

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

for the MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SERVICE



ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TESTING SYSTEM

National Institute of
Public Administration

Public Service Department

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Preface

This handbook is published by the Cluster for Language Excellence, National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), Public Service Department to provide information on the range of English language assessments offered towards developing the human capital of the Malaysian public service. The handbook is intended for all test users from various schemes and services, heads of ministries and departments, and other stakeholders who wish to know more about the types of assessments offered. It provides information on English language tests that are mandatory for different purposes. Readers will find this handbook useful in giving them a comprehensive picture of the different tests in terms of purpose, their formats and specifications, and in reporting their performance on the assessments.

Introduction

The development of the English Testing System for the Malaysian Public Service started with the introduction of the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) in 1998. Initially, developed for the Diplomatic and Administrative service, ELPA has since been repurposed to include all other schemes within the public service. On December 21 2016, the Public Service Department (PSD) of Malaysia issued an official circular appointing the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) as the “Third Party” for the English language assessment of public service officers. The circular, involving federal public officers from across 28 schemes of service and 4 grade levels, outlined the processes and procedures as well as the prerequisites for ministries and agencies to fast-track talented and competent officers to key positions in government. This circular set in motion the application of the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) as one of the few screening instruments for officers selected for the fast-tracking.

The fast-tracking idea was first mooted in 2015 when the PSD recognised the importance of preparing a talented pool of officers for higher strategic positions in the government service. The PSD believed that officers selected for such positions should, among others, possess a high degree of English language competency to enable them to function effectively. Such was the relevance and sense of urgency in the use of ELPA for this purpose.

The development of ELPA has been made possible through the “English for the Malaysian Civil Service (EMCS)” Project which was a collaborative project between INTAN and British Council. This collaboration enabled INTAN to develop the ELPA based on expertise from an internationally acknowledged institution for English language testing, namely, the Testing and Evaluation Unit (TEU), Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Reading.

The PSD also instituted other leadership and managerial assessment programs for officers in different grades of service. English language assessments have become an important component for these programmes. INTAN was tasked with producing and administering the different English language tests to address the needs of the various service groups. As a result, the English Language Testing System for the Public Service slowly came to play its role as envisioned with the development of the ELPA.

This system comprises a range of tests to assess diverse groups of officers for different purposes. Currently, the testing system offers English assessments for fast-track purposes, in-service training application, and for leadership development and assessment programmes. Information from test performance is also used to put in place a mechanism to facilitate appropriate planning and relevant language training for development purposes. All assessments offered under the English Language Testing System for the Malaysian Public Service are made fit to purpose as they draw on the language needs of officers from the public service context.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (ELPA 1.0)

PURPOSE

To assess the proficiency in English of officers in the Professional and Managerial Category in relation to the requirements of their jobs.

DURATION

The total time needed to assess the three skills in reading, writing, and spoken interaction is about two hours. However, the actual time will vary as the administration of the Spoken Interaction Module involves additional time.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

- Reading Module;
- Writing Module; and
- Spoken Interaction Module

Reading Module

Description

The Reading Module assesses the ability to read effectively and comprises two sections. The first assesses candidates' ability to read quickly using skimming and scanning strategies to retrieve information. The second assesses their ability to read carefully to extract main ideas and lexical meaning, and to make inferences from the text. The texts for this module are 400 to 500 words long and are extracted from journal and magazine articles, newspapers, and non-fiction books - materials that candidates are likely to read in their jobs. Topics are broadly professional and drawn mainly from management and administration fields. Care has been taken to ensure that while topics are specific to public service work settings they are general to all ministries and departments.

Format

SECTION	FOCUS	ITEM TYPE	TIME	SAMPLE DIMENSIONS	WEIGHTAGE
A	Reading quickly	Scanning for details: 5 multi-choice questions	4 mins	1 to 2 texts	50%
		Skimming for gist: 2 multi-choice questions	6 mins	2 texts	
B	Reading carefully	Extracting main ideas, making contextual inferences: 5 short answer questions	20 mins	1 to 2 texts	50%
		Inferring lexical meaning: 5 short answer questions		1 to 2 texts	

Section A - Reading Quickly

This section consists of two sub-sections. In Part I, candidates have to answer five questions by scanning through one or two texts or a collection of texts for specific details such as facts and figures. Candidates have **4 minutes** to answer **ALL** questions.

Part II contains two texts with one question each. Candidates are required to answer the questions by skimming each text for its gist or overall meaning. Candidates have **3 minutes** to answer **each question**.

Section B - Reading Carefully

This section also consists of two sub-sections. In Part I, candidates have to read one or two texts carefully to answer five questions. These questions assess candidates' ability to identify or recognise explicitly stated main ideas and infer propositional meaning. Part II contains five questions which require candidates to infer lexical meaning from context.

Performance Scale

The performance of candidates on the reading module will be assessed in terms of their ability to read quickly and carefully and represented as bands on a reading profile. A candidate may thus obtain a result ranging from 1 to 5. The reading profile for this purpose is given below.

The Reading Profile

BAND	DESCRIPTION
5	Fully able to read quickly for gist and important details. Fully able to understand explicitly stated and inferred meanings.
4	Reasonably able to read quickly for gist and important details. Reasonably able to understand explicitly stated and inferred meanings.
3	Moderately able to read quickly for gist and important details. Moderately able to understand explicitly stated and inferred meanings.
2	Barely able to read quickly for gist and important details. Barely able to understand explicitly stated and inferred meanings.
1	Almost unable to read quickly for gist and important details. Almost unable to understand explicitly stated and inferred meanings.

Writing Module

Description

Comprising two sections, candidates are required to write a formal **letter** in Section A while Section B involves the writing of a formal **report**. For both, candidates are encouraged to plan their work and prepare rough drafts before they write the final letter or report. Blank pages are provided in the Assessment booklet for this purpose.

