

# ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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6109  
Paper 1

## GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the paper was accessible to most candidates as the reading passages were suited to their linguistic ability. A few candidates might have been unfamiliar with the topics of some reading passages, but this should not have a big influence as the ultimate purpose is testing comprehension and not the content of the reading passages. Some candidates did not follow the general instructions of the questions. Some candidates answered parts of the question paper using pencil and others copied answers wrongly from the texts. **Candidates must only use a pen and not a pencil.** Wrong and long lifting of answers were also a problem. Spelling and handwriting proved to be a problem to many candidates e.g. candidates spelled “I” which is supposed to be spelled with a capital letter, with a lower case. Some candidates’ handwriting was beyond legible. Most candidates have a serious problem with punctuation. The majority of candidates appeared to manage their time appropriately as they could complete all the exercises. It is important to answer the questions in the third person (he/she) and not the first person (I), if that is the requirement. There is a concern with regards to the general language usage of the candidates.

A range of tasks was included in the paper, requiring candidates to demonstrate a variety of practical reading and writing skills. These ranged from selecting short relevant details from texts, a multiple matching task, a note-taking task, a multiple-choice task, a guided writing task and the more challenging extended writing task.

In **Task 1**, reading comprehension, it is essential that candidates locate the key requirements of each question and answer with a brief and precise phrase.

In **Task 2**, in the multiple matching exercise, it is recommended that candidates practise skimming and scanning reading techniques and carefully consider each question, taking into account any distracting information in the texts. When writing their answer, candidates should clearly indicate the letter they have selected.

In **Task 3**, note-taking, candidates need to ensure that their responses are brief and correspond to the heading of each question. Each line represents a separate point, and candidates should not repeat a point. Where a candidate includes two points on the same line, only the first is taken into consideration. Additionally, candidates should not add extra bullet points unless they have crossed through a previous response.

In **Task 4**, in the multiple choice questions candidates should be encouraged to make it absolutely clear which option they wish to be taken as their final answer. It needs to be emphasised that where crossing out of a rejected selection is not clear this will be seen as ambiguous and it will not be credited.

In **Task 5 (guided writing)**, informal letter, responses must provide relevant information and be written in an informal style. All prompts have to be addressed and developed in order to have access to marks in the top band for Content.

In **Task 6 (Extended writing)**, candidates need to respond to the different requirements of this task and write relevantly. They should adopt a style and register suited to the chosen topic.

## COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

### Task 1

Stronger candidates performed exceptionally well in this task, but the weaker candidates really struggled. Less successful responses tended to include more information than required, which changed the meaning of the expected answer. Long, irrelevant lifts or additional information still prove to be the preferred way of answering this task and this approach can result in candidates losing marks. Candidates should be encouraged to write brief responses.

- 1 The one part of the question was fairly well answered as most candidates could identify **durable** as one of the correct responses. The second correct response **vast variety** was not successfully answered by candidates, because they lifted irrelevant information and left out the important part of the answer. The distractor “portable” was also a popular answer. A few candidates also wrote both correct responses on the same line and could therefore only score one mark.

- 2 This question proved more challenging for candidates as many opted for the additional information in the reading passage. The correct answer, for **trade/trading**, was not a popular answer for this question.
- 3 This question was fairly well answered by most candidates who managed to write the correct response **could not afford them**.
- 4 This question was answered fairly well as most candidates could write the correct responses: **marital status and age**, but the spelling of marital was a problem as many candidates incorrectly wrote “material” or “martial” and other variations, which made their responses wrong.
- 5 Most candidates failed to score a mark for this question as they could not identify the correct response which is “**the meaning depends on the area**”. Most candidates lifted incorrect information such as “local knowledge” from the reading passage.
- 6 This question was well answered as almost all candidates managed to score a mark for the correct response **the family/parents and child**.
- 7 Majority of candidates did not score a mark for this question as they gave “organisation” or “promotes beadwork” as their response. The correct response **agent** rarely came up.
- 8 This question was fairly well answered as many candidates wrote the correct response **children are able to attend school**. Incorrect responses focused on the women and not the children, e.g. “the women earn a living...”.

## Task 2

Most candidates struggled to give the correct responses for this task, but there were some very successful attempts at the task. Many candidates could not achieve the whole range of marks as many achieved less than five out of nine marks. Some candidates did not seem to have tried to look for the correct links in the extracts and opted to just write one letter throughout.

Presentation of answers was generally clear. Candidates are reminded that if they change their mind, they should not write the second answer over the first, but should cross out the wrong answer clearly, and write their final choice alongside. Candidates should also be cautioned not to answer this task using pencil and that they should follow the instructions by giving A, B, C or D as their responses and NOT the names used in the extract.

