

https://dspace.org/

Inferencing and syntactic complexity as two determinants of comprehension difficulty

Bam, Carl Laurence

2016-06-10
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/20452

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

INFERENCING AND SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY AS TWO DETERMINANTS OF COMPREHENSION DIFFICULTY.

Carl Laurence Bam.

GRADUATED WITH DISTINCTION 20 April 1993

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
for the degree of Master of Arts.
Johannesburg, 1992.

ABSTRACT.

This investigation demonstrates that school-leavers experience the greatest amount of difficulty in answering comprehension questions that demand inferencing related to stylistic effects in written passages. It also demonstrates that the texts used in Transvaal Education Department written comprehension examinations and the questions asked on the texts are not syntactically difficult to process.

A brief introduction to comprehension testing in the Republic of South Africa is followed by an explanation as to how 2077 scripts from the Transvaal province were selected and treated, to establish which questions matriculation candidates found most difficult and which the easiest. The items most candidates failed, and those for which most scored 70% or more, were then categorised according to two different taxonomies, to reveal that the difficult questions require inferencing procedures that easy questions do not.

To confirm that comprehension difficulty for school-leavers stems from what they are asked to infer, and not from the inherent syntactic complexity of the texts or questions themselves, the syntax of both the difficult and easy items is scrutinized.

The inferencing tasks demanded of candidates in the six most difficult questions are described in detail and some of the findings of this investigation are related to ongoing research in Britain. The study questions whether comprehension ability is best tested by the kinds of questions candidates found most difficult and suggests ways teachers may use to prepare candidates for a comprehension examination of this kind.

DECLARATION.

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted to any other university for any degree or examination.

Signed .....

at Johannesburg

on the 25th day of September, 1992.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I wish to thank Mr Norman Blight, my supervisor, for his advice, his insights, and his hours of patient reading and note-taking.

Acknowledgements are also due to the Transvaal Education Department for allowing me access to examination scripts and for granting me six months of special leave to devote to this investigation. Dr S Gopher of the T.E.D. Ancillary Services encouraged me to undertake the research.

To Mr Charles Nuttall, who provided me with comment on the initial proposal, many thanks.

I am grateful to the Witwatersrand Council of Education for the financial contribution it made in the form of the Whitmore Richards Bursary, to help me cover some of the costs incurred in the undertaking. Mr Graham Keats very kindly alerted me to the availability of this funding.

My wife and daughters have been patient and tolerant of my short-temper whenever a problem arose that I found difficult to deal with. To them I am grateful.

LIST OF APPENDICES.

A) English First Language: Senior Certificate Examination, 1989. Page 156.

B) Memorandum: Senior Certificate Examination, 1989. Page 165.

C) English First Language: Senior Certificate Examination, 1990. Page 169.

D) Memorandum: Senior Certificate Examination, 1990. Page 179.

INFERENCING AND SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY AS TWO DETERMINANTS OF COMPREHENSION DIFFICULTY.

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.	i
List of Appendices.	iv
CHAPTER ONE.	1
A BRIEF ORIENTATION	1
COMPREHENSION TESTING	2
AIM AND GENERAL PROCEDURE FOLLOWED	5
THE TERMS *INFERENCING* AND *SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY*	6
Inferencing: Text-based vs model-based views	6
Syntactic complexity	13
CHAPTER TWO.	17
THE DATA	17
THE TAXONOMIES USED TO CHARACTERIZE THE QUESTIONS	20
Prince's Taxonomy of Assumed Familiarity	21
Irwin's Ex-QAR taxonomy	25
Explicit vs Implicit in Irwin's taxonomy	31
THE MARKING MEMORANDA AND CANDIDATES'RESPONSES	36
CHAPTER THREE.	39
THE APPROACH TO SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY AND READING DIFFICULTY	39
THE MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: Question 3 of 1989	40
THE SECOND-MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: Question 16 of 1989	45
THE THIRD-MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: Question 9 of 1989	52
THE FOURTH-MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: Question 7 of 1990	56
THE FIFTH-MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: Question 13 of 1990	62
THE SIXTH-MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: Question 18 of 1989	69
CHAPTER FOUR.	76
THE EASIEST ITEM: Question 12 of 1990	76
THE SECOND-EASIEST ITEM: Question 20 of 1990	8?
THE THIRD-EASIEST ITEM: Question 1 of 1990	87
TWO EASY ITEMS OF EQUAL DIFFICULTY	96

CHAPTER FIVE. 105

THE QUESTION OF SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY 105
KINDS OF QUESTIONS FOUND EASIEST AND MOST DIFFICULT 109
The easiest questions 111
The most difficult questions 114
3 of 1989 115
The remaining five most difficult questions 126

CHAPTER SIX. 137

TESTING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS 137
SOURCES OF DIFFICULTY IN T.E.D. COMPREHENSION TESTS 141
Bibliography 150
Appendix A
B
C
D

CHAPTER ONE.

In this chapter, certain general comments about reading comprehension research will be made. They will be related to comprehension testing as it is practised in South Africa. The aim of the study will be spelled out and a broad overview will be given of the procedure to be followed. A brief explanation of how the major terms in the title are to be taken, in the light of how they have been used in recent research, will conclude the chapter.

A BRIEF ORIENTATION.

Anderson and Pearson, speculating on future directions for research in reading comprehension, offer the following three ideas

> as hypotheses in need of elaboration and explication ...in need of testing in the laboratory and the classroom. First, poor readers are likely to have gaps in knowledge. Since what a person already knows is a principal determiner of what she can comprehend, the less she knows, the less she can comprehend.
> Second, poor readers are likely to have an impoverished understanding of the relationships among the facts they do know about a topic. Arbitrary information is a source of confusion, slow learning, slow processing and unsatisfactory reasoning.
> Third, poor readers are unlikely to make the inferences required to weave the information given in a text into a coherent overall representation... Forming a coherent representation requires drawing precise, integrating inferences, and drawing such inferences is not something poor readers do routinely and spontaneously... (1984:255).

This investigation confirms that knowledge-gaps, arbitrary information and appropriate context-construction are the

sources of difficulty in reading comprehension examinations.

COMPREHENSION TESTING.

There is no single, generally accepted method of assessing a reader's ability to comprehend a piece of connected written discourse. The bulk of experimental research into reading comprehension, assesses in different ways a reader's ability to recall elements from a given piece of connected discourse. This recall procedure is based on firmly established evidence that what a reader finds meaningful is better remembered than what has not been understood (see Goetz & Armbruster, 1980).

Aside from measuring a reader's ability to remember elements in connected written discourse, there are other means that have been used by experimenters in an effort to assess comprehension ability. They include plausibility or acceptability judgements, sentence verification tasks, self-reporting comprehension times, cloze procedures and "think-out-loud" protocols. These techniques are constantly being refined and applied to a wide variety of problems being investigated experimentally but, so far, have had little impact on traditional, school-used comprehension tests in the Republic of South Africa. The examinations used to measure comprehension abilities in pupils, by all registered education departments in this country, invariably require the pupil to answer questions that are based on a read piece of connected discourse. For the purposes of this

investigation, the connected discourse from which questions are derived, will be referred to as "the text/s" (See Appendices A and C).

This traditional question/written answer mode of information gathering in order to assess comprehension ability, presents investigators with certain problems.

The first is that the answer a pupil gives to a question "depends somewhat on the nature of the question and its relationship to the text. Attempts to systematize the production of comprehension questions have met with limited success. Attempts at post hoc classification have met with more success" (Johnston, 1984: 154). The present investigation is an attempt at the classification of comprehension questions after the test had been conducted.

The second problem relates to the availability of the text during the test. It is likely that when the text is available to pupils, the strategies they adopt to recover information from the text may be different from those adopted in tests where the text is unavailable.

This investigation is concerned with questions and texts that are available to students during the test, as this is the common matriculation examination procedure in the country. It is an investigation into the difficulties experienced by candidates with the text available, and therefore makes no claims regarding the nature of difficulty in tests where the text is not available, for instance in tests of recall.

In order to be granted a school-leaving certificate, all South Africans must pass an examination in both of the official languages (English and Afrikaans at the time of writing). A part of this examination always involves a comprehension test of the question\written answer sort. English-speaking matriculation candidates who are registered with the Transvaal Education Department (T.E.D.), and comprise the vast majority of English-speaking candidates in this province, are required to write three papers in the final school-leaving examination in English-as-subject. The first of these papers is called "Original Writing", the second "Comprehension and Language" and the third "Literature". Each of these papers tests, ostensibly, different abilities in each candidate, and when these abilities are scored and added to an "oral score", the composite of the four scores is assumed to reflect a general proficiency in each candidate's use of his (her) mother-tongue.

The question of exactly what these differing abilities are, as reflected in each of the three papers, has yet to be confronted in any sort of systematic research and since this has not been done, the assumption that each paper measures different abilities remains untested. This assumption will become increasingly open to question during the course of the present investigation into the nature of comprehension difficulty (see pages 137ff).

THE AIM AND THE GENERAL PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE STUDY.

It will be demonstrated that, amongst most Transvaal English-speaking matriculants, the major cause of difficulty in reading comprehension examinations, stems from an inability to construct an appropriate context, from which to infer, rather than from any inherent syntactic complexity of the material to be comprehended. Essentially, the demonstration will take the form of comparing the pragmatic demands that inferencing makes on matriculants with the syntactic demands made on candidates in the 1989 and 1990 reading comprehension examinations (See Appendices A and C). The demonstration will be carried out in two steps. The first will require a classification of the questions the candidates found most difficult in the matriculation examinations. This classification will reveal that the most difficult questions were the questions which demanded a particular kind of inferencing from candidates.

The second step will require an examination of the syntactic complexity involved in the successful answering of the same difficult questions. It will be shown that the difficult questions (and the text fragments from which they are derived) are not syntactically more complex than other questions candidates found easier.

THE TERMS "INFERENCING" AND "SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY".

Inferencing is the interpretation process most appealed to whenever researchers need to explain how readers get from what is explicitly stated in a text, to what they think the writer intended to convey. It is most frequently referred to as the "filling in" of information that is implicit in a text. In whatever way the general notion of inference is used, it is agreed that it is of central importance to any theory of comprehension.

Inferencing: the text-based view vs. the model-based view.

Two distinct views of inference procedures are discernible in the literature over the last decade. The first is a TEXT-BASED view of inferencing and sees the process essentially as a search for meaningful connections between the propositions in a text. It is perceived as a "bottom-up" process which searches for potential meaningful relations between surface elements in the text in order that a coherent text model can be constructed.

The other view is a "MODEL-BASED" view (Collins et al 1980:386) and understands the process as being essentially "top-down" in nature. It sees inferencing as a synthesizing procedure, using the surface elements of a text to fill out and complete an underlying text representation.

Collins et al (1980:385) adopt a model-based view of the process when, following Bransford and Johnson (1973), they

assert that readers "do not simply connect the events in a text into a sequential structure. Rather, they seem to create a complex scenario or model within which the events described might plausibly occur."

Roger van de Velde's view (1981:289) is clearly a text-based view. He claims that "actualized inferences include mainly those cognitive processes which relate (fragments of) ideas to each other, thus establishing larger relations and ultimately providing conclusions." His "bottom-up" view of this process is evident in his use of the terms: *fragments of ideas* are synthesized into *larger relations* and finally provide the reader with *conclusions*.

Sanford and Garrod (1981:5) adopt a text-based, "bottom-up" view of inferencing similar to that of Van de Velde. They state that

> ...the message in a text is dependent on the reader bringing in additional knowledge in an attempt to come up with a coherent interpretation of the passage as a whole. One way of characterizing this additional component of text-meaning is in terms of the inferences which the skilled reader must make in order to connect the meanings of the various sentences in a sensible way.

A statement such as this suggests that the process is a cumulative one with "additional" components of text-meaning being added sentence by sentence, until some final text representation has been constructed.

When the underlying coherence of a text is not immediately obvious, de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:101) appeal to the text-based view of inferencing.

> To bind things together, INFERENCING must be done. This operation involves supplying reasonable concepts and relations to fill in a GAP or DISCONTINUITY in a textual world. Inferencing is always directed toward solving a problem...: bridging a space where a pathway might fail to reach. (Capitals theirs.)

Seeing a text, as de Beaugrande and Dressler do, as having "gaps" or "discontinuities" which are filled in as a reader proceeds, suggests that their view of the process is a "bottom-up" view.

Brown and Yule (1984:259ff) go some way towards reconciling "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches. They point out that "texts may have formal missing links, but it is readers and hearers who make inferences." This point is an intuitively persuasive one and leads to the conclusion that "inferences are connections people make when attempting to reach an interpretation of what they read or hear." They go on to suggest that the more interpretive "work" the reader has to undertake in arriving at a reasonable interpretation, the more likelihood there is of inferences being made. But the question of how much "work" has to be done by the reader in reaching an interpretation is a complicated one.

Brown and Yule (1984:260) distinguish between "automatic" and "non-automatic" inferences. "Non-automatic" inferences are connections that readers will choose to make and will involve the reader in more interpretive "work".

