

FRENCH

Paper 8682/01

Speaking

General comments

Most recordings were clear and Centres had paid attention to the format of the examination. However there were a few errors in addition and transcription of marks, which sometimes caused a change in the rank order. Centres are reminded that they are responsible for ensuring accurate addition and transcription of marks.

Where there were instances of poor quality recording, it was largely due to poor acoustics in the room or not using an external microphone (which should be positioned closer to the candidate than the Examiner). Administrative matters were sometimes overlooked: Examiners should begin their recording with Centre and syllabus information and each candidate should be introduced on tape by name and number. Since each examination should last approximately 20 minutes, only **two** candidates should be recorded per side of a 90 minute cassette, and only **one** per side of a 60 minute cassette – it is disruptive to candidates for the Examiner to be obliged to turn over a cassette in the middle of an examination, and parts of the recording are inevitably lost. Once an examination has begun, the cassette should neither be stopped nor paused – it should run without interruption. Where CDs are used instead of cassettes, please ensure that these can be played on a normal CD player. It is very helpful to Moderators if cassettes and boxes are labelled clearly, showing which candidates appear in the sample, and in exactly what order they appear on the cassettes. Cassettes should be spot-checked after the examination to ensure that recording has taken place.

Examiners and candidates alike should be familiar with the format and timings of the examination:

- 3 to 3½ minutes for the candidate's presentation
- 7 to 8 minutes for the Topic Conversation, developing the candidate's chosen topic
- 8 to 9 minutes of General Conversation

If candidates seem to be continuing with their presentation for longer than 3½ minutes, Examiners should interrupt and begin asking questions. If the Examiner chooses to introduce each section, this should be done in French. A mark should be entered in each column of the Working Mark Sheet, according to the mark scheme set out in the syllabus, and the addition checked carefully for each candidate. Please note, there is no provision in the mark scheme for half marks – Examiners must decide on a whole mark to be entered in each column of the working mark sheet. Working mark sheets and the second copy of the MS1 should be sent with the cassettes for moderation.

Section 1: Presentation

Candidates chose a wide range of topic areas here, with the most popular being *les médias, la famille, l'éducation, le fossé des générations/les jeunes, les drogues* and various aspects of *la nourriture/la santé*. Another popular choice was some aspect of sport, whether personal, about a national team, or about a major sporting event, such as the *Tour de France*. There were fewer candidates choosing to talk about the environment and pollution, *le SIDA* or *tabagisme*, all popular subjects in previous years. It is in the candidate's advantage to choose a topic area in which they have a genuine interest, as they are far more likely to be able to develop this and offer ideas and opinions and engage with the Examiner in an exchange of views. It is not advisable to encourage a whole teaching group to pursue the same topic. There were fewer factual topics than chosen in the past, though some weaker candidates opted for more limited choices and were not always able to offer much beyond the factual. Although it is perfectly possible to develop a topic such as *Paris* or *les vacances* to an appropriate level, this is often not the case and candidates may restrict the marks available to them. Most candidates were well-prepared, having researched their chosen topic, and were able to talk for at least 3 minutes, with plenty of additional material to use in the Topic Conversation. There are still a few instances of candidates and Examiners being unaware of the requirement that the chosen topic must make reference to the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where French is spoken; where this is not the case, the mark for content/presentation will be halved.

It is not enough just to say “*et en France c’est la même chose...*”. Some candidates raced through their presentations so quickly that they scored poorly for pronunciation and intonation and made it very difficult for Moderators to understand what they were actually saying – clearly, candidates want to practise and do well, but over-rehearsal often ruins carefully prepared material.

Though there is no problem with ending the presentation with a question, candidates should be actively discouraged from asking questions of the Examiner during their presentation – it wastes the time available to them, particularly if the Examiner answers at any length, and there are no marks available for asking questions during this section of the examination.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

The most successful topics gave Examiners opportunities to ask questions which opened up the topic and enabled candidate to express and defend a point of view. In some cases, candidates merely repeated material from their presentation, but many were able to go beyond this material and discuss the chosen topic in a mature and balanced way. It is worth noting that sometimes candidates need thinking time to answer some questions – it is often easy for an Examiner to rush into a repetition or rephrasing of a question which a candidate may just need a little more time to answer.

