

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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A801 Listening

General Comments

The first part of this year's examination went well. As always, exercises 1 and 2 did not cause many problems, because the prompts are straightforward and the answers are multiple choice.

For some candidates the first hurdle of this year's paper was presented in the third exercise. This was partly due to the fact that it is the first moment in the paper where candidates have to think of a word themselves. Some candidates appear to have difficulty expressing themselves in English. In this third exercise the choice of possible answers is still very limited and most candidates managed quite well.

The fourth and fifth exercises were more challenging. This is the point in the exam where candidates are required to listen more carefully to what is being said.

For the last three exercises proper passive knowledge of the target language is needed. There were no obvious difficulties in this paper.

Comments on Individual Questions

Exercise 1 and 2

Most candidates received full marks for this exercise. Very few candidates missed a question or two in this part of the exam and these seemed to be Questions 4 ('What does the village not have?') and 5 ('What does Marieke think of sport?'). From the second exercise only Question 7 ('What does the school look like?') was difficult for some candidates. The speaker indicates that her school is very small, therefore the correct answer is the smallest building presented in the icons.

Exercise 3

Most candidates did this exercise well. It is important for candidates to remember to answer English questions in English as no marks can be awarded for answers given in Dutch. This was also the first moment of the examination where a lack of English skills could hinder the performance of some candidates. In the first question ('Moniek wants to go ... *camping*...') for instance, the answer '*to a camp*' was not rewarded with any marks. A number of candidates found question 15b difficult ('Frank will be staying in a youth hostel'), possibly because they were not familiar with the concept of a youth hostel. It is advisable to work through the vocabulary list in the preparation for the exam, since most of the vocabulary used is in there.

Exercise 4

In this exercise the pace picked up a little and the language became more colloquial. Here it is good for the candidates to pick up on words that indicate the answer (*daar, en, of*). The exercise did not prove to be too difficult. The last question was done well by most.

Exercise 5

This exercise was more challenging, especially the first three questions. Most candidates managed well with the second part of the exercise, even if they appeared to have lost the thread in the beginning.

It is worth noting that all topics used for the exam are mentioned in the specification. Reading Dutch newspapers aimed at this age group (14–19) should help preparing for possible topics used in the examination.

Exercise 6

In this exercise candidates were required to summarise the information they heard. Most candidates did this exercise very well and there weren't any particular difficulties. Common mistakes were made in Question 27, where Carlos tells us he has to think long and hard before he starts writing. Some candidates picked the answer 'D' (have a *long* lie-in), focussing on the word 'long'.

Exercise 7

The matching exercise on 'bird watching' was done quite well with no obvious difficult questions. There was a tendency in the last question to link 'rare birds' with 'abroad', as that might be the answer to expect. The correct answer was 'birds of prey'.

Exercise 8

The last exercise of this paper was a reasonably straightforward interview which required precise listening. Better candidates did not encounter problems with the questions.

A802 Speaking

General Comments

This year's speaking examination went very well. It was very good to see that candidates had prepared well for their presentations and most examiners were very supportive towards them, which helped them to demonstrate their language skills. It is important to remind candidates that they should elaborate as much as possible, as we are looking for opinions and points of view from the candidate.

The administration was handled very well. Where the appropriate forms were not available, most examiners gave us details of the candidates on a piece of paper, which was very helpful. Please make sure to mention the name and number of every candidate prior to the test.

Most examiners this year made sure that the candidates were as close as possible to the microphone. It is a good idea to test the recording prior to the speaking test, so the volume can be adjusted if needed.

If CDs are used, please make sure that the CDs are finalised before they can be used in any other computer or CD-player.

Finally, this was the final year audio cassette tapes were accepted for the speaking test.

Comments on Individual Questions

Presentation

There was a variety of presentation topics this year. Many candidates talked about their family or personal life and a sizeable group talked about their hobbies. A growing number of candidates picked a general interest topic like 'Koninginnedag'. The best performances were those topics which the candidates felt passionate about. These topics also leave room for discussion. Most teachers/examiners managed to ask questions directly related to the presentation, which is very helpful to the candidate.

It is important to encourage candidates to present an introduction instead of a 'full talk', so it is easier to keep talking about the topic afterwards. Candidates were very good at justifying their opinions or point of views.

As last year, some candidates expressed many opinions and justifications in their 1-minute presentation. This is an excellent technique as it ensures marks for communication can be accessed straight away.

Teachers/examiners need to be careful not to use closed questions to which the candidate can only answer with 'ja' or 'nee' (ie, *Voetballen je vrienden ook?*). If such questions are asked it is good technique to follow up with questions like *'hoe vind je dat?'*

General Conversation

At the start of this part of the exam the examiner presents the candidate with a choice of three topics and the candidate can select one topic to talk about. The topics in this part of the examination open up the conversation quite easily. It is important, however, to make sure that the topics for the General Conversation do not overlap with the Presentation topic. Most Examiners were able to hold a conversation that sounded natural, which very often brings out the best in candidates.

