Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression

Report on the October 2014 examination

The examination with this name was taken by two candidates, each of whom was awarded the Certificate at the lower B level. I thank my colleague John Drennan for participating in the marking and annotation.

The books *A Wealth of Words* and *The Complete Plain Words*, mentioned on p.1 of the previous report (May 2014), are again strongly recommended. Pages 7 and 8 of the booklet *SSC* (*Sentences to Study and Change*), the booklet *LNE 1* (*Learningguild Notes on English* 1), and the sheet BG ("A basic guide to writing good English") provide short introductions to grammar. References are given here to them, and also to revised chapters (available separately at present) of my book *Making up Sentences*, and to my article QPS ("Questions and Principles for Sentence-Construction", on pp. 11-16 of *Learningguild Letter* 1.2013). It would be helpful to print BG and QPS from the website learningguild.org.au: there is a link to BG from the Home page, and that issue of the *Letter*, like many others, can be found at 'Publications'. The booklets can be purchased from Learningguild.

Section 1

The marks were B- and C++: 16 and 13½ out of 30. Each sentence from a to i was marked out of 2, and those from j to l out of 4. Here is a proposed version, with comments. Readers are invited to compare this one closely with the original, and to consider why the few changes not explained have been made. It is, of course, important to avoid deviating from the spelling that appears in the original (e.g., by writing *feilds* in the second sentence), except where one is confident that, as is certainly sometimes the case, it needs to be corrected. There is a paragraph at the end with recommended reading for students who want to become more competent in sentence-correction, and so do better in the other sections as well as this.

a) 75% of our caravan parks cater not only for your needs but also for those of your pets.

> *Facilitate* is a verb used transitively, not intransitively (*SSC* p.8, 2), but in any case is not an apt one here. One candidate did well in using the transitive verb *accommodate*. *Not only* usually requires parallelism (BG 8, QPS 6). Why 'those of your pets'? See QPS 4.

b) I need to ask in which of these fields you work or have worked.

> The original confuses a direct question with an "embedded" or "indirect" one (*MS* 5:3.9, QPS 3: the former adjective is clearer); the candidates did not resolve that confusion. *Do you* needs to be accompanied by *work*, not *worked* (*MS* 3:7.12), but in the embedded form we need *you work*.

c) Correct.

> Notice the use of a gerund (*growing*) preceded by a preposition (*MS* 3:5.6) and followed, because the verb is transitive, by an object-locution. The

candidate who made unnecessary changes lost the reference to imparting enthusiasm, i.e., of engendering eagerness and not just interest.

d) Providing an example of social mobility, he rose from being a rubber tapper to become a great educator.

At first I corrected this sentence with 'As an example of social mobility', but 'Providing an example …' is more precise. One candidate admirably avoided the awkwardness of combining *up* with *the social mobility* by writing *He moved up the social ladder*. The metaphor in *ladder*, however, gives too strong an impression of a series of definite stages.

It might be thought that parallelism requires *becoming*, not the infinitive *become*. "Isn't that *to* a preposition, like *from*?" If it were, we should have to follow it with a gerund. One could, though with an awkward repetition, write *to being*, preposition + gerund. Here *become* is right after the "infinitive marker" (or particle: note the spelling) *to*, and we have an example of the infinitive used to express an outcome or result (not here purpose), as in 'The girls went on to win the grand final.' The compilers of the *Oxford Essential Dictionary* should have followed the example of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's* and made an entry for *to* with the infinitive quite separate from that for the preposition. By not doing so, they give rise to the incorrect and harmful belief that prepositions can be used with an infinitive.

e) In contrast with the practice of most Australian carriers that charge for checked luggage, this fee must be paid at the airport upon check-in.

