

**Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers  
(English Language)**

**Guidance Notes for Candidates**

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# **Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language)**

## **Guidance Notes for Candidates**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this Guide is to serve as a supplement to the *Syllabus Specifications for the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language)* published by the Government of the Hong Kong SAR in November 2000.

The first two administrations of the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) (LPATE) took place in March 2001 and March 2002. As a result of the experience gained from these two administrations, this Guide has been produced so as to provide candidates with more focused guidance in key areas of the Assessment. Sample questions and answers from previous administrations of the LPATE and excerpts from the marking criteria are given to illustrate the skills required for success in each paper.

Reference is made to the *Syllabus Specifications*, which should be read in conjunction with this Guide. Where appropriate, amendments or additions to the *Syllabus Specifications* are included. In addition, details are provided of the marking procedures of the Assessment so as to enable candidates to better understand the ways in which they are assessed and how the final results are arrived at.

## Paper I Reading

This paper consists of two parts:

Part 1: Multiple-choice Cloze

Part 2: Reading Comprehension

For a detailed description of this paper, see the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 4-19).

This paper is marked according to a marking scheme. The total marks gained by each candidate are then accorded a proficiency level (1 to 5). The proficiency levels are determined by two methods, as described in the *Syllabus Specifications* (page 2).

### **Part 1: Multiple-choice Cloze**

Whilst doing the multiple-choice cloze, candidates may wish to adopt the following strategies:

- Read the passage all the way through first.
- Read both before and after the missing text to gain clues as to the structure and meaning of the sentence as a whole.
- Examine the answer options carefully. If there are two options that are almost the same in meaning and form, these can usually both be discarded. Make sure that the option chosen conveys the meaning of the clause/sentence and is grammatically correct.

A sample section of the 2002 LPATE Paper 1 (Reading) Part 1 is given below:

## Specimen Section of Part 1: Multiple-choice Cloze

From the choices for Questions 1 – 7, choose the option which would best complete the article if inserted in the blanks.

### Learning new methods to swim in English ocean

English is Japan's weak point. Children study the language for six years in junior high school without learning to speak it coherently. The Japanese are notoriously \_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_ of foreigners, preferring to slip away at their approach \_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_ risk their shaky language skills in a face-to-face encounter.

Japan's recent results in TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) have been \_\_\_ (3) \_\_\_. Placed 150<sup>th</sup> out of 165 nations, Japan languishes near the bottom, faring little better in Asia than the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). \_\_\_ (4) \_\_\_ a command of English, Japan is being left behind by the rest of the world.

Even the Education Ministry \_\_\_ (5) \_\_\_ that something needs to be done. From 2002, English will be taught in elementary schools too, not as a compulsory subject, lest it be subject to the entrance-exam system and become as stilted and useless as high school English, but as \_\_\_ (6) \_\_\_ program in international understanding that will emphasise songs and games. The course content will be purely \_\_\_ (7) \_\_\_, no reading or writing.

Source: An article by Taeko Miraoka in the *Asahi Evening News Special*, August, 1999.

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. A. embarrassed | 5. A. recognises |
| B. shy            | B. urges         |
| C. resentful      | C. says          |
| D. careful        | D. expects       |
| 2. A. so as to    | 6. A. a selected |
| B. and to         | B. an academic   |
| C. not to         | C. a chosen      |
| D. rather than    | D. an elective   |
| 3. A. abysmal     | 7. A. fun        |
| B. fair           | B. oral          |
| C. average        | C. play          |
| D. worst          | D. talking       |
| 4. A. Other than  |                  |
| B. With           |                  |
| C. Needing        |                  |
| D. Without        |                  |

## Key to Specimen Section of Part 1: Multiple-choice Cloze

1. B                      2. D                      3. A                      4. D                      5. A  
6. D                      7. B

### Explanation

Question 1 – The best answer is Option B, ‘shy’. Option A has a similar meaning but cannot be used, as ‘embarrassed’ is not normally followed by the preposition ‘of’. Options C and D can both be followed by ‘of’ but their meanings do not match the rest of the sentence, which mentions behaviour (e.g. ‘slipping away’) and feelings (reluctance to ‘risk their shaky language skills’) related to shyness not resentment or carefulness.

Question 2 – The best answer is Option D, ‘rather than’ as it indicates an alternative course of action. Option A suggests that risking their language skills is the purpose of slipping away, which is clearly nonsense; and option B suggests that risking their language skills is something they do in addition to slipping away, which is also clearly nonsense. Option C is close to the appropriate meaning but it would normally require a logical connector (conjunction) linking it with the rest of the sentence (e.g. ‘so as not to’).

Question 3 – The best answer is Option A, ‘abysmal’. The context (e.g. preceding context: ‘English is Japan’s weak point’; ‘without learning to speak it coherently’; ‘shaky language skills’; following context: ‘languishes near the bottom’) makes it clear that an adjective meaning something like ‘very bad’ is needed here and so options B and C are clearly incorrect. Option D is inappropriate because it is a superlative adjective, which requires comparison with others (e.g. ‘the worst among x, y, z’). The next sentence makes it clear that Japan’s results, though poor, are not the worst among the 165 nations who took the test.

Question 4 – The best answer is Option D, ‘Without’. The first clause of this sentence takes the main point of the preceding sentences – that Japan does not have a command of English – and says that this is the reason for Japan being left behind. ‘Without’ is very close in meaning to ‘lacking’. The only other alternative close in meaning is option C. However, the required meaning is clearly that Japan is being left behind because she does not have a command of English, not because she needs a command of English.

Question 5 – The best answer is Option A, ‘recognises’. Options A, C and D would ‘fit’ grammatically, but Option A best fits the context as the rest of the paragraph is about what the Education Ministry have done to try to solve the problem. They have therefore realized or ‘recognized’ the problem. The other options suggest that they may have not tried to do anything about the problem themselves.

Question 6 – The best answer is Option D, ‘an elective’, as ‘elective’ is an adjective used to describe a non-compulsory program. The preceding sentence says that English should be taught ‘not as a compulsory subject’ – ‘not compulsory’ is precisely the meaning of ‘elective’, i.e. that the students will be free to take or to not take the program. Options A and C are not appropriate as they suggest that someone other than students will select or choose the program. Option B does not match with the idea of the program emphasising ‘songs and games’.

Question 7 – The best answer is Option B, ‘oral’, as it is meant to contrast with the other two language skills mentioned, ‘reading’ and ‘writing’. Options A and C are similar in meaning to each other and whilst either would be possible, they do not convey the intended meaning of a skills-based language program. Option D is closer to the intended meaning but indicates only speaking, while Option B indicates both speaking and listening.

## **Part 2: Reading Comprehension**

When doing Part 2: Reading Comprehension, candidates may wish to adopt the following strategies:

- Read the passage all the way through first.
- Refer to the text for answers rather than try to guess from personal knowledge or experience.
- Write concise answers that, wherever possible, summarise or paraphrase the information contained in the text. Sometimes the words in the text may form the most appropriate answer; however, candidates should not copy irrelevant sections of the text.

When doing the reading paper generally, candidates are advised to:

- Plan the time they wish to allocate to each section;
- Read each passage before attempting the questions;
- Attempt to answer all questions.

Candidates should recognise that reading widely, especially on educational matters pertaining to English teaching, is beneficial to language skills development and ability and thus will help in examination performance.

A specimen section of questions from the 2002 LPATE Paper 1 (Reading) Part 2 is given below:

## Specimen Section of Part 2: Reading Comprehension

Read the article entitled ‘Examination system must be reformed’ on pages 7 and 8 and answer the following questions in your own words as far as possible. Marks may be deducted if you copy indiscriminately from the passage. You do not have to answer each question in complete sentences but make sure that your answers are full enough and coherent enough for the assessor to understand.