All topics were chosen by different candidates. The questions given should provide examiners with some ideas of what can be asked. To receive full marks it is important for candidates to produce longer sentences and show they can take initiative in the conversation. It is therefore very helpful if the teacher/examiner continues on the comments the candidate has made by asking '*Waarom? Vertel eens?*' etc.

The best conversations were those in which the examiner found a topic that was close to the candidate's heart. Many examiners used the questions in the back of the Teacher Instructions booklet as a starting point and picked up more personal information as soon as possible to make the candidate talk. This technique worked very well and meant that the candidate had the potential to access the higher mark bands.

Conclusion

Most teacher-examiners had familiarised themselves with the Teacher's instructions. This meant the speaking tests ran smoothly in the majority of cases. Many thanks for the good work of many Examiners and the excellent preparation of the candidates.

A803 Reading

General comments

The Reading Examination consists of 8 exercises with Dutch texts and mainly English questions. Exercise 2 is a matching exercise with icons and Dutch statements, while the final exercise requires candidates to complete sentences briefly in Dutch.

The multiple choice and matching exercises were well done. Most candidates responded well to the open ended questions in exercises 5 and 7. Careful reading of the text, as well as the questions is required. Answers needed to be brief and in English, as shown in the examples. Some candidates could not express themselves well enough in English to answer these questions correctly.

Quite a few candidates did not always tick a box in the matching exercises, and in the last two exercises some candidates did not answer all the questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Exercise 1 Questions 1–5

This exercise was done well. A few candidates wanted to buy their chips at the *drogist* (C) rather than the cafe (A). There was the occasional mistake in Q5, where the walk through the town of Antwerp was not understood.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–12

Most candidates gained full marks. In Q6 some candidates sent the fireman to the fire in a bus (J) rather than in the fire engine (C). The other questions also occasionally received a wrong answer. Q10 was usually correct.

Exercise 3 Questions 13–18

This was the first longer Dutch text. The multiple choice questions were in English. On the whole the exercise was done well. Q15 needed extra careful reading of the text, while Q16 asked in which month the family day was this year, not last year.

Exercise 4 Questions 19–24

Two Dutch texts about a school exchange with six statements in English. Candidates had to tick a box to indicate which text the statements referred to. Candidates need to remain focused when dealing with two texts. Candidates sometimes picked the wrong name. In Q22 quite a few candidates chose either Jaap or Hein, but Both was the correct answer. There were a few candidates who did not tick a Both box at all in this exercise.

Exercise 5 Questions 25–31

This exercise consists of a Dutch text about baby tigers in a Dutch zoo, with open ended questions in English. Brief answers were required. Many answers were unnecessarily long and sometimes the extra words made the answer invalid. Some candidates found it hard to express themselves in English, while some wrote in Dutch.

Q25: was answered well.

Q26: appeared to be the most difficult with candidates answering *fresh air* instead of *injection*. Some candidates gave both these answers, which was incorrect.

Q27: only needed one word ie *outside*. At times more words were added such as *the zoo*, which made the answer incorrect.

Q28: was usually answered correctly with *sunny*. Quite a few candidates gave longer answers such as *nice and sunny*. This was unnecessary.

Q29: The majority of candidates gave the correct answer with *summer holiday*.

Q30: Most candidates answered that the zoo workers loved or were fond of the animals. *They take care of the animals/work hard* was not allowed.

Q31: The last paragraph of the text gives a number of reasons why there are fewer tigers in the wild. Only one would earn the full mark. Some candidates gave all possible answers. This was not necessary.

Exercise 6 Questions 32–37

This Dutch text about a boy who saved the heart ward of his local hospital was more difficult, but the majority of candidates responded well to the English multiple choice questions. Many candidates gave one or two incorrect answers, especially Questions 34 and 36.

Exercise 7 Questions 38–42

This Dutch text about living statues was a challenge. Candidates had to answer open-ended questions in English. Many candidates responded well. Others could not always find the correct English words.

Q38 (a), (b) and (c): Many candidates gave three correct answers in the order they were given in the second paragraph. Some just stated it was difficult or complicated, but did not give the reason why.

Q39: This question appeared to be difficult in that quite a few candidates did not know the English for 'toneelgroep'. If they could not think of *drama group*, they often found good alternative answers in *a group of actors/performers* or *theatre group*.

Q40: Some candidates did not know the Dutch for coin, but *paying* and *money* were good alternatives. *Mints/sweets* were incorrect.