The problems inherent in seeing inferences as either "automatic" or "non-automatic" are immediately obvious. What for some readers may be "automatic", for others may be "non-

automatic" and this then leads Brown and Yule to conclude that "the texts which a reader will normally encounter will show a minimal amount of formal cohesion, assume massive amounts of background knowledge, and normally require the reader to make whatever inferences he feels willing to work for in order to reach an understanding of what is being conveyed."

This conclusion is, of course, a problem for discourse analysts wanting to make predictions about the nature of any given text, but it is less of a problem for testers of comprehension abilities. The view adopted by Brown and Yule leaves "inferencing as a process which is context-dependent, text-specific and located in the individual reader." Within any comprehension test, both the context and the texts can be seen as being constants ie necessary for all readers and the variability of each individual reader's text representation is, in effect, what is being evaluated.

The position adopted by Perfetti (1985:40ff) is clearly model-based in that he sees inferencing as a means whereby a reader arrives at a representation of the text meaning.

> There is, of course, more to reading a text than encoding words and propositions. The reader encodes these propositions in the context of knowledge about concepts, knowledge about inferences (inference rules), knowledge about the forms of texts, and general knowledge about the everyday world. By *text modeling* we mean the processes by which the reader combines such knowledge with local processes to form a representation of the text meaning.

Certain inferences, according to Perfetti, are logically or semantically forced or impelled, ie necessary, and are used,

by and large, to relate propositions to one another. These "impelled" inferences are the inferences readers must make in order to construct a cohesive text representation. They are not necessarily what Brown and Yule term "automatic" inferences.

More recently, Irwin (1986:27) and Garrod et al (1990:250) have called "forced" inferences "necessary", since they are "needed to maintain referential coherence or to establish causal relations" (Garrod, S. et al 1990:250). Non-forced inferences may or may not be drawn in the process of a reader constructing a representation of text meaning. These non-forced inferences are referred to as "elaborative inferences" by both Irwin and Garrod et al.

What is important for the purposes of this investigation though is Perfetti's assertion (1985:174) that "we should not be surprised if, at any given age, high-ability readers make more inferences" (than do low-ability readers). This is most certainly the assumption on which the T.E.D. comprehension paper is based, since so many of the questions call for inferencing abilities in candidates (see Tables 3 and 4 on pages 34 and 35). A model-based approach such as that adopted by Johnson-Laird (1988:231) takes the process of inferencing further than earlier notions do. The idea that inferencing plays a pervasive role in the reader's synthesizing surface elements to fill out an underlying text model (Brown and Yule 1983; Perfetti 1985) is extended by Johnson-Laird, to accord inferencing an even more pervasive

role. In his assertion that "the process of understanding discourse leads to models of the states of affairs that are described", there is the suggestion that the mental models he postulates are actually *constructed* by everyday reasoning (Johnson-Laird's term which includes inferencing.)

The model-based view of inferencing does pose questions concerning the nature of inferencing that have yet to be answered. If inferencing is the process of filling out and synthesizing an underlying text model (Collins et al 1980) then whatever elements are implicit in a text must be recovered from some store of knowledge. Cognitive scientists usually appeal to schema-theory (or related notions of frames, scripts, scenarios and plans) when required to represent this background knowledge, but the problem of explaining how only those elements which are necessary for the construction of a text model are actually selected in "on-line" processing is, at present, unresolved. It would be a grossly inefficient system that required all the background knowledge a reader possesses to be instantaneously available while he is reading a particular text.

Greene (1987:47) describes the problem:

> To demonstrate the flexibility of people's interpretations, think of the inferences you might make to interpret the presence of a dog in an antique shop, in a dog home, in a field of sheep, with a bow on its head. Did you think of a plaster dog, a pathetic mongrel, a fierce wolf-like dog or a gentle sheep dog, a spoilt pekinese probably belonging to a foolish middle-aged woman?
>
> If you did, you were exploiting default features of dogs you may not even have thought about for a long time...

> No matter what I say about dogs, a listener will try to infer which of all the possible values in the dog frame I am referring to. This potential for generating inferences has been called the inferential explosion.

Brown and Yule (1983:269) commenting on the same problem assert that

> Given this 'open-ended' feature of inferencing, it is extremely difficult to provide, for any naturally occurring text, the single set of inferences which an individual reader has made in arriving at an interpretation.

The problem, for the purposes of this investigation, however, is not an insurmountable one. The discourse analyst "may be left with no secure basis for talking, in analytic as opposed to intuitive terms, about the inferences involved in the comprehension of texts" (Brown and Yule 1983:269). Nevertheless, it is possible to identify and specify those inferences required of candidates when they are asked to answer questions in a comprehension test. Most of the questions asked in such a test, must be seen as cues or a set of instructions to the candidates to search for the inferences to be drawn in order for the question to be answered. In other words, comprehension testers do not attempt to test candidates on all the inferences that can be drawn from a text, for they are, as Brown and Yule claim, indeterminable in number. What is mostly asked for in a comprehension test at this level, is the demonstration by a candidate that (s)he is able to draw those inferences in a reading of a text similar to the inferences that examiners draw. This point is taken up and explained in some detail in

Chapters 5 and 6 - see pages 134ff. Marks are awarded on the basis of the degree of fit between examiners' inferences and candidate's inferences.

Syntactic complexity.

Since Chomsky's Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (1965), psychologists have been trying to understand precisely how syntax influences the comprehension of sentences. Initially, detransformations were proposed to explain why certain constructions took longer to process than others (see Miller and McKean (1964) - working from Chomsky's earlier version). Later, during the 1970s psychological parsing strategies were proposed (Kimball, 1973; Clark and Clark, 1977) which, as Greene (1987:73) comments, "may work for the simple sentences quoted by their authors, (but) no one has worked out how they would apply to the whole range of English sentences..."

Current opinion is, that in the normal comprehension of sentences, syntactic processing always takes place, but that it may, or may not be used in interpreting the sentence. Alderson and Urquart (1984:157), citing Schlesinger (1968), maintain that "in general... experimental findings suggest that, at least for L1 readers, syntax only becomes a problem when it interacts with other factors in the utterance." (See page 108 for a possible instance of this problem.) Harris and Coltheart (1986:190) cite evidence for the view that "syntactic computation seems to take place automatically,

but...the extent to which the results of such computations are used in normal comprehension depends on whether or not pragmatic or semantic cues are available to aid interpretation."

This investigation will demonstrate that "pragmatic and semantic cues" are often available to T.E.D.candidates, but that they are not sufficiently recovered by certain readers and it is this incapacity that is the real cause of student failure to score well on comprehension tests.

The word "complexity" as it is used in the title of this investigation, is used in a non-technical way. Rather than confine the meaning to the traditional one, by which complexity is defined in terms of units that contain more than one constituent, and in the case of a sentence, having one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses, "complexity" should be taken to mean "the extent to which the reader's processing load is increased." Put another way, the more a particular syntactic feature hinders a reader's construction of meaning, the more complex it is.

There is little doubt that syntactic organization affects comprehensibility. Siler (1974) demonstrates the importance of grammatical cues in early reading. He found that children aged seven and nine had far more difficulty reading syntactically violated sentences than they had reading semantically violated sentences.

Quirk et al (1985) discuss in some detail how the positioning of subordinate clauses can increase the

processing demands made on a reader. Left-branching clauses, ie subordinate clauses in initial sentence positions, are shown to be more difficult to comprehend than subordinate clauses in final position (right-branching clauses). Investigations into factors of syntax which might pose some difficulty for readers are numerous and varied.

Readers appear to begin syntactic processing as soon as there is enough material to work on. The well-known "click paradigm" has been used in a number of ways to confirm the findings by Garrett, Bever and Fodor (1966) that readers process sentences in clause units.

This "clausal hypothesis" has undergone some modification since it was first proposed. The initial claim by Carroll and Bever (1976) that working memory is cleared of information once the end of each clause has been reached, has been modified (Flores d'Arcais and Schreuder 1983) to account for clauses taking longer or shorter times to process, depending on their length, position in the sentence, their predictability or how they are organized. For instance, left-branching clauses need to be held in working memory until the main clause has been read. This increases a reader's processing load.

If one is defining "syntactic complexity" in terms of reader processing load and one accepts that readers process sentences, as far as possible, in units closely resembling clauses, then it is possible to predict potential syntactic complexity. The complexity would probably involve clauses

too long to hold in working memory, or clauses positioned in such a way as to compel the reader to hold them in working memory until the main clause has been processed. A clause that is difficult for a reader to predict might be a potentially difficult clause or a clause that is structured in a particular way, say in an A S V O A pattern, may prove complex in the way complexity is seen above.

Research into syntactic processing at present is most concerned with establishing whether or not syntactic processes are autonomous of semantic and pragmatic processes, but the weight of the evidence (see Harris and Coltheart 1986) suggests that syntactic processing interacts with semantic and pragmatic processing during the time that a reader spends arriving at an interpretation.

The present study, which draws on readers' output alone, cannot say much about the autonomy of syntactic processing, but in isolated cases (see remarks on 17B, page 95) syntactic processing can be seen to have affected a reader's interpretation.

Chapter 2 will explain how a representative sample of T.E.D. comprehension answers was derived and how the difficult questions were identified and categorized.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the complexity of the syntactic organization of sentences and the questions asked in comprehension tests. This is done to demonstrate that it was not syntactic complexity that examination candidates found most difficult, but the pragmatic processes of inferencing.

CHAPTER TWO.

This chapter describes the procedures carried out on the data which were used to establish orders of question difficulty and to characterize question types.

THE DATA.

A sample of 1094 (1989) and 983 (1990) scripts was selected from schools administered by the Transvaal Education Department (T.E.D.). The sample represents 10% in 1989 and 9.8% in 1990, of the total English-speaking matriculation population who wrote the T.E.D. examination. The scripts, from twelve different classes of school, were used to establish which questions proved most difficult to answer. The sample was drawn from these twelve different kinds of school, in an attempt to make it as representative as possible of the English-speaking matriculation population in the Transvaal. The twelve classes of school varied in terms of whether they were urban or rural; boys only or girls only or co-educational; whether they were government run schools or privately run schools. Another two classes of school were included in the sample because of particular characteristics they possessed.

The sample therefore comprised all the 1989 and 1990 scripts from:

an urban, boys only government school;

an urban, girls only government school;

a rural, boys only government school;

a rural, girls only government school;

three co-educational government schools,

one rural and two urban;

an urban, boys only private school;

an urban, girls only private school;

an urban, co-educational private school;

an urban, co-educational private tutorial college and

a co-educational, government technical high school.

In order to compute an index of difficulty, the total number of actual marks obtained on each item for all twelve schools was divided by the possible number of marks that could have been awarded for each item. The quotient of this computation reflects the performance of the total sample on each item. The item that reflected the least number of marks awarded was judged to be the most difficult item, the item awarded the most marks, the easiest. The actual number of marks awarded for each item is expressed as an index of 1 in the tables on pages 19 and 20.

In a sample of over two thousand scripts, not all the answers which were awarded a distinction mark or a failing mark could be quoted. From the total sample of 2077 scripts, four sub-samples were used. In the two examinations (1989 and 1990), all the scripts that reflected an overall distinction pass or an overall failing mark were separated out and it is from these four sub-samples that answers have been quoted for their illustrative value.

TABLE 1.

THE 1989 PAPER.

A total of 1094 scripts was sampled.

Test Item Number.	Total No. marks awarded.	Total No. possible.	Difficulty index.	Order of difficulty.
1	1556.5	2188	.711	25
2	1276	2188	.583	20
3	989	3282	.301	1
4	1383	2188	.632	23
5	1076.5	2188	.492	12
6	1116	2188	.510	13
7	1010	2188	.4[illegible]	7
8	1254.5	2188	.573	18
9	1484	4376	.339	3
10	5[illegible]3	1094	.468	9
11	947.5	2188	.433	5
12	1967.5	4376	.449	6
13	1022	2188	.467	8
14	1894	3282	.577	19
15	1584.5	3282	.482	11
16	1384	4376	.316	2
17	1207.5	2188	.551	16
18	1260	3282	.383	4
19	8791.5	16410	.535	15
20	1440	2188	.658	24
21	3882.5	6564	.591	21
22	1216	2188	.555	17
23	5502	8752	.628	22
24	4512.5	8752	.515	14
25	7360.5	15316	.480	10

TABLE 2.

THE 1990 PAPER.

A total of 983 scripts was sampled.

Test Item Number.	Total No. marks awarded.	Total No. possible.	Difficulty index.	Order of difficulty.
1	4766.5	5898	.808	20
2	1605.5	2949	.544	8
3	1266	2949	.429	4
4	988	1966	.503	5
5	1678	2949	.569	14
6	1661.5	2949	.563	12
7	1069	2949	.362	1
8	1871	2949	.634	16
9	2098	2949	.711	19
10	3828.5	5898	.649	17
11	2754	4915	.560	11
12	2775	2949	.941	22
13	1837	4915	.373	2
14	3219.5	5898	.545	9
15	4001.5	5898	.678	18
16	3337	5898	.565	14
17	3760.5	6881	.546	10
18	2470	4915	.503	5
19	1826.5	2949	.619	15
20	1754	1966	.892	21
21	1063.5	1966	.541	7
22	5494	14745	.373	2

This quantitative analysis was necessary to determine operationally which of the questions were easy and which difficult.

