

IoL EDUCATION TRUST (IoLET)

CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS

CERTIFICATE IN BILINGUAL SKILLS (CBS)

CHIEF MODERATOR'S REPORT 2009

1. Matters arising from 2008 Moderator's Report

1.1. Candidate Numbers

The numbers sitting the 2009 CBS examination were very similar to those for the 2008 examination. There were only 3 Centres, including the London Centre.

1.2 Examiner and Tape Sampler Training

Training sessions for CBS oral examiners were held prior to the 2009 examination. This was reflected in the improved comments and examples given on the mark sheets in 2009.

1.3 Replacement of Translation Task

This will be addressed further in this Report, under a separate heading.

1.4 Resitting only part of a unit

This was proving to be a useful change to the CBS format. The proportion of passes on individual units raised the overall percentage of passes.

1.5 The London Olympics

The IoL was part of a consortium which had put forward a proposal to the 2012 Olympics Committee regarding testing of interpreters/translators, but the outlook was not optimistic. There were so many financial constraints on the Committee, and also languages did not seem to figure largely in their list of priorities.

2. 2009 Examination

2.1. Profile of candidates and languages

55 candidates were entered for the 2009 examination, in 15 languages. The tabulation for 2009 is as follows:

Language	Candidate Numbers
Polish	8
Somali	7
Spanish	6
Dari	6
Kurdish (Sorani)	6
Urdu	6
Panjabi	4
Slovak	3
Gujarati	3
Cantonese	1
French	1

Pashto	1
Portuguese (Brazilian)	1
Portuguese (European)	1
Russian	1

Polish again attracted the largest number of candidates. It is surprising that Urdu has fallen so behind, when that was the language most in demand for so many years since the inception of the CBS examination. In 2009 there were no fewer than six languages with only one candidate. Not only is this financially difficult to sustain, but there is no comparison of groups possible.

2.2. Examination Results

Comparative Statistics: 2004 – 2009

Exam Session	Number of			%ages						
	Centres	Langs.	Cands.	Dist.	Merit	Pass	LCo	LcW	LC*)	Fail
2004	8	16	86	0	1.3	29.5	28.3	7.7	n/a	33.3
2005	9	14	59	0	3.6	33.9	25	0	n/a	37.5
2006	4	13	52	0	4.1	14.3	32.7	2.0	n/a	46.9
2007	4	7	29	0	0	17.9	50	7.1	n/a	25.0
2008	5	12	58	0	0	39.7	31.0	5.2	17.2	6.9
2009	3	15	55	0	1.8	38.2	30.9	0.0	21.8	7.3

LC*): Please note that from 2008 a 'Letter of Credit' has been introduced for individual tasks that are passed within either Oral or Written units.

The examination appeared to go well, with no major problems. Those which did arise were dealt with in-house by the Examinations Manager and the team. Most concerned the failure of candidates to add their centre number, candidate number, and/or Task number on the folder and the paper, and in a few cases to resolve problems where the task was put in the wrong folder, thus being sent to the wrong marker.

One centre said that ALL candidates complained about the examiner, but this was checked and proved to be an unjustified claim.

Task 3B, Translation into Other Language: “Women’s refuge” caused some problems, since “refuge” became confused with “refugee” and so “asylum seeker women”.

“Abuse” became just “insult” which is not adequate.

As suggested in the 2008 Moderator’s Report the Letter writing task was simplified and the overall performance in this section of the examination was much improved.

2.3. Marking the examination

With so few candidates, and obviously in the case of the seven languages where there was only one candidate, it is difficult to give an overall picture of

the level of attainment. Markers even with just one candidate have to be extremely aware and careful to adhere to the marking instructions.

The Reports from Written Markers were well presented and useful, as were those on the whole of Oral Examiners and Tape Samplers.

Everyone seems more aware of the need to give helpful comments together with examples. This makes the moderator's task much easier.