Format

SECTION	TASK TYPE	TIME ALLOCATED	WEIGHTAGE	SAMPLE DIMENSIONS
A	Formal Letter	30 mins.	50%	One task; length 1 page (150 - 200 words)
B	Formal Report	45 mins.	50%	One task; length 2-3 pages (400 - 600 words)

Section A - Formal Letter

In this section, candidates are given assistance in the form of content input to write a formal letter. This could be a letter requiring candidates to reply. Alternatively, it could be a description of a situation requiring candidates to provide an appropriate response. Topics are mainly from administration and management fields. The types of letters a candidate to be written include:

- Expressing opinions, justifications
- Expressing an apology
- Giving information, directions, explanation, instructions, advice
- Requesting clarification, assistance (including invitations)
- Making or replying to complaints

Letters should be about 150 to 200 words excluding the inside address, salutations, and complimentary close.

Section B - Formal Report

In this section, candidates are required to write a short formal report of about 400 to 600 words. Assistance will be given in the form of content input which will usually be a description of a situation and a requirement for a report to be made. The situations for the reports draw upon public service work settings and simulate them as far as possible. Topics are broadly administration and management and include:

- Presenting proposals for solving a problem
- Presenting justifications or arguments for or against a course of action
- Evaluating a situation or problem, making deductions, providing comments, and presenting solutions

Candidates are advised to organise their reports according to the following sections:

- Introduction / Background
- Objectives / Purpose (of the report)
- Issues / Discussion
- Recommendations (in brief)
- Conclusion

The purpose of such a structure is to ensure that candidates will incorporate these salient elements in their report.

Performance Scale

Candidates are assessed on the following criteria for the writing tasks in both Sections A and B:

- Task fulfilment - relevance of content
- Organisation
- Grammar and vocabulary
- Appropriateness of style
- Punctuation and spelling

This is to ensure that all the elements contributing to effective writing are covered. Task fulfilment is included as a criterion as candidates should demonstrate not only linguistic ability but also the ability to effectively understand and address a given problem or situation.

The rating scale for writing is an analytic one. Candidates are assessed in terms of each of the criteria specified above for both the tasks to yield a composite measure of writing ability. Thus, performance in the writing module will be reported in relation to the bands on an analytic scale ranging from 1 to 5 instead of scores. The profile writing ability will consist of the descriptors corresponding to the scores obtained. Descriptors will be given for each of the criteria specified on the analytic rating scale. . For example, the writing profile for a candidate awarded a Band 3 might be:

Writing:

- Adequately addresses some parts of a writing task.
- Arguments are generally well organised and developed.
- Accurately uses a good range of grammatical structures.
- Uses a limited range of vocabulary.
- Uses reasonable style.
- Has spelling and punctuation errors that hamper communication.

THE SPOKEN INTERACTION MODULE

Description

The Spoken Interaction Module consists of two sections where candidates have to perform different speaking tasks, that is, a telephone conversation, discussion, and interview. All tasks involve two-way communications with another candidate or with the examiner or interlocutor for the interview. The discussion and interview involve face-to-face interactions with a candidate and an interlocutor respectively. In the telephone conversation, however, candidates do not face each other during the performance of the task.

Format

TASK TYPE	MODE	TIME	WEIGHTAGE	SAMPLE DIMENSIONS
Interview	Candidate to interviewer; face-to-face	5 mins	50%	One task
Telephone conversation Or Discussion	Officer to officer; no visual contact Or Officer to officer; face-to-face	5-7 mins.	50%	One task

Section A - Interview

In this section, candidates have to complete a pre-interview questionnaire which includes questions about their jobs, and about their professional and academic qualifications. This questionnaire serves as a guide for the interlocutor during the interview.

Section B - Telephone Conversation OR Discussion

Candidates perform either of these tasks in pairs. They are given assistance in the form of role cards which describe a situation they have to role-play. They are given time to read and understand their respective roles and allowed to ask the interlocutor for assistance should they find difficulty understanding their roles. In the first task, they engage in a telephone conversation and in the second, they are involved in a discussion. Time given for this task is 5 minutes.

Every attempt is made to make the situations representative of real public service work settings. Topics for the situations are drawn mainly from administration and management fields and include:

- Providing information, explanation, or clarification via the telephone
- Addressing a problem and seeking solutions via discussion

Performance Scale

A 6-point holistic rating scale is used to assess performance on both tasks and the results combined and reported as bands on a scale of 1 to 6. See **Appendix B** for the Speaking Performance rating scale.

REPORTING OF SCORES

A separate band for each module will be reported together with a composite score derived from combining the scores of all three modules. The Reading and Writing modules are reported on a band of 1 to 5 while the Speaking Module is reported on a band of 1 to 6. The composite score will be reported as a single score and a band which reflects the level of English Language user or proficiency level i.e., Band 5 (Expert), Band 4 (Competent), Band 3 (Adequate), Band 2 (Limited), and Band 1 (Extremely Limited). (**See Appendix C for ELPA Performance Descriptors**)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (ELPA) FOR FAST-TRACK PURPOSES (ELPA 2.0)

PURPOSE

The purpose of the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) is to assess the proficiency in English of officers in the professional and managerial category in relation to the requirements of their job for fast-track purposes. Officers identified for such purposes can be promoted to strategic positions if they fulfil all requirements set by the Public Service Department including English competency.

Like ELPA 1.0, the three assessment components are retained. The test tasks for reading and writing are similar to ELPA 1.0. However, for the Spoken Interaction Module, new test tasks which are more relevant and suitable for the target test takers are incorporated in ELPA 2.0.