Each item was then typified according to two different taxonomies in order to characterize the kinds of questions matriculation candidates found most difficult.

THE TAXONOMIES USED TO CHARACTERIZE THE QUESTIONS.

Wanliss (1988:2), in commenting on the readability of the comprehension passages set by South African Education

Departments in Senior Certificate examinations, points out that "there is no easy way of measuring difficulty of questions set in comprehension tests." The most common way is to set questions, score them, and calculate a difficulty index, that reflects which questions the testees found most difficult, as has been illustrated above. But this method of determining difficulty does not address the much more interesting question of what it is about the questions which makes them difficult. In attempting to answer this question, the present investigation uses two taxonomies.

The first is a taxonomy of what constitutes Given and New information, the second, a taxonomy that attempts to characterize comprehension questions in terms of comprehension processes. Using two taxonomies in tandem attempts to lend a measure of construct validity to the application of the taxonomies as instruments.

Prince's Taxonomy of Assumed Familiarity.

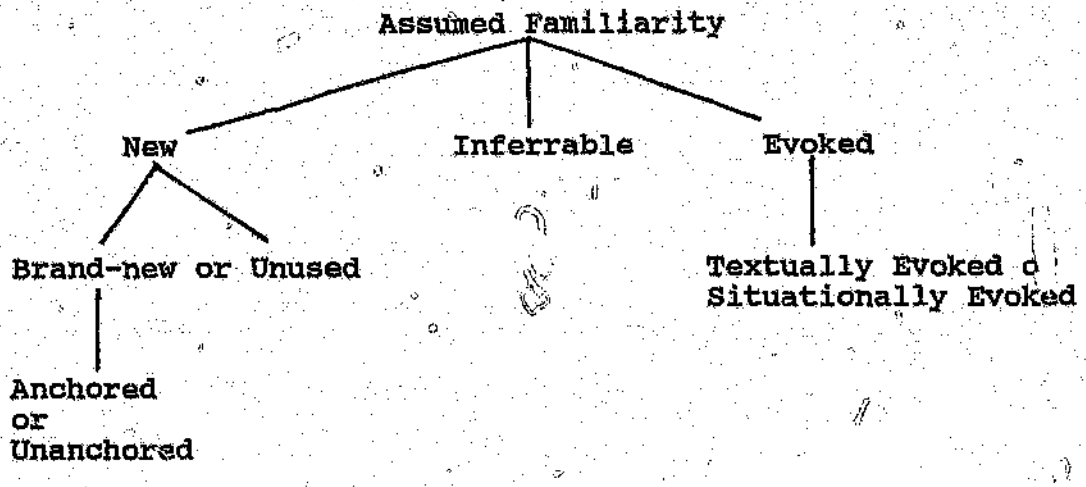
Prince's seminal article Toward a Taxonomy of Given-New Information (1981) has been used by researchers to investigate the status of information in discourse (Mazzie 1987) and is the taxonomy that was used to assign a particular status to the information entities that the questions required the candidates to recover in the T.E.D examinations. These information entities in the form of noun phrases (NPs) constitute the semantic content of the answers and demand *mention* for the answer to be awarded a

mark. The entity which the candidate is required to recover is invariably identifiable as that entity (or those entities) to which the interrogative (the Wh-element) of the question refers.

Prince (1981:235) defines a discourse entity as "a discourse-model object...(which) may represent an individual (existent in the real world or not), a class of individuals, an exemplar, a substance, a concept etc." Discourse entities are represented by NPs in a text and each will be assumed by the writer to be more or less familiar to the reader. In order to specify the extent to which entities may be more or less familiar, Prince proposes a taxonomy of "assumed familiarity" in which entities may be assigned some status.

Entities may be New, Inferrable or Evoked. Each of these three entity-types is sub-categorized in ways that make further distinctions possible. Entities in Prince's proposed model will possess attributes and be linked to other entities. The attributes are important since some of the questions asked in comprehension tests require students to recover the attributes of particular entities.

Prince represents her taxonomy in the form of a tree-diagram:



The first class of entities Prince identifies are the *NEW ENTITIES* and these are [illegible] which are introduced into the discourse for the first time. New entities which have to be created by the reader are *BRAND-NEW* and may be *ANCHORED* or *UNANCHORED*. A Brand-new entity is anchored if the NP representing it is linked to some other discourse entity. If a Brand-new entity is not contained within some other discourse entity it is Unanchored or simply Brand-new. Thus in a phrase like "The government of Communist Party leader Erich Honecker" (T.E.D.1989:3 - see Appendix A pages 2 and 3) the entity "Communist Party Leader" is a Brand-new Unanchored entity but "Erich Honecker" is contained within the Unanchored entity and so is Brand-new and Anchored to "Communist Party Leader".

The second kind of New entity Prince terms *UNUSED*. An Unused entity is one which the writer assumes to be known to the reader but not necessarily in the reader's consciousness at the time. Thus the NP "West Berlin" used to open the text

of Section A (T.E.D.1989:2 - see Appendix A page 2) can be assumed to be known to the reader but not one he would be thinking about before beginning his reading. As may be expected, the difference between the New entities, Brand-new and Unused, is a matter of assumed familiarity. The Brand-new entity is not assumed by the writer to be known to the reader and the Unused entity is, although not having enjoyed a mention in the discourse.

The second class of entities that Prince proposes are the *EVOKED* entities. An NP which has been used by the writer and is already in the discourse is a *TEXTUALLY EVOKED* entity while one that is *SITUATIONALLY EVOKED* represents discourse participants or salient features of the extralinguistic situation in which the discourse takes place. So in the first sentence of the text set in Section A (T.E.D.1989:2 - see Appendix A page 2) "a place" is a Textually Evoked entity since it refers to "West Berlin" (already mentioned). Question 1 of the examination paper (Appendix A page 3) begins "According to *this extract*..." and the reference to the text is clearly part of the comprehension examination situation. "This extract" then, is a Situationally Evoked entity.

The third class of discourse entity Prince calls the *INFERRABLES*.

The writer in using this kind of entity assumes that the reader can infer it, either through logical, or what Prince terms "plausible" reasoning, from entities already evoked or

from other Inferrables. In order to interpret "the pubs" (T.E.D.1989:2 - See Appendix A page 2) the reader needs to infer that the pubs are the pubs of West Berlin (entity already evoked in line 1). The Inferrables are an important and complex set of entities and have been shown (Mazzie 1987) to be far more predominant in written discourse than the other entities.

Originally designed by Prince to establish information status in discourse, the taxonomy has been used by discourse analysts for purposes of identifying implicitness in text and the nature of "givenness" in discourse (see Mazzie 1987 and Yule 1981). There is no reason why the taxonomy cannot be used to identify the status of the information that candidates in comprehension tests need to recover, if, by doing so, a means can be found to distinguish one kind of question from another. This investigation is, as far as I know, the first to use Prince's taxonomy for this purpose.

Irwin's Ex-OAR Taxonomy.

Several taxonomies have been constructed with the specific aim of aiding comprehension testers in designing tests that assess a variety of abilities or skills. The most common are Bloom's (1956) and Barrett's (1979). (See pages 137ff for further comment.)

Although helpful and widely used, taxonomies such as these have been criticized on the grounds that they "are not strictly based on a complete cognitive model of the

comprehension process itself" (Irwin 1986:142). At present, no complete cognitive model exists, but some progress has been made in the construction of models that, in different ways, reflect what we have learnt about the comprehension process since Bloom's and Barrett's taxonomies were proposed.

One such model has been constructed by Irwin (1986) on which she has based what she terms the Expanded Question-Answer Relationship (Ex-QAR) taxonomy. It has been used in this investigation to identify and categorize the examination questions which are the subject of this study, and was chosen for three reasons.

The first is that, having been based on a recent model of the comprehension process, it goes some way towards answering the criticism levelled at earlier taxonomies. It draws on, and takes into account, most of the recent attempts to model comprehension processes. Certain crucial findings in the ways readers process text are incorporated into Irwin's Ex-QAR taxonomy. For instance, Bloom's and Barrett's taxonomies were attempts to specify the kinds of questions testers asked and the answers to these questions were viewed as *products*. Irwin's taxonomy attempts to classify questions in relation to the source of the answer: in other words, her model, on which the taxonomy is based, describes the task involved in going from text to answer, and therefore goes some way towards taking into account the *processes* involved in comprehending a text and answering

questions on it. (See page 57 for an instance of this characteristic.)

The second reason for choosing to use the Ex-QAR taxonomy is a methodological one. The application of a single taxonomy, such as Prince's, which is Discourse Analytic in orientation, might not have provided sufficient and indisputable grounds for identifying question-types. A confirmation from another source was required. Irwin's taxonomy constitutes the second source, having been derived from inter-disciplinary research. The application of Irwin's taxonomy was justified. Those questions predicted by Prince's taxonomy as being of a particular kind, were confirmed as similar, by Irwin's taxonomy. (See pages 34 and 35.)

The third reason was that Irwin's model of the comprehension processes (and her Ex-QAR taxonomy) is "instructionally useful" (Irwin 1986:2). By this she means that the model and the taxonomy are constructed so that both teachers and students may use them. Students and teachers are not only able to identify the kinds of questions asked in comprehension assessment, but students especially can be made aware of the processes that are in operation while they are interpreting text. This instructional aspect of Irwin's model is most useful to students who need to know what it is that they are being asked to do when answering comprehension questions. The Ex-QAR taxonomy uses six major categories. Essentially they are based on the comprehension

processes that Irwin describes in her proposed model but each process has as its input, information of different kinds and from different sources. The first five categories distinguish five different kinds of information and the sixth category relates to what Irwin calls the metacognitive processes. These processes are identified as the strategies readers use while reading, and are not often used in the formulation of comprehension questions in this country at present. The five categories that were used to typify the examination questions in this study are:

1. Information deriving from pre-reading and prior knowledge.
2. Microinformation that is explicitly stated or implicit in the text.
3. Integrative information that is explicitly stated or implicit in the text.
4. Macroinformation that is explicit or implicit in the text.
5. Elaborative information.

Category 1 questions, ie those which fall into the pre-reading, prior knowledge category, may be questions on vocabulary or background concepts. They are described by Murray (1985) as the kinds of questions that "require students to relate what is in the text to what they already know about the topic." Question 7 (T.E.D.1989:3 - see Appendix A page 3) illustrates this kind of question clearly. The question reads:

The writer refers to West Berlin as being an "enclave" (line 23).
In our media the term is often used with reference to Walvis Bay.
What does this word mean?

Examiners in phrasing this straightforward vocabulary question were at pains to relate the word "enclave" to the candidates' prior local geographical knowledge.

Microinformation (category 2) which is explicit, is information that is generated from individual idea units within each sentence. An idea unit is seen as a word or group of words, and this idea unit makes up a meaningful phrase (sometimes called a "chunk"). One or more of these meaningful phrases would make up a sentence.

Microinformation is therefore information that is derivable from intra-sentential relationships or idea-units (chunks) within sentences. Implicit microinformation is to be found in lexical or phrasal ambiguity or connotation. Explicit microinformation is required from candidates in question 11 (T.E.D.1989:4 - see Appendix A page 4) in which candidates are asked to identify the plural form of the word "graffito". Question 12.2 (T.E.D. 1989:5 Appendix A page 5) which asks candidates to explore the connotations of "utopian" would be categorized as an implicit micro-information question.

The integrative information (category 3 in the taxonomy) that is explicitly stated would include anaphoric reference

(but not ellipsis) and explicit connectives. Implicit integrative information consists of implicit connectives, ellipses and what Irwin terms "slot-filling inferences". They are defined by Irwin (1986:38) as "those inferences that fill in important missing aspects of the given situation." The "slots" are determined by the situation and following Fillmore (1968) and Kintsch (1974) Irwin suggests that they are related to such implicit information as agent, object, instrument, experiencer, source or goal. Other implicit "slots" could include character motivation, other psychological and physical causes of an action (or state of affairs), enabling circumstances and spatio-temporal relationships. Irwin adopts these last instances of "slots" from Warren, Nicholas and Trabasso (1979). The first sentence of the passage by Steinbeck (T.E.D.1989:5 - see Appendix A page 5) contains no fewer than seven instances of implicit integrative information. For instance, when Steinbeck calls Cannery Row "a stink", the candidate is required to "fill in missing aspects of the given situation" such that "the stink" is interpreted as being the result of the canning activities in Monterey. This operation on the part of the candidate would be a slot-filling inference. Macroinformation that is explicit (category 4) consists of explicitly stated main ideas, explicit summaries or organization of material into sub-heads. For instance, the term "TWA - For the BEST of America" encapsulates what the advertisement (T.E.D.1989:8 - see Appendix A page 8)

attempts to spell out explicitly.