Marking written Task 4B, Letter in Other Language

The main line to be drawn is, as always, between Fail and Pass. Someone could omit one item, but still pass – but an omission would mean that such a candidate could not attain the level of Merit or Distinction, no matter how well the candidate completed the rest of the Task

2.4. Change in format of Translation and Letter Tasks

At the Awards Meeting on 8th July 2009 the Chief Moderator put forward a possible new format – to combine both the translation and letter tasks. The proposed format was that of a REPORT, which is frequently the task required of bi-lingual workers in public services, but it was felt that the IoL should retain the right to put forward a test **either as a report or as a letter**. Obviously in any year both tasks into and out of English would be in the same format, it would not be valid in terms of a realistic test of those with English as a first language and those with another language as mother tongue to have one task as a report, the other as a letter.

- The change in format would have various advantages, for example: The CBS would be reduced from 7 units to 5 units – Role Play, a Sight Translation both from and into English, and the Report/Letter in English and in the Other Language.
- This could be incorporated into the new proposal to OFQUAL which is required to maintain accreditation as an examining body, and would mean that the new format could be incorporated in the 2011 examination
- This timing would allow the IoL to prepare details and advise Centres in good time

As always, the level of the CBS Examination should not be higher than A level.

The point was made by one Examiner present at the Meeting that marking a translation was still a clear way of indicating a candidate's ability in terms of grammar and fluency, but on the other hand the general consensus of opinion was that since this is a vocational examination, it is important that the tasks set reflect the type of demands to be met by a bilingual worker in the public services.

2.5. Centres

There were only three Centres, including the London Centre in 2009.

The problem for Centres lies with funding. To have funding allocated a second year, the Centre must show a good level of passes in the first year – and this is not always the case. If the examination can be less costly to candidates/centres through the new proposed format, there might be a revival in the number of Centres.

The IoLET would advise Centres which previously offered CBS of the change, to encourage them to seek funding and put forward candidates again in 2011.

3. Awards

The prize for the best centre for the 2009 examination goes to Bradford College.

The prize for the best candidate goes to a Spanish candidate sitting the examination at the London Centre.

The Moderator wishes to express appreciation and thanks to Ulrike Heinze, the CBS Examinations Manager, and her team, and the Director of Examinations, Hilary Maxwell-Hyslop, for their support.

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Recommendations to Candidates

1. Build up a glossary of useful words. Do not just rely on a dictionary, which may be misleading, with “false friends”. For example the term women’s **refuge** in one Task in the 2009 examination became confused with **refugee** and from there to **asylum seeker**. You can see how easy it is to be misled along the wrong route.
2. Cantonese candidates should adhere to one script or the other – traditional or simplified – and not jump from one to the other in a written Task. More attention should be paid to the use of correct Chinese characters
3. Dari candidates must avoid using a Farsi dictionary, and they must stick to Dari.
4. Candidates should use their time wisely:
 - Reading through the whole Task before commencing to write
 - Making sure sufficient time is allowed for each component of the Task
 - Allowing time to READ THROUGH the written elements at the end, as one can often then correct minor mistakes of spelling, grammar, etc.
5. Ask your tutor to advise you of any special weaknesses you may have – which will become apparent during the course. You can then pay attention to correction any specific weakness, be it grammar, spelling, legibility, clearness in speaking, self confidence during the Oral Tasks.
6. Remember at the examination you **MUST** be sure to write on the examination paper your candidate number and the Task number, and you must put the right paper in the correct folder.

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Recommendations to Centres

1. Check the potential level of Candidates at enrolment stage
2. Make each candidate aware during the course of any specific lacunae in his/her aptitude, be it spelling, grammar, legibility, confidence in speaking, etc.
3. Hold a mock examination
4. Doing this will help avoid problems which arose in the 2009 examination, with candidates forgetting to put down the Task Number, their Candidate Number, or in some instances putting the wrong written paper in the wrong folder
5. Make sure candidates are given lined paper with a margin – and told NOT to write across the margin
6. Ensure the tape recorder is working correctly – and that the WHOLE of the oral examination is recorded. In one instance in the 2009 examination part of the oral was omitted. This can affect the results because tape sampling is then impossible for that section of the examination
7. Letter writing conventions in English and in the Other Language must be taught. Candidates are penalised if they fail to put a date, use the correct and appropriate salutations, etc.