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Principal Examiner Feedback

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In English as a Second Language (4ES1) Paper 02

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Principal Examiner's Report to centres.

English as a Second Language – Listening Paper 4ES1 02 November 2024

Background to the paper

The listening paper is composed of 4 sections of increasing complexity and challenge.

Part 1 both sections A and B cover AO3(a), understanding the overall message of a spoken text. Part 1 Section A consisted of 5 short extracts in which people were describing their favourite holidays. Section B was a short extract loosely linked to the previous section in which the speaker described a holiday on the Mississippi River in America. Section A consisted of a multiple-choice exercise whereas Section B consisted of question-and-answer exercise limited to three words for each answer.

Part 2 covers AO3(b), identifying essential and finer points and AO3(d), identifying a speaker's viewpoint or attitude, whether stated or implied. This part consisted of a talk about reducing the use of plastic in the home. This part consisted of a cloze exercise and multiple-choice questions.

Part 3 covers AO3(c), understanding a conversation where information is being negotiated and exchanged and AO3(d), where a speaker's viewpoint and attitude is identified, stated, or implied. In this part candidates listened to an interview with a popular historian and television presenter. The interviewee discussed her work as a curator for the Historic Royal Palaces and how she became a television presenter. The responses consisted of questions and answers and multiple-choice questions.

Part 4 covered AO3(b), identifying essential and finer points and AO3(d), identifying a speaker's viewpoint and attitude. In this part, candidates listened to an extract from a podcast about what our lives might look like in the future. The responses in this section were of the cloze kind.

Candidates' responses

Although this was a relatively small cohort and as with previous November series, the ability spread tended towards the more able candidates, there were sufficiently clear indications of how the candidates responded.

Generally, candidates responded well to all sections of the paper. Each section presented challenges for all candidates across the ability range. Most candidates appeared to have attempted all parts of the unit. Some candidates who appeared to struggle with the cloze exercises and Q 21-25 tended to perform better in the multiple-choice options.

Detailed comments

There were three types of responses on this paper: multiple choice, text completion or cloze exercise with limited word count and short answers. All three types were attempted, although on rare occasions candidates did not adhere to the word limit given in the relevant rubric.

In several instances, especially in the cluster of Questions 21 -Q25 candidates did not write their answer in the correct space provided and so their response was marked as being incorrect. Furthermore, with reference to this section, many candidates did not take advantage of the fact that they were not limited to three words. The questions in this section invite longer and fuller responses. Sometimes a single worded answer did not gain any points as it had no real reference to the question or needed to be developed as one word was too vague a response. This applied to Q24. Please see explanation below when referring in greater detail to Part 3. Nevertheless, there appears to be an improvement in how candidates responded to the questions and there were more longer responses than in previous series with fewer candidates falling back on one-word responses.

A few candidates did not appear to make good use of the preparation time prior to the texts being read out. In such cases the responses bore no relation to the questions. A good example of this would be Q34. Please see explanation when referring in greater detail to Part 4. This implies that the candidate had not read the question carefully in advance and guessed the answer.

Text completion and short response questions

In Part 1B, 2 and 4, candidates lost marks if they did not adhere to the limit of three words where relevant, even though the responses in themselves were often correct. However, it was gratifying to note that few candidates made that rubric mistake. They had obviously been prepared for this type of response. Marks were also lost where a correct response was crossed out and an incorrect one substituted. Where a response was so badly written that it was unintelligible marks were lost.

Grammatical Accuracy

Although this is not a requirement, candidates should try to answer in such a manner that their response makes sense grammatically. They should be aware of indefinite or definite articles, tenses of the verbs in the questions, active and passive voices, singular or plural nouns when reading the questions. This involves careful reading of questions during the one-minute preparation time. However, if the responses were intelligible, candidates were not penalised.

Spelling and word substitution

Where spelling was concerned, the general rule applied during the marking was that if the answer did not affect communication, candidates were awarded a mark. For example, the various misspellings for tea towels in Q18 and Chief curator in Q22 were generally accepted. If candidates made a lexical error which changed the meaning of their reply or made no sense, they were not awarded a mark.