It is natural that candidates should want to rehearse for their examinations but it is important that in the conversation sections they are asked a wide range of questions, from the simple to the complicated, and that some of these questions should be unexpected. Simple questions, such as “*Pourquoi?*” often produce the most complicated answers, and where candidates are allowed to deliver pre-learned responses, it is difficult to award a mark higher than 6 for comprehension and responsiveness, since this has not really been tested. Candidates need to be aware that to score highly in this category, they should not content themselves with a simple answer, but should try to develop this to the best of their ability.

Examiners need to be aware of how long they are spending on this section – it has often been the case this year that the Topic Conversation has extended far beyond the required 7 to 8 minutes, and the General Conversation has been cut to compensate. Before leaving the Topic Conversation and moving on, Examiners should check whether candidates have any questions to ask them.

Section 3: General Conversation

Examiners should signal to candidates that they are moving on to the General Conversation, and should remember that the syllabus states that the section will begin with fairly straightforward questions about the candidate’s background and interests and will move quickly on to a more mature conversation discussing more abstract and/or current issues within the general topic areas. It would be inappropriate to spend too long talking about a candidate’s holiday plans for example – but perhaps this could be used as a stepping stone to a conversation about tourism and its effect on the environment, their carbon footprint, or the effect on the people of developing countries. Where conversation does not go beyond basic IGCSE level, candidates cannot score marks in the higher bands of the mark scheme.

Initial questions are intended to establish possible areas of discussion for each individual candidate, so each examination should be different. Examiners need to remember that in Centres with a number of candidates, the topics discussed in General Conversation should be varied; the aim should be not to cover all the topic areas dealt with during the course, but rather to develop different ones with each candidate. Better 3 or 4 topic areas investigated in depth, than 14 or 15 skated over with a pat response. There should be no set list of questions, and certainly no “right” answers – candidates should be given the freedom to express themselves and Examiners should be prepared to engage with them and respond to what they say, rather than moving on to a different unrelated topic as soon as the candidate has formulated a sentence. The objective, after all, is conversation, and candidates should be given the opportunity to show that they are capable of taking part in a conversation at an appropriate level. Examiners should remember to prompt for questions at the end of this section, too.

Questions

Candidates are required to ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections and there are 10 marks available for this. Where candidates do not ask the Examiner any questions during the course of conversation, (and some candidates do find this difficult), Examiners must prompt them to do so, so that candidates have the opportunity to score. The mark awarded for this should be recorded in the final column for each conversation section on the working mark sheet – if a candidate does not ask any questions in one or other of the conversation sections, a zero must be recorded in this column – the mark scheme states “No

questions, even when prompted (0)". There were many instances of a mark being recorded in the columns without candidates having asked a single question. In the Topic Conversation, candidates should know what will be discussed and can plan ahead for something suitable to ask. Examiners should ensure candidates are familiar with the criteria for awarding marks here – in order to score more than 3 marks, candidates must show that they are able to ask relevant and reasonably accurate questions, and to score more than 4, they need to be able to use a variety of forms – multiple examples of "*et que pensez-vous, Monsieur/Madame ?*" will not, of themselves, be sufficient to score 5.

It is important that Examiners remember that their role is one of enabling the candidate to show what he or she can do, and that therefore candidates should be allowed the maximum possible time to express and develop their ideas and opinions – this means that when candidates ask them questions, they may need to limit their own responses in order to allow the candidates as much time as possible.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The general standard of performance of the candidates was in line with that of previous years. Candidates generally found the content of the texts reasonably accessible, with the difficulty for many lying in the need to manipulate the language of the texts in giving their responses to them. There were some first-rate scripts from candidates who displayed an ability to make their points with commendable fluency and accuracy.

Most candidates managed to attempt all questions, but a few failed to attempt **Question 5**.

Nearly all candidates knew how to tackle the different types of question, revealing a good level of preparation and familiarity with the required tasks. Where candidates scored poorly, it was often because they copied whole sentences or phrases unaltered from the texts in **Questions 3 and 4**, or because they preferred to give their own opinions of what they thought the text ought to have said, rather than what it actually did say, or because they wrote general essays in answer to the first task in **Question 5**.

