

Linguaskill Business Listening and Reading (60-85 minutes)

Methodology and strategies taken from '200% Linguaskill Business' (Prepmyfuture, Ellipses 2020)

Listening

On average 35 questions (the number of questions varies as a function of the candidate's answers and the time available)

The test starts with a B1 question and progresses to higher or lower level questions depending on the candidate's success.

Part 1: Listen and select

Candidates listen to a short audio recording and answer a multiple-choice question with three text options

Approximately 10 questions

Strategies

1. **Read the questions before you listen to the audio recording** (to understand the context of the dialogue; to direct your listening to the answer)
2. **Don't panic if you don't understand everything** – focus on finding the information you need to answer the question
3. **Focus on the context and listen out for false friends**
4. **Spend 15-20 seconds answering each question** (in addition to listening to the audio)

Part 2: Listen and select

Candidates listen to a short audio recording and answer a multiple-choice question with three image

Approximately 12 questions

Strategies

1. **Before listening to the audio recording look at the images and brainstorm keywords** associated with each picture, and keywords which link the images together
2. **The most common types of images:** price tickets, clocks, office equipment, graphs, business cards, signs
3. **You must know:** how to read numbers and the time, office vocabulary, employment vocabulary, travel vocabulary, prepositions to describe graph trends
4. **Spend a maximum of 20 seconds on each question** (in addition to listening to the audio)

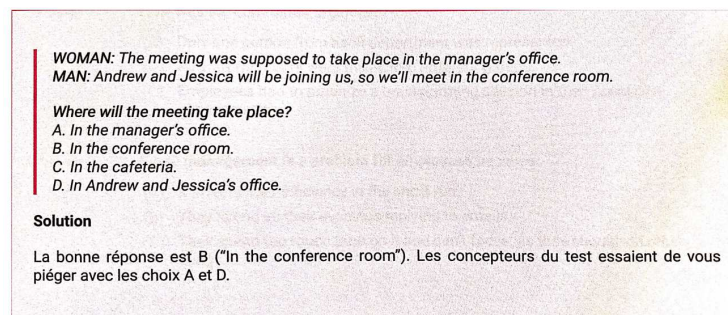
Part 3: Extended listening

Candidates listen to a longer recording and answer a series of multiple-choice questions based on it. The questions are in the same order as the information they hear in the recording.

Approximately 10 questions

Strategies

1. **Read the questions before you listen to the audio recording** (to understand the context of the dialogue; to direct your listening to the answer)
2. **Spend 15-20 seconds answering each question**
3. **Take notes** during the extended listening to avoid listening to the recording twice
4. **Only listen to the audio recording for a second time if needed**
5. **Don't panic if you don't understand everything** – focus on finding the information you need to answer the question
6. **Confusion**: The conversation could include several spatio-temporal references to confuse the candidate. Example:



WOMAN: The meeting was supposed to take place in the manager's office.
MAN: Andrew and Jessica will be joining us, so we'll meet in the conference room.

Where will the meeting take place?
A. In the manager's office.
B. In the conference room.
C. In the cafeteria.
D. In Andrew and Jessica's office.

Solution

La bonne réponse est B ("In the conference room"). Les concepteurs du test essaient de vous piéger avec les choix A et D.

3 types of questions

1. **General information**: Where does the conversation probably take place? Where most likely are the speakers? What are the speakers mainly discussing?
2. **Specific information**: When will the woman start her job? What products are being sold? How can people receive the special offer?
3. **Deduction**: Why are the speakers having this conversation? What can be inferred? What will the woman probably do next?

Reading

On average 35 questions (the number of questions varies as a function of your answers and the time available)

The test starts with a B1 question and progresses to higher or lower level questions depending on the candidate's success.

Equal time must be spent on the listening and reading parts. Do not answer the questions too quickly (to avoid errors), but also avoid answering the questions too slowly (otherwise you won't have time to finish the other parts and Linguaskill cannot give you a score)

The complete test will last a maximum of 85 minutes. Spend 50% of the time on the reading part. Check the progression bar and clock on the screen to observe your progress and remaining time.

Manage your time. A suggestion:

Part 1: 30-40 secs per question

Part 2: 30-40 secs per question

Part 3 and 4: 3-5 mins per block of 5 questions

Part 5: 8 mins per text

Part 1: Read and select

Candidates read a notice, label, memo or letter containing a short text and choose the sentence or phrase that most closely matches the meaning of the text. There are three possible answers.

Around 7 questions

Strategies

1. **Find the clues in the answers.** Pay particular attention to: the subject, spatio-temporal references, negations, comparisons, chronology
2. **Specific lexical fields.** Revise vocabulary specific to information notes, complaints, promotional offers, orders, instructions, directions, graphs and figures

Part 2: Gapped sentences

Candidates read a sentence with a missing word (gap) and choose the correct word to fill the gap. There are three or four choices for each gap.

Around 7 questions

Strategies

1. **Know the classic questions.** There are two categories of questions: vocabulary and grammar. Most frequent grammar points in Linguaskill : grammatical nature, conjugation, link words, conditionals, prepositions, pronouns, comparatives, superlatives, modal verbs, infinitive/gerund.

2. **Think out loud.** For question types 2-4 read the sentences and different options out loud in your head and choose the one which 'sounds the best'. This method avoids lengthy hesitations and can often give the correct answer.
3. **You don't need to understand all the sentence.** Example:

The government is concerned that due to the economic situation, growth in tax revenues might be _____ than expected.

A. weak
B. weakly
C. weaker
D. weakens

Solution

Oublions maintenant tout le texte, sauf les mots qui viennent juste avant et juste après le trou, et concentrons-nous sur cette partie.

[...] might be _____ than expected.

