

**GENERAL COMMENT:**

In general, candidates who did well in the paper were enrolled at centers that did well in the paper. (One could infer that such candidates found the paper to be “easy”). Conversely, candidates who fared poorly in the paper were enrolled at centres where the majority of their fellow matriculants also fared poorly in the paper. (One could infer that such candidates found the paper to be “difficult”). It is therefore very difficult to pinpoint a particular question that that, across the board, could be said to have been well, or poorly, answered. Having said that, it must be said that the answers of candidates from centers that fared poorly were characterised by a number of “unnecessary errors”. Because the scripts are marked strictly according to a nationally set memorandum (from which the marker cannot deviate) some candidates could not be awarded a particular mark, while the marker could infer that the candidate understood what was required. In other words, the problem is one of technique, not necessarily comprehension. The solution clearly lies in making candidates complete enough well-structured exercises, on which the educator can give constructive feedback. So, educators would do well to bear the following in mind:

**SECTION A – THE COMPREHENSION (QUESTION 1)**

- **QUOTING (1):** So many candidates still regard answering comprehension questions in an exam as something fundamentally different to “answering questions”. Surely the latter is something that everyone is familiar with and has some experience in. When, in the normal run of things, one has to answer a question, one does not “quote”. Rather, one answers from one’s own understanding/conviction/memory. It must be emphasised that this is what one does when one answers comprehension questions. While the answer is obviously derived from the text, candidates must be encouraged to answer in their own words. Marks are unnecessarily lost when unsolicited quotes are provided as answers.
- **QUOTING (2):** Candidates should be reminded that when they use a quotation from a text, it should be verbatim, i.e exactly the same as in the text. In other words, if the required quote happens to be a series of words that includes a capital and a comma, then that capital and comma should be included when that series of words is rewritten as an answer. Failure to do so means that the mark is forfeited.
- **QUOTING (3):** All quotes must be written between a set of inverted commas. In this paper, so many candidates lost marks when they either failed to place their quotes between inverted commas, or when they, after opening the quote, forgot to close it with the second inverted comma.
- **QUOTING (4) – Quoting a set number of words:** It is heartbreaking to not have to award a candidate a mark when he/she has provided the correct quote, but has included one extra word. The instruction to quote will almost always include a word limit. Failure to adhere to that limit results in the mark being forfeited.
- **TRUE/FALSE and FACT/OPINION QUESTIONS:** A number of concerns relate to this point: (i) Candidates must be told to write their choice out in full. They should refrain from providing a “T” (for TRUE) or a “F” (for FALSE). (ii) When providing these words as answers, they should also be spelt correctly. Many candidates spelt TRUE “TREU” and FALSE “FALS”. (iii) “YES” in the place of, say, “TRUE” will always be marked wrong. (iv) The question that requires the candidate to choose between, say TRUE or FALSE,

will always also require the candidate to substantiate that choice with either a reason (in own words), or a quote. Failure to provide a quote or reason results in the loss of the mark, even if the choice was correct. Providing an incorrect quote or reason could, however, result in the mark for the choice still being awarded. (Providing the correct quote without stating the choice = no mark).

## SECTION B – THE SUMMARY (QUESTION 2)

At centers where candidates generally performed poorly, it was clear that they were unfamiliar with the manner in which a summary is marked. Below is the set of guidelines that is generally followed when the summary is marked:

### CRITERIA FOR MARKING THE SUMMARY :

7 marks for **FACTS**  
1 mark for **LENGTH**  
2 marks for **LANGUAGE**      **USAGE = 10 MARKS**

### OWN WORDS AND QUOTATIONS:

- The core idea must be written in the candidate's **own words** as far as possible.
- Changes in the word order are acceptable if they are grammatically correct.
- Award the mark for a correct fact even if it has been quoted, but indicate with a 'Q' in the left-hand margin.

### FACTS:

- Award **one** mark for each correct fact.
- The facts do not need to be in any particular order, but mark only the **first seven** facts written by the candidate.
- Mark only **one** fact per line / sentence; ignore the second. If an incorrect fact is given first, the candidate unfortunately forfeits the mark for the second possibly-correct fact.
- If the candidate has written in paragraph form, treat one sentence as a fact. In a case like this, the candidate automatically loses both language marks.

### NUMBER OF WORDS:

- Count the number of words up to the maximum and draw //. Ignore the rest.

### PENALTIES

- If the maximum of words is exceeded, no mark is awarded for length.
- If the number of words is not indicated, or is obviously indicated incorrectly, the candidate also forfeits the mark.
- Indicate **ALL** grammar, spelling and punctuation errors.  
0-3 errors            =      2 marks [*if candidate has scored 5 or more for facts*]  
4-6 errors            =      1 mark  
7 or more errors    =      0 marks
- A quotation must be regarded as a language error.
- The number of marks awarded for language and length (number of words) *combined* **MAY NOT** exceed the mark obtained for "facts".

One could see that candidates were taught the skill of summarising using a particular format / approach. (For example, candidates were familiar with the “one text, one set of instructions” format.) In this question paper, candidates were presented with two texts and a set of instructions that required them to contrast those texts and present their findings (differences) in a point-form summary.

Many candidates lost marks when they focused only on one passage and presented key points from that passage as their summary. While this is a clear case of the candidate not having read the instructions correctly, it can also be ascribed to the fact that candidates have a certain expectation of the format of the summary question, rather than a familiarity with the skills they were expected to demonstrate.

Once again, a learner can only acquire the skill of summarising through practice, and being provided with proper feedback on his/her answer.

### **SECTION C – LANGUAGE IN ACTION (QUESTIONS 3 & 4)**

One way in which to address poor performance in this section is to say, rather obviously, but vaguely, that educators must teach language structures. While this is not necessarily bad advice, it does not address the possible root cause of poor performance.

Statistically, one could reasonably take the view that candidates who fared well in this section are candidates who are familiar and comfortable with English as a language. Put in progressive terms, the challenge for English language educators working at centers where candidates fared poorly is to make learners familiar and comfortable with the language. The ideal would be where a learner (who speaks English as an additional language), instinctively “feels” that a sentence, word, expression is either wrong, better, not suitable, ... without necessarily knowing which rule has been either followed or broken, as the case may be. While this is undoubtedly a tall order, the following suggestions may help:

- Learners, throughout their schooling career, (as High School educators, you can only influence what happens from Grade 8 level onwards) should be exposed to good writing that is suitable for their cognitive levels. This exposure should be constant, deliberate and structured. In other words, educators cannot assume that learners will quickly, of their own volition or naturally discern the features of good writing in a text; it must be carefully and constantly pointed out to them. **(This is a Reading Programme.)**
- Examples of good writing / good English usage must be read aloud in class. Learners must learn to appreciate the cadences of the language in spoken form. **(This relates to Spoken Texts.)**
- Teaching features of the language must be **integrated** in Creative Writing lessons. This will enable the educator, upon marking the Creative piece, to give feedback on a learner’s comprehension of the language structure that was taught in class. Moreover, this will then not be a case of mere “right or wrong” (as is so often the case with a “language exercise”); learners will be able to use, and see the use of, a language structure in context.