## Answers

- 9 B
- 10 D
- 11 A
- 12 B
- 13 C
- 14 D
- 15 A
- 16 C
- 17 A

## Task 3

Most candidates showed sufficient understanding of the task. The downside is that some candidates did not write short notes, but opted to give very long sentences as their responses. The candidates also did not delete bullets when they wrote their long responses and as a result lost some marks. Candidates are encouraged to write short phrases that fit in the bullet spaces provided. Some candidates did not consider the headings and interchanged the information, e.g. writing the responses for heading two under heading one. Some candidates also skipped key words in their lifts. Spelling was also a problem as candidates wrote “principle” instead of “principal”, “behing” instead of “behind”,

“toughfulness” instead of “thoughtfulness”, etc. The wrong word class, e.g. “pass” instead of “past” was also a concern.

Candidates should be taught/trained to make sure that the meaning is not changed when they try to write notes in their own words. Not all synonyms carry the same meaning in the context of the information.

The correct use of the pronouns “he”, “she”, “her”, “his” were very important for this task. Pronouns should be taught to the candidates so that they know how to identify the different identities in reading passages.

### **What you learn about the writer’s classmate in his early years**

This heading proved to be challenging to many candidates because they did not focus on the classmate, but other general revelations about the classmate that were made in the reading passage. Additional information also resulted in loss of marks.

Acceptable responses under this heading are:

- **Not a good student** – responses like “not a good boy” or “no good student” were not accepted.
- **Had a part time job** – responses like “HAS a part time job”, “the principal did not know he had a part time job” or “did not know he had a part time job” were not accepted.
- **Had a difficult home life**
- **Undisciplined**

One mark was awarded for each acceptable response, up to a maximum of 3 marks.

### **The lessons the writer learned that afternoon**

This part was answered fairly well as the verbs used in the reading passage guided the candidates to the correct responses. It was interesting to learn that the last option on the mark scheme was also the most popular one, simply because the word “learned” was used in the reading passage and the candidates managed to make the direct link.

Acceptable responses under this heading are:

- **Most of your life is hidden from people you see every day**
- **Everyone’s view into the past is different**
- **Behind every communication is information**
- **She has/had a happy and full life**
- **We all find a place in this world**
- **Thoughtfulness leads to honesty**
- **Not to judge a person based on past experiences / to see everyone you meet with fresh eyes**

One mark was awarded for each acceptable response, up to a maximum of 5 marks.

Candidates need to ensure that their responses correspond to the heading of each question. Each line represents a separate point, and candidates should not repeat a point. If a candidate includes two points on the same line, only the first point is taken into consideration. Additionally, candidates should not add extra bullet point unless they have crossed out their first answer. Candidates should also not add any information in their answer when there is no reference to such information in the text.

### **Task 4**

The multiple-choice task had mixed responses from candidates, but the majority of candidates scored low marks for this task. This task requires thorough comprehension of the text and lack of comprehension possibly attributed to the poor performance of candidates. The most commonly found correct responses were 20 and 24.

Presentation of answers was generally clear, but some candidates crossed or encircled the letter to the correct answer instead of ticking the box. A few candidates also ticked more than one response which resulted in them losing the mark entirely. It is recommended that candidates clearly cancel a response if they change their mind so that their final choice is very clear. Some candidates also used pencil to answer this task, and it should be strongly discouraged. A few candidates did not attempt some questions and they should be encouraged to answer all the questions.

### **Answers**

18 C

19 D

20 A

21 B

22 C

23 A

24 B

25 B

### Task 5

#### *Informal letter*

This task was fairly well answered, though some candidates wrote off topic, e.g. writing about a soccer tournament instead of the party. It should be noted that most candidates were able to follow the instructions, although they could not develop the prompts.

More successful responses showed an awareness of the target audience and adopted a style and register suited to an informal letter. Some responses which were simple narratives and lacked engagement with the reader were less successful and did not achieve high marks for content. Development of ideas varied greatly. Some candidates managed to squeeze all three prompts into single sentence for each which resulted in very limited responses. Other candidates put the focus more on one prompt and dealt with the other two bullet points in one or two sentences, which led to an imbalance for the reader. Candidates are reminded to consider all prompts when planning their responses and include the appropriate amount of detail for each one. Some candidates rewrote the instructions of the task verbatim in their letter as their content, e.g. "I am planning a big celebration for someone important in my life, but I am not sure how to make the occasion really memorable." A lot of candidates were organising their own party or a party for the recipient of the letter which was in contrast to what the task requires.

Candidates are reminded that in informal letter writing, responses must provide relevant information and be written in an informal style. All prompts have to be addressed and developed in order to have access to marks in the top band for Content. Refrain from teaching candidates a standard introduction to informal letters, but rather teach them that the entire piece from beginning to end should link well.