DURATION

The total time needed to assess the three skills is approximately 11/2 hours although actual times will vary as the administration of the Spoken Interaction Module involves additional waiting time.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

- A Reading Module;
- A Writing Module; and
- A Speaking Module: i) Read and Respond to Text and; ii) Individual Short Talk

Reading Module

Refer to ELPA 1.0

Writing Module

Refer to ELPA 1.0

Speaking Module

Description

The Spoken Module consists of **2 tasks** which candidates have to complete as follows:

PART	TASK TYPE	MODE	TIME ALLOWED	WEIGHTAGE	SAMPLE DIMENSIONS
i	Read and Respond to Text	Officer to officer; no visual contact	5 mins.	50%	One task
ii	Individual Short Talk	Officer to officer; face-to-face	7-10 mins.	50%	One task

Part i - Read and Respond to a Text

Candidates will be given a text based on current issues in management, leadership, social sciences, and others. They have 2 minutes to read the text and the examiner will ask a question based on it. The reading text is mainly used to springboard discussion on the topic of the text. Candidates are advised to relate to their work experience as much as possible when they respond to the question. They have 3 minutes to respond and a score is awarded based on the Holistic Speaking Performance rating scale.

Part ii – Individual Short Talk

In this task, candidates have to speak for 3 minutes on a given topic and have 3 minutes to prepare for it. All candidates will be given guidelines to prepare for this task. See Appendix D.

Scoring

Two forms of scoring are used for the Speaking Module - holistic and analytical. The holistic scoring is based on a 6-point Speaking Performance Rating Scale with the following descriptors:

- a. able to converse confidently and fluently
- b. able to maintain theme of the discussion/conversation
- c. able to present arguments coherently
- d. able to demonstrate an excellent facility with the language

For the analytical scoring, the following assessment criteria are used to assess the effectiveness of the output:

- Task Fulfilment
 - a. Speaks clearly and within given time
 - b. Relevant and suitable content
 - c. Coherence and organisation

- Delivery
 - Eye contact
 - Signposting
 - Fluency
 - Grammar and vocabulary

REPORTING OF SCORES

A separate band for each module is reported together with a composite score derived from combining the scores of all three modules. The Reading and Writing modules are reported on a band of 1 to 5 while that for the Speaking Module on a band of 1 to 6. The composite score is also be reported as a single score and a band which reflects the level of English Language user or proficiency level i.e., Band 5 (Expert), Band 4 (Competent), Band 3 (Adequate), Band 2 (Limited), and Band 1 (Extremely Limited). (**See Appendix C for ELPA Performance Descriptors**)

ENGLISH SPEAKING ASSESMENT FOR ADVANCED LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME (ALMP)

PURPOSE

To assess the English speaking ability of officers attending the **Advanced Leadership Management Programme** on a variety of professionally-related themes and tasks.

TARGET GROUP

JUSA C

DURATION

The speaking assessment takes approximately 10-15 minutes per candidate excluding waiting time.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT

Description

For this speaking assessment, candidates perform two tasks namely: i) Read and Respond to Text; and ii) Impromptu Discourse.

Part I – Read and Respond to a Text

Candidates are provided a text based on current issues in management, leadership, social sciences, and others. They will have to read for **2 minutes** and the examiner will ask **one question** related to the text. The reading text is mainly used to springboard discussion on the topic of the text. Candidates have **3 minutes** to respond and a score awarded based on the Holistic Speaking Performance rating scale.

Part II – Impromptu Discourse

For this task, candidates have to respond to three prompts based on the topic they have chosen as follows:

- (i) Reason for the choice of topic;
- (ii) Elaborate on the topic by giving 2-3 points and supporting the points with relevant argument or details; and
- (iii) Explain how the topic is related to their work.

Candidates will respond to the prompts with little or no preparation time given. The task takes 4-5 minutes to complete. The candidates will be assessed on

how well they explain the topic based on the given prompts. Both holistic and analytical performance rating scales are used to assess performance.

MODE OF ASSESSMENT

Face-to-face with an examiner (one-to-one).

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Two forms of scoring are used - holistic and analytical. The holistic scoring is based on the 6-point Speaking Performance Rating Scale with the following descriptors:

- able to converse confidently and fluently
- able to maintain theme of the discussion/conversation
- able to present arguments coherently
- able to demonstrate excellent facility with the language

For analytical scoring, the following assessment criteria assess the effectiveness of the output:

- Task Fulfilment
 - Promptness in responding
 - Active participation
 - Expression of ideas
 - Quality of ideas
- Delivery
 - Fluency
 - Grammar and vocabulary

REPORTING OF SCORES

Scores are reported on a band of 1 to 6 based on the average score of the two parts. The following descriptors are used to explain the different speaking bands:

- Band 1 - Intermittent Speaker
- Band 2 - Extremely Limited Speaker
- Band 3 - Marginal Speaker
- Band 4 - Modest Speaker
- Band 5 - Competent Speaker
- Band 6 - Expert Speaker

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPEAKING ASSESSMENT FOR
ADVANCED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT
PROGRAMME
(ALEAP)**

PURPOSE

To assess the English speaking ability of officers attending the **Advanced Leadership Development and Management Programme** on a variety of professionally-related themes and tasks.

TARGET GROUP

Grade 54

DURATION

The speaking assessment takes approximately 10-15 minutes per candidate excluding waiting time.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT

Description

For this speaking assessment, candidates have to perform three tasks namely, i) Interview; ii) Extended Discourse; and iii) Read and Respond to a text.

Part I – Interview

Candidates have to respond to questions about themselves, their work experience, and future plans. The interview is based on a pre-interview questionnaire and takes about 3 - 4 minutes.

Part ii – Extended Discourse

This is a continuation of the interview task where the examiner prompts the candidate to speak for 2 to 3 minutes on general or work-related topics. A separate score is awarded for this part.