Macroinformation that is implicit would be found in main ideas, summaries and diagrams that do not explicitly announce themselves as such. Jonathan Raban (T.E.D 1989:4 - see Appendix A page 4) tries to capture the quality of Quatar as being "a handsome treasury of filth" and provides in this phrase what is, in effect, a summary, though implicit, of what the passage has been about. Information that requires the reader to make inferences not necessarily intended by the author, Irwin has termed "Elaborative information". This kind of information constitutes category 5 of Irwin's taxonomy. It, in effect, includes information that a reader may gain from making predictions of various kinds, elaborations based on prior knowledge, the mental images a reader may call up and the affective responses a reader may feel during the course of reading. Question 5 (T.E.D. 1989:3 - see Appendix A page 3) asks candidates what the change of a name like "Schlossbrucke" to the "Marx-Engels Bridge" tells of the Communist takeover of East Berlin. A candidate without any prior knowledge of the tendency of modern political parties to honour political figures by naming public works after them, would have difficulty with a question such as this.

Explicit versus Implicit in Irwin's Taxonomy.

Irwin's taxonomy requires that questions be classified according to whether they are IMPLICIT or EXPLICIT, but the

question of whether information is to be considered as implicit or explicit is a difficult one.

It has been addressed by, amongst others, Olson (1977), Chafe (1982), Mazzie (1987) and Enkvist (1990). Enkvist (1990:12) summarizes the established linguistic approach to the question by referring to "...formally describable, and thus tangible, cohesion markers that can be heard or seen on the surface of discourse or text." This view is similar to the one Irwin has adopted in the construction of her taxonomy. For example, Irwin (1986:144), in explicating implicit and explicit integrative information in her Ex-QAR taxonomy, asserts that "...questions about explicit integrative information ask about anaphoric references and explicit connectives *that are stated directly*."

In the classification of items in this study, *explicitness* is seen as occurring on the surface of the texts.

In characterizing *implicitness*, Irwin draws on the terms "textually implicit information" and "scriptally implicit information". These terms are Pearson and Johnson's (1978), the former taken to mean "information implied in the text" and the latter "information already in the mind of the reader."

This characterization raises the question of information status. Brown and Yule (1984:179ff) in their treatment of information structure raise a number of objections as to how "givenness" has been viewed in the literature. Briefly reviewing the work done by Halliday (1967), Chafe (1976),

Clark & Clark (1977) and Sanford and Garrod (1981), Brown and Yule (1984:189) conclude with nothing better than a supposition

> that it is the exploitation of ...regularities (such as the use of the definite and indefinite article) in contexts of discourse which allows us to assess the information status attributed to an entity by speakers and writers. (My brackets.)

The context of discourse which allows us to assess the "givenness" of a particular piece of information in this investigation is the discourse of the comprehension tests themselves. In later chapters, when the terms are used, an explanation is given for treating a particular item as either "implicit" or "explicit".

Tables 3 and 4 below illustrate how all the questions in both examinations were classified in terms of the categories in the taxonomies developed by Prince and Irwin.

Table 3 **THE TAXONOMIES APPLIED - Analysis of Paper 1. 1989**

	Prince's Entities					Irwin's Categories							
	Brand-new	Unused	Inferrables	Evoked Textual	Evoked Situational	Prereading & Prior Knowledge	Micro Explicit	Micro Implicit	Integrative Explicit	Integrative Implicit	Macro Explicit	Macro Implicit	Elaborative
Question Number													
1				*			*						
2	*										*		
3			*							*			
4			*									*	
5			*										*
6	*					*							
7	*		*			*							
8			*			*							*
9.1			*										*
9.2			*							*			
10			*					*					
11	*		*				*						
12.1		*								*			
12.2			*					*					
13		*				*							
14			*										*
15			*										*
16			*							*			
17			*										*
18			*										*
20			*							*			
21.1				*							*		
21.2			*										*
21.3			*							*			
22			*				*						
23.1			*										*
23.2			*										*
23.3				*			*						
23.4			*							*			
24.1			*									*	
24.2			*							*			
24.3			*							*			
24.4			*							*			

Table 4 **ANALYSIS OF PAPER 2. 1990**

	Prince's Entities					Irwin's Categories							
	Brand-new	Unused	Inferrables	Evoked Textual	Evoked Situational	Prereading & Prior Knowledge	Micro Explicit	Micro Implicit	Integrative Explicit	Integrative Implicit	Macro Explicit	Macro Implicit	Elaborative
Question Number													
1.1				*		*	*						
1.2				*			*	*					
2		*					*						
3			*										*
4			*							*			
5			*							*			
6			*										*
7			*							*			
8			*										*
9			*			*							
10.1		*					*						
10.2								*					
10.3			*									*	
11		*	*									*	
12				*			*						
13.1			*										*
13.2			*										*
14.1				*				*					
14.2			*			*							
15.1				*				*					
15.2				*			*						
15.3				*			*						
16.1				*				*					
16.2			*										*
16.3				*			*						
17.1			*										*
17.2			*					*					
18			*										*
19			*										*
20				*		*							
21			*										*
22			*	*							*		

THE MARKING MEMORANDA AND CANDIDATES' RESPONSES.

Classifying the questions according to the taxonomies outlined above, proved, in the case of certain questions, to be problematic. For instance, Prince's taxonomy was designed to identify new and old information in discourse and is based on "...discourse entities in a discourse model (that) are represented by NPs in a text..." (Prince 1981:235). Not all questions asked of candidates require of them the recovery of entities in Prince's sense. How-questions or questions which ask candidates to "explain" some textual phenomenon need to be interpreted as Inferrable entities. In order to specify what the Inferrable entities were, it was necessary to use the marking memoranda (see Appendices B and D) from which examiners worked and certain answers from the candidates' scripts. The Elaborative category in Irwin's taxonomy is a very broad one, defined as containing all those inferences not necessarily intended by the writer. As it is difficult in some instances to know what the writer intended the reader to infer, it was necessary to use candidates' inferences in the answers they provided, in order to make decisions about whether a particular question was elaborative or, say, a macro-implicit question.
Both problems referred to above had to be approached by taking certain candidates' responses into account. In this, the advice offered by Alderson (1984:23) was taken. He suggests that "it would seem to make sense to deliberately

select extreme cases for investigation, rather than examining average or normal cases." Since the examination of markedly different responses was likely to illuminate the differences in the nature of the response better than average cases might, distinction-level answers were contrasted with failing answers, when candidates' responses were examined. They are quoted *sic passim*.

Transvaal Education Department policy prevented actual examination numbers being used as this could reveal the identity of candidates, so responses are classified as either distinction level (T for top) or failing (B for bottom answers). The number before the T or B reflects the candidate's relative position in terms of over-all performance: 1T is the candidate who fared best, 2T second best and 1B worst, 2B second worst and so on.

The question of whether markers of the scripts were able to distinguish between distinction-level and failing answers is not considered. In the opinion of this investigator more than sufficient controls existed during the assessment of answers for scores to be considered consistent and accurate. Certain selected candidates' responses and the examiners' marking memoranda were used in conjunction with the questions whenever there was doubt about a particul classification.

The tables on pages 19,20,34 and 35 identify the difficult and easy questions and place them in categories. The six questions that most candidates failed were of the Inferrable

type and required the recovery of implicit or elaborative information, whereas the easiest questions demanded the recovery of textually evoked, explicit or taught information (see page 110.)

But whether it was the *kind of information* that had to be accessed *or* whether it was the *syntactic organization of the information* that caused candidates difficulty, is the question answered more fully in Chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER THREE.

In this chapter, reasons are provided as to why the six most difficult questions have been classified as they have and the syntactic complexity of each is examined. Each of the items was selected because the majority of candidates scored a failing mark ie below 40%.

The discussion will incorporate:

1. The reasons for each item's having been classified as a particular question-type in terms of the taxonomies outlined in Chapter 2;
2. Comment on the syntactic complexity of the questions and the text-parts from which the questions were derived;
3. Judgements based on 1 and 2 above about the nature of the difficulty encountered by candidates in each item.

THE APPROACH TO SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY AND READING DIFFICULTY.

The complexity of a sentence is seen (as was explained in Chapter 1:13ff) in terms of the "structures that increase a reader's processing load." Perera (1984:287ff) cites evidence to justify hypothesizing three potential sources of grammatical difficulty in reading. "First, reading is likely to be harder when the grammatical structure of a sentence is not easy to predict... Second, reading is likely to be

harder when a sentence does not divide readily into optimal segments for processing...

Third, reading is likely to be harder when a heavy burden is imposed on short-term memory." This third condition is more general than the first two and instances of it would include such constructions as those that demand a reader hold in working memory verbatim words and phrases until the clause or sentence is completed. Other instances would be the "interrupting construction", where, say, the subject and verb might be interrupted by an intervening phrase or clause; or a long subject noun phrase; or an elliptical construction that requires a reader to hold exact words in memory until they are recovered from elsewhere in the text. The questions themselves, and texts from which the questions were derived, are examined in terms of these three possible sources of syntactic complexity.

THE MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: QUESTION 3 OF THE 1989 PAPER.

Candidates were required to read a passage from TIME magazine which contrasts East and West Berlin. (See Appendix A page 2).

1. Question 3 (T.E.D.1989:3) reads:

> Explain what you think the writer intended when he remarks, "whatever may become of the sickle, the hammer can certainly be heard ringing across East Berlin..." (line 26).

Both "the sickle" and "the hammer" are in Prince's terms New and Unused entities. However the writer of the passage

assumes that the reader knows that these are the symbols of "a Communist country" (line 25) and answers must mention the symbolic meanings of the terms. These terms, the emblems of industry or agriculture are therefore INFERRABLES (See Table 3 page 34.)

Candidates needed to identify these as symbols in order to provide any sort of answer to the more complex question of what the writer intended by using them the way he did.

Candidate 40T wrote an answer deserving full marks:

> The sickle and the hammer are symbolic of Communism, of a Socialistic society which is restricted and drab. East Berlin is part of the Communist rule.
> In line 26 the writer uses a play on words and conveys the thought that the authorities are making changes to building structures in E Berlin. The hammer in this context refers to a hammer that a workman would use in constructing something (ie the new buildings). "Whatever may become of the sickle" is an implication that the strong-hold of communism has or is to be loosened by the construction of new, modern buildings and the attempt at introducing a new, lively lifestyle in E Berlin.

A candidate (12B) was awarded no marks at all despite having captured some of the sense of "the hammer can certainly be heard ringing across East Berlin" when he wrote:

> The East German authorities are helping improve living conditions.

What this candidate failed to do was to identify and mention the Inferrables in his answer.

In Irwin's terms this question would be classified as an INTEGRATIVE IMPLICIT question (See Table 3 page 34). It requires the candidate to "fill in important missing aspects of the given situation" (Irwin,1986:38). The implicitness lies in the connotations attached to "sickle" and "hammer"

that a reader must recover and mention. In this instance the hammer had to be construed both symbolically (of Communism) and literally (as an instrument used in building or other industries).

2. The form of the rubric is not an unusual one. It is imperative in mood, and right-branching in terms of clausal organization. According to Quirk et al. (1985:1039) "Right-branching clauses are the easiest to comprehend."

The matrix clause is followed by two noun clauses and an adverbial clause, before the quotation from the passage begins. The second noun clause is embedded in the first but in a way that did not provide students at matriculation level with much difficulty in trying to predict what might follow the first. The superordinate noun clause "What you think" is deletable and the embedded clause "What the writer intended" is predictable enough in an item of this sort. The familiar phrasing of this first part of the rubric makes it easy to segment, and this easily segmentable arrangement of clauses did not place too heavy a burden on the working memory of students at matriculation level.

The quotation used in the rubric is only part of the full sentence (lines 26-30). The full sentence can be bracketed to illustrate the clauses and the embedding.

4 4 1
[Whatever may become of the sickle,] [the hammer can
2
certainly be heard ringing across East Berlin, [which is
3
embarked on a building spree [that will last until the end
321
of the century.]]]

Clause 3 is embedded in clause 2, which in turn is embedded in clause 1. Clause 1, the matrix clause (the hammer can certainly be heard ringing across East Berlin) is fronted by clause 4, a "universal conditional-concessive clause" (Quirk et al 1985:1101) and both the embedding and the fronting can overload working memory. Clause 4 is a universal conditional since it indicates "a free choice from any number of conditions". The concessive implication can be seen in the inference that "*even if nothing* becomes of the sickle, the hammer can still be heard ringing across East Berlin." What is interesting here is that the inference, that needs to be made to recognize the concessive implication in the Whatever-clause, *was* made, even by the weakest candidates. Candidate 3B was awarded no marks for his answer, yet it displays plainly an understanding of the conditional-concessive nature of the initial clause. His answer reads:

> The writers telling us that whatever may become of this country whether peace or destruction, the rest of Berlin will know about it.