Some candidates confused the party for a braai, a bar opening, etc. Many candidates wanted an intimate party while the instruction says that it is a big celebration. It is also observed, with concern, that many candidates have been focusing on their boyfriends and girlfriends and the inference of sexual activities after the party. This references to personal relationships should be strongly discouraged and the mention of sexual references is taboo. Candidates should also be cautioned not to come up with content that is not very realistic and they should learn to link all 3 prompts with each other, e.g. you cannot say it's for grandmother's birthday party, but it will be at a bar and all YOUR friends should be invited and YOUR favourite artist should perform.

Prompt one: There were very limited responses for this prompt. Most candidates managed to say who the party was for, but could not develop anything further. Many would just say it's a birthday, graduation party, etc. The reason for celebrating this important person was not really appropriately addressed. Successful candidates included some information about the person and could come up with realistic reasons for the celebration. Weaker candidates would just mention the person, e.g. my grandmother, father, mother, friend, etc., or "It's her birthday, graduation" etc., without any further development. Some would simply say that it is a surprise party, but this is a type of party and not a reason for having a party.

Prompt two: This prompt required candidates to explain what they wanted the friend to do. This prompt was not addressed satisfactorily as most candidates just listed a lot of chores for the friend, e.g. making the food, to cleaning the venue. Some of these chores also did not link well with the task of organising a party. Many candidates would mention what the friend needs to do and then focus on what you would do and explain their own role. Candidates should also be taught to use appropriate content, e.g. you cannot ask your friend to give you money or pay for the occasion or even ask your friend to buy a car for this other friend you are organising the party for.

Prompt three: This prompt proved to be above level for even the stronger candidates as many of them did not show a good understanding of the word "venue". A lot of them confused venue with time, date and theme, e.g. "The venue will take place on 30 January at 17h00 until midnight and we should all be dressed in black and white." Many also did not focus on an exact place, but just said the village, Dubai, Windhoek, the beach (which is a very large area), etc.

From a language point of view, there were a lot of grammar and spelling errors in general. Candidates who attempted more sophisticated vocabulary were let down by the spelling of those words. Candidates who made use of a more formal register or who used vocabulary that was inappropriate to the writing piece, produced unnatural sounding language. Over-rated vocabulary was used that does not ring right with the audience. Candidates are encouraged to increase their

topic-related vocabulary resources to achieve marks in the top band for Language. Candidates are also encouraged to focus on greater accuracy of tenses in compound and complex sentences. Idioms and linking words were over-used and incorrectly applied. Pre-learned phrases and the incorrect use of idioms can distract from the focus of the task and may obscure meaning. Overall, many responses were organised effectively into paragraphs, but punctuation is a major concern as the most basic punctuation was not even observed.

### Task 6

Most candidates misinterpreted the topics and little to no planning was done. The influence of direct translation from their vernacular is still very evident. This is worrisome and candidates should be trained on writing and on developing their English with proper activities and vocabulary. An increase in profanity/swear words was also noticed and candidates are seriously cautioned not to make use of such language when they answer the question paper. The incorrect use of articles “the”, “a” and “an” is a huge problem. Many candidates used the noun and pronoun next to each other, e.g. “People they don’t want to be honest.” Candidates do not know how to link paragraphs with each other and they also do not know how to use a topic sentence per paragraph and then develop that idea. The extended writing pieces were incoherent and the focus was mostly listing instead of development.

It should be noted that a lot of candidates in their attempt to be creative came up with very unrealistic stories. Some would tell a story and at the end realise it was only a dream, or they would retell a movie they have seen without much success. The use of fables and fantasies as their stories should also NOT be encouraged. Candidates should come up with their own, original content as far as possible. Another disturbing observation is that candidates are using information directly from the question paper and they do get penalised heavily for it, so it should not be encouraged.

It is noticed with great concern that candidates do not know the difference between the different types of essays as the majority of them did not know that each topic focused on a specific type of essay.

- (a) It is good to take risks. Write an essay in which you give your opinion.

This is an argumentative essay, but only very few candidates were aware. Many of them wrote a narrative and some even wrote a descriptive essay. Many candidates gave examples of risks instead of responding to the statement. Candidates who are into Forex trading also used this platform to educate the reader about Forex, e.g. how it works, how they got started, the different types of platforms, etc., instead of focusing on the risk involved in this trade. It seemed as if these candidates were more interested in sharing their knowledge on that particular subject than to answer the topic. Instead of reacting to the response, a lot of candidates gave advice about taking risks and others simply listed information randomly with no link. The few who understood the topic did not give a stance, but just wrote a very general piece about risk taking. They failed to argue their points, and only came up with a lot of facts. The focus was also primarily on the negative side of risk taking instead of looking into the positive side too. Many candidates also just listed the advantages and disadvantages of risk taking without directly linking it to the topic. Quite a number of candidates did not know what risk is and confused it with “rest”, “responsibility” or linked risk taking to crime, corruption, challenges and sacrifice. A few candidates simply misinterpreted the question and wrote about something that did not relate to the topic at all and could not score any mark.

