterances which exceed those maximums. On the other hand, some conversations were too short, preventing candidates from securing their optimum mark. Where an interviewer realises that the first conversation was too long, this should not be compensated by making the others too brief, as each conversation is assessed independently.

Best practice occurs where interviewers employ a discreet means of timing of each conversation, as opposed to loud bleeps which tend to distract. Whereas candidates need to be allowed the time stipulated for the presentation, a maximum time does apply. With only a few exceptions, transition from one conversation to the next was announced.

It is again appropriate to thank interviewers for showing a great deal of empathy towards their students, by making every effort to place candidates at their ease. Naturally, this has a positive influence on candidate performance.

Administrative Matters

Once again, centres are to be commended for the overall excellent standard of administration during this series.

Correct labelling of tapes/CDs and other documentation remains an area of strength, in most cases. In just a few instances, no documentation was included. Interviewers who are unfamiliar with this component are asked to follow the guidelines provided on pages 39-42 of the current IGCSE French Specification.

Recordings tended to be outstanding in their level of clarity, but some were not clearly audible, due to very "quiet" recordings or obtrusive background noise. Centres are politely requested to check the quality of each recording, whether on CD or cassette, but particularly that of the first candidate, thus allowing appropriate measures to be taken for the subsequent recordings. The microphone should always be placed in such a position that it favours the candidate rather than the interviewer.

2009 Statistics

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lowest mark for award of Subject Grade (all candidates) (max 100)	87	76	65	54	45	36	27	18

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Lowest mark for award of Grade for Spoken French (optional) (max 60)	51	45	39	33	26	19	13	7

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