This candidate has captured the free choice of conditions by his use of "whether peace or destruction" and has represented the concessive implication by his own use of a whatever-

clause. His answer was awarded no marks because he has failed to interpret "sickle" and "hammer" as Communist symbols. He seems to have construed the sickle as representing peace and the hammer as representing destruction. Another very weak candidate, whose answer displays a recognition of the concessive implication in the initial clause was 6B. She wrote:

> I think that the writer intended to make us (the readers) aware that even though East Berlin is a isolated communist country there is still activity which can be heard from the other side of the Wall. (The activity is the ringing of a bell which is embarked on a building spree.)

Her use of "even though" expresses her inferring the concessive element in the Whatever-clause and she, like 3B, has been given no credit for this. She, too, has failed to point out the significance of the sickle and hammer as Communist symbols.

3. In trying to account for the difficulty of this item, then, one must recognise that neither the embedding, nor the fronting of the conditional-concessive Whatever-clause, caused an increase in the reader's processing load. The potentially difficult syntax was not the reason most candidates failed the question. The reason has to do with "hammers" and "sickles". If one sees "context" as Sperber and Wilson do (1986:15) as a "psychological construct, a sub-set of the hearer's (reader's) assumptions about the world", then readers of this question were unable to interpret this utterance because they were unable to

construct a context in which "hammer" and "sickle" were part of a Communist world. There are necessary conditions of context-construction, independent of the syntax of an utterance, which, if not met, make interpretation of an utterance wrong. Most candidates were unable to construct the context constructed by the examiners, and their answers to question 3 of the 1989 paper were therefore wrong.

THE SECOND MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: QUESTION 16 OF THE 1989 PAPER.

Candidates were asked to read the opening lines of Steinbeck's Cannery Row. (See Appendix A page 5.)

1. Question 16 (T.E.D.1989:6) instructs candidates to focus their attention on Steinbeck's description (lines 17-21) of the canneries on Cannery Row that "dip their tails into the bay." Steinbeck goes on to say that

> The figure is advisedly chosen, for if the canneries dipped their mouths into the bay the canned sardines which emerge from the other end would be, metaphorically at least, even more horrifying.

Part one of question 16 asks candidates what they can deduce from this remark, of his attitude to canned sardines. The deduction that candidates needed to make requires an INFERRABLE that the examiners assume is recoverable from some item or items within the quotation.

In order to deduce that Steinbeck does not like sardines, a candidate would need to infer this from Steinbeck's use of the phrase "even more horrifying."

An answer (7T) that was awarded full marks reads:

> Canned sardines disgust him, he thinks that they are dirty and smelly and no better than an animal's excretion.

The three attributes mentioned and the final NP of the answer are inferrable.

Candidate 1: indicates in her answer the source of the inference:

> Steinbeck views canned sardines with distaste as can be seen from his comment "even more horrifying."

50B appears not to have identified agent, patient or instrument at all in the following answer:

> The sardines are exposed to horrifying sights before they are canned. Therefore the quality of the sardines is poor.

The question, since it involves filling in aspects of a particular situation, in this case identifying the writer's attitude to sardines, can, in Irwin's terms, be labeled an INTEGRATIVE IMPLICIT question.

Part two of question 16 requires candidates to explain what Steinbeck means when he says, "The figure is advisedly chosen". Steinbeck supplies the answer when he explains that his choice of image is a considered one, for to imagine canneries defecating would be even more horrifying. Unless candidates are able to recover the image of sardines disappearing into a tail and emerging from a mouth, they would not be able to comment on the advisability of the use of such an image. Having to comment on the use of the entity "figure" is, in effect, having to supply reasons for its use, and these reasons would be INFERRABLES.

An answer by 7T makes clear the need to construct the image in order to make the reasons for its use clear.

> The personification of the factories or the metaphor of comparing the factories to animals is very effective. He uses the image of sardines going into the tails and coming out the mouth rather than the image of sardines going in the mouth and out the rear end which would be more horrifying.

Candidate 50B was unable to construct the necessary image. He wrote:

> The figure that is chosen is that of the person to take them out of the boat. The sardines mustn't get a fright.

Constructing mental images, of the kind involved in this question, is, within the framework of an Ex-QAR taxonomy, the construction of ELABORATIVE information. Once the image has been constructed however, the candidate needs to integrate this information with his attitudes to how polite the image is and then infer that the figure is advisedly chosen to avoid vulgarity.

2. The first question follows the normal pattern of Wh-questions in that the Wh-element functions as object of the sentence and the usual inversion of subject and verb is maintained.

The second question is imperative in mood with three right-branching subordinate clauses. (See comment on right-branching clauses on page 42). Neither the first nor the second question provided even the weakest candidates with problems of interpretation. Most begin their answers with "I can deduce that..." or "He means that...". Certain answers

to the first question are more to the point and simply announce "He doesn't like sardines." The sentence from the text to which the two questions refer is complex in the sense that it may increase a reader's processing load. Not only can it make considerable demands on a reader's working memory, but it is not easily segmentable and certain clauses are difficult to predict.

What demands are made on the reader's working memory are caused by the multiple degrees of embedding in the sentence. The matrix clause is followed by three subordinate clauses, two of which are embedded in a superordinate clause. Bracketing reveals the degree of embedding:

```
1                                  2    3
[The figure is advisedly chosen [for [if the canneries
                                  3 2
dipped their mouths into the bay] the canned sardines
4                                 4 2
[which  emerge from the other end] would be,
                                                  21
metaphorically, at least, even more horrifying.]]
```

Both the if-clause and the which-clause are embedded in the superordinate for-clause.

The if-clause is in initial position in the for-clause and is left branching, whereas the relative clause nests in medial position in the for-clause.

The sentence is unusual in that it violates the "...dominant tendency of syntactic structure that the greatest depth of subordination is reached in the final part of the sentence." (Quirk et al 1985:1039). The greatest depth of subordination

is reached medially in this sentence. There are a number of ways in which this sentence might overload a reader's working memory. "The canned sardines", which is the subject of the adverbial for-clause, has to be held in working memory until the very end of the sentence in order to be linked to the verbal element of the clause "would be...horrifying." Two constructions interrupt this operation. The effort of holding the subject in memory is likely to be increased by the interrupting which-clause and the adverbial phrase which interrupts the verbal element is followed by an intensifier before the reader finally gets to "horrifying".

These interrupting constructions are clearly a potential source of difficulty in the segmentation of the sentence. This is particularly noticeable in the for-clause. The conjunction is separated from the subject by the conditional if-clause and the subject in turn is separated from the verb by the adjectival which-clause.

Again, the for-clause is not an easily predictable one. Given the incomplete sentence "The canned sardines would be...", most readers would attempt to find a complement of some kind to fill the slot. The adverbial "metaphorically at least" is an improbable candidate and therefore difficult to predict.

Other than providing readers with possible difficulties in memory storage, segmentation and predictability, the sentence insists on the recovery of an entity that the

writer treats as given but to many candidates was new. The problem is exacerbated by its being the head noun of the main clause, viz. "The figure". Steinbeck's use of the definite article indicates that he uses the noun in question as a "given". Few candidates recognised it as denoting "a figure of speech" and, by implication, the metaphor used in the preceding sentence. "The figure" has to be recognised as a metaphor for a candidate to be able to explain its meaning.

The first part of the question, viz. "What can you deduce from this (the lines quoted) of his attitude to canned sardines?" had to be answered by mention being made of Steinbeck's distaste for sardines and by some reference to his use of the phrase "even more horrifying". The second part of the question, viz. "Explain what he means when he says, 'The figure is advisedly chosen.'", had certain distinction-level candidates completely bai 1. 17T wrote:

> He means that it is positioned well, and it is appropriately placed for what must be done - it's just right.

"The figure" in this answer is interpreted as being a functional entity of some kind, relying on positioning or placing for its effectiveness, perhaps the factory.

A similar answer was supplied by another distinction-level candidate (10T) who wrote:

> The price and amount of sardines is chosen with care and knowledge, with all considerations and suggestions taken into account.

The two answers are similar in that both reflect the failure

of the writers to interpret "figure" as a figure of speech. Both have interpreted "figure" in its literal senses, 17T as some physical entity such as a factory perhaps, and 10T as a price or amount. Neither of these distinction-level candidates has used the word "metaphorically" at all in his interpretation.

3. Two possible reasons based on the syntax of this item may be advanced for this omission by candidates who, in other questions, were awarded excellent marks.

The first is that the phrase "metaphorically, at least," is an interrupting phrase and impedes a reader's search for the complementation that must follow "would be...". A fast reader in his quick search for verb-complementation may miss interrupting phrases such as this. Related to this supposition is another. Phrases that are difficult to predict, as "metaphorically, at least" is, may be purposely glossed over and not noted by fast readers. Fast readers may well adopt a strategy that instructs them to get to predictable elements in the text as quickly as possible. This strategy would allow fast readers more hypothesis confirmation in less time and would go some way towards accounting for these distinction-level candidates not noticing an interrupting construction. The second possible reason that these candidates failed to include the reference to metaphor in their answers is that they took the question to mean that only the main clause had to be explained. Only the main clause is quoted in the second part of the

question. It seems unlikely that candidates such as these would ignore co-text though.

What needs to be noted, however, in attempting to explain the difficulty in this question, is that in terms of the taxonomies, the answer, like the answer to the most difficult question, depends on the candidates' recovering an Inferrable and integrating implicit information to arrive at an appropriate interpretation. But it is not only in this respect very similar to the most difficult question. Candidates, unable to recover the image of canneries disgorging sardines, were, like candidates faced with a question about sickles and hammers, unable to construct the appropriate context which had to include canneries disgorging sardines. This was a necessary condition of context construction (See pages 44 and 45), independent of the syntax of the text, which was constructed by examiners, but not by candidates unable to answer the question.

THE THIRD MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: QUESTION 9 OF THE 1989 PAPER.

This question, like the most difficult, is based on the TIME magazine article that contrasts East and West Berlin. (See Appendix A page 2).

1. Question 9 (T.E.D.1989:4) is in two parts. The question reads:

> The West German analyst speaks of the "big effort" (line 37) being made to improve the conditions of life in East Berlin.

9.1 What stylistic criticism may be levelled against his use of the word 'big' in this context?

9.2 Supply a more suitable word with which to replace it.

Candidates were expected to say that the word "big" as used in this context had little to commend it as an adjective, that its meaning is vague, that it is clichéd, overworked or tired. Candidates who suggested words like "sustained" or "concerted" to replace "big", were awarded full marks.

Candidates were expected to comment on an attribute rather than the entity "a big effort", which in Prince's terms would be a Textually Evoked entity recoverable from "the face-lift" in the preceding lines "...Erich Honecker hopes that the face-lift will alter East Berlin's image as the drab socialist sister of the glamorous, glittering West." In being asked to comment on the effectiveness of the attribute however, candidates needed to draw on information not available at all in the text itself and for this reason the answer must be seen as INFERRABLE.

Candidates may have been drilled into believing that the word "big" ought to be avoided at all costs, but in order to replace the word with another, some inference is necessary and the attribute can therefore also be seen as an INFERRABLE.

Most certainly, when a candidate is asked to fill in some slot (in this instance by the removal of the word "big") the question is almost by definition a slot-filling inference in Irwin's terms or an INTEGRATIVE IMPLICIT question-type.

Criticism of a writer's stylistic use of a word should be seen as an ELABORATIVE question, since it involves consideration of the writer's purpose, or as Irwin (1986:78) puts it, "analysing the reasoning used by the author."

A number of candidates did not question the *stylistic* use of "big" but questioned the truth or accuracy of the term. Such a candidate was 2B who wrote:

> East Berlin is relatively small to the West and a "big effort" need NOT be made to improve conditions because the country is already one of the most beautiful in Europe.

This candidate did not offer a word to replace "big". Candidate 2B either did not know what "stylistic" meant or chose to ignore it.

2. Both parts of the question are syntactically straightforward and provided candidates with no difficulty of interpretation. The Q-element in part 1 of the question is placed in initial position and functions as the subject of the sentence. The second part of the question is, like the two most difficult items, imperative in mood and not unfamiliar in comprehension tests of this kind.

In order to be awarded full marks for 9.1, answers had to mention that "big" is clichéd and in the context of the analyst's remark has little meaning. In answering part 2 of the question, candidates suggested a variety of replacements. The marks awarded for these answers depended on what examiners considered "good" words ie what examiners considered a more suitable word that in some way took into

account the context in which the remark was made. Thus a replacement for "big" such as "great" was only awarded 50% whereas "determined" or "sustained" were seen as warranting full marks. In order to select a replacement word which was worth full marks, readers had to relate "a big effort" to the "face-lift" mentioned in line 32, since it is the face-lift that the West German analyst is trying to explain. The explanation by the West German analyst was not misinterpreted by candidates. The clause pattern in that part of the sentence relevant to the answer is an S V O A pattern and has not increased the reader's processing load unduly, since candidates could conceivably have answered this question correctly without having to understand the meaning of the sentence.