The practice of copying out the question in **Questions 3 and 4** as a preamble to the answer is a waste of time for the candidate, as well as potentially introducing linguistic errors which do nothing to enhance the overall impression for the quality of language mark. There were also significant numbers of candidates who tried to incorporate the words of the question in an introduction to every answer. For example, the answer to **Question 3(a)** does not need to be: *Selon le deuxième paragraphe, les facteurs psychologiques chez l'adolescent qui peuvent le pousser à provoquer les conflits sont que l'adolescent veut établir son identité.* The full mark for that element of the answer is scored perfectly satisfactorily by *Il veut établir son identité* on its own.

A few of the most fluent candidates wrote mini-essays in response to these questions, and produced long, complex and speculative answers which went far further than the text itself and far further than the requirement for scoring full marks. In the process some of them overlooked the need to include the basic information from the text which was required to score the marks.

Among weaker candidates, copying wholesale from the text was, as usual, quite a common feature. The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer *sans copier mot à mot des phrases entières du texte*. They may use material from the passage but they must use it in such a way as to demonstrate understanding. Copying sentences or whole phrases verbatim from the text in the hope that they contain the answer does not demonstrate understanding and is therefore not rewarded. Even quite small changes or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language – see specific comments on **Questions 3 and 4** below.

Question 2, on the other hand, is not the time to attempt to find other words for straightforward vocabulary items used in the original sentence. This question is a test of grammatical manipulation, not of an ability to find alternative vocabulary for its own sake.

In **Question 1**, it was pleasing to note that unlike in previous years nearly all candidates realized the need for the words given as the answer to be interchangeable in every respect with the word or words given in the question – i.e. the word or words to be inserted must fit precisely into the 'footprint' of the word or words which they are replacing.

In **Question 5**, candidates must adhere to the word limits which are clearly set out in the rubric: a total of 140 words for both sections. A suggested suitable split would be 90-100 words for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and 40-50 words for the response. Material beyond 150 words overall is ignored and scores no marks. This means that those candidates who use up the entire allocation of words on the summary automatically receive none of the 5 marks available for their personal response.

If, on the other hand, the responses to **Question 5** are significantly below the word limit, the overall language mark is reduced accordingly.

These limits are such that candidates cannot afford the luxury of an introductory preamble, however polished: *En lisant les deux articles, j'ai trouvé quelques causes principales de tensions dans la vie familiale de nos jours, et elles sont présentées en bas* (25 words). Even relatively modest examples such as this (some were significantly longer) mean that the candidate has squandered a significant amount of the available words in which to score the ten points available. Candidates need to make the point as succinctly as possible. It is a summary of specific points from the texts that is requested in the first part of **Question 5**, not a general essay which is quite likely to score 0/10.

It is strongly recommended that candidates count carefully the number of words that they have used as they go through the exercise and record them accurately at the end of each of the two parts, if only in order to highlight to themselves the need to remain within the limits. For the purpose of counting words in this context, a word is taken to be any unit that is not joined to another in any way: therefore *il y a* is three words, as is *Qu'est-ce que c'est?*

The occasional candidate used bullet points to list the points that they were making for content. Though content marks may be awarded for this, the language mark is likely to be reduced if no verbs are used to express the ideas and the language consequently lacks fluency.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally answered well. *Instaurer*, *resurgir* and *vigilant* (items **(a)**, **(d)** and **(e)**) were the answers most often correctly identified, whilst *prévenir* and *accueilli* (items **(b)** and **(c)**) caused more problems, *rappeler* being commonly offered for *avertir*, and a variety of grammatical forms being offered for *reçu* despite the clue of the past participle. Minor copying errors were tolerated – notably in the case of *accueilli*.

Question 2

There were some very good answers to this question from the strongest candidates, but as usual, the task proved very demanding for candidates with a less-than-secure command of grammatical structures. Minor spelling mistakes were not penalised but grammatical errors were.

- 2(a):** This was generally well handled, although some missed the important accent on *rassuré*.
- 2(b):** Approximately half the candidates recognised the need for a subjunctive, although fewer managed to produce the correct form of *pouvoir*. Of those who did, some spoiled things by writing *...que l'enfant puisse pouvoir parler*.
- 2(c):** The task of converting a less common form of the verb back into a more common one (*sachant* to *savent*) tripped up quite a large number of candidates.
- 2(d):** The ability to form a correct imperative or to put the sentence into direct speech proved a good test.
- 2(e):** Many candidates failed to understand the nuances of meaning in the original, and over-complicated their answer.