Part iii – Read and Respond to a Text

For this task, candidates are given a text based on current issues in management, leadership, social sciences, and others. They read for **2 minutes** and the examiner asks **one question** related to the text. The reading text is mainly used to springboard discussion on the topic of the text. Candidates have **3 minutes** to respond and a score awarded based on the Holistic Speaking Performance rating scale.

MODE OF ASSESSMENT

Face-to-face with an examiner (one-to-one).

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All tasks are scored using a holistic rating scale based on a 6-point Speaking Performance Rating Scale with the following descriptors:

- able to converse confidently and fluently
- able to maintain theme of the discussion/conversation
- able to present arguments coherently
- able to demonstrate excellent facility with the language

For the analytical scoring, the following assessment criteria are used to assess the effectiveness of the output:

- Task Fulfilment
 - Promptness in responding
 - Active participation
 - Expression of ideas
 - Quality of ideas
- Delivery
 - Fluency
 - Grammar and vocabulary

REPORTING OF SCORES

Scores are reported on a band of 1 to 6 and based on the average score of the two parts. The following descriptors are used to explain the different speaking bands:

- Band 1 - Intermittent Speaker
- Band 2 - Extremely Limited Speaker
- Band 3 - Marginal Speaker
- Band 4 - Modest Speaker
- Band 5 - Competent Speaker
- Band 6 - Expert Speaker

**INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE
FOR MIDDLE MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME
(MLEAP)**

PURPOSE

To assess the speaking ability of officers attending the **Middle Management and Leadership Program** on a variety of professionally-related themes and tasks.

TARGET GROUP

Grade 52

DURATION

The speaking assessment takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes per group. Each group is given 3 minutes to prepare individually while the time given for each group to discuss their topic is 15 minutes.

MODE OF ASSESSMENT

Face-to-face with an examiner (one-to-one).

This task assesses mid-management officers' English speaking ability on a wide range of current and relevant topics for the public service.

TASK DESCRIPTION

Candidates participate in a discussion as follows:

- **Three** candidates participate in the discussion at a time.
- The examiner will provide the discussion topic in the examination room.
- Candidates have **3 minutes** to prepare for the topic individually.
- Candidates are encouraged to gather as many points to support their arguments.
- They may google for information.
- Once the examiner prompts the start of the discussion, **any candidate** can start the discussion.
- The duration for the discussion is **12 minutes** during which candidates can **respond and contribute as much** as they can.
- The examiner will prompt the end of the discussion.

SCORING

Two forms of scoring are used - holistic and analytical. The holistic scoring is based on the 6-point Speaking Performance Rating Scale with the following descriptors:

- a)** able to converse confidently and fluently
- b)** able to maintain theme of the discussion/conversation
- c)** able to present arguments coherently
- d)** able to demonstrate excellent facility with the language

For the analytical scoring, the following assessment criteria are used to assess the effectiveness of the output:

- Task Fulfilment
 - a. Promptness in responding
 - b. Active participation
 - c. Expression of ideas
 - d. Engaging others
 - e. Quality of ideas
- Delivery
- Fluency
- Grammar and vocabulary

REPORTING OF SCORES

Scores are reported on a band of 1 to 6 and based on the average score of the holistic and analytical scores. The following descriptors are used to explain the different speaking bands:

- Band 1 - Intermittent Speaker
- Band 2 - Extremely Limited Speaker
- Band 3 - Marginal Speaker
- Band 4 - Modest Speaker
- Band 5 - Competent Speaker
- Band 6 - Expert Speaker

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAIRED INTERACTION SPEAKING
ASSESSMENT FOR EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ASSESSMENT
PROGRAMME (ELEAP)**

PURPOSE

To assess the English speaking ability of officers as part of the requirement of those selected to the ELEAP program.

TARGET GROUP

Grades 44 and 48 identified for the ELEAP Program

DURATION

8 – 10 minutes per pair

DESCRIPTION

Candidates perform one speaking task in a discussion involving a face-to-face interaction/two-way communication with another candidate. They are given assistance in the form of role cards that describe a situation they have to role-play. Candidates are given time to read and understand their respective role cards and can refer to the interlocutor for assistance for clarification. They have **8-10 minutes to complete the task**. The situations are representative of real public service work settings with topics drawn mainly from administration and management fields.

SCORING

Tasks are scored on a holistic scale based on a 6-point Speaking Performance Rating Scale with the following descriptors:

- a) able to converse confidently and fluently;
- b) able to maintain theme of the discussion/conversation;
- c) able to present arguments coherently; and
- d) able to demonstrate excellent facility with the language.

REPORTING OF SCORES

Scores are reported on a band of 1 to 6. The following descriptors are used to explain the different speaking bands:

- Band 1 - Intermittent Speaker
- Band 2 - Extremely Limited Speaker
- Band 3 - Marginal Speaker
- Band 4 - Modest Speaker
- Band 5 - Competent Speaker
- Band 6 - Expert Speaker