Candidates were not penalised for misspelling a word if it sounded like the target word and it was suggested by their response that they had understood the text. One of the options as a response to Q22 was ... (she was chief curator at the Royal Palaces.

The word curator proved to be a difficult word in terms of spelling and candidates were not penalised for spelling errors providing the resulting word was intelligible.

Some substitutes offered by the candidates were accepted. As a response for Question 11 some candidates offered less stressed instead of calmer. However, in Question 13 get used up as an alternative to wear out was not accepted as that altered the meaning of the statement. It is the product that gets used up not the plastic container.

Comments on sections of the paper

The paper had been devised with increasing complexity and challenge with each part being attempted by most of the candidates.

Part 1 (A) and Part (B)

In this section candidates were asked to listen to 5 short passages in which people described their favourite holidays, and to respond to a set of multiple-choice style questions. The majority of candidates appeared to have answered Part 1 (A) successfully.

In part B there were several questions, especially Question 7 and Question 8 which required more careful listening to the tape.

It was pleasing to note that very few candidates exceeded the 3-word limit and thereby losing marks.

Part 2

This section required candidates to complete sentences about the text they had listened to, on reducing plastic in the home, which consisted of a cloze exercise, as well as answering two multiple choice questions. Generally, candidates performed quite well and many appeared to adhere to the three-word limit. Most candidates responded well to the

multiple-choice questions. Candidates should not try to guess the response beforehand without considering the context but listen carefully to the tape. This is especially important in an article which is of topical interest. This could apply to Q12 where a few candidates wrote ... not common or more expensive. The correct response was dull or boring referring to eco products.

Part 3

In this section, which consisted of an interview, candidates were required to answer questions by providing the relevant responses to show they understood the text. The second part to this section was a set of multiple-choice responses. There was no word limit to Q21 - Q25 and many candidates replied in full sentences, whilst others with just one or two words. Writing full sentences, however short, does show that the candidate has understood the text and so should be encouraged to provide fuller responses for this section. Sometimes, a single worded response did not gain any marks as it had no real reference to the question. For example, in Question 22 simply writing chief (often wrongly misspelled) did not really indicate whether the candidate understood the passage or not. By not elaborating on the word chief the candidate lost a mark. The correct response could have been: She was chief curator. Similarly, the response artefacts and paintings was not adequate. She was in charge of / took care of artefacts and paintings would have been a more suitable response.

Q24 also indicated which candidates had not listened to the recording carefully enough. The candidates were asked ...How did Lucy start working as a television presenter? The presenter was curious how Lucy started to work presenting programmes on Television. Some candidates responded that there was always someone working in the museum who wanted to help and missed the point of Lucy herself being asked. A possible correct response could be: She was asked to help or the museum wanted someone to help.

Part 4

In this section, which was an extract from a podcast about what our lives might look like in the future. Candidates were required to complete sentences about the text they heard by providing the relevant answers in Cloze exercises. Most of the candidates who attempted this part replied within the three-word limit in all three sections including the cluster of Questions 33 – 37. Q35 proved to be a typical example of not listening to the tape with due care and attention or guessing the response. Q35 was linked to the paragraph which discussed self-driving or driverless cars. A surprising number of candidates responded with electric cars to the question, whereas the emphasis was on the cars being self-driving and without the need of a driver.

Advice to centres

- It is recommended that candidates listen to a wide range of different types of texts such as current affairs, TV and radio programmes and podcasts in order to familiarise themselves with a wide range of topics.
- Centres should prepare candidates for the listening examination by familiarising them with the style of the paper and with the types of questions they can expect to find on this unit.
- Candidates should make good use of the time before the tape is being played to read the questions, 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 the questions and to strictly adhere to the word limit where necessary and use the correct space for the relevant answer.
- Candidates should consider the spelling of words when providing their answers.
- Candidates should also consider the grammar and punctuation in the cloze responses as these give a clue to the correct response.