Question 3

The questions were generally well answered but there was a fair amount of lifting of phrases from the texts. **(See General comments)**

- 3(a):** This was well answered, with most candidates finding at least the first two points here. The third element led to a good deal of lifting.
- 3(b):** Again generally well answered, but changing *la transformation des moments d'échange* into an answer incorporating a verb was beyond some candidates.

- 3(c):** This was generally well done, with most candidates identifying at least three of the marks. However not all understood the ideas of parents imposing their views, or who was to be instilling confidence in whom.
- 3(d):** Most candidates successfully referred to parents showing concern/love for their children by imposing limits, but fewer identified the idea of children feeling protected. Most candidates ignored the second part of the question, concerning the question of silence, but those who attempted it generally did so successfully. Others got rather carried away with impassioned pleas which, although heart-felt, scored no marks.
- 3(e):** Most candidates scored one or two marks, but *vigilant sans être encombrant* constituted an unacceptable 'lift' in a large number of scripts.

Question 4

- 4(a):** A simple manipulation of the text was all that was necessary to score full marks: e.g. *le divorce est (devenu) plus facile* or *les valeurs sont maintenant plus libérales*. Some candidates misinterpreted *niveau de vie* as 'cost of living'. Others used these items as an opportunity to write an extended piece for each item outlining the ills of modern life in general, the effects of divorce on children or the problems caused by working mothers who were seen as abandoning their children in order to earn money.
- 4(b):** Most candidates pointed to the fact that workload pressures led to an impoverishment of family life, but there was a great deal of straightforward 'lifting' from the text in this item.
- 4(c):** A large number of candidates used this as an opportunity to discuss *les fléaux sociaux*, earning no marks in the process. Others managed to score a mark by identifying the members of the family as those being on hand, but relatively few understood the idea of *se plaindre*.
- 4(d):** This was generally well understood.
- 4(e):** Most candidates identified two of the required elements (dialogue and listening) but fewer mentioned the ideas of avoiding confrontation or finding a compromise for the third mark. Making the first point three times does not earn the three marks.

Question 5

This question asks the candidates to summarise the main issues of the two passages and then to reflect on them, giving their own views. Being concise is part of the task. See **General comments** at the start of this report for the need for candidates to embark directly on identifying and giving point-scoring information without a general introduction.

Candidates were required to summarise '*les principales causes de tensions dans la vie familiale telles qu'elles sont présentées dans ces deux articles*', specifically excluding those mentioned in the first paragraph of each text. Fewer candidates scored highly for the summary than in previous years. Candidates who scored fewest marks included those who focused (sometimes exclusively) on the first paragraphs of each text or who wrote general essays for which there was no evidence in the texts and therefore no mark. Others latched onto one or two points early on and simply repeated them in different words.

The personal response gives the candidate the chance to express their feelings on the topic, which candidates generally did with some imagination and originality – assuming they had not exceeded the word limit by this stage. This was handled better than in some previous years, with high scores being quite common for some thoughtful and original responses.

The quality of language varied considerably: some found it difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form, but the best candidates wrote idiomatic, fluent and accurate French. Verb endings were common sources of error: among the weaker candidates there appeared to be a wide-spread belief that the plural form of *il parle* is *ils parles*. There were particular problems with *leur/leurs/ses/eux* (e.g. *leur enfants, ses parent etc.*) – the translation of 'their' was more often than not thought to be *ses* - and with emphatic and other pronouns in general. The use of definite and partitive articles was eccentric, as was adjectival agreement and the choice of tense in many cases.

FRENCH

Paper 8682/03

Essay

General comments

Candidates were given a choice of 5 questions, one on each of the following topics; *Le conflit des générations*, *Les médias*, *L'éducation*, *Les pays en voie de développement* and *Vie culturelle et patrimoine*. The essays were marked out of 40, with a maximum mark of 24 for language and 16 for content. It was felt that the overall standard of performance was slightly lower than that of previous years from the point of view of both language and content.

For the most part, language marks tended to fall in the middle of the good category, though towards the bottom end of the range language knowledge was in some cases very poor, with candidates barely displaying a rudimentary grasp of grammatical structure. Across the ability range quite a number of candidates lost marks because of careless, avoidable errors which might have been identified if sufficient time had been reserved for a systematic and careful revision of what had been written. It is recommended that future candidates practice this important aspect of examination technique.