WRITING COMPONENT RATING SCALE

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
1. Task fulfilment	5 Addresses all parts of a writing task effectively.
	4 Addresses some parts of a writing task effectively.
	3 Addresses some parts of a writing task adequately.
	2 Attempts to address a writing task but is flawed in many areas.
	1 Is completely unable to address a writing task and seriously flawed in many areas.
2. Organisation	5 Is well organised and well developed.
	4 Is generally well organised and well developed.
	3 Is reasonably well organised and well developed though it occasionally lacks coherence and cohesion.
	2 Is weak in organisation and at times uses irrelevant and inappropriate details.
	1 Displays serious dis-organisation and underdevelopment.
3. Grammar	5 Uses a full range of grammatical structures accurately.
	4 Uses a good range of grammatical structures accurately.
	3 Uses an adequate range of grammatical structures with adequate accuracy.
	2 Uses a limited range of grammatical structures with limited accuracy.
	1 Uses an extremely limited range of grammatical structures with very limited accuracy.
4. Vocabulary	5 Uses a full range of vocabulary.
	4 Uses a good range of vocabulary.
	3 Uses an adequate range of vocabulary.
	2 Uses a limited range of vocabulary.
	1 Uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary.
5. Style	5 Uses appropriate style.
	4 Has very little problem in using appropriate style.
	3 Uses reasonable style.
	2 Is unsuccessful or inconsistent in using appropriate style.
	1 Has no awareness of appropriate style
6. Mechanics	5 Has almost no errors of spelling and punctuation.
	4 Has relatively few significant errors of spelling and punctuation.
	3 Has a number of spelling and punctuation errors.
	2 Has an accumulation of spelling and punctuation errors which impedes communication.
	1 Has serious and frequent errors of spelling and punctuation.

HOLISTIC RATING SCALE FOR SPEAKING

BAND	DESCRIPTION
6	<p>Expert Speaker Is able to converse confidently and fluently. Can maintain theme of the discourse/conversation. Presents arguments coherently. Demonstrates very good grasp of the language.</p>
5	<p>Competent Speaker Is able to converse reasonably confidently and fluently. Stumbles and hesitates at times. Can maintain theme of the discussion/conversation most of the time. Presents arguments fairly coherently. Demonstrates a fairly good grasp of the language.</p>
4	<p>Modest speaker Is able to converse with moderate confidence and fluency. Maintains theme of the discussion/conversation, but with some difficulty. Gist of conversation is relevant. Demonstrates some grasp of the language but some clear deficiencies in mastery of language patterns. May need to be asked for repetition or clarification.</p>
3	<p>Marginal speaker Converses with little confidence or fluency: the conversation is neither easy nor flowing. Maintains conversation/discussion but rather passively; rarely takes the initiative. Shows little ability to present coherent argument. Demonstrates some grasp of the language, but tends to rely on stock phrases. Has difficulty in following English at normal speed.</p>
2	<p>Extremely limited speaker Conversation/discussion is laborious and punctuated with hesitations and misunderstandings. Cannot make major contributions to discussion. Is unable to produce continuous and accurate discourse: relies heavily on stock phrases. Only catches part of normal speech: can just hang on to the gist of conversation.</p>
1	<p>Intermittent speaker Is unable to have a conversation/discussion. Communication is patchy and sporadic. Has no working facility with the language.</p>

ELPA PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS

BAND	DESCRIPTION
5	<p><u>EXPERT USER</u> High level of proficiency and sophistication. Demonstrates sophistication in thinking when responding either in speaking or in writing. Able to express ideas and maintain a conversation on familiar and work related topics confidently and with ease.</p> <p>Can communicate effectively in providing appropriate responses to given situations. Has excellent language control for efficient and effective interaction using systematic and frequently sophisticated strategies for conveying and expressing ideas and messages.</p>
4	<p><u>COMPETENT USER</u> Good language proficiency. Demonstrates higher order thinking when responding either by speaking or in writing. Able to express ideas and maintain a conversation on familiar and work related topics confidently and with relative ease.</p> <p>Can communicate well in providing appropriate responses to given situations. Has good language control and is consistent and effective in the different types of interaction. Able to use systematic and occasionally sophisticated strategies for conveying and expressing ideas and messages.</p>
3	<p><u>ADEQUATE USER</u> Adequate language proficiency. Demonstrates sufficient responses to the different situations either in speaking or in writing. Needs further enhancement or reinforcement to help express ideas and messages effectively.</p> <p>Communication skills need further strengthening in terms of providing appropriate responses to different situations. Has a sufficient control of language to fully understand short, non-complex texts or discourse and can express ideas in relation to oneself and one's immediate environment with a degree of fluency and spontaneity.</p>
2	<p><u>LIMITED USER</u> Conversation/discussion is laborious and punctuated with hesitations and misunderstandings.</p> <p>Unable to communicate much in conversations. Is unable to produce continuous and accurate discourse in either speaking or writing, relies heavily on stock phrases. Only catches part of normal speech, can just hang on to the gist of conversations.</p>
1	<p><u>EXTREMELY LIMITED USER</u> Poor language proficiency. Has significant problems in terms of providing appropriate responses to different situations either in speaking or in writing.</p> <p>Communication is patchy or sporadic. Has no working facility or control of the language.</p>

PREPARATION FOR INDIVIDUAL SHORT TALK

Organising your talk – some tips

One of the challenges of giving a short talk is to organise your content so that your message can be understood. So how can you organise your talk with little/no preparation time?

Here are some tips when preparing for the **Individual Short Talk Task**.

1. Narrow the scope of your topic

- Often you will have a topic which is quite general. Decide on what aspect of the topic you wish to talk about. See the example below:
 - Topic: *Maintaining a skilled workforce in the public service*
 - Narrowed topic/scope :
 - *Challenges in maintaining a skilled workforce in the public service*; or
 - *Ways we can maintain a skilled workforce in the public service*; or
 - *Maintaining a skilled workforce: how do we deal with the aging factor*
- As long as the scope you have defined is related to the given topic, you will not be penalised.

2. Decide on your content

- Once you have decided to narrow your topic, come up with only 2-3 main points for your talk.
- Arrange the key points in logical order and expand them with supporting material such as examples, facts and figures (if you know), and anecdotes or examples from real-life situations.

3. Structure your talk

a) Divide your talk into three sections:

- Introduction (beginning)
 - Inform the audience in the introduction what your subject is and how you have organised the presentation (by stating the main points). In other words, give a preview of your talk.
- Main Content (middle)

- Then inform them of the details of the main points /or messages (by expanding and qualifying the key points in more detail and providing supporting evidence).
- Conclusion (end)
 - Inform the audience of what you have just told them (by summarising the key main points, concluding with the main subject again). Try to use different words when summarising. End decisively within the stipulated time.