A fee cannot be contrasted directly with a group of carriers, so *Unlike* needs to be changed (*MS* 5:3.4), or, as one candidate admirably realized, one could replace *this fee must be paid* by *this carrier requires this fee to be paid*. A requirement of payment upon check-in stands in contrast with the practice of most. In the original, the absence of a comma before *which*, as well as the attention given to paying **upon** check-in, suggests that the writer was concerned to make a distinction within the group of carriers that charged for checked luggage. The relative clause is therefore an **identifying** one rather than a **commenting** one, and is more clearly so if *which* is replaced by *that* (*MS* 4:2.5; 5:3.10).

f) It is extremely unlikely that the trial will last as long as that.

Notice the "anticipatory" *It* (*MS* 3:2.5): much more formally, we could write 'That the trial will last as long as that is extremely unlikely'. 'That long' is not suitable for written English.

g) This cheque contains a microprinted line: its absence could indicate a fraudulent document.

It is the **absence** of the line that could indicate ….

h) We were heartened by his use of the word 'dynasty': it implies that he will be part of that dynasty.

The **mention** of a locution – talking or writing **about** it – needs to be distinguished from its **use** (*MS* 1:3): sometimes, as often in this section, by

the use for the first of italics, but often, as here in the proposed version, by a pair of single inverted commas (1:3.2). **Words**, especially in a given context, imply: **people** infer (draw conclusions about) what the words imply.

i) The fact that you do not yet have an offer does not prevent you from enquiring where else you might get one.

The subject-locution should not take the form of an adverbial clause; it should be a noun clause, which may be preceded for clarity by 'the fact'. (See *MS* 2:4.4.) *Say* is clumsy here, and the comma is an interrupting one (5:3.10). Alternatively one could use an adverbial clause in a proper way, as in one candidate's version, with its excellent inclusion of *still*: "If you don't yet have an offer of a place, you can still enquire where you might get one."

j) The strategy of using songs has had a great impact on language teaching right up to the present, and through it students learn more quickly than they do through other techniques.

The tense required in the first verb is present perfect (*MS* 3:7.6), not present. (See either of Murphy's grammars.) *Impact* is an NC (*LNE 1*. 3; *SSC* p.8, 3) and so needs an introductory word, which a descriptive adjective is not: here the article *a*. *Present*, *past* and *future*, when used as nouns, require *the*. In writing, *more quickly* is better as the comparative adverb than *quicker*. *Than they do through* is better than *in comparison to*; better than the latter would be *in comparison with*, since an unlikeness rather than a likeness is being asserted. If one employs the phrase 'use of songs', as one candidate did, it needs to be preceded by 'the', as does 'pleasure of meeting new students'.

k) In the sharing of knowledge and experience with the students, it is not something poured into them that has counted but what was planted.

It is essential to grasp the structure of a sentence or, as here, its **lack** of a coherent structure. The original set of words from *is not* to *was planted* needed to be preceded by an anticipatory *it* (again, see *MS* 3:2.4). The person who made this comment wanted to focus not on the knowledge and experience of a teacher or teachers, but on **how** that knowledge and experience were shared. The use of both *the* before *students* and the past-tense *was* before *planted* implies that the person commenting was thinking with admiration of some particular teacher or teachers who taught in the right way, i.e., not by pouring facts into passive minds (perhaps the teaching was always more stimulating than 'pouring' implies), but by planting seeds of learning that would grow in lively minds. What has counted, he or she holds, is that past planting. I have used 'something poured' to avoid the awkward use of the present tense and any suggestion that some of the teaching was actually "pouring".

Both candidates, understandably, made their version of the statement one that lacked any past reference. One dropped both the metaphors *poured* and *planted*; the other left out the crucial words *that count*. This was an uncommonly difficult sentence to correct. One sometimes has to think out what a writer was or is (at least presumably) wanting to communicate, and to change as much of the original wording as is really necessary to make that clear. That thinking out and changing constitutes an educative process, the request for which is a good test.

l) Your simple manner and disciplined life, based on depth of character, have set a shining example for many to follow.

> *Mannerism*, *carpeted*, *glaring* and even *profound* were unsuitable words here. The phrase from *Your* to *life* is better treated as plural than as singular.