3. Accounting then, for the difficulty of this item in syntactic terms is difficult. The important point to note is that although the question at face value appears to be very different from the two most difficult questions, it nevertheless does, like them, demand from the candidates the construction of a context (see pages 44 and 52). The context would incorporate the kind of effort that needs to be made when a city is undergoing a "face-lift"; building operations that are "sustained" operations. Only if candidates were able to construct this kind of context, could they be expected to access a word like "sustained" to replace "big". Difficulty of this kind of is quite independent of the syntax of the West German analyst's remarks about a "big

effort".

THE FOURTH MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: QUESTION 7 OF THE 1990 PAPER.

Candidates were asked to read an article from LIFE magazine on Man's ability to survive the environmental crisis. (See Appendix C page 2).

1. Question 7 (T.E.D.1990:3) was the fourth most difficult item with a difficulty index of .362. The question asks candidates to "Explain why the writer's use of the SEMICOLON may be considered a better punctuation mark to use than a comma or a full stop..." in the lines

> We build wood fires in steam-heated city apartments; we keep plants and animals around us as if to maintain direct contact with our own origins; we travel long and far on weekends...

"Semicolon" as used in the rubric is a New and Unused entity which is unanchored in any other entity. Candidates are required to provide a REASON for the use of this new, unused entity, and the reason is an INFERRABLE since no reason is recoverable from the text. However, candidates who had been taught that semicolons were used "to separate different, but related concepts..." (Appendix D page 1) would not have had to infer a reason at all.

Others who may have been taught the functions of a full stop and comma may have been able to infer that the lines required some punctuation mark weaker than a full stop but stronger than a comma. Most candidates did indulge in some

inferring. For instance the three weakest candidates wrote:

1B The use of the semicolon is to give us a longer break after each point and for us to actually think about it. Think about what he has said.

2B The writers use of a semicolon is that there is so many things related to one subject that are so important. He cant insert commas or full-stops because there (re so many things to say.

3B They are giving more information on their points and that is what a semicolon is used for.

Classifying the question in Irwin's terms illustrates an important feature of this particular taxonomy. Earlier taxonomies classified questions according to the product the tester expected as an answer. (See Chapter 2, page 27). In applying Irwin's taxonomy however, this particular question is seen as an INTEGRATIVE IMPLICIT question since candidates are attempting to infer reasons that are implicit in the writer's use of the semicolon. If the answers of the candidates were not taken into account, one might be tempted to classify this question as one depending solely on prior knowledge. This would be an over-simplification of the processes at work here.

2. Again, as with the rubric of item 3 in the 1989 paper, the item is in imperative mood and, in this case, is an instruction to explain a particular feature of passage one. Its construction is similar to question 3 of the 1989 paper (the most difficult question) with the matrix clause in initial position followed by a noun clause, which is right-

branching and easiest to comprehend (see page 42).

Although the rubric at first glance appears to be lengthy and might be suspected of placing too great a burden on a reader's working memory, closer scrutiny reveals that the sentence is unlikely to do this. The prepositional complement of the subject of the subordinate clause ("semicolon"), does not need to be held in a reader's working memory for any extended period since the examiner has chosen to include a certain amount of redundancy in the complement "a better punctuation mark". Had he chosen to omit it and written "...may be considered better than (his use of) a comma or full stop...", candidates would not have been reminded that the question had to do with punctuation marks, and would possibly have had to deal with an increased processing load.

A further reason for suggesting that the reader's working memory is not over-extended by the structural arrangement of this sentence, is that the examiners' use of the super-ordinate term "punctuation mark" is also likely to remind the candidate that the prepositional complement "semicolon" ought to be topicalized in an answer. This suggestion is borne out by the examiner's capitalization of "semicolon", in order to draw the attention of the candidates to it, and the suggestion is further confirmed by the memorandum supplied to markers. In it "semicolon" is topicalized. It reads:

> The semicolon is used to separate different, but related

concepts...

The familiar S V O A structure of the subordinate clause makes it hard to see how it might be construed as a structure difficult to predict.

None of the three weakest candidates in the 1990 sample was in any doubt as to what was required. Their answers (quoted in 1 above, see Page 57) show an awareness of the topicalized NP and candidate 3B has attempted his own kind of end-focus.

3. The only possible explanation that can be offered for their being awarded no marks, is that they were simply unable to articulate good enough reasons for the writer's use of this particular punctuation mark. Candidate 2B reveals an ignorance of the use of the other two punctuation marks referred to in the question. What the candidates lacked was either a particular kind of prior knowledge as to how punctuation marks are used, or the knowledge needed to infer a precise enough answer.

In a sense these responses are uninteresting because the knowledge that the candidates required could presumably have been taught. A more irteresting (if idiosyncratic) response was 3B's.

> They are giving more information on their points and that is what a semicolon is used for.

He was given no credit for this answer, but the nature of it is revealing. He has not topicalized "semicolon" as the examiners expected candidates to, yet he cannot be said to

have misunderstood the topic of the question. He has devoted the whole of a co-ordinate clause to it. The first clause, "They are giving more information on their points", suggests that the candidate knows something of the use of a semicolon. If he has tried to express the sense of something like "adding information in point form" then a semicolon would be an appropriate punctuation mark to use.

This candidate has revealed, however, an inability to assign proper reference to both the pronouns used in lines 45 and 48 (the lines referred to in the question.) He has taken the "we" to refer to "writers" rather than to "all of us - mankind", and this incorrect reference assignment may have been supported by the use of "writer's" in the question itself. That the candidate has trouble assigning reference is further evidenced in the second clause of his answer. "That" as it has been used is strictly an indeterminate reference, unless it has been used to refer to the whole of the preceding clause, which is unlikely.

There are at least two possibilities that one needs to consider in trying to account for the difficulty this particular candidate experienced.

The first is that the rubric directed attention to lines 45 and 48 and this candidate read the full sentence from line 44 to 51. In it, he encountered no fewer than three instances of "we" and the related pronouns "us" and "our". It is in this fifth paragraph only that the pronominal is consistently used in the plural. The full extract of six

paragraphs allows for at least five different antecedents of "we" - man; many others; human beings; mankind and each person. The writer's inconsistent use of singular and plural pronouns in early paragraphs could well be the cause of 3B's confusion. "Our" in line 4 and "us" in line 10 refer to "man" in line 1 and not, as a quick reading might suggest, to "many others" in line 3. "Man" and "he" (both singular) become "we" in the very next line. This inconsistent use of singular and plural pronouns then might be the reason that the candidate began his answer with "They", revealing his own confusion.

The second possible reason for 3B's inability to assign appropriate reference to the "we" of lines 44 and 45 is either his failure to notice the apostrophe used in the word "writer's" as part of the rubric, or his ignorance of this particular use of the apostrophe. He interpreted "writer's" as the "we" of lines 44 and 45 ie as the plural of "writer". This misinterpretation can be accounted for, if one accepts the principle of "local interpretation" (Brown and Yule, 1984:59). They maintain that "This principle instructs the hearer (reader) not to construct a context any larger than he needs to arrive at an interpretation."

It is possible that 3B has used only the rubric and paragraph five as co-text to interpret the pronouns. He takes "writer's" as a straightforward plural and confirms this interpretation by the uses of "our", "we", and "us" in paragraph five. Had he used a larger co-text (the other five

paragraphs) to assign a reference to "writer's", he may not have begun his answer with "They".

In attempting to account for the difficulty most candidates had with this question, however, one must acknowledge that most were unable to articulate the conventions of basic punctuation. The top candidate (1T) failed the question with this answer:

> The semicolon prolongs the sentence and makes us realize how desperate man is to make nature a part of his life. We see the lengths man will go to, to experience nature in every aspect of his daily life.

There is little doubt that this candidate has recovered the sense of the lines, and she has simply failed to account for the use of the semicolon. This kind of ineptitude may be the result of negligence on the part of her teachers. She needed to know how to articulate the conventions applied to the use of the semicolon.

Neither syntactic considerations nor context construction appear to have caused candidates difficulty with this question.

THE FIFTH MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: QUESTION 13 OF THE 1990 PAPER.

The question is based on a description, by George Orwell, of Sheffield at night. (See Appendix C page 5.)

1. Question 13 of the 1990 paper and question 22 were of equal difficulty, both with an index of .373. Question 22 is a precis exercise and it is unusual for most candidates to

fail this item. A precis exercise regularly appears in paper two of the T.E.D. examinations and most candidates in the past have had no trouble passing the item. (See item 19 of the 1989 paper). A deliberate policy decision was taken by the examiners in 1990, which accounts for most candidates failing the precis. Candidates who ignored the request to write an article for a record sleeve were heavily penalized. The decision was taken in the hope that matriculants could in future be alerted to the importance of register in their precis writing. Had this decision not been taken, item 22 would not have had a difficulty index of .373 and would not have been considered in this study as a difficult item. Item 13 however, which is a difficult item, is based on passage 3.1 of the 1990 paper (Appendix C page 5). The attention of the candidates is drawn to paragraph 3 of the passage in which Orwell describes Sheffield at night, and they are instructed to "Examine this image..." The image from line 12 reads:

> serrated flames, like circular saws, squeeze themselves out...
>
> Two questions follow:
>
> What do you visualise from this simile?
>
> How does the alliteration help to intensify the sinister impression of this image?

The answers to both of these questions must be considered as INFERRABLES. Readers are required to make mention of entities and attributes of entities not recoverable in the text other than by processes of "plausible reasoning"

(Prince, 1981:236). The marking memorandum (Appendix D page 3) specified as acceptable, responses that mentioned "sharp, jagged points of flame spurting up around the edges" for the first question, and "sibilants " which "create a hissing, malevolent impression" for the second.

Irwin's taxonomy would classify both these questions as ELABORATIVE in type (See Chapter 2 page 31), since both depend on the reader's creation of mental images and, strictly speaking, responses should not draw on information that is explicit in the text. A word like "serrated" which is explicitly stated had to be recovered in a form that shared certain semantic features with "serrated" and was therefore only implicit in the concept of "serratedness". "Jagged" is such a form.

Another elaboration required from readers if they were to respond appropriately to the second question is the mental image created by sibilants of a "hissing" or "rasping" sound. Candidates would also need to relate sibilance to malevolence of some kind and nothing explicit in the text prompts them to do so, other than the word "sinister" in the question. Using the word "sinister" however, would not have earned a candidate a mark.

2. The general form of the rubric of question 13 is very similar to that of the second most difficult question viz. 16 in the 1989 paper (Appendix A page 6), in that both questions begin by instructing readers to examine a particular piece of text and then follow this imperative

with two Wh-questions. (16.2 is formally an imperative but functionally a What-question.) The Q-elements function quite normally in both questions, in 13.1 as object of the clause and in 13.2 as an adverbial. As was the case in question 16 neither question posed much difficulty in interpretation for even the weakest candidates. Most begin their answers with "I visualise..." or "The alliteration helps to...", thus indicating an awareness at least, of what was required as an answer.

The image that readers are asked to visualise is part of the sentence which reads: "Sometimes the drifts of smoke are rosy with sulphur, *and serrated flames, like circular saws, squeeze themselves out* from beneath the cowls of foundry chimneys."

It is a compound sentence with a regular structure, a single main clause joined to a second by the common co-ordinator "and". A reader beginning a grammatical analysis is able to identify subject and verb in the first clause without any interruption or need for a re-analysis because of unpredictable elements. The co-ordinate clause is slightly more problematic. The subject is easily and quickly identifiable but the postmodifying prepositional phrase, "like circular saws", interrupts the reader's search for a verb. The phrasal verb itself is in a sense interrupted by the pronoun "themselves" but would have been less interpretable (possibly even ambiguous) had it been written *"squeeze out themselves."

Potentially then these two interrupting elements could hinder a reader in an initial search for subject and verb and thus place an undue processing load on the reader's working memory.

3. Quite commonly, when examiners use technical terms such as "simile" or "alliteration" (often quite unnecessarily), certain candidates are intent on displaying memorised knowledge in the hope that examiners give them some credit. Such a candidate is 19B, who has some idea of what "simile" and "alliteration" *signify*, but has not been able to assign a *value* to the items "simile" or "alliteration" within the context of this particular exchange between testee and tester. (The terms "signification " and "value" are from Widdowson, 1979:8.)

19B wrote:

> A simile is when you say something is like something else. The actual flames lifting into the air.

and

> Alliteration is when the letters are the same and ... it makes it sound more sophisticated like the actual thing thats happening.

This kind of error is explicable in the light of Widdowson's comment that

> Language can be manipulated in the classroom in the form of text-sentences which ...indicate the **signification** of linguistic items. This is not the same as language **use** - the use of sentences in the performance of utterances which give these elements communicative **value**.

19B has displayed a knowledge of the signification of the items "simile" and "alliteration" without recovering what

Kingman (1988:26) calls "the thick pragmatic meaning" of the question viz. describe what it is that you visualise when you read the words "serrated flames, like circular saws, squeeze themselves out..."