Content marks were mostly between the lower end of the good and the middle of the adequate categories. Stronger candidates produced essays that were balanced and well structured, with a relevant introduction and an argument that led to a conclusion. Weaker candidates demonstrated poor logical reasoning skills linked to a tendency to write about the overall topic rather than the specific question.

The majority of the candidates observed the rubric on the number of words to be written, and most appeared to have had sufficient time in which to complete the task.

Examples of common language problems follow:

- Misspellings of common words such as: *société*, *examen*, *difficulté*, *le public*, *étudiant*, *éducation*, *le stress*, *problème*, *voir*, *destruction*, *déjà*, *atmosphère*, *exemple*, *sujet*, *tous les jours*, *chacun*, *ressources*, *grands-parents*, *environnement*.
- Gender of important, commonplace nouns such as: *chose*, *groupe*, *monde*, *problème*, *vie*, *façon*, *raison*, *type*, *opinion*, *manque*, *pollution*, *personne*.
- Confusion/misuse of: *a/à*, *ce qui/ceux qui*, *c'est/ces*, *ses/ces*, *leur/leurs*, *cela/ceux-là*, *parce que/à cause de*, *tandis que/pendant que*, *ou/où*.
- Constructions, including such errors as: « *Les jeunes ne sont pas laissé sortir* », « *des problèmes tel que* », « *les fléaux que la société fait face à* », « *les gens besoinent d'éducation* ».
- Inclusion of *en* when not required: « *il y en a beaucoup de personnes qui...* »
- Past participles used instead of infinitives, and vice-versa: « *l'atmosphère est très polluer* », « *cela va causé...* »
- Failure to link a verb with its subject: « *le gouvernement doivent* ».

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

This was a popular question, attracting candidates across the ability range. There was quite a strong tendency to look at problems within the family and to spend insufficient time considering the wider social implications of the question. Many candidates took the view that problems within the family such as a lack of communication and discussion arise because in many cases both parents have to go out to work, leaving the children to their own devices and open to temptations such as drugs, alcohol abuse and vandalism. Weaker candidates tended to look solely at the causes of the generation gap, citing parental disapproval of their children's tastes in clothing, music and choice of friends and the younger generation's greater interest in and understanding of modern technology.

Question 2

This question also proved to be popular. Most candidates agreed with the statement, pointing out that the press today is more concerned with celebrity and sensationalism than with world and national news, and that it is this that sells newspapers and generates profit, along with an ever-increasing amount of advertising. Quite a number of candidates were sceptical about the veracity of the information provided by some newspapers, pointing the finger in some instances at government propaganda. Some candidates were able to stand back and take a wider view, making the above points but also pointing out that the non-sensationalist press does exist, citing as examples such newspapers as *The Times* and *Le Monde*. The weakest candidates wrote a non-focused essay on the media in general.

Question 3

This question attracted the greatest number of candidates and produced focused and relevant answers. Most agreed with the statement, appreciating the fact that there is a vast difference between the formal education received whilst one is at school, college or university and that which one receives once the formal element comes to an end. Most candidates gave examples of education received during the process of life experience, referring to that received in the workplace; as a result of rapidly expanding and innovative technology; through the development of one's social skills; through personal relationships; through the various stages of parenthood amongst others. Many made the point in their conclusion that one's education never really ends. Weaker candidates tended to produce a brief survey of the various stages of one's school career and of subjects that can be studied, and showed little understanding of how life and social skills can be seen to constitute education.

Question 4

Whilst weaker candidates tended to restrict their answer to a general survey of problems of the Third World such as drought, extreme poverty, disease and inadequate infrastructure, stronger candidates focused on the statement and presented some interesting views. Some saw the individuals referred to in the question as being people living in a developing country, whereas others saw the individuals as people living in a developed country. Whilst some candidates were convinced that the size of the problem and the amount of financial aid needed were such that the individual could not make any difference, others argued, sometimes passionately, that the individual could and should help by giving to charity and by working for support agencies such as *Médecins sans frontières*.

Question 5

This question attracted few candidates. There was a tendency to focus either on the protection of one's cultural and historical heritage or on the protection of the environment and to virtually ignore the other. Some candidates did try to link the two elements, however, with various degrees of success. Stronger candidates, referring to specific examples, gave reasons why it is important to protect each element, and came to a conclusion based on the strength of each argument. The effects of travel and tourism on both heritage and environment were often referred to.