4. Use Signposting

- Used properly, signposting can ensure logical and coherent delivery.
- Signposting tells the audience where you are headed.

e.g.

“There are three things you should do to make your vehicle last. First, you should ... Second, you should ... Third, you should... My second point is, let me move on to the next point, another advantage of...”

COMPARING ELPA WITH OTHER ESTABLISHED ASSESSMENTS

TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS	SUGGESTED CORRESPONDING SCORES	
ELPA	Band 5	Band 4
Cambridge Advanced Proficiency	C2	C1
IELTS	Band 9	Band 7 - 8
TOEFL	590 - 777	550 -587
TOEIC	785 - 990	605- 780
PTE General	Level 5	Level 4
PTE Academic	85+	76- 84
Michigan	ECPE	ECCE
BEC	-	BEC Higher (C1) & BEC Vantage (B2)

TESTING RESOURCES

Sample Items for ELPA's Reading Quickly

Sample 1: Reading Quickly (Skimming – 3 Mins)

When we think of fraught relationships, we often think about the relationship between business-folks and their smartphones. Have we become servants or masters to our smartphones? Smart devices are sometimes empowering. They put a world of information at our fingertips. They free people to work from home instead of squeezing onto a train with malodorous strangers. That is a huge boon for parents seeking flexible work hours. Smartphones and tablets can also promote efficiency by allowing people to get things done in spare moments that would otherwise be wasted, such as while queuing for service. They can even help slackers create the illusion that they are working around the clock, by programming their e-mail to be sent at 1am.

But for most people the servant has become the master. Not long ago only doctors were on call all the time. Now everybody is. Bosses think nothing of invading their employees' free time. Work invades the home far more than domestic chores invade the office. Otherwise-sane people check their smartphones obsessively, even during pre-dinner drinks, and send e-mails first thing in the morning and last thing at night.

This is partly because smartphones are addictive. When Martin Lindstrom, a branding guru, tried to identify the ten sounds that affect people most powerfully, he found that a vibrating phone came third, after the Intel chime and a giggling baby. BlackBerrys and iPhones provide relentless stimuli interspersed with rewards. Whenever you check the glowing rectangle, there is a fair chance you will see a message from a client or your boss or at least an e-mail from a Nigerian gentleman offering you \$1m if you share your bank details with him. Smartphones are the best excuse yet devised for procrastination. How many people can honestly say that they have never *pruned* their e-mails to put off tackling more demanding tasks?

Hyper-connectivity exaggerates some of the most destabilising trends in the modern workplace: the rise of global supply chains and the general cult of flexibility. Smartphones make it easier for managers to change their minds at the last moment: for example, to e-mail a minion at 11pm to tell him he must fly to Pittsburgh tomorrow. The devices also make it easier for managers in one-time zone to spoil the evenings of managers in another.

Employees find it ever harder to distinguish between "on-time" and "off-time"—and indeed between real work and make-work. Executives are lumbered with two overlapping workdays: a formal one full of meetings and an informal one spent trying to keep up with the torrent of e-mails and messages.

None of this is good for business people's marriages or mental health. It may be bad for business, too. When bosses change their minds at the last minute, it is hard to plan for the future. And several studies have shown what ought to be common sense: that people think more deeply if they are not constantly distracted.

Retrieved and adapted from <http://www.economist.com>

1. Which of the following statements best summarises the whole article?
 - A) Smartphones are bad for business people.
 - B) Business people should use smartphones efficiently.
 - C) Smartphones can help businesses increase productivity.
 - D) People have become obsessive users of smartphones.

Answer 1 – D

Sample 2: Reading quickly (Scanning – 3 mins)

PETALING JAYA: Tune Hotels Regional Services Sdn Bhd, the budget hotel chain owned by Tan Sri Tony Fernandes, head of South-East Asia's biggest low-cost carrier, may go public in early 2013 to expand its hospitality network, its chief executive officer said. Tune Hotels, a unit of investment company Tune Group led by Fernandes, aimed to have as many as 60 hotels across 10 countries including the UK and India by the end of 2012. According to Mark Lankaster, the CEO of Tune Hotels, their goal was to operate 100 by 2014. One of the ways for them to achieve this is to raise more capital to invest and continue the brand-growing.

Fernandes, 46, is aiming to repeat his success with AirAsia Bhd, which was listed in 2004 and overtook national carrier Malaysia Airlines (MAS) to become the country's biggest airline by market value. AirAsia's shares have doubled while MAS continues to fall. AirAsia has said it intends to spin off and list its Thai and Indonesian units this year, while its long-haul associate AirAsia X Sdn Bhd may sell shares in Europe and Asia in 2012.

Tune Group, which Fernandes co-founded with AirAsia's deputy CEO Kamarudin Meranun, invested in businesses ranging from hotels, prepaid mobile-phone services to online financial products. Petaling Jaya-based Tune Hotels had been reinvesting its income to grow the business. The company is preparing itself for an initial public offering and has yet to decide which stock exchange it would be listed on.

Tune Hotels adopts a so-called "demand-driven" pricing model similar to AirAsia's, which encourages guests to book ahead in order to secure cheaper room rates. While international hotel operators including France's Accor SA have set up economy brands such as Ibis and All Seasons targeting the budget-conscious travellers, they don't compete directly in the bargain-bucket segment targeted by Tune Hotels, said Malaysian Association of Hotels vice-president Ivo Nekvapil.

