



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

In the 2005 Ukrainian oral examination there was a spread of performances; the majority of performances were good, while a small number of students reached either an excellent or only a mediocre standard. As usual, the quality of performances in the Conversation section was better than in the Discussion section. Most students had prepared well, though in some instances students with a good knowledge of the grammatical and stylistic aspects of the Ukrainian language had not been as thorough in preparing the content of their Discussions. All of the more confident students showed a variety of communicative strategies. Students' command of grammar and phonetics was, on the whole, at a good or very good level (exceptionally good in one or two cases).

In general, students engaged in real dialogue with the assessors and responded appropriately to their conversation cues and questions. There were only a few cases where students did not grasp the meaning of what an assessor had said, and almost no instances where the general idea was entirely misunderstood. It was encouraging to see that very few students were intent upon following a prepared script. Almost all students treated the examination as a situation of genuine interaction and communication. Few students used props or images this year, but those who did so used them appropriately.

Students' performances were assessed under the criteria of communication, content and language.

Communication

Most students were able to maintain the exchange and move it forward by responding and elaborating on what the assessors had said. In almost all cases students contributed new material to the dialogue. Rarely did assessors need to use strategies to elicit responses from reticent students, and there were one or two cases where students gave the impression of being very accomplished conversationalists. While there were a number of students who used exceptionally good Ukrainian phonetics, the majority showed the influence of Australian speech to some extent. Even the weaker performances were relatively well paced, with few pauses. Many students were able to paraphrase when the correct word did not come to mind.

Content

The content in the examinations, especially in the Discussion section, was of high quality. The relevance, breadth and depth of material were appropriate in most cases, and in the best performances these were excellent. Students' capacity to refer to, and make judgments about, the material that had been considered during their Detailed Studies was generally high.

Language

Students' accuracy in grammar and pronunciation was generally very good, and in one or two cases it was exceptional. Some students systematically made the same mistake throughout the exchange (for example, attributed an incorrect meaning to a word, or repeated an error in case endings or tense). The polite form was used by all, as is appropriate for an exchange with adults outside the immediate family circle.

Good communication strategies were in evidence as much in the Conversation section of the examination as in the Discussion. Fluency and successful linking, although not always accompanied by linguistic accuracy, were in evidence in all but one or two of the exchanges.

Only the best students displayed a wide variety of stylistic register or a broad range of grammatical forms. The majority, however, effectively used a middle register suitable for most communicative situations.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Section 1 – Conversation

All performances in this section were at least satisfactory. Students encountered little difficulty in handling the prescribed topics of the Conversation, even in the cases when assessors prompted the more confident students to discuss less obvious aspects of their interests or plans for the future. The very best students showed an ability to enter into the



spirit of informality implied by a conversation about personal and family issues, while at the same time paying due respect to the structured and official nature of the examination.

Section 2 – Discussion

Students were provided with a rich topic for the Discussion in 2005 as they had all experienced Ukraine's Orange Revolution at least through the media, if not personally. The majority of students chose to speak on this topic, but there was great variety in which aspects of the event were discussed. These included the music of the revolution, the poisoning of Yushchenko, changes in the image of Ukraine as a consequence of the revolution, the campaigns of the two presidential candidates, the symbols and attributes used during the revolution, and the role of the demonstration at Independence Square. Some of the more accomplished students successfully attempted quite difficult topics, such as the change of national identity during and after the revolution and the significance of the Orange Revolution for people of Ukrainian background outside Ukraine.

While the quality of the content presented in the discussions varied, it was clear that students' interest in the subject matter had caused most of them to seek out good information and to think, sometimes deeply, about the issues that the Orange Revolution brought to light.