Q41: Most candidates answered this question correctly in that the elf had lost her way. Others translated the wrong part of the text and said that the elf was allowed to make a noise.

Q42: The answer to this question had to convey that the girls like the roles because they are different from their normal life. Answers such as: *They like it/They won't be recognised* did not state this.

Exercise 8 Questions 43–48

This final exercise consists of a Dutch text and statements. Candidates are asked to put a Dutch word (or words) in the gaps in the statements. The words are not necessarily in the text. This exercise was challenging. Some candidates attempted only a few of the questions or tried to insert random words from the text. Others answered many of the questions correctly.

Q43: This question turned out to be difficult for candidates who did not know the Dutch word for building, *gebouw*. The word *pand* in the text also means building and in the combination *nieuw pand* the meaning was clear to many candidates. Answers meaning another street or another part of the town were not allowed.

Q44: The Dutch for *visits/uses/goes to* was required. If candidates added the negative *niet* they had inadvertently given the sentence a double negative which was incorrect.

Q45: needed the Dutch for airport. The English was not allowed but the name Schiphol was. Some lifted the words *Schiphol ben* which was incorrect. Many did not know the Dutch words *vliegveld* or *luchthaven*. *Vliegtuin* and *vliegpoort* were not allowed.

Q46: The correct answer was *boeken*. This was obvious to some, but others thought the author missed the good old days.

Q47: Again one simple Dutch word was required: *Nieuwe* or *Moderne*.

Q48: Quite a few candidates knew the correct answer was *problemen* or a similar answer that fitted in the sentence. A number of candidates lifted the word *boete* from the text which was incorrect.

A804 Writing

General Comments

The examination was generally well done. Last year many candidates looked no further than Questions 1 and 2, but this year the other questions were frequently attempted too.

Nearly everyone seemed to have read the important instructions written in **bold** on the cover page of this paper. These are: Answer **any two** questions, **Write up to a maximum of 150 words for each question in Dutch** and **Each question must be for a different purpose.**

Many candidates wrote two essays in Dutch and for a different purpose. The majority of candidates wrote more and frequently far more than 150 words. It is clear that candidates produce better work when they take their time to write two essays of the required number of words. Writing longer essays usually does not improve the Quality of Language mark.

On each of the five question pages there is a reminder: a) to give factual information **and** to explain ideas and points of views; b) to use a variety of vocabulary, different types of sentences and different verb tenses. Point a) is especially important for the Communication mark and b) for the Quality of Language mark.

Many candidates indicated the particular purpose of their writing eg blog/e-mail/letter/magazine article/script of a conversation. This worked well. In quite a number of essays there was no obvious different purpose. Many candidates were able to produce a variety of vocabulary, different types of sentences and different verb tenses. Some candidates used different verb tenses in one essay, but not in the other. Some candidates may not have understood the English instructions or questions.

Dictionaries are allowed in this examination.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Many candidates chose to write about their local park. Those who used the ideas in the question paper often wrote a balanced essay with all the required elements. Candidates used the park for walking, playing football and the playground. Others commented on the beautiful trees and flowers. Some wrote about a park where they used to live, which provided different verb tenses. There was a variety of suggestions for improvements, while some thought their park was perfect. Some of the essays were letters or e-mails, but many had no particular purpose.

Question 2

There were some excellent essays on the new local sports centre with a great choice of sports on offer. Some candidates did well in writing about their present, past and future sports. Almost everyone wrote about the reason why sport is good for you. There were also a number of candidates who wrote well, but did not mention the new sports centre. Some candidates who had written their first essay about playing football in the park also wrote about playing football without saying anything much about the sports centre. Some essays were newspaper articles or the script of an interview with the manager of the centre. Others were letters to a friend to encourage them to use the centre too.

Question 3

There were a number of lively essays about concerts of favourite singers or bands in various locations. Almost all were considered to be a very special experience. Many candidates had an opinion about the price of tickets and whether it was worth it or not. There were some good scripts of conversations or interviews about concerts.

Question 4

Animals in the modern world meant to most candidates family pets such as dogs, cats and hamsters, usually followed by the pros and cons of animals in zoos. Although they wrote well about their pets, at times it was a summing up of the number of animals, names, ages and colours. Most candidates also described visits to a zoo with relatives when they were younger. Here many points of view and justifications were expressed, often with a variety of vocabulary, tenses and sentence structures.

Question 5

The last subject about arts activities at home, at school and in the future was sometimes misunderstood, as some candidates wrote about school and the future without mentioning any arts activities. Perhaps candidates do not always look at the five ideas they can use. The first one actually suggests arts activities such as photography, painting and drama. There were some very good essays when candidates used all three, one as a past interest, a current interest and one for the future, for instance how drawing would be useful for a career in architecture.

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