1. What problem are teachers and educational administrators aware of (line 7)? <i>(1 mark)</i>
2. What does the writer think are two possible reasons for the importance of examinations in Hong Kong education? <i>(2 marks)</i>
3. Briefly explain the metaphor used in paragraph 4 (lines 20 – 24). <i>(2 marks)</i>
4. What is the author’s attitude towards the way students are prepared for examinations (lines 22 – 24)? Give at least 2 words or phrases from the text to support your answer. <i>(2 marks)</i>
5. Explain what is ‘exasperating and frustrating many of the NET teachers from overseas’ (line 27). <i>(1 mark)</i>
6. ‘This is a tragic legacy’ (line 34) — what does ‘This’ refer to? <i>(1 mark)</i>
7. Explain what the author means by ‘reform cannot come quickly enough’ (line 37). <i>(1 mark)</i>
8. What effects does the writer think his proposed changes could have on the way students in Hong Kong learn? <i>(2 marks)</i>

**Passage**

**Examination system must be reformed**

Two separate features on education topics in the Sunday Morning Post on October 17 were in fact railing about the same thing. I refer to CT's feature in Agenda about discipline problems in Hong Kong schools and JH's report in Postmagazine about the shortcomings in the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) scheme.

5 In both cases, the authors point the finger at the dominating influence the examination system has on all aspects of education in the SAR. There is no doubt that teachers and educational administrators are aware of the problem and it was with optimism all round that the Education Commission recently proposed some changes to the system that might downgrade the use of examinations as a one-off method of sorting out  
10 students.

I have often wondered why the culture of examinations is such an all-pervasive feature of the Hong Kong educational scene. Of course, it may have something to do with the historical importance of using examinations in pre-1949 China, where the technique was used traditionally to qualify for service in the imperial court. Here, it  
15 involved the commitment to memory of vast tracts of knowledge. Maybe, though, in Hong Kong, it was always felt necessary to have an easy way to narrow down the overwhelming stream of students being pushed along by their parents towards higher education, when in fact, the resources and places needed to cope with these students were just not available.

20 Whatever the reason, the traditional examination engine is out of control and is stifling teaching and learning practices that could make education more relevant and interesting for students in a modern world. Like pistons under pressure in this machine, teachers are forced to resort to a simplistic model of rote learning to cram students with content that can be regurgitated in an exam. Parents are also caught up  
25 in this pressure, feeling obliged to spend long hours supervising their children's homework or sending them to an endless stream of tutors after school.

This is the very system that is exasperating and frustrating many of the NET teachers from overseas. They are being forced to comply with the demands of an outdated examination-driven educational system; and there are few opportunities to introduce  
30 the teaching practices that their experience has shown can stimulate interest in learning a language.

At the other end, we see the detrimental effect on students: a reluctance to learn, growing discipline problems, and far too many suicides.

35 This is a tragic legacy, given that young people are generally enthusiastic about gaining mastery over their lives by acquiring the knowledge and skills that are relevant to them.

It seems to me that reform cannot come quickly enough. The examination system needs a drastic overhaul. Instead of relying entirely on one big examination at the end of a course, we need to be employing a greater variety of methods when making

40 judgments about each student's achievements. These could include continuous assessment and individual student project work.

This should lead to less of the memorisation of content that the present examination culture fosters. Research has conclusively shown how useless this is as a goal in education when most of what is memorised is forgotten two weeks after the examination. In any case, most knowledge passed on to students will never be used by them and is therefore irrelevant.

What is more relevant to young people in the short and long terms is to provide them with the opportunities to discover knowledge for themselves; only in this way can they build up an understanding of the world that has meaning for them in an intellectual, emotional, social and aesthetic sense.

I am convinced that changes of this nature would assist in making education a happier and more fulfilling process for young people, as well as providing them with more relevant, long-term skills that can be used throughout their lives.

Source: A letter to the *Sunday Morning Post*, 24 October 1999.

## Key to Specimen Section of Part 2: Reading Comprehension with Explanations

### Question 1

What problem are teachers and educational administrators aware of (line 7)?

The ‘problem’ referred to in line 7 is that described in line 5, i.e. ‘the dominating influence the examination system has on all aspects of education in the SAR.’ Candidates could also paraphrase this as:

*The problem referred to is that exams dominate education in Hong Kong.*

### Question 2

What does the writer think are two possible reasons for the importance of examinations in Hong Kong education?

The two reasons mentioned are described in the third paragraph, i.e. ‘the historical importance of using examinations in pre-1949 China, where the technique was used traditionally to qualify for service in the imperial court’ and ‘in Hong Kong, it was always felt necessary to have an easy way to narrow down the overwhelming stream of students being pushed along by their parents towards higher education, when in fact, the resources and places needed to cope with these students were just not available.’ Candidates could paraphrase these two points as:

1. *Examinations were traditionally important in China, as they were used to select people to serve in the imperial court.*
2. *In Hong Kong, examinations were an easy way of selecting which students could take up limited places in higher education.*

Both answers must state the reason for the importance of examinations, i.e. for selection purposes, either ‘to serve in the imperial court’ or ‘to take up limited places in higher education’.

### Question 3

Briefly explain the metaphor used in paragraph 4 (lines 20 – 24).

The metaphor in paragraph 4 is contained in the section ‘the traditional examination engine is out of control and is stifling teaching and learning practices that could make education more relevant and interesting for students in a modern world. Like pistons under pressure in this machine, teachers are forced to resort to a simplistic model of rote learning to cram students with content that can be regurgitated in an exam.’

To explain this metaphor, candidates must show how the examination system is being compared to a machine or engine and how this is representative of the way that teachers are being put under pressure. Two possible explanations are:

*The way the examination system puts pressure on teachers is similar to the way pressure is put on pistons in a machine.*

OR

*Teachers are compared to pistons in an engine because they feel pressure from the exam system to get results.*

It is not enough to simply say that ‘teachers are like pistons in a machine’ without giving an explanation as to why this comparison is made.

#### Question 4

What is the author’s attitude towards the way students are prepared for examinations (lines 22–24)? Give at least 2 words or phrases from the text to support your answer.

From the words used in lines 22-24, such as ‘resort to’, rote-learning’, simplistic’, ‘cram’ and ‘regurgitate’, it is clear that the writer holds a negative attitude. To get the two marks for this question, it is necessary firstly to state:

*The writer holds a negative (or critical or disapproving) attitude to the ways that students are prepared for exams.*

And then to quote any two of the words or phrases, for example:

*This is shown by the use of the words ‘resort to’ and ‘rote-learning’.*

#### Question 5

Explain what is ‘exasperating and frustrating many of the NET teachers from overseas’ (line 27).

To answer this question, it is necessary to look at line 27, which says, ‘This is the very system that is exasperating and frustrating many of the NET teachers from overseas.’ ‘This’ refers back to the description of the education system in the previous paragraph, and in the following sentence the ‘system’ is further characterized as ‘an outdated examination-driven system’. So an answer to this question could be:

*The examination-driven educational system.*

OR

*The examination-dominated education(al) system.*

### Question 6

‘This is a tragic legacy’ (line 34) — what does ‘This’ refer to?

‘This’ in line 34 refers back to the previous paragraph, i.e. ‘At the other end, we see the detrimental effect on students: a reluctance to learn, growing discipline problems, and far too many suicides.’ So by ‘this’ the writer means ‘the detrimental effects on students’. There are two ways to answer this question:

*The detrimental effects on students mentioned in the previous paragraph.*

OR

*Students’ reluctance to learn, growing discipline problems and too many suicides.*

The answer must indicate the bad effects on students.