Tune Hotels has expanded to 12 properties in Malaysia, Indonesia and the UK since the opening of its first hotel in downtown Kuala Lumpur four years ago. Development deals were signed to add 90 more assets in South-East Asia, Australia, London and India. While the company owned most of the hotels currently under operation, it had accelerated the expansion through partnerships and franchise arrangements. Recently, Tune Hotels teamed up with UK-based investment company Queensway Group Ltd to develop and run 15 properties in the Greater London area by 2017, and it's working with Apodis Hospitality Group to invest in 20 Indian hotels.

Fernandes entered the airline business by mortgaging his home and digging into savings to buy then AirAsia for RM1 in 2001, assuming its debts and two ageing Boeing Co planes. He now has a net worth of US\$470mil, according to Forbes magazine, and is also principal of the Lotus F1 Racing team. – Bloomberg

Retrieved and adapted from *The Star*

1. According to the passage, which of the following is a goal of Tune Hotels? They will

- A) be listed in 2015.
- B) operate 100 hotels by 2014.
- C) have 70 hotels in 10 countries
- B) merge with other companies to accelerate expansion

2. According to the passage, when was Air Asia listed?

- A) 2004
- B) 2012
- C) 2014
- D) 2017.

Answers (1-B, 2-A)

Sample Items for ELPA’s Reading Carefully

Sample 3: Reading carefully

World leaders and information gatekeepers have struggled to determine how best to address the epidemic of “fake news.” French President Emmanuel Macron joined the struggle recently, providing his own solution for how to curb the spread of misinformation online: Make it illegal.

Though the exact details of the proposed bill are not yet known, Macron said the law—which would apply only during campaigns—would boost transparency online by mandating that social media platforms must reveal who is paying for sponsored content, as well as impose a cap on how much can be spent. He said judges would be empowered to take down false content and even block access to websites where such content appears.

France, like the United States and others, has laws that protect freedom of speech. In fact, Article 11 of the country’s Declaration of Human and Civil Rights guarantees that all citizens “may speak, write, print freely, except what is tantamount to the abuse of this liberty in the cases determined by Law.” Still, some critics fear the proposed law could represent a violation.

The issue resonates with people both within and beyond France. Germany, have already pursued legislative efforts to combat the spread of false information. Still, vocalizing opposition to the **proliferation** of fake news is one thing—identifying it is another. It’s for this very reason that the European Commission announced in November the creation of a high-level group to advise on policy decisions focused on countering the spread of false information online.

Some believe usage of the term “fake news” is itself problematic. Claire Wardle, the strategy and research director of First Draft News, a non-profit research group, told CNN’s *Reliable Sources* in November that the phrase “fake news” is a “woefully inadequate” way to describe the challenges of combatting false information that may be spread with or without harmful intent, arguing that it is instead “being used globally by politicians to describe information that they don’t like.”

World leaders and journalists aren’t the only ones endeavouring to tackle the spread of misinformation. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, where false information is often propagated, have announced their own plans for countering fake news. In October, Facebook began rolling out a transparency tool that will allow North America-based users to view the ads of any particular page running on Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger, regardless of whether or not that user is part of the ad’s intended target audience. Twitter, on the other hand, has proposed that misinformation should be battled with the right information, arguing that users are at the forefront of challenging fake news. As Gerogina Wright, a reasearcher with the European Programme puts it “the reality is there is no clear definition of fake news and there lies the complexity”.

Adapted from The Atlantic

1. According to the text, how best can world leaders curb the epidemic of misinformation Online?
 - A. Propose legitimate law and censor content to curb dissent and change the narrative.
 - B. The creation of a high-level group to advise on policy decisions to counter false information.
 - C. Social media platforms must reveal who is paying for sponsored content and impose a spending cap on money spent.
 - D. Judges would be empowered to take down false content and block access to websites where fake content appears.

2. The word **proliferation** as used in the text is best replaced by
- A. many types
 - B. existence of
 - C. increase rapidly
 - D. different facets
3. According to the text, the expression all citizens may speak, write, print freely, except what is tantamount to the abuse of this liberty means
- A. Freedom of speech is exclusive.
 - B. Freedom of speech is not absolute.
 - C. Freedom of speech is exhaustive.
 - D. Freedom of speech is protected.
4. Which of the following statements is NOT true about the phrase “fake news is woefully inadequate” as used in the text?
- A. False information is often propagated.
 - B. Fake news may spread without harmful intent.
 - C. Fake news is being used by leaders and politicians for personal gains.
 - D. Twitter has proposed that misinformation should be battled with right information in challenging fake news.
5. Which of the following is a suitable title for the article?
- A. False News
 - B. Unreliable News
 - C. War on Fake News
 - D. Anti-Fake News Law

Answers (1-D, 2-C, 3-D, 4-D, 5-C)

Sample 4: Read and Respond

(ALMP and ALEAP English Speaking Assessments)

Do employees complain that your company suffers from a lack of communication? Or perhaps, as many companies do, you conducted an employee engagement survey and “lack of communication” emerged as a top gripe. This problem may not be what it seems. That means that when you ask someone questions about how they feel about their workplace, people can answer that pretty readily; most people have a sense of whether they feel good or bad about their work and the company. When you ask for more specific information about what is making them feel good or bad, though, people often grope around for a rationale that *could* explain their feelings. Whether it *does* explain them is hard to judge.

When a company has a specific difficulty that it is addressing, people in the organization may point to that specific difficulty as the source of their negative feelings. When there are no readymade concepts floating around, though, people seek out candidates. And that is where “communication” comes in. Because people sense that they were missing needed information, they blame lack of communication for the problem. When taken literally, as a communication problem, managers look for new modes of communication to ensure information is provided. They create new emails, newsletters, meetings, or bulletin boards. The assumption is that greater access to information is the solution.