- (b) Write a story with the following title: “Honesty is the best policy.”

Once again, this question seemed to be above level for even the stronger candidates. Candidates were not even guided by the word “story” that indicated that they had to write a narrative. Most of them gave a factual account of honesty, e.g. the advantages of being honest. As a result these candidates could not score marks in the higher content band. The candidates who wrote a story about honesty, wrote random stories that focused purely on lying and ended their stories with the phrase “Honesty is the best policy” with no link to the story. Candidates who managed to write an appropriate story, were let down by their conclusion as the end of the story just fell flat and the readers were left with more questions than answers. Another observation is that the build-up is too long and the actual, relevant part of the story is squeezed in one paragraph and then the story loses its effect.

Some candidates understood the meaning of honesty and wrote about “respect”, “obedience”, “good manners”, “faithfulness”, etc. A lot of them also focused their stories on relationships, alcohol abuse, stealing or witnessing something which did not answer the question effectively. Many candidates misunderstood the word “policy” and wrote stories about “police officers” or “education policy”, “pregnancy policy”, etc. This resulted in an off topic and candidates could not score any mark.

- (c) Describe a taxi/bus ride you have had and what you saw as well as experienced during the journey.

This topic was poorly addressed and most candidates, even stronger candidates did not manage to score marks in the higher content band. They could not write a descriptive essay and would instead write a story. The ones who attempted to write a relevant descriptive piece, exaggerated the use of adjectives and would list three to four adjectives next to each other just to describe the mountains they saw during their journey. Candidates also did not understand that the experience referred to the atmosphere and activities in the bus and what was felt during the journey. This question also had two parts (what was seen and the experience) to it, and very few candidates attempted both. This resulted in candidates not scoring marks in the higher content band. A lot of candidates did not understand the word “ride” in the topic and would only describe the bus or the taxi instead of the journey. Many also focused on the driver and described the driver’s attitude and habits. Some candidates focused on bus rides in general and would then give advice to the government or drivers on how to make the roads safe. Candidates also described different types of transport or they would write about a journey in a private car or on a plane. Many candidates went on a school tour/ trip or family trip and they would then struggle to adhere to the requirements of the topic. The one aspect of the topic: WHAT WAS SEEN was not effectively addressed as candidates would only list a lot of animals without any explanations or they would drive to Etosha National Park and see the animals there. The animals seen would be listed in every paragraph which resulted in repetition. What was also observed was that candidates would not see anything on the journey, but would reach their destination (sometimes multiple destinations) and they would then see things in that town, not realising that the journey has ended. Another disturbing observation was that the candidate would sleep for the duration of the journey and would wake up when they reach the destination and would then see the destination/town/city from the bus. The second aspect of the topic: THE EXPERIENCE was also not effectively addressed as a lot of candidates wrote about an accident they encountered on their way and the focus would shift from the bus ride to the accident. Candidates would also sometimes not even be in a bus or taxi but would witness a bus or taxi accident and would report on it. Many candidates were the bus or taxi driver or owners.

### **POSITIVE SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS**

Candidates should be taught the following:

- The question paper should be answered in blue or black pen as instructed on the cover page of the question paper. PENCIL should not be used at all.
- Grammar, spelling and concord should be emphasised.
- Teach learners the different types of sentences and focus on sentence constructions.
- Appropriate vocabulary should be addressed and vocabulary exercises should be given but steer clear of pretentious, unnatural use of vocabulary. Vocabulary should have a purpose when used in a specific written piece.
- Teach appropriate use of idioms and conjunctions
- The pronoun “I” should always be written with a capital letter. It should be instilled in the learners.
- “I am” and “I” *with any other verb next to it* should be written as two separate words. This should be instilled in the learners. Am should be preceded by I in most cases and should not stand on its own, especially in the beginning of a sentence.
- Teach command and question words
- To use prompts correctly and to develop them
- To use the correct tone and register
- To write realistically
- Teach candidates critical and creative thinking skills.
- Encourage creativity, but within the set limits of a topic
- Teach interpretation of questions
- Teach learners to read instructions carefully and not rush into answering questions
- Teach candidates to use the spaces provided
- Teach candidates the different types of essays on how to identify key words in a question to guide them as to which type of essay they have to write
- To adhere to word limits
- To write legibly and in appropriate language
- Address the use of swear words and offensive language immediately and penalise candidates when they use it in their writing pieces.
- Discourage the use of sms-language and address it immediately when it is picked up in written pieces.
- Address sexual and relationship references as well as political and religious references in writing pieces as these references becomes the focus of the pieces and candidates can lose marks.
- To develop a love of reading