### Question 7

Explain what the author means by ‘reform cannot come quickly enough’ (line 37).

The expression ‘cannot come quickly enough’ is an example of idiomatic usage and means ‘must come as quickly as possible’. Therefore, what the writer is trying to say is:

*The system must be reformed as soon as possible.*

OR

*The sooner the system is reformed the better*

### Question 8

What effects does the writer think his proposed changes could have on the way students in Hong Kong learn?

The information needed to answer this question is contained in the paragraphs beginning on line 43 and line 48. The two main ideas expressed by the writer are that:

1. *Students will use less memorisation of content.*
2. *Students will be given more opportunities to discover knowledge for themselves.*

The question requires the candidate to first identify the fact that the two main effects of the proposed changes are described in these two paragraphs; and then summarise these two ideas.

## Paper II Writing

This paper consists of two parts:

Part 1: Task 1 Expository Writing

Part 2: Tasks 2A & 2B Correcting and Explaining Errors/Problems in a Student's Composition

For a detailed description of this paper, see the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 20-56).

### **Part 1: Task 1 Expository Writing**

- A common problem is not completing the task. Candidates should make sure they read the task instructions carefully and ascertain exactly what they are required to do. This usually consists of four or five specific aspects of the overall task.
- To avoid breakdowns in organisation and coherence, it is advisable to have each paragraph deal with one topic only and there to be some linkage evident between paragraphs, with the use of cohesive devices such as conjunctions, referencing and repetition of key words and phrases. Writing should wherever possible be concise and to the point without any unnecessary or irrelevant content.
- Candidates should make sure that they proofread their finished writing carefully to avoid such grammatical errors as poor sentence structure, incorrect tenses and prepositional misuse, as well as spelling mistakes. Also clichés such as 'widening their horizons' or 'taking golden opportunities' should be avoided.
- Candidates are advised to spend more time reading English so as to increase their vocabulary, and practising their writing. They should also be familiar with the basic structure of an expository text.

For illustrative purposes, two samples of candidates' writing from the 2002 LPATE Paper II (Writing) Part 1 are included on pages 17 and 19. Explanations of the key features of the samples are provided to help prospective candidates to better understand the requirements of this part of the Assessment.

## Specimen Paper of Part 1: Expository Writing <sup>1</sup>

In Part 1, you are required to write a coherent expository text using accurate grammar. Please make sure you address all aspects of the task.

### Background

You, as the Panel Chair of English in a secondary school in Hong Kong, have just received an email message from the Head of Languages in a nearby international secondary school for children from overseas. The Head of Languages is suggesting a regular after-school activity in which students from the international school and your school will get together to exchange English and Cantonese conversation.

Dear Li

It was good to meet you at the last meeting of the Association of Secondary English Language Teachers and I was really interested to hear about some of the innovations you have started in your school to get the kids feeling comfortable speaking English. I'm going to try and use some of your ideas in developing the Cantonese courses for our secondary students next term!

I have another suggestion: how about running an exchange activity between our schools? Our Secondary 3 students could have your Secondary 3 students over one day after school to practise English conversation. Then the following week you would invite our students to practise Cantonese. What do you think? We could trial it over a six-week period to see how popular it is.

I think it would be great to get our students together so that they can learn from each other. I would really like to hear your opinion.

Hope to see you at the next meeting.

Best wishes

Chris Evans  
Head of Languages

### Task

Assume you are Li Li, the Panel Chair of English. Respond to Chris' suggestion by email and comment specifically on how you think this idea would work for your students. Provide at least one more idea on how the two schools could work together and say how you think this might benefit the international students. End your email using the name 'Li'.

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<sup>1</sup> The specimen paper shown is that which was given to secondary-focused candidates. The equivalent task for primary candidates differed slightly from this in context only.

## Sample Writing 1

Dear Chris,

5 Thanks for your E-mail. I am really pleased to hear your positive response towards our innovations to get our students feeling comfortable speaking English. I am also excited that you are planning to try out some of these ideas in developing Cantonese courses for your students. Whether it's Chinese or English, learning a foreign language is tough!

With regard to your suggestion to run a Form three exchange activity, I must say, it is a fantastic idea. What our students lack is practice, especially in their oral English and this activity will certainly provide them with plenty of opportunity to interact, converse and use their English in a natural way.

10 There are numerous benefits for both groups of students, but I feel that this exposure will certainly have long lasting value for our students. The exposure to native-speaking students, who are of the same age and therefore less threatening, will not only develop our students' command of and ability to speak English, but also their confidence. This opportunity will give them a real chance to speak English naturally, outside of the classroom. I am sure they will learn lots of new words (especially colloquialisms) and be more aware of English as a form of communication and means of expression.

I would also like to take this opportunity to suggest several other ideas in which our schools could work together.

20 Firstly, I am aware that your school offers Putonghua as a subject. As many of our students have come from Mainland China, I would like to suggest that these students run a course to teach Putonghua and about life in China to your students. This can benefit your students in several ways. Firstly, it will give them greater exposure to the language and secondly, it will increase their knowledge of Chinese culture. Our students can share their stories and experience of life in China, which will enrich your students' understanding of China.

25 A second idea which I will briefly introduce to you is an exchange dance programme. As both of our schools have strong dance teams, I suggest that once a week your team comes over to our school to learn and try-out some traditional Chinese dances taught by our students. Then the following week, your dance team can teach some western dances to our students. My school has many traditional Chinese costumes and of course a Chinese orchestra which will make the dancing more fun. Your students can learn about Chinese history and literature (as many of the dances convey tales from ancient China).

Please let me know what you think of my suggestions and if possible a time when you are free so that we can meet to discuss these matters in more detail.

35 Best wishes,

Li Li

Head of English

## Assessment of Sample Writing 1

Sample 1 was assessed and considered to be a superior piece of writing. The following are comments made by the assessors on each different scale:

### Organisation and coherence (Level 5)

Sample 1 shows examples of clear organisation at both a paragraph and sentence level. Each main paragraph deals clearly with one topic, which is introduced and then elaborated. There are various cohesive devices used to link the paragraphs together, for example, the sentence in line 17/18 introduces the new ideas that the writer has. These new ideas are foregrounded with the use of 'Firstly' (line 19) and 'A second idea' (line 25), showing the ability to vary the form of expression used. There is also frequent and appropriate use of pronouns such as 'this' for reference and use of synonyms such as 'idea' and 'suggestion', 'benefit' and 'value', and 'culture' and 'history and literature' to achieve coherence and cohesion. The result is a piece of writing which is very easy to read and to extract information from.

### Grammatical accuracy (Level 5)

Grammatical structures are almost always accurate and a wide range of structures and vocabulary are used.

### Task completion (Level 4/5)

The task is completed fully in that the main points asked for are addressed. The writer first responds to Chris Evans' email concerning the suggested exchange programme (paragraphs 1 and 2). Then the writer describes how the programme might benefit his/her students (paragraph 3). In paragraphs 5 and 6 the writer outlines other sensible ways in which the two schools could work together and indicates how these ideas would benefit the international students.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The award of a Level 4 or 5 is dependent on the assessors' judgement of whether the candidate has produced a text that completes the task fully (Level 4) or completes the task fully and in an exemplary manner (Level 5).

## Sample Writing 2

Dear Evans,

I am glad to hear from you after the last meeting. I welcome the idea of having exchange programme to improve students' oral ability.

5 Students in my school are quite shy when they speak English. Having more informal activities to speak with native speakers will certainly help. With more opportunities to practise oral English, their confidence and ability will be enhanced. Besides, having exchange activities with students from different culture of similar ages, will surely broaden their horizons.