Before you leap into action, think of the complaints about communication problems as the canary in the coal mine. It’s a signal that something is wrong, but it itself is probably not the problem. Start by engaging with people more specifically, getting them to think about specific things that have gone wrong. Instead of assuming that the cause of the problem is a lack of communication, analyse the situation to figure out why people would feel that they could not act effectively. For example, in an organization where employees thought that people were not communicating as the source of problem soon realised that the problem was due to something else such as unclear structure defining what employees could and could not do. The real culprit was that the HR process needed to be updated to be clearer about job responsibilities, not that the organization as a whole needed to spend more time and effort communicating.

While poor communication is often the scapegoat, it’s not the only one. That’s why it’s important to understand the limitations of people’s ability to report what is bothering them, whether it’s in a one-on-one conversation or in a feedback survey. When you ask people a question, they typically want to give an answer. How good that answer is, depends on what access people have to the information that forms the basis of the answer. Most of us do a pretty lousy job of figuring out what’s actually bothering us. Ultimately, it is important to remember that criticisms of broad topics like communication are a symptom, not a diagnosis. From there, it is crucial to examine complaints more closely to determine what the solutions might be.

Retrieved and adapted from <http://www.economist.com> on x.x.xx

Questions

1. One of the assumptions in this article is that greater access to information **is** the solution for many organisations to address the lack of communication. What do you think of this statement?
2. What does this sentence (found in the third paragraph) mean?

Before you leap into action, think of the complaints about communication problems as the canary in the coalmine.

3. Do you agree with the author that many problems faced by organisations are not necessarily due to lack of communication?
4. As a member of the management team, how does your organisation handle complaints or employees' dissatisfaction?

Sample 5: Topics for Intellectual Discourse (MLEAP Intellectual Discourse)

1. National identity and lack of unity are challenges facing the young people in Malaysia:
2. Setting English competency requirement for Federal In-service Training award pushes the envelope for merit-based reward.

FAQs

1. *What is the reason for the introduction of an assessment system specifically for the public service?*

The assessment system is intended to serve as a platform to produce and deliver a variety of English language assessments for the public service. This testing system addresses the emphasis on the efforts to enhance English language competency in the public service.

2. *What are the types of assessments offered?*

There are several types of assessment offered under this English Language Testing system. The first is the **English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)** which was introduced in 1998 to assess the language proficiency of junior and mid-level Administrative and Diplomatic Service (ADS) officers. Since then it has been repurposed to include others schemes of service. The ELPA assesses reading, writing and speaking as been used among others as a first screen to fast-track officers to strategic positions. This started in 2015. In 2018, the Public Service Department instituted ELPA as a requirement for in-service scholarship application. The most important purpose of this assessment is to put in place a mechanism for follow-up training based on test performance. ELPA is unique as it is the only assessment developed to assess English language competency in a public service workplace context.

Other tests include those under the INTAN's leadership and development programmes. These programmes are designed to develop as well as assess officers' leadership skills before they are recommended for promotion to the next grade level. They are offered at every grade level from Grade 44 (junior executives) to JUSA C (senior executives). As English assessment is one component of this programme, a variety of test tasks suitable for the different grade levels are used to assess English competency. These include using face-to-face interviews, extended discourse, group discussions and Impromptu discourse ways. In addition all test tasks are drawn from public service related themes and focus only on speaking ability.

3. *Who makes the decision on which officers have to be assessed under this system?*

The Public Service Department and Heads of Ministries and Departments may require public service officers to sit for the different assessments as part of their assessment or officers themselves may wish to be assessed on their proficiency in English especially for fast-track purposes.

4. *What will the results of the Assessment be used for?*

This decision lies with the Public Service Department. The results may be used for various purposes, including staff placements, postings, special assignments and promotions. The ELPA provides information about public service officer's English language ability. Other assessments focus on speaking ability. Such information could be useful in deciding if officers need English language training in line with their job requirements.

5. *Who owns the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) and other English language assessments?*

The National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN)

6. *Who will administer the English Language Proficiency Assessment?*

In the interests of security, the developers of the Assessment System, that is, the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) are responsible for administering the Assessment.

7. *Who will the results be reported to? Is there a pass or fail mark and who will determine this? What happens if a candidate fails?*

The results will be reported to the Public Service Department and the heads of departments or agencies requesting the assessment. This assessment does not set a pass/fail mark because results are reported in the form of profiles (descriptors) of ability in reading, writing, and spoken interaction. However, ministries and departments may set their own minimum pass marks for their officers depending on what the results will be used for. Should such pass marks be set, ministries and

departments can decide on a course of action if an officer fails to achieve them.

8. *What is the credibility of the assessment?*

All assessments under the system have been developed by trainers from the Language Cluster in INTAN who have had more than 20 years experience in testing and evaluation. All assessments are fit-to-purpose that is assessing language in the public service context. The initial establishment of the ELPA was made through collaboration with Reading University, the link university for the Assessment System via the “English for the Malaysian Civil Service” (EMCS) Project with the British Council. The assessment development process was also supported by extensive trialling, research, documentation, statistical analyses, training, and security systems.

9. *How does the different assessments compare with IELTS and TOEFL? What is the difference?*

The difference lies in its purpose. All assessments developed under the English Language Testing System are *job-specific* ones and fit to purpose. They are designed to assess the different skills as used in the public service context. IELTS and TOEFL, however, are examinations designed to provide information about English language ability for academic study in universities abroad.

10. *How often can a candidate sit for the Assessment?*


The results of all the assessments are valid for 2 years. This will provide ample time for candidates to enhance their English language competency so that they can improve their performance on future assessments.

11. *How will information about the ELPA be disseminated?*

Information on this Assessment is disseminated through this handbook on the INTAN portal.



National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN)
Bukit Kiara Main Campus
Jalan Bukit Kiara
50480 Kuala Lumpur

 www.intanbk.intan.my

 03-2084 7777

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