To some extent then the error here can be ascribed to the kind of teaching to which the candidate has been exposed and the use of "trigger-words" like "simile" and "alliteration" in the phrasing of the question which tempt candidates to display memorised fragments of knowledge in the hope of getting credit in an examination.

A number of candidates focused attention on the "circular saw", which they visualised as necessarily a saw which saws wood. Answers refer to "wood" or "trees" or "sawdust", none of which is mentioned in the text.

14B I visualise a saw slowly cutting through a tree. The saw squeezes out of the tree, so the flames squeeze of(f?) the slag heap.

14B did not offer an answer to 13.2.

43B I visualise an electric saw cutting through a tree and trying to go through to the other end.
and
It uses a hard "s" sound ie. circular squeeze.

8T I visualise a flame that is spiralling upwards in a circular fashion. The edges of the circle of fire are jagged and the flame is spiralling so fast it appears to be slicing the air like a saw. The smoke from the flame looks like sawdust spraying out from a saw whining through wood.
and
...the dirtiness and abandonment of the area is intensified through alliteration and thus the town seems more sinister, evil and secretive.

Despite both questions 13.1 and 13.2 being linked by number and by the common image, none of the three responses quoted

above has attempted to relate 13.1 and 13.2 to each other. This omission may also be explained in terms of the kind of teaching candidates such as these three have been subjected to. What were referred to as "trigger-words" on page 67 have been taught as discreet pieces of information and a word like "alliteration" in a question, prompts a routine response - identify commonly occurring consonants. There is no attempt to explain why the writer may have chosen to use the device and no attempt to relate the sounds produced to the semantic content of the image in question. The answer provided by 43B above to the second part of the question illustrates clearly how a trigger like "alliteration" releases the stock response.

If stock responses are seen as stereotypical responses then the argument made above concerning triggers like "simile" or "alliteration", is supported by all three responses. These candidates recovered the stereotypical associations of "circular saw" - it is a saw used for cutting wood. What they were unable to do, was to imagine and describe what they saw and heard in terms of the menace of industrial-ization.

Findings have shown that forming mental images and affective responses to the text being read leads to recovery of information at greater depth (Gernsbacher, M. et al. 1990: 430; Martins, D. 1982:152). The following three answers illustrate that weak candidates were unable to relate what they see to what they hear, while reading.

20B wrote: I visualise an animal trying to free itself from a trap but can only move a limited distance.
and
The continuous "s" sound creates a burning sound.

26B wrote: I visualise a black and dark battlefield that has come to an end,with flames burning sharply and fiercely. Weapons lying around which are like the circular saws and like the forgotten dead from other wars coming out of their graves to fetch the dead that have just died on this battlefield.
and
To emphasise how dark and black this small town is...

39B wrote: A painful experience as you squeeze out the matter out of the saws. An ugly, disgusting and painful experience.
and
It makes the image stronger and points out the real truth behind it, thus show- to us its importance.

These three answers, which fail to integrate the sights and sounds in a single image, illustrate the difficulties candidates have in constructing contexts that coincide with the contexts that examiners construct and consider appropriate (see pages 44, 52, 55 and 61).
Nothing in the syntax of the question or in the text itself exacerbates the difficulty since these candidates were drawing on a particular sub-set of their assumptions about the world (Sperber and Wilson, 1986:15).

THE SIXTH MOST DIFFICULT ITEM: QUESTION 18 OF THE 1989 PAPER.

1. Question 18 of the 1989 paper, with a difficulty index of .383 is the last of the questions which most candidates

failed. Like the second-most difficult question, it is based on a sentence drawn from Steinbeck's Cannery Row (Appendix A page 5). The question reads:

> "They come running to clean and cut and pack and cook and can the fish." (line 29)
>
> Here, too, Steinbeck uses repetition, this time of the word "and". He also uses alliteration. If this sentence were read aloud, how would the sound of it add to its meaning?

The question draws the candidates' attention to the previous one, (Question 17) in which candidates had to comment on Steinbeck's use of repetition. In question 18, they are alerted again to the repetition and alliteration. As in question 17, candidates are expected to mention at least two INFERRABLES in their answers. They need to mention that the repetition of the consonant [c] and the co-ordinator echo the sounds of machines (entity 1) in the canning factories and reflect the repetitious and monotonous nature of the business of canning fish (entity 2). These entities and attributes are nowhere recoverable from any other entity in the text. Unless a reader associates the repeated [c] with the sound of machinery and then reasons that repetitious sounds create boredom, he is unlikely to be given any credit for an answer. An answer by 3T was awarded full marks:

> The repeated heavy "c" sound emphasises the activity taking place; it emphasises the drudgery of the activity, as does the repetition of the word "and" which also serves to build the events to a climax. The short, one-syllable words (cut and pack and cook etc). evoke the methodical fastmoving process (of machinery).

A candidate (28B) who did not use Inferrables in the initial

part of an answer but chose to assign attributes to the work in the factories, was awarded no marks at all. He explained the repetition and alliteration as

> describing how fast (attribute) the employees work. It sounds quick (attribute) and to the point (attribute) with no hesitation (entity) at all. (Brackets mine.)

To retrieve the notion that repetition (phonemic and lexical) is indicative of some added meaning component (such as drudgery or monotony) is dependent on prior knowledge elaboration. Candidates need to know that this stylistic device contributes some additional sense to the explicit and literal meanings in the sentence. As such, a question calling on candidates to use this knowledge is classifiable under ELABORATIVE information within the framework of an Ex-QAR taxonomy.

2. Arranged as it is, this rubric could well increase a reader's processing time. Three sentences precede the fourth which contains the Q-element, thus necessitating similar backward referencing from the reader as question 16 demanded. (The second-most difficult question.) However, in an initial search for subject and verb, a reader is not likely to have to resort to any form of re-analysis since the verb follows subjects closely in three of the four sentences that make up the rubric of this question. The predictability of syntactic elements then, does not seem to pose much difficulty to a reader.

The compound sentence from which the question was derived is

unusual in that it contains four co-ordinated non-finite clauses. Now compound sentences generally should not provide readers with much difficulty since children begin compounding with "and" from a very young age. The difficulty (if any) with this sentence must lie in the sheer quantity of ellipsis. Compound sentences of this kind allow "both initial ellipsis and final ellipsis" (Quirk,R et al 1985: 911) and Steinbeck has used both kinds. In the four co-ordinate clauses he omits the subject (They), the verb and modifier (come running), and the "to" of the infinitive in initial positions. The first four clauses use final ellipsis in that they carry no complementation until the last clause. Such concentrated ellipsis has been shown to cause readers difficulty (Richek 1977, quoted in Perera,1984:294), yet few (if any) matriculation candidates misunderstood the sentence.

Certainly some of the initial ellipsis was recovered by candidate 3B who wrote:

> This sentence is like a rhyming scheme, it's like a continuous routine that these people do.
> Everyday they come to work, they clean and they cut and they pack...

The same candidate was not unaware that the cutting and the packing had to do with fish. Her answer to the following question (No.19 of the paper) includes the remark:

> ...they come to clean and cut and pack the fish ... until the last fish is cut and cleaned.

3. There is little doubt that candidates understood both the question asked, and the line by Steinbeck, which provided

the examiners with the repetition and alliteration they needed in order to ask the question.

Answers which were awarded no marks at all fell into two main categories; they were either provided by candidates who were ill-equipped in examination techniques or they were provided by candidates who were unable to match their inferences with the inferences that examiners drew from the repetition and alliteration in the target sentence.

Answers by candidates 1B and 21B illustrate deficiencies in examination technique:

> It would sound like it is a sentence that has no full stop but just lots of sentences joined with the word and. It would also loose its meaning because it has no break in between.

21B wrote:

> It is a repetition of the same consonant sound. It gives us the sound of how it sounds like.

Both answers reveal disturbing aspects of what is possibly bad teaching practice. Both candidates appear to believe that what teachers have told them, will serve as answers in a test of this kind. 1B has recognised the repetition of "and" and possibly because he cannot think of why Steinbeck would use such a device, resorts to recounting the advice probably given to him by his teacher.

21B is a victim of the trigger response common to answers in item 13 of the 1990 examination (see page 67). He has identified the alliteration but has failed to relate it to meaning in the target sentence.

The second category of answers that were awarded no marks at

all for this question comprised those written by candidates who failed to draw the inferences that the examiners drew. These kinds of answers were far more common than those displaying a deficiency in examination technique.

The following responses illustrate the candidates' ability to draw inferences which are clearly relevant to the question asked and which display a clear understanding of what is required as an appropriate response, yet do not match the expectations of the examiners (see Chapter 6 page 144 for more comment).

11B. It makes it sound as if everything was done at once, all at the same time which it could have.

17B. If read allowd it sounds like a list which is exactly what it is; a list of things they had to do. It adds to the meaning because it makes us think of all they had to do..,cook, pack, cut, and can the fish. They also couldn't do it all at once and the "ands" are showing us that.

25B. It would sound very exciting and it captures the adjectives in the sentence.

26B. It would add more flow to it. It would be as if the reader was being allowed to do what was being done.

26B1. It would make the job sound so much longer than it actually is.

16B. If the sentence were read aloud the sound would add to the meaning of speed. The process of the canning of sardines would sound to the reader as a speedy process. Everyone working at their best productivity.

28B. The "ands" used by Steinbeck in describing how fast the employees work. It sounds quick and to the point with no hesitation at all.

5B. ...Even here we can see that everything is done in its order. One cannot start doing something else without having finished the other. The

alliteration adds to the flow of this routine.

29B. He does this to make it sound as if it is being done systematically, that it is all done in one day, from cleaning to next and so on. He tries to show us that it is one routine and they are so used to doing it that it comes naturally.

30B. It will sound as if they are singing at the same time as they are working so that they don't bore themselves.

The writers of the ten answers above have been able to draw a wide variety of inferences. They associate repetition, either of the "and" or of the initial [c], with singing, systematic work, ordering, speed, the duration of time, excitement and simultaneity. None of these contexts matched the two that the examiners had in mind. The sub-set of the examiners' assumptions about the world included the belief that a stylistic device such as the repetition of sound, in particular in some workplace, is a reflection of monotony. One can only speculate on the source of this assumption, but it might have been adopted by examiners who were trained in English Literature. (This possibility is again taken up later - see pages 145ff.)

The diversity of some of these responses and of those offered as answers to question 13 (1990) above, is taken up in Chapter 6 (see page 139).

How these six difficult questions differ from the easy questions is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR.

A discussion of the kinds of questions on which candidates scored 70% or more, is undertaken. This is done to establish whether the difficult questions discussed in Chapter 3 are different from easy questions, in terms of Prince's and Irwin's taxonomies, and to test whether the syntax of easy questions is markedly different from that of the difficult ones. The procedure followed will be similar to that followed in Chapter 3:

1) An explanation of why an item is classified as it is, in terms of the two taxonomies used for this purpose, will be given.
2) A search for possible increases in syntactic processing load will be made.
3) An account will be offered of what makes the item an easy one.

THE EASIEST ITEM: QUESTION 12 OF THE 1990 PAPER.

1. A difficulty index of .941 on an item indicates that 94.1% of the total number of marks that could possibly be awarded for this question, were in fact awarded. This does not necessarily make the item a poor discriminator in a test, but it shows quite clearly that the sample group scored, on average, over 90% on this item, making it the easiest question matriculation candidates encountered in the two examinations under investigation.

Question 12 (T.E.D. 1990:5) is based on the passage by George Orwell (see Appendix C page 5 since the question involves the whole passage). The rubric begins with the remark that "Good descriptive writing usually appeals to one of our five senses." It goes on to instruct candidates to

> Identify the writer's use of three different senses in this description, providing an appropriate quotation from the passage for each sense.

Candidates needed to recover the sense (see Lyons, 1968:427) of the word "senses" as it is used in the rubric, since it is a New Entity introduced into the discourse. But its status in terms of "givenness" is uncertain. Prince (1981:235) distinguishes between two types of New Entity, the one Brand-new and the other Unused. In a discourse where the readers were a heterogeneous group who had not in any way been prepared for the reading, the entity "senses" would a Brand-new one.

Two factors, however, need to be taken into consideration in the case of "senses", as it is used in this question. The first is that high school students are often taught that "descriptive writing" depends for its effectiveness on the writer's deliberately appealing to one or more of the reader's senses ie his sense of sight, hearing, touch, taste or smell. Given that this teaching practice is widespread, "senses" then may be seen as an UNUSED entity, one that does not need to be created by the reader, but is part of his knowledge of "descriptive writing".

The other factor that suggests that this entity ought to be classified as UNUSED is the apparent assumption by the examiners that candidates would know what it was that "senses" referred to. They offer no explanation to candidates of their use of "our five senses". They assume not only a shared human quality with the candidates but a shared knowledge as well.