10 As you might know, my school has 'Active English' activity which is held every Wednesday after school. Interested students are grouped into different groups according their levels of ability to have games and other fun activities. The programmes are designed to help students feeling comfortable to speak English with one another. I would suggest that we change our programme plan and take six weeks out for trial of the exchange with your school.

15 We can get Secondary 3 students who have joined 'Active English' programme to exchange with your Secondary 3 students. Themes like school life, going to restaurant, shopping in supermarket would help students practising in their daily life setting. If it work well, we can extend it in term of time and coverage to cover other senior forms students as well.

20 As for students in your school, I think it would good for them to practise Cantonese with our little 'native speakers'. I have come across some students in other international schools who do not speak Cantonese at all even after living in Hong Kong for years. This programme will help your students to know more about the general living conditions and culture of people in Hong Kong. Please let me know what would you suggest for themes and types of activity.

25 As our 'Active English' groups meet every Wednesday from 4 to 6 pm would it be good for you too? For the venue, I would suggest that we go to your school for English practise and you come to my school for Cantonese practise. What would you suggest?

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Li

Panel Chair of English

## Assessment of Sample Writing 2

Sample 2 was considered to be of the minimum standard required to attain the language proficiency requirement. The following are comments made by the assessors on each different scale:

### Organisation and coherence (Level 3)

The organisation in this sample is generally well achieved. Each paragraph deals with a different topic, although sometimes new points are included at inappropriate places. An example of this is in paragraph 3, in which the writer begins by discussing his/her school's English activities and then suddenly makes a suggestion concerning the exchange programme. The coherence breaks down at this point as the link is not clear. The writer does make use of pronouns such as 'it' and 'this' but the reference is not always clear, for example, in line 16, the writer says, 'If it work well'; it is not clear what 'it' is referring to in this case.

### Grammatical accuracy (Level 3)

Grammatical structures are usually accurate and some more complex structures are attempted, for example in line 5, 'With more opportunities to practise oral English, their confidence and ability will be enhanced.' However, there are occasional intrusive errors such as the use of gerund instead of infinitive in line 11/12, 'The programmes are designed to help students feeling comfortable to speak English with one another'; and the omission of articles as in Line 15/16, 'going to restaurant, shopping in supermarket'. However, these seldom impede understanding.

### Task completion (Level 3)

The writer completes the task to an acceptable degree. In paragraph 1, the writer responds to the idea of an exchange activity and in the next paragraph states how this activity might benefit his/her students. The writer also makes some attempt to say how the international students might benefit from any joint-school activity (paragraph 5). However, the writer does not address a key aspect of the task, which is to suggest another way in which the schools could work together. Instead, he/she describes his/her school's 'Active English' activity, which is of questionable relevance.

## **Part 2: Tasks 2A & 2B Correcting and Explaining Errors/Problems in a Student's Composition**

A marking scheme is used for the marking of Paper II (Writing) Part 2: Correcting and Explaining Errors/Problems in a Student's Composition. The marks allocated to each candidate for the two tasks in Part 2 are then converted to proficiency levels according to the stipulations in the scales and descriptors given in the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 55 and 56).

Below are some general points that candidates taking Paper II (Writing) Part 2 may wish to note:

- Tasks 2A and 2B, though related, are two separate tasks. Candidates are asked not to put the answers to the two parts together.
- For Task 2A, candidates should correct only the errors in underlined and numbered items designated for correction. For Task 2B, candidates are required to explain only the errors/problems in items designated for explanation.
- Candidates should read the instructions carefully and make sure that all items designated for correction and explanation in Task 2A and 2B are completed.
- Becoming more familiar with basic grammatical terminology can help in identifying and explaining errors more clearly and concisely. Candidates may wish to refer to a grammar textbook for guidance. If so, they should choose a book which they find easy to use and from a reputable publisher.

For purposes of illustration, excerpts are included from the 2002 LPATE Paper 2 (Writing) Part 2 test. Examples are given of how to correct and explain the errors/problems in the excerpts, as well as the rationale behind them. Sample candidates' answers are included to illustrate some typical mistakes by candidates in this part of the paper.

For a complete specimen paper of Part 2, see the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 45 – 47).

## Specimen Paper of Part 2: Correcting and Explaining Errors/Problems in a Student's Composition

Please note that for this specimen paper, only a sample number of the original items have been included for analysis.

In Part 2, you are asked to demonstrate your ability, as a teacher of English, to identify, correct and explain some of the errors/problems in a student's composition. There are two tasks in this Part:

Task 2A: Detection and correction of errors/problems.

Task 2B: Explanation of errors/problems.

### Task 2A: Detection and correction of errors/problems

Below is a student's composition. Although it contains a large number of errors/problems, you are asked to correct *only those in the underlined and numbered items*. Each item has *at least one error/problem and possibly more* (e.g. subject-verb agreement; omission of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular 's' or plural 's'). When you provide corrections, please retain the original meaning and words as much as possible; **any unnecessary changes may be penalised**. Item 1 has been done for you in the right-hand column.

One day I fell asleep on the MTR and when I woke up, the train was empty. I got off the train, ran out of the station and saw that all the streets and buildings were empty too. I couldn't see anybody at all. At that time (1) I was very frighten because I had not experienced before. (2) So I phone to my parents, but they were not in the house, I didn't know what was happening. Am I dreaming, I couldn't believe that.

After that, I went to the nearest police station, but there haven't any policemen and other people inside. That I walked out of the police station, I saw an electricity appliance store. I went inside. (3) There were nobody here, but a television switched on.

I thought that might be all the people on earth was taken (4) to another planets by the UFO. Might be all the people were killed by them, I was afraid of my parents safety. I didn't know who can help me because there were no body here.

Suddenly, I couldn't saw anything. I just knew that it was dark, but I had clam down because I realised I just having a nightmare. (5) I switched on the light, it was nearly 4 o'clock in the morning.

(1) *I was very frightened because I had not experienced this before.*

Now provide corrections for Items 2-5. Write them in the Answer Book provided for Part 2.

## Sample Corrections

In Task 2A, candidates are required to correct only the errors/problems in the underlined and numbered sections of the text. For the items numbered 2–5, possible corrections could be:<sup>3</sup>

- (2) *So I phoned my parents.*
- (3) *There was nobody there, but a television was switched on. / Nobody was there, but a television was switched on.*
- (4) *to another planet by a UFO. / to other planets by a UFO.*
- (5) *I switched on the light. It was nearly 4 o'clock in the morning. / I switched on the light; it was nearly 4 o'clock in the morning. / I switched on the light and saw that it was nearly 4 o'clock in the morning.*

## Task 2B: Explanation of errors/problems

In Task 2A, you have corrected some of the errors/problems in the student's composition. Now you are required to explain the error(s)/problem(s) in **Items 2, 4, and 5**.

Please note that it is not enough simply to describe the changes you have made in Task 2A. You should demonstrate your understanding of the underlying rules or generalisations, using grammatical terms where appropriate.

In the box below is a **suggested** answer for Item 1:

*At that time (1) I was very frighten because I had not experienced before.*

Item 1:

*The first problem is the verb "frighten". Here, the adjective form "frightened" is required because it describes the writer's feeling or state.*

*The second problem is that "experience" is a transitive verb and needs an object. "This" could be used as an object to refer back to the whole situation.*

Please write your error explanations for **Items 2, 4 and 5** in the Answer Book provided for Part 2. Start a new paragraph for each of the errors you comment on.

To explain the errors/problems in the designated items, candidates need to cover two stages of explanation:

---

<sup>3</sup> The corrections indicated here are for reference only and are not intended to be the only acceptable answers.