There is a good guide to sentence-correction, with plenty of explanation and exercises, in the whole of a chapter of Book 5 of *English for Australian Schools*, by Ronald Ridout and Kenneth McGregor. Copies of that chapter can be obtained from Learningguild. Neil James of the Plain English Foundation in NSW has valuably had republished *The New Graded Word-Book for Australian Schools* (c. 1950: now from Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2012). In Appendix B in *Making up Sentences* I write of the value of that book and propose some amendments. A very helpful book at the elementary or intermediate level of EFL (English as a further language) is *Common Errors in English* (HarperCollins 2013) by Elizabeth Walter and Kate Woodford. Students near or at the advanced level would do well to borrow (from Learninguild, if they wish) *Correcting your English*, by Harry Blamires, published under that title (no longer as *The Queen's English*!) by Bloomsbury, London, in 1996. Of course it is sensible to go through this section in many a previous Learningguild exam paper and (after making one's own attempt in each case) related report.

Section 2

The candidates did well here. Both were given B+++.

Here is the proposed version.

> Max began: "You've come across such phrases as 'the football industry' and even 'the education industry'?" "Yes indeed", Jill replied. "I hate them." "Really?" said Max. "Isn't it just logical to talk that way? So much money's involved, indispensable to those enterprises: they're big businesses." "Look," said Jill, "'industry' belongs in such a phrase as 'commerce and industry', which refers respectively to engaging in buying and selling and to manufacturing, in each case, as people say, for one's living, and primarily so. Neither sport nor education should be engaged in primarily (I emphasize that word) for that motive or for anyone's profit: they're corrupted if they are."
>
> The compilers of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* begin their entry for this most recent use by telling us that an industry, in that sense of our word, is, as they put it, "a particular (profitable) activity": notice the brackets around that word. They are not, of course, thereby disagreeing with Jill's view.

A full stop is preferable to a comma before ‘I hate them”, partly to give emphasis to those words.

Any comma after a word or set of words in inverted commas should never be placed vertically below the later of the inverted commas, but both below **and** to the left or right: the left (as with *“Look,”*) if the comma is thought to belong to the quoted set, the right if it is contributed by the author of the passage.

One candidate had a pair of commas around ‘I emphasize that word’, the other had just a comma after ‘primarily’. Because the clause is inserted rather than belonging to the grammar of the rest of the sentence, a pair of brackets or of dashes is needed. Inverted commas should not be used to show emphasis: use underlining or bold type, or (if it is preferred in the work as a whole) italics.

The edition of the *SOED* I use has as its title ‘The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary’. I have reduced that, and so not given ‘the’ the italics used when referring to a book by its title.

The words ‘as they put it’ require that the following four words be put in the double inverted commas of quotation. Since we are asked to notice brackets, we must put them in.

The set of words ‘notice the brackets around that word’ needs to be put, after a colon, in the same sentence as that in which the brackets have occurred. Both candidates began their final sentence with it. ‘Thereby’ has the same meaning here as ‘by recognizing that the word is used in this way’. It is not that the use of brackets might lead one to think that the compilers held a different view from Jill’s.

Section 3

The passage from Walter Lippmann was unusually difficult for this section, and allowance was made for that. One candidate obtained B-, and the other, who did not answer the third subsection, C.

It is always valuable to ask, about each particular part of a section of an exam paper, “What exactly am I being asked to do here?” One can sometimes relevantly ask “How many sub-questions?” and distinguish them, and make sure that one leaves none out.

i) Not just “What does Lippmann mean by ‘collectivist’?” but “How does **this passage enable** me to understand how these people called by him collectivists view (a) the nation and (b) the citizens of it?”. Thus, recognizing that here the conception of the **relationship** between nation and citizens is crucial, one might answer:

> Though the word *collectivist(s)* occurs only twice, we can note that the people so called are said to think in terms of a “super-organism” (earlier “a collective organism”) and to “[sacrifice] the individual”. Another metaphor is that of “a cog in a … machine”. So Lippmann is presenting the collectivists as depersonalizing individual citizens by seeing them as merely parts of a much larger entity, presumably a nation (such as might be ruled by a dictator of the kind mentioned in the second paragraph), which is compared to a machine or an organism.. These collectivists do not see individuals as “free men” within “self-governing societies”.