Même sans avoir saisi le sens de toute la phrase, il suffit de se rappeler que le mot « than », suivi ici par un participe passé, est typiquement précédé par le comparatif de l'adjectif. On se souvient aussi que le comparatif des adjectifs courts se forme en ajoutant « -er ».

Il suffit donc de connaître la règle de formation des comparatifs pour savoir qu'ici la seule réponse possible est « weaker ».

Part 3: Multiple-choice gap-fill

Candidates choose the right word or phrase to fill five gaps in a text. There are three or four choices for each gap.

These questions test your grammar and vocabulary

Strategies

1. **Use strategies of elimination and 'read out loud in your head'**
2. **Revise the English tenses.** The answer options are often 4 forms of the same verb. Therefore before you answer define the temporal context of the sentence (often before/just after the verb).

Examples:

Until last week, we _____ any information concerning your current situation.

A. haven't received
B. hadn't received
C. wouldn't receive
D. didn't receive

Solution

Dans cette phrase, nous pouvons repérer un premier indice temporel : « last week ». L'action globale de la phrase se situe donc dans le passé.

D'autre part, pour établir la chronologie entre les différentes actions, nous pouvons utiliser le mot de liaison « until » qui indique une antériorité.

Il s'agit donc du temps avant la semaine dernière, donc avant le passé. La réponse doit donc comprendre le mot *had* + participe passé du verbe. La réponse B est la bonne.

I _____ the resumes of 5 applicants who are to be interviewed for the marketing post...

- A. will soon receive
- B. am now receiving
- C. often receive
- D. I have already received.

Avec seulement cette information, il est impossible de choisir la bonne réponse. On ne sait pas s'il va recevoir les 5 CVs, s'il est en train de les recevoir ou s'il les a déjà reçus. Il faut donc lire plus loin pour trouver la bonne réponse :

Is this the final shortlist or can I expect to receive more...?

Si on comprend que cette phrase veut dire : « S'agit-il de la liste finale ou devrais-je m'attendre à en recevoir davantage ? », on peut déduire qu'il a déjà reçu les CVs (période de temps qui va jusqu'à maintenant). Avec cette déduction, la seule réponse possible est la D (« I have already received »).

3. **Vocabulary traps.** Some questions need you to understand the context of the text, the chronology and overall meaning. Therefore it is too risky to answer sentence by sentence; understand the full text. Example:

Dear Mr Nugent,

I am writing in reply to your letter of 7th January regarding the _____ of your camcorder...

- A. delivery
- B. use
- C. purchase
- D. repair

En lisant l'option A, on peut tout de suite présumer qu'il s'agit de la livraison d'un caméscope et donc inscrire cette réponse sans prendre le temps de lire les autres options. En regardant bien, on voit que les 4 options sont ici possibles, et il faut davantage d'informations pour pouvoir choisir la bonne réponse. Effectivement, c'est dans la phrase suivante que nous trouvons la réponse à cette première question :

Our warranty does not cover damage which is a consequence of failure to follow instructions, and this is clearly the case with your camera. I therefore regret to inform you that we are not able to replace the damaged parts within the terms of the warranty...

Même sans pouvoir comprendre le texte à 100 %, les mots « damage » et « damaged parts » suffisent pour déduire que la lettre du 7 janvier traitait des réparations de la caméra, et non pas de sa livraison, de son utilisation ou de son achat.

Part 4: Open gap-fill

Candidates read a short text in which there are five gaps and write in the missing word in each gap. No choices are given.

Strategies

1. **Read all of the text before answering.**
2. **Check your spelling.** You will not get a point if you make a spelling mistake. Use the rough paper provided to write your answer before typing your answer on the computer
3. **The classics:** Remember that there is only one correct answer, therefore vocabulary/conjugation-type answers cannot be used because of synonyms. To limit the number of acceptable answers, Linguaskill tests a limited number of concepts – so revise these in priority! Articles, phrasal verbs, linking words, comparatives/superlatives and pronouns

Part 5: Extended reading

Candidates read a longer text and answer a series of five multiple-choice questions (with four choices for each question). The questions are in the same order as the information in the text.

Strategies

1. **Time management.** You don't have to read all the text to answer the questions. Skim read the text. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text, so save time and energy by reading the text bit by bit to answer the questions. Read the title and the first question, then start to read the text, find the answer, read the second question etc.
2. **Don't stay blocked.** If you cannot find the answer, move to the next question. At the end of the series of the questions, use the process of elimination if you still don't have the answer.
3. **The importance of linking words.** You can understand the content/purpose of each paragraph by looking at the linking word used (e.g. one the one hand = explains one of two arguments)
4. **Guess the meaning of words through the context.** If you don't understand a word that is essential to understand the text, use the context and the rest of the sentence to guess the definition of the word. Example:

The cows approached the **trough**...

D'abord, on comprend que « trough » (ici en tous cas) est un nom. On commence aussi à avoir une idée de ce que peut être un « trough ». Un mur ? Un arbre ? Une clôture ? Dans tous les cas, quelque chose à voir avec la ferme ou la nature. Souvent, ces connaissances, voire ces intuitions nous suffisent pour bien répondre.

La compréhension d'une langue n'est souvent pas ce qu'on appelle un *zero sum game*, c'est-à-dire ce n'est pas noir ou blanc, oui ou non, 100% ou 0%, mais une question de degré de certitude (je suis à 20/40/60/80% sûr que c'est ça), et il faut parfois vivre avec cette zone de doute.

The cows approached the **trough** and drank the water that was inside it.

Avec le texte qui suit immédiatement le mot, nous avons l'image parfaite de ce qu'est un « trough » dans notre texte, et on n'a même pas besoin d'une traduction. Si notre certitude n'est pas encore à 100%, on est bien au-delà de 80% de certitude.