**Stage 1** requires some form of generalisation; that is, the candidate should show that the explanation could be applied to other, similar situations. The use of fairly simple terminology is appropriate here. Please note that it is not enough simply to describe the correction that has been carried out in Task 2A. An example from Item 4 is:

*The problem is the use of the article 'the'.*

**Stage 2** requires a deeper insight into the problem, i.e. the justification for why the correction is necessary. Continuing the example from Item 4 gives:

*As 'UFO' has not been mentioned before, the indefinite article 'a' should be used.*

In the case of a lexical error, it may involve stating why the original form is wrong or why another form is right. Candidates will still gain credit for answers which address Stage 1 only, or, less commonly, Stage 2 only.

### Sample Explanations

For the sample items, possible explanations are given below, with the stage of explanation indicated in parentheses:

- (2) *The verb 'phone' should be used in its past tense form, 'phoned' [Stage 1] as the writer is telling what happened to him/her in the past. [Stage 2]*

*The preposition 'to' is not necessary here [Stage 1] as 'phone' should be followed directly by a noun phrase / by a direct object. [Stage 2]*

- (4) *The first problem is that 'planets' should not be plural; [Stage 1] this is because it follows (the determiner) 'another' which is singular. [Stage 2]*

*OR*

*As 'planets' is plural, it should be preceded by (the determiner) 'other', [Stage 1] not 'another', which is singular. [Stage 2]*

*The second problem is the use of the (definite) article 'the'. As 'UFO' has not been mentioned before, (the indefinite article) 'a' should be used.*

- (5) *The two clauses are not properly joined. [Stage 2] There should be a full stop or semi-colon after 'light'. [Stage 1]*

*OR*

*The two clauses are not properly joined. [Stage 2] The main clause 'I switched on the light' could be connected to the independent clause 'it was nearly 4 o'clock' using a (coordinating) conjunction such as 'and'. [Stage 1]*

In the above examples, the terms in brackets are additional and full marks could still be gained without these terms.

Candidates may wish to refer to the LPAT Assessment Reports (available online at <http://www.ed.gov.hk/aid/chinese/english%20v/link/teacher/audit.htm>) for Chief Examiners' comments on past candidates' performance in Task 2B.

### **Simplified Sample Answers for Items in *Syllabus Specifications* (Page 50)**

The sample explanations given on page 50 of the *Syllabus Specifications* are meant to be comprehensive and are in more detail than is required for Task 2B. Below are simplified versions of these explanations, which would be acceptable as complete answers.

- (2) I don't know their play with me or not.

*The first problem is that the verb phrase 'don't know' should be in the past tense as the writer was referring to a past event. Hence, it should be 'didn't know'.*

*The second problem is the use of the pronoun 'their', which should be changed to 'they' to become the subject of the verb 'play'.*

*The third problem is that the sentence should be in the form of a reported or indirect question. In this case, 'if' can be added to the beginning of the second clause and the modal auxiliary 'would' added before 'play' to indicate willingness.*

(The sentence would then be: *I didn't know if they would play with me or not.*)

- (3) they told me where is my classroom,

*The problem here is that the clause should be written in reported speech. The verb 'is' and the subject 'my classroom' should be inverted.*

(The clause would then be: *they told me where my classroom is,*)

- (5) she must teach me.

*There are two problems in this clause. Firstly, the writer has used the modal verb form 'must', which indicates obligation and so is inappropriate. A more suitable word such as 'will' should be used to show the writer's intended meaning of kindness shown by the teacher.*

*The second problem is also due to choice of words. The writer can use 'help' instead of 'teach' to show a more general meaning, which matches the context.*

(The clause would then be: *she will help me.*)

- (11) when she know our very sleepy,

*Firstly, the verb 'know' should be in the simple present tense 'knows', as the writer wanted to indicate that it was something the teacher did as a repeated action.*

*Secondly, a linking verb 'are' should be added to match with the adjective 'sleepy'.*

*The third problem is that the possessive pronoun 'our' should be 'we', the subject of the linking verb 'are'.*

*(The clause would then be: when she knows we are very sleepy,)*

- (12) He like our friend more than a teacher, because she very friendly and unlike other teacher always punish the student, when we do some wrong thing.

*There are a number of problems in this sentence. Firstly, the writer has confused the pronouns 'he' and 'she'. Here, 'she' should be used. Secondly, 'like' should be used as a preposition and not as a verb and therefore needs a linking verb 'is'. Thirdly, the adverb 'more' should be placed before 'like' as it is this word that it is qualifying. Fourthly, to match the parallel construction 'than a teacher', 'our' should be changed to 'a'.*

*In the next clause, the adjective 'friendly' needs a linking verb 'is' after the subject 'she'. Also, there is a problem of number agreement and so 'other teacher' and 'the student' should be in plural form. Another problem is concerning the word order of the expression 'some wrong thing', which can be rewritten as 'something wrong'. Finally, the writer should use a relative clause to modify 'other teachers'. This can be done by omitting the commas before 'because' and 'when', adding the relative pronoun 'who' after 'teachers' and inserting a comma after 'friendly'.*

*(The sentence would then be: She is more like a friend than a teacher because she is very friendly, unlike other teachers who always punish the students when we do something wrong.)*

## Paper III Listening

This paper is marked according to a marking scheme. The total marks gained by each candidate are then accorded a proficiency level (1 to 5). The proficiency levels are determined by two methods, as described in the *Syllabus Specifications* (page 2).

Overall advice to candidates taking the listening test is:

- When preparing for this test, candidates are advised to take every opportunity to listen to spoken English, including a wide variety of genres, accents and speeds.
- When tackling the test, candidates are advised to not only pay attention to oral input but also to make use of appropriate background knowledge and context. They should also refer to the Explanatory Notes for Reading and Listening in the *Syllabus Specifications* (page 4).

Sample sections of the 2002 LPATE Listening Test, together with parts of the tape script and sample acceptable answers are reproduced for illustrative purposes. For a detailed description of this paper, please refer to the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 58-99).

## **Specimen Questions & Answers of Paper III Listening Test**

The Announcer's introduction to the test is shown below:

### **TELEC**

Dr. David Bunton is the Deputy Director of TELEC, the Teachers of English Language Education Centre, at the University of Hong Kong. You are going to hear him talk to a group of teachers of English. The talk itself lasts about 25 minutes. Before it begins, you will have 5 minutes to go through the questions and think about the topic of the discussion. When the talk finishes, you will have 10 minutes to complete the last two questions and to tidy up all your answers.

In the talk, pauses are included, before or after certain questions, to allow you to read the upcoming questions, or to complete your answers before you continue. Please follow carefully the instructions on the question paper and on this tape.

Please note that you are expected to write your answers while you listen, and there is no need to take notes for most questions.

Your answers to the questions should be drawn from the talk. When writing, please use a pencil. Complete sentences are not required, but the answers you provide should be full, in English, and coherent enough for the assessor to understand.

You now have 5 minutes to read through the questions, to gain a general idea about the topics that the talk covers.

Each specimen question will be followed by the relevant section from the tape script of the test, an acceptable answer for the question and explanation of how the answer was arrived at.

### Specimen Question 1

David discusses the mission of TELEC. Indicate which of the following statements describe(s) the mission of TELEC, according to David, by inserting a tick (✓) in the correct boxes below: (3 marks)

- (a) To encourage the use of new technologies.
- (b) To strengthen the professional development of teachers of English in Hong Kong.
- (c) To provide worksheets and materials for teachers to use in the language classroom.

Yes	No

### Tape Script

Our mission, as it says here in this leaflet, is “to enhance the professional development of English language teachers and to improve English language standards in Hong Kong”. TELEC began because of concerns about the standard of English and whether or not it was falling. The feeling was that teachers are the real key to the successful teaching and learning of English and that with new technology there was a tool to enable them to keep in touch with each other and develop professionally.