Thus one can show that one has grasped which parts of the text are most germane to the question, and to summarize their import. The candidates wrote rather more generally of what the implications were of these views of the nation and of citizens.

ii) Most striking in this set of words is the use of the phrase *public servants* for people who are elected. We commonly use it (or, in Britain, *civil servants*) of people employed in government departments, whereas those elected are normally politicians, whether a president or a member of a parliament. Lippmann is inviting us to use language that reminds us that in a democracy these people are not to be thought of primarily as our rulers but as our servants, in the sense that they are engaged in public service ('the' there would be misleading), concerned to promote the good of the public as a whole, and subject to removal if they or their party are not thought to be doing so. If one agrees that this is their role, one might well consider this striking use of 'public servant' to make the point admirably.

An election is genuine only if those who vote are free to vote as they wish, without fear of recrimination. Lippmann brings out well that conceptual link. It might also be thought noteworthy that he does not use here the locution *free men and women*. It was commonly said in Lippmann's time that the term *men* often connoted human beings regardless of their sex, but in recent decades it has been widely held that the constant use of the word *men* has marginalized women. Candidates could have agreed or disagreed with the use of *men* here, but with one or more reasons for doing so.

Both candidates concentrated on the phrase *public servants*, without asking themselves what Lippmann might be doing with it here. One recognized that the set of words specified was "somewhat peculiar" because public servants are not elected, and said that he thought Lippmann "would've been better off using the words 'politicians' or 'leaders' instead". He noted also that in some cases the voting public has "some indirect say" in the choice of public servants, since elected politicians sometimes choose public servants, although public servants mostly remain in office whatever the government is. (That is not so in the United States.) The other said "A servant does not have a choice" (in fact servants do often choose whom they will seek as an employer), whereas people choose to offer themselves as representatives in politics.

iii) The candidate who answered this subsection drew a good contrast between the "compas[s]ion" that could achieve the respect for others' rights which Lippmann sees to be vital and the "greed, anger and fear" that "human personality … carries with it". He therefore said that he had sadly to agree with the view attributed to "any politician, any advertiser". This subsection well illustrates the need for **balance**, as requested in the wording of the requirements put at the head of Section 5. (On balance in answers, see the first page of that section in the March 2004 report.) Moreover, in this case, not to be ignored was the sub-question in the final sentence, "Refer …."

One could begin a 200-word answer by stressing the word *ideal*. The collectivists' ideal is indeed utterly different in its implications from the one Lippmann proposes, in which individuals are **free**, but he is not implying closeness to the latter in the present defective conditions of our own societies. Not all politicians (or all advertisers?) are as cynical as is here suggested, but certainly there is widespread selfishness and lack of interest in thinking about or seeking to realize the "noblest possibilities" of human life. However, that does not mean it is futile to think in terms of ideals and strive to get nearer to them. Probably the word *fellowship* should not be applied to a nation, which can, however, offer a protective and even supportive framework (e.g., through free public libraries) for many overlapping fellowships

large and small, in which human beings can freely develop and even fulfil their "nobler" (finer?) possibilities, including those of love, helpfulness, creativity, mental vigour and truth-seeking exploration, through personal relationships involving both freedom and obligations, crafts, professions, the arts, sport at its best, hard thinking and cooperative and far-reaching education.

Section 4

The marks here were B- and, for an answer of only about 180 words, Just below C, i.e., a narrow fail.