Some people do have misconceptions about our mission, and why we were established. Some teachers think that our main role is to provide worksheets and materials for use in the classroom, which it isn't. We do aim higher than just giving out teaching materials.

### Answer & Explanation

- (a) *NO*
- (b) *YES*
- (c) *NO*

The speaker states in the first sentence that the mission is to ‘enhance the development of English language teachers’, so (b) is clearly ‘YES’. He does not say that they aim to encourage the use of new technologies and he denies that their main role is to provide worksheets and materials, so (a) and (c) should be ‘NO’.

## Specimen Question 2

- (a) In which two ways, according to David, does the primary project differ from the secondary one? (2 marks)

The differences are:

(i) *The primary project* \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) *The primary project* \_\_\_\_\_

- (b) How does David feel about these differences? Circle ONE word below to indicate your answer. (1 mark)

positive / indifferent / negative

## Tape Script

The way that the primary project has evolved is rather different from what I thought it would be like. Looking back I can see that I thought that the primary grammar would be very much like the secondary one, well, a sort of simplified version of the secondary. In fact, I was quite wrong. It actually explains grammar more comprehensively and we were very pleased with that. So that's the first difference. Also, another strength, I believe, is that it takes the functional approach a lot further.

## Answer & Explanation

- (a) (i) *The primary project explains grammar more comprehensively.*  
(ii) *The primary project takes the functional approach further.*
- (b) *positive*

The two differences are given in the last three sentences. Correct answers have to include the underlined words, or equivalent words, to indicate the contrast between the two projects.

The speaker indicates that he is positive about the differences through the use of the words 'pleased' and 'strength' as well as by the positive tone discernable in his voice.

Specimen Question 3

Take notes on the steps for registration and the reasons for them. You will use this information to write a set of instructions.

Space for your notes  
(Work in this space will NOT be marked.)

Now complete the following instructions with the help of your notes, using appropriate language. (Step 2 has been completed for you.) (5 marks)

*TeleNex's Conference Corners: Instructions For Registration*

Teachers who wish to register as users of the Conference Corners on *TeleNex* need to do the following:

Step 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2 *Make a copy of the form.* \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Step 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Step 5 \_\_\_\_\_

### Tape Script

How do we join the Conference Corners? Do we have to get ourselves registered?

Well, yes, there is a registration form on the Net that teachers can fill in, but they must fax it to us. We really want to be sure that somebody is a bona fide school teacher so we follow a number of steps in order to register somebody. We ask the teacher to make a copy of the form after they've filled it out on the Net. Then they should sign it and get it chopped by the school. Then they need to fax it to us so that we can see the chop and verify that they are a Hong Kong school teacher. It takes a bit more time to do it this way but this ensures that teachers know the corners are private and they can express themselves and their concerns more freely when they log on.

### Answer & Explanation

- Step 1            *Fill out the (application) form on the Net.*  
Step 3            *Sign the form.*  
Step 4            *Get the form chopped by the school.*  
Step 5            *Fax the form back to TELEX.*

The speaker identifies five steps. As one is given, the other four have to be written in the correct order to receive the marks as the speaker is describing a process with a clear order of steps or stages. To put the steps in the wrong order will render the whole process illogical. Candidates need to show that they have a deeper understanding of the process, rather than simply being able to retrieve some or all of the individual steps. Candidates are given two minutes to complete this question from the notes they have made. An extra mark is awarded for this question to candidates who use appropriate language for writing instructions.

### Specimen Question 4

According to David, what are the two criteria followed by TELEC when writing materials?

(2 marks)

- (i) The language in the materials has to be
- 

- (ii) The language in the materials also has to be
- 

### Tape Script

The texts that we are working on are, of course, for teachers, but they would probably also want to use them with students in the classroom. So in a way we have to meet two demands when we write. For example, for primary students, texts would have to be short and simple but we would also want the students and teachers to understand how a particular genre works. We're doing a sort of balancing act when preparing materials, asking ourselves to what extent we put in terms simple

enough for children to understand and to what extent we have to use more complex language that the teacher will understand, and which, hopefully, will help in developing a teacher professionally. So, some of the terms we use will educate the teacher, but won't necessarily be those they could use in the primary school classroom.

### Answers & Explanations

- (i) *The language in the materials has to be simple enough for primary students/children to understand.*
- (ii) *The language in the materials also has to be complex so that it will help in developing a teacher professionally/help to educate the teacher.*

This question involves the processing of a longer piece of spoken text to retrieve the required answers. Most candidates during the administration of the test were able to identify and write correctly the answer for (i), but many failed to answer (ii) fully. A common answer given was 'complex enough for the teacher to understand'. This is a parallel form of the answer for (i) but actually makes no sense. Such candidates probably guessed the answer without thinking logically about what it could be.

## Paper IV Speaking

The Speaking paper consists of two parts. There are three tasks in Part 1, namely, Task 1A: Reading Aloud a Prose Passage, Task 1B: Reading Aloud a Poem and Task 1C: Telling a Story/Recounting an Experience/Presenting Arguments; and one task in Part 2, namely, Group Interaction. For Part 2, candidates are given either a primary or secondary-focused task depending on the focus they opt for at the time of application. There are no differences in the level of difficulty of the primary and secondary tasks.

Candidates are tested on six scales of performance, namely, (a) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation; (b) Reading Aloud with Meaning; (c) Grammatical Accuracy; (d) Organisation and Cohesion; (e) Interacting with Peers; and (f) Explaining Language Matters to Peers. Each candidate is assessed by two assessors who base their assessment on the descriptors of each scale, which are set out in the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 110-115).

For a detailed description of this paper, please refer to the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 100-115).

### Comments and Advice

The following comments and advice are based on the 2002 Assessment Report.

#### Part 1: Tasks 1A, 1B and 1C

- Candidates should note that Tasks 1A and 1B, reading aloud a prose passage followed by a poem, are in the reverse order of the specimen paper in the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 102-103). The order was changed in 2002 in response to recommendations from examiners and assessors.
- A major weakness of candidates doing Part 1 is in ‘Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation’ when reading aloud the prose passage and the poem, with stress and intonation a particular problem for many. It is recommended that prospective candidates spend time reading suitable English texts and listening to the ways that such texts are read aloud by competent speakers. Candidates may also wish to spend time on improving their pronunciation prior to the Assessment.
- When doing Task 1C, candidates should not attempt to read from a ‘script’ that they have prepared during the preparation time. Such candidates will be marked down for this as the assessors usually find that once the candidate has completed his/her ‘reading’, they have nothing else to say, or what they do say either repeats what they have said already or even contradicts it, making the whole ‘monologue’ incoherent. Candidates are advised to make brief notes during the preparation time and to work from these, such that their talk has a clear structure and is relevant to the topic. The assessors expect candidates to present different aspects of the topic to demonstrate that they are able to organise their thoughts and present them coherently using a range of grammatical structures. Candidates are expected to talk for about 2 minutes and will be told by the assessors when to stop their presentation. Candidates should also try to maintain eye contact with the assessors during their presentation.