There were three sub-questions (see the second paragraph of Sec. 3 above): two had question marks and the other, the main one, had the imperative verb *determine*. The answer that failed did not deal with the second sub-question, and did not get sufficiently "stuck into" the detail of the text on the others.

i) The conclusion (implicit in the two rhetorical questions in P3) is that there is **nothing more important than management** for companies, sporting teams, schools and universities. The comparative aspect of that view needs to be made clear. It is not enough to say that Joan sees management as very important.

ii) We can tell what Joan's conclusion is not only from its generality, but from the adverbs 'then' and 'therefore', which are flags or signposts for a conclusion.

iii) Has she "given us good reasons to accept that conclusion"? So often, as here, in reading or listening to claims that something is true, we encounter mere assertions rather than reasons. Good reasons are **facts** adduced that support the conclusion, either by necessitating it or by rendering it likely to be true, as the explanation or a consequence of such facts, often considered in combination so as to judge their cumulative force. Hence, often, one asks for sufficient **evidence**.

Joan gives us a good reason, appealing in P2 to our ability to recognize chaos when we see it, for agreeing that proper management (though not always by fiat) is **a necessary** condition of the success of a group. But it is not on that account a **sufficient** condition, nor the **only necessary** condition, nor the one most deserving our attention. One candidate mentioned "factors such as being able to inspire others, listening to other opinions and making decisions that benifit [benefit] those the leader is in charge off [of]". He rightly made the same point in response to P5.

What is said about faculties of education, schools and universities simply asserts Joan's view. *All too theoretical* begs the question (i.e., simply assumes what the right answer is to it) "How important is it to study the history or the philosophy of education and engage with some theories?"

The last paragraph, like the first two examples in the first, deserves an amused scorn! Joan has simply picked up uses of the verb *manage* outside the common kind of talk about the management of groups, and gives the impression that the husband had better be the manager of both births and family life. In two senses of the words, <u>he had better not be</u>, though he may sometimes have valuable encouragement, help and even advice to contribute.

Section 5

The essays gained the marks B+ and B-. The writer of the better one sensibly responded in turn to each of Tony Abbott's three statements in the second quoted sentence. He could have asked whether the use of the derogatory noun 'demonisation' was a way of avoiding the need to take seriously the views of those who warn against continuing reliance on coal. The other writer made numerous good points, but his essay was weakened by errors of word-choice and spelling.

The purchase of the two pairs of exam paper and report for 2004 is recommended ($10 including postage), because of all that those reports have to say about essay-writing.

There was faulty choice of words in 'demise of the environment' (→ 'deterioration …'), 'not imagined by only a few generations before us' (→ '… a few generations ago' or, better, '… before the Industrial Revolution'), 'they have allowed for people … to have access to electricity' (→ 'enabled people …'), 'the good [that] coal has brought in the past does not justify the threat it poses …' (→ '… does not outweigh …'), 'economical disa[s]ters' (→'economic …'). The verb is 'destroy', not 'destruct'.

Gerunds, like participles, can be wrongly unconnected, as in 'However by looking to the future of coal Tony Abbott's comment doesn't hold up' (→ '…, when we take into account the future of coal, …'). An apostrophe and *s* needed to follow 'Australia' in the sentence 'It is also a large part of many countries' economies, including Australia'.

I leave the reader to correct *benificial*, *feul*, *repercusions* and *jeopody*. A keen student of English could greatly increase his or her range of vocabulary, appreciation of words, and even spelling by studying Chapter II, "Our Debt to Other Languages", in *A Wealth of Words*, recommended on p.1 of the Report on the May 2014 exam. ('*Bene*', Latin for 'well', is on p.26.) Careful pronunciation often helps in spelling, as in the second and third words of those four. If the word we used were *repercusions*, its second-last syllable would be pronounced with a *yoo* sound, as in *confusion*. In fact the word comes from Latin '*percutere*' ('strike through', 'beat hard') and Latin itself added '*re*' ('back'). The past participle passive (neuter) is '*percussum*': hence *percussion*. There is a similar origin for *concussion* and even *discussion*: in late Latin, people used the verb '*discutere*' when they thought of themselves as, in conversation, striking X and Y apart as different. (How fascinating and enriching etymology can be!) The fourth word's derivation, from French, is interesting, but it may have to be one of those words which, like some persons' names, we need to put on a list to revise and memorize.

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