## Part 2: Group Interaction

- In Part 2 of the paper, a weakness sometimes observed is the use of incorrect grammatical terms and/or erroneous grammatical explanations. As is the case with the explaining errors section of Paper II (Writing), candidates should try to become more familiar with basic grammatical terminology so that they are able to identify errors.
- In a few cases, candidates may talk about certain categories of errors that do not feature in the text. This would indicate that they had rehearsed a “speech” prior to the Assessment. In such cases candidates are marked down on “Explaining Language Matters to Peers” as they have not shown an ability to discuss the errors in the text provided.
- It is also important for candidates to be able to suggest strategies that teachers might use to help students improve the areas in which they have demonstrated weakness.
- Another weakness of some candidates in the group interaction is the tendency to talk about irrelevant matters, such as the characteristics of their own students or problems with the education system. This shows an inability to interact with peers, which should involve not only speaking to others but also listening to them and responding appropriately. Again, candidates can prepare for this part of the Assessment by practising speaking in English with colleagues rather than memorising sections of speech in advance.

To provide guidance for candidates taking Paper IV Speaking, a specimen paper from the 2002 LPATE Speaking Test is included.

## Specimen Paper of Speaking Test

### Part 1 (5 minutes)

#### Task 1A Reading Aloud (Prose)

Please read the following prose passage aloud as meaningfully as possible. Read it in such a way that you would arouse your students' interest.

#### **The Bus Ride**

It was an unbearably steamy August afternoon in New York City, the kind of sweaty day that makes people sullen with discomfort. I was heading back to a hotel, and as I stepped onto a bus up Madison Avenue, I was startled by the driver, a middle-aged black man with an enthusiastic smile, who welcomed me with a friendly, "Hi! How you doing?" as I got on, a greeting he proffered to everyone else who entered as the bus wormed through the thick midtown traffic. Each passenger was as startled as I, and, locked into the morose mood of the day, few returned his greeting.

But as the bus crawled uptown through the gridlock, a slow, rather magical transformation occurred. The driver gave a running monologue for our benefit, a lively commentary on the passing scene around us; there was a terrific sale at the store, a wonderful exhibit at this museum, did you hear about the new movie that just opened at the cinema down the block? His delight in the rich possibilities the city offered was infectious. By the time people got off the bus, each in turn had shaken off the sullen shell they had entered with, and when the driver shouted out "So long, have a great day!" each gave a smiling response.

The memory of that encounter has stayed with me for close to twenty years. When I rode that Madison Avenue bus, I had just finished my own doctorate in psychology – but there was scant attention paid in the psychology of the day to just how such a transformation could happen. Psychological science knew little or nothing of the mechanics of emotion.

Daniel Goleman

Source: Goleman, D., *Emotional Intelligence*, New York: Bantam Books, 1995.

### **Task 1B Reading Aloud (Poetry)**

Please read the following poem aloud as meaningfully as possible. Read it in such a way that you would arouse your students' interest.

#### **Jealousy**

by Ruth Ellison

I put out my hand and plucked a rose,  
A red satin rose with a velvet scent,  
And held its loveliness in reverent palms,  
Knowing that it was perfect.

Then, because I could not make the rose,  
And because I could not paint the rose,  
Nor carve it, nor mould it,  
Nor even draw its beauty in my words,  
I slowly closed my fingers over it  
And crushed it.

Source: Armstrong, I. (Ed.), *Every Man Will Shout: An Anthology of Modern Verse*, Hong Kong: O.U.P., 1991.

### **Task 1C Telling a Story/Recounting an Experience/Presenting Arguments**

As a teacher, how might you manage a situation in which a student displays negative emotions or behaviour? Give an example from your own experience.

**End of Part 1**

## Part 2: Group Interaction

In this part of the speaking assessment, you are required to participate in a group discussion about a student's writing problems.

### Instructions

- *To prepare for the discussion:*

First read the worksheet and then read the student's composition that follows, in order to evaluate the language problems in it. Select two or three of the problems which you consider to be the most important. Be prepared to justify your choices during the discussion with your fellow candidates. In addition, be prepared to discuss the strategies you would use to help your students to overcome the problems you have identified.

- *During preparation:*

Please remember NOT to talk to the other candidates. You are advised NOT to make extensive notes.

- *During the discussion:*

Remember to focus on the specific tasks described above. You should converse with your fellow candidates in an informal, co-operative manner and respond to their ideas. Do NOT make speeches or spend any time organising or discussing how your group will operate.

### Version A (Primary-focused Task)

Read through the worksheet below, which was given to an upper primary class. Do NOT do the worksheet yourself!

#### Worksheet

You have received a letter from your new penfriend in Japan. Her name is Suki. Write a reply to Suki's letter.

Now look at the next page, where you will find a pupil's composition based on this worksheet.

## Task

Categorise the language problems in the composition below, and discuss them with your fellow candidates. Identify two or three of the problems which you consider to be the most important. Justify your choices. In addition, discuss the strategies you would use to help your pupils to overcome the problems you have identified.

## Pupil's composition

*Hello Suki*

3 *I am a girl. I have two brothers. Their names are Sam and Bob. My father is a clerk. I go to a girls school. I born in Hong Kong.*

6 *Sam is fourteen years' old. Sams school is a boys school. My father work in Central. My school is in Kowloon. Sam like play T.V. games. But he always spend all his time to play. His toy cars all broken.*

9 *My mother is a teacher. She go to the same school with me. I like watch television in my spare time. Mums clothes are all beautiful. She like go shopping in her spare time. Dad do not like shopping. Dads hobby is horse-racing.*

12 *I also like listen to music. I have many CDs. My drawer fill with CDs. Bob is my younger brother. Bobs nickname is BB. I like Japanese dresses. My dresses all made in Japan. Bob is seven years old. I am twelve years old. Bob go to a boys and girls school.*

15 *On Sundays, we like go to a Chinese restaurant for lunch. I also like Japanese food. After lunch, Dad go watch horse-racing. I like Japan. I hope go to Japan one day.*

18 *Thank you very much.*

*Your new friend*

*Susan Lee*

**End of Paper**

**Version B (Secondary-focused Task)**

Read through the worksheet below, which was given to an upper secondary class. Do NOT do the worksheet yourself!

Worksheet
One day, you were trapped for an hour in a lift. Describe what happened.

Now look at the next page, where you will find a student's composition based on this worksheet.

## Task

Categorise the language problems in the composition below, and discuss them with your fellow candidates. Identify two or three of the problems which you consider to be the most important. Justify your choices. In addition, discuss the strategies you would use to help your students to overcome the problems you have identified.

### Student's composition

3 *One day, I had got up at seven o'clock. No sooner I had eaten my breakfast, than I left home for school. After I waited for a minute, the lift had come. When the door had opened, I walked in. Three other people there had been in the lift. They were an old lady, a young boy, and a middle-aged man.*

6 *The door had closed and the lift started to move. Hardly the lift had descended for two storeys when a strange sound was there. The lift stopped to move. The old lady said "what has happened"? The young boy said "let's get help". I said "yes, but how"? The middle-aged man said "let's try to press this button". The boy kept*  
9 *on to press the button for one minute, but no response there was. The man told the boy stop to press the button. He said 'there is no use to press'.*

12 *The man said "I can't to wait. I must to be at the airport soon". Then he had put his hands on the door and tried opening it by force. The old woman said "you may be hurt yourself". The man had not listened to her. He continued. But two minutes after, he gave up to try. He had sat on the floor and said "I will to miss*  
15 *my flight". The old woman asked him to not worry. The firemen would to come soon. But I could not to help worrying. I would had a test in the second lesson.*

18 *An hour had passed. We heard some noise the lift outside. Someone shouted, "we're firemen and we're trying to get you out". Two minutes after, the door opened. We had been saved.*

**End of Paper**

## Paper V Classroom Language Assessment

The Classroom Language Assessment focuses on four scales of performance, namely: (a) Grammatical Accuracy, (b) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation, (c) the Language of Interaction, (d) the Language of Instruction. For a detailed description of this paper, please refer to the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 116-123) and the VCD entitled *Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language)*.

Candidates should take note of the following procedural points:

- When submitting an application, a candidate should produce full and detailed information regarding his/her teaching timetable and the school calendar, and any subsequent changes should be promptly reported.
- Each candidate will be assessed by two assessors, each coming separately to observe one single lesson. At least 5 working days' notice will normally be given to a candidate to allow for preparation.
- If necessary, a briefing, which is not assessed, will take place before the assessment to allow the assessor to understand the design and structure of the lesson, the standard of the class and previous learning experience, etc. It is not necessary to give the assessor a written lesson plan.
- Allowance will be given for the teacher and the class to settle down at the start of the lesson, but a continuous period of 20 minutes' teaching is a minimum requirement for the assessment.

Candidates may also wish to take note of the following advice:

- The Classroom Language Assessment is an assessment of language ability and not pedagogy or teaching methodology. The candidate should ensure that all the components of classroom language as stipulated in the *Syllabus Specifications* (page 118) can be assessed. While it is important to use language at a complexity level appropriate for a specific group of students, the candidate should demonstrate in the lesson to be assessed as wide a range of language skills as possible.
- The candidate should ensure that the lesson to be assessed is conducted in English as far as possible. The use of Cantonese is not encouraged and, if judged to be uncalled for, will adversely affect the assessment.

## Marking Procedures

The marking procedures for the LPATE, except for Paper V (Classroom Language Assessment) consist of the following stages:

- Development of marking schemes
- Assessor<sup>4</sup> recruitment
- Selection of sample scripts / video recordings
- Assessor standardisation
- Check-marking
- Borderline review
- Appeals marking

### Development of Marking Schemes

The LPATE consists of five papers:

1. Reading (Paper I)
2. Writing (Paper II)
3. Listening (Paper III)
4. Speaking (Paper IV)
5. Classroom Language Assessment (Paper V)

As described in the *Syllabus Specifications* (pages 1-2), in the assessment of writing, speaking and classroom language, scales and descriptors are used. Papers I (Reading) and III (Listening) do not use scales and descriptors and are marked according to a marking scheme. A marking scheme is also used for Paper II (Task 2A & 2B).

The marking schemes for Paper I, Paper II (Task 2A & 2B) and Paper III are developed in parallel to the question papers during the process of moderation of the papers. After the Assessment has taken place, a range of sample candidates' scripts are marked and based on this the marking schemes are amended to take into account any possible variations in acceptable and unacceptable answers.

### Assessor Recruitment

Assessors for the LPATE are recruited locally in Hong Kong and must fulfil the following criteria:

- Be a full-time teacher of English language / English linguistics at a tertiary institute in Hong Kong OR be a full-time educator of English teachers at a teacher-education institute in Hong Kong OR both.
- Hold as a minimum a Masters degree in English language teaching / linguistics or equivalent.

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<sup>4</sup> For the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers, the term “assessor” is used rather than “marker”.

Exceptions to the above criteria are equally qualified persons who have served on the moderation committees of the LPATE in the development of the question papers.

### Selection of Sample Scripts / Video Recordings

In order to standardise the marking and assessing procedures, samples of candidates' performances are used to provide assessors with an indication of how candidates have performed on each task and in each paper.<sup>5</sup>

For the Reading, Writing and Listening papers, sample candidates' scripts are chosen and marked by the Chief Examiners. A number of these scripts are then selected as being representative of the performances of candidates in that administration of the Assessment. The sample scripts are then photocopied and used for standardisation of marking.

For Paper IV (Speaking) and Paper V (Classroom Language Assessment), sample video recordings, similar to those on the VCD entitled *Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language): Speaking and Classroom Language Demonstration* (distributed together with the *Syllabus Specifications*) are used by the Chief Examiners and each performance is assigned a proficiency level on each of the scales involved. These recordings show a wide range of candidate performances, including strengths and weaknesses, and are used to standardise assessors during the assessor training sessions prior to the Assessment.

### Assessor Standardisation

Assessor standardisation is carried out both prior to the Assessment (for Speaking and Classroom Language Assessment) and afterwards (for Reading, Writing and Listening).

For Classroom Language Assessment, the recruitment and standardization of assessors was conducted before the first administration of the LPATE. Regular meetings among the team of assessors are held to ensure a high level of standardization and that the descriptors as laid down in the *Syllabus Specifications* are strictly adhered to. For Speaking, training of assessors takes place a few days before the Assessment begins. Assessors are taken through the procedures of the Assessment so that they are fully familiar with them. Then, the assessors watch sample recordings of candidates' performances and are invited to assign a proficiency level on each of the six scales of the Assessment (see the *Syllabus Specifications*, pages 110 – 115). There follows discussion of the levels awarded in relation to the various abilities of the candidates viewed until all assessors come to agree on the finalised levels, in accordance with those assigned previously by the Chief Examiners. This process is repeated as many times as is necessary until the Chief Examiners are confident that all assessors are fully familiar with the scales and descriptors and are applying them to the same standards.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> All sample performances are anonymous and candidates' personal information is not released to assessors.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that after the training sessions, if the Chief Examiners are not confident that an assessor is standardised, that assessor will not be involved in the live assessment.

For the Reading, Writing and Listening papers, assessors meetings are held a few days after the Assessment has taken place. Assessors are invited to mark the sample scripts and then compare the marks they have awarded with those of the other assessors and the Chief Examiners. Discussion takes place until the Chief Examiners are confident that all assessors are applying the particular marking scheme consistently. Once the Chief Examiners are convinced that all assessors are standardised, live scripts are distributed to the assessors for marking.<sup>7</sup>

### Check-marking

During the marking/assessing process, close monitoring is carried out of assessors to ensure that standards are maintained.

The Reading, Writing and Listening papers are check-marked a total of three times during the marking process: after ten scripts have been marked; after half the scripts have been marked; and after all the scripts have been marked. The Chief Examiner will closely monitor the marking of each assessor and give feedback to the assessor on his/her marking. The assessor will be advised on whether his/her marking is consistent with that required and he/she will be instructed to adjust his/her marking as necessary.

During the Speaking assessment, the Chief Examiners closely monitor all ‘teams’ of assessors and discuss with them their awarding of levels to the candidates so that consistent standards are maintained across assessors and throughout the assessment period. If necessary, assessors are instructed to change their levels if the Chief Examiners find them to be assessing too strictly or too leniently.

### Borderline Review

After the marking process of the written papers has been completed and the proficiency levels determined, a review of the marking takes place in order to ensure that no script is assigned an incorrect proficiency level.

All those scripts for the Reading, Writing and Listening papers which fall close to the borderline or ‘cut-off’ point for the different proficiency levels (1-5) are check-marked to ensure that they have been placed in the correct level.

In addition, for the Writing paper, which is independently marked by two assessors, the Chief Examiner will check-mark all scripts in which there is a discrepancy between assessors of one level or more.

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<sup>7</sup> If an assessor is found to be inconsistent in his/her marking, he/she will not be asked to mark any live scripts.

## Appeals Marking

After the results of the Assessment have been released, candidates may apply for appeals rechecking (for technical errors) and remarking. Each script requiring remarking is marked by a different assessor to the one who marked the script originally and if an upgrade is warranted it is marked again by another assessor. If the second appeals assessor agrees that the script should be upgraded, the Chief Examiner is asked to make a final judgement.<sup>8</sup> For Paper IV (Speaking) and Paper V (Classroom Language Assessment), candidates may apply for rechecking of technical errors only, but not for remarking.

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<sup>8</sup> Whilst every effort is taken to ensure that marking/assessing is carried out accurately, it should be acknowledged that due to the subjective nature of the marking process, occasional discrepancies occur, which are considered to be within acceptable boundaries.