The appropriate quotations from the passage are recoverable from the text. They are:

> ...at night you can see the red rivulets of fire winding this way and that, and also the slow-moving blue flames of sulphur... (lines 6 and 7)
>
> If at rare moments you stop smelling sulphur it is because you have begun smelling gas. (Line 8)
>
> Even the shallow river that runs through the town is usually bright yellow with some chemical... (line 9)
>
> Through the open doors of foundries you see fiery serpents of iron... and you hear the whizz and thump of steam hammers and the scream of the iron...(lines 13-15)

But the status of the entities in the quotations above is uncertain in terms of assumed familiarity. Phrases such as "the red rivulets of fire", "sulphur" or "gas", and "the whizz and thump of steam hammers" are New Entities in the discourse. A candidate, however, who has recovered the meaning of "senses", reads such phrases as "you can see" (line 6), "you stop smelling", "you have begun smelling" (line 8) or "you hear" (line 14) as familiar after "senses" and therefore as given information or textually evoked information. The appropriate quotations that serve as

answers follow these given phrases and may, therefore, also be viewed as TEXTUALLY EVOKED entities.

Irwin's Ex-QAR taxonomy would classify the identification of the writer's use of the three different senses as a PRIOR-KNOWLEDGE or PRE-READING question since readers would need to know in what way "senses" is used in the question. The quotations themselves contain MICRO-EXPLICIT information that simply needs to be recognised and re-written as part of an answer.

2. Certain syntactic features might have affected ease of processing. The mood of the question is similar to that of the most difficult question (3 of 1989), in that it is phrased as an imperative (see page 47). Preceding the imperative is a simple, active, declarative sentence, in which the subject in initial position is followed by the verb phrase with a complement. The second sentence of the rubric is, like the rubric of the most difficult question, right-branching, and so ought to be easy to understand. Two potential sources of difficulty however are immediately apparent. The instruction after the imperative "Identify" is unusually long and secondly it is not clear whether the infinite clause introduced by "providing" functions as a subordinate clause or as a co-ordinate clause in the sentence. The unusually long instruction could compel a reader to backtrack, in order to remind himself of the main verb ("Identify") and this unnecessary load on working memory has been created by nominalizing a clause something

like "the writer has used". Furthermore, the nominalization itself has the effect of obscuring agent and action. The common subject-verb pattern reflects the semantic agent-action structure, which according to Greene (1987:72) is one of the first structures a reader looks for as a "psychological parsing strategy". Nominalization can frustrate this search by the reader.

The other potential source of difficulty, because it makes prediction difficult, lies in the status of the clause which asks candidates to provide an appropriate quotation from the passage. The omission of a conjunction which would make explicit the relationship between the clauses, might create uncertainty in the reader as to whether the writer meant "Identify the writer's use of three different senses...*and* provide an appropriate quotation...for each sense" or whether he meant "Identify the writer's use of three different senses...*by* providing an appropriate quotation...". Both possible sources of difficulty might have been removed by a re-casting of the entire second sentence into three simple sentences. If it had read: "The writer has used three different senses in this description. Identify them. Provide an appropriate quotation for each from the passage", the nominalization "the writer's use of three different senses" and the uncertainty of the clausal status of the rest of the sentence would have been resolved.

3. The item was an easy one despite the syntactic potential for increasing a reader's processing load.

Three out of the five weakest candidates scored well on the question (80% or full marks) in spite of their overall test scores of below 33%. All candidates who scored full marks interpreted the non-finite clause as a second clause in a compound sentence ie they interpreted "providing" as meaning "and provide".

Candidate 5B was able to name the senses referred to in the question, but did not provide appropriate quotations. He wrote:

i Sight
ii Smell
iii Hearing

This is an interesting answer, if one considers that the candidate has managed to recover what is, in effect, the New Entity in the discourse, but has failed to find the Textually Evoked entities.

Following Chafe (1976:30) that "given" information is "in the addressee's consciousness", one would suppose that Textually Evoked entities are more easily recoverable than "new" ones. It is possible that this candidate has been schooled into the response he made. He knows that "Good descriptive writing usually appeals to at least one of our five senses" and he has been able to name three of them. A more interesting possibility exists however. The part of the question he has not answered viz. providing the appropriate quotations, is the specific part of the question that constitutes both the unnecessary load on working memory and

that is difficult to predict. This reader has ignored the non-finite clause "providing an appropriate quotation from the passage for each sense", and focused his attention on the main verb or task word ("Identify"). If this is a common examination strategy, it has implications for examiners who phrase their questions in the way this one has been phrased. The weakest candidate (1B), was awarded no marks for the question because for the phrase "in this description", he read something like "in each paragraph" (understandable since the description is three paragraphs long) and he interpreted "sense" as a general perception or feeling. He wrote:

> In the first paragraph it is a sense of uneasiness, regret eg. the real ugliness of industrialism.
>
> The second paragraph is more anger than pity eg. "so planless and functionless."
>
> The third paragraph is full sadness and feelings that will never be saved eg. "the blackness of everything."

A misinterpretation of this kind illustrates that what was assumed by the examiner to be shared knowledge, viz. that "our five senses" would be recoverable by the reader as "our five faculties of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch" was, in the case of this reader, not shared knowledge at all. The candidate's PRE-READING and PRIOR KNOWLEDGE (to use Irwin's terms) were not sufficiently developed. Most candidates, however, had been taught the sense of "senses" and shared this assumption with the examiners.

THE SECOND EASIEST ITEM: QUESTION 20 OF THE 1990 PAPER.

1. Question 20 (see Appendix C page 8) was derived from the passage by Russel Baker writing in The Star. It is a piece about how unhappy whales are with the pollution caused by people. The rubric directs the attention of the candidates to the second-last paragraph of the passage which reads:

> "Your father has been very sensitive about garbage," the mother whale explained, "ever since he dived into 800 tons of fresh sludge that had just been dumped off the New Jersey coast. Your father and myself were not happy. He smelled like a sewer for weeks."

The sentence "Your father and myself were not happy" is quoted. Candidates are informed that this sentence "reflects a widespread grammatical error most people make nowadays." They are then instructed to "Rewrite the sentence by merely correcting the pronoun." They are asked to underline the correction.

The target sentence for correction must be viewed as TEXTUALLY EVOKED since it appears in the passage candidates read. What the candidate needs to recover ie to write down as an answer, is the pronoun "I" (to replace "myself") and this is a TEXTUALLY EVOKED entity. The pronoun "myself" refers anaphorically to the "mother" of lines 1 and 4 of the passage. But candidates were not being tested on their ability to assign a referent to the pronoun. What was tested in this item was an ability on their parts to replace a misused pronoun with one that Standard English demands and only 106 candidates out of 893 had trouble doing so. Since

each candidate was either awarded full marks or no marks at all for this question, it is possible to say that more than 89% of the sample population was able to supply the pronoun required.

Irwin's Ex-QAR taxonomy would place this kind of question in the PRE-READING, PRIOR KNOWLEDGE category, since it requests information "removed from the text...and review(s). background information" (Irwin, 1986:143). The kind of background information Irwin had in mind when constructing this particular category, was drawn from work by Pearson and Johnson (1978), Pearson, Hanson and Gordon (1979) Wilson and Hammill (1982) and others. It has been variously represented as "schemata" (Rumelhart,1981), "frames" (Minsky, 1975), "scripts" (Schank and Abelson, 1977) or as "scenarios" (Sanford and Garrod,1981). Each of these representations differs from the others in certain very specific ways, but roughly speaking, they may all be seen as knowledge structures of various kinds and rely heavily on the semantic content of concepts, objects or attributes for their plausibility. It is difficult to argue that the "I" of the corrected sentence, in this particular question, is somehow semantically different from the "myself" of the deviant sentence. The prior-knowledge required of candidates in this question is not of the same kind as that usually referred to in reading research. It is, in a sense not intended by Irwin, "removed from the text", in that this knowledge is part of their Standard English dialect.

2. The rubric of question 20 contains a number of syntactic features that might have increased a reader's processing load, but did not (see Appendix C page 8). The full rubric reads:

> Towards the end of the second-last paragraph the following sentence appears:
>
> "Your father and myself were not happy."
>
> This reflects a widespread grammatical error most people make nowadays. Rewrite the sentence by merely correcting the pronoun. Please underline the correction.

The main clause of the introductory sentence is fronted by a position adjunct which would normally favour final position. (See Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:227.) The fronting may have been deliberate to avoid end-focus. Had the introductory sentence read, "The following sentence appears towards the end of the second-last paragraph", the demonstrative "this" of the following sentence may have been interpreted to mean that the positioning of the sentence in the paragraph was somehow at fault.

Candidates could have had some difficulty in identifying the antecedent to which the phrase "the pronoun" refers, since the target sentence contains two possibilities, "Your" and "myself".

The instruction to candidates to "Rewrite the sentence by merely correcting the pronoun" is potentially confusing. The end-weight of the prepositional phrase could have encouraged candidates to "merely correct the pronoun".

Despite these potential pitfalls, very few (if any) candidates misinterpreted what was required.

3. A number of answers that were given no marks at all, illustrate the kinds of difficulty certain candidates experienced. 1B wrote:

Your father and myself <u>are</u> not happy.

Either this candidate did not know what a pronoun is, or he ignored the hint supplied to candidates in the adverbial phrase "by merely correcting the pronoun."

A candidate, however, who might have known what a pronoun is, was 39B who wrote:

<u>You</u> father and myself were not very happy.

Given the instruction, "Rewrite the sentence by merely correcting the pronoun", this candidate may have looked for the first pronoun and tried to make some sense of the sentence by "correcting" it.

Another kind of error was committed by 11B who, ignoring the reference to "pronoun", perceived "happy" as too colloquial perhaps. She wrote:

Your father and myself were not <u>pleased</u>.

The reasons offered for these errors can only be speculative, but in trying to account for the vast majority of candidates obtaining full marks for this question, only two plausible reasons can be offered.

Either matriculants are taught the appropriate, polite and standard use of pronouns or they use the standard as a matter of course in their speaking and writing. The latter

possibility is the only explanation that one can offer for the wrong answer supplied by candidate 3B. Ignoring the reference to pronoun completely, she wrote:

Your father and I were not pleased.

Despite correcting and underlining the wrong word, she was given full marks. Examiners and candidates needed to share the assumption that "myself" was grammatically erroneous and in large measure, they did.

But what is noteworthy is that no "context construction" was needed in this question (as the term has thus far been understood - see page 44) and as such little disagreement arose between candidates and examiners.

THE THIRD EASIEST ITEM: QUESTION 1 OF THE 1990 PAPER.

The question, like the fourth most difficult question, is based on the LIFE magazine article about Man's ability to survive. (See Appendix C page 2.)

1. Question 1 of the 1990 paper (T.E.D.1990:3) is, with a difficulty index of .808, the last of the three questions for which most candidates were awarded distinction marks. It is deliberate and common practice amongst examiners to set an easy question at the beginning of a paper of this kind so as to allow writers to overcome any initial anxieties they may feel at the start of an examination.

The rubric draws the reader's attention to the opening paragraph of Passage 1 (see Appendix C page 3) and states that "the writer refers to the theory advanced by many scientists

that man is on the way to extinction. (Line 1)". To be awarded full marks, candidates needed to fulfil two requirements.

In question 1.1, they were asked to use their own words in listing four of the major areas of concern to environmental scientists as mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2.

In 1.2, they were asked whether they thought the writer of the passage agreed that man is, in fact, heading for extinction, and they were asked to give a reason for their answers.

Asked to list, *in their own words*, four areas of concern that are mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2, candidates are not, in Davies and Widdowson's (1974:168) terms, being asked to answer a "direct reference" question. Davies and Widdowson explain that what they have in mind are "questions which only require of the reader that he recover information directly from the text as an almost automatic procedure. All he needs to do is to refer to that part of the passage to which the question naturally directs him." By having to use their own words, candidates are being asked here to do more than what is "automatic".

The "areas of concern to environmental scientists" that are directly recoverable from paragraphs 1 and 2 are, "the destructive effects of our power-intoxicated technology", "our ungoverned population growth" and "the dirt, pollution and noise". These "areas of concern" contain six New and Unused entities, which, if recovered and written down, would

that man is on the way to extinction. (Line 1)". To be awarded full marks, candidates needed to fulfil two requirements.

In question 1.1, they were asked to use their own words in listing four of the major areas of concern to environmental scientists as mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2.

In 1.2, they were asked whether they thought the writer of the passage agreed that man is, in fact, heading for extinction, and they were asked to give a reason for their answers.

Asked to list, *in their own words*, four major areas of concern that are mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2, candidates are not, in Davies and Widdowson's (1974:168) terms, being asked to answer a "direct reference" question. Davies and Widdowson explain that what they have in mind are "questions which only require of the reader that he recover information directly from the text as an almost automatic procedure. All he needs to do is to refer to that part of the passage to which the question naturally directs him." By having to use their own words, candidates are being asked here to do more than what is "automatic".

The "areas of concern to environmental scientists" that are directly recoverable from paragraphs 1 and 2 are, "the destructive effects of our power-intoxicated technology", "our ungoverned population growth" and "the dirt, pollution and noise". These "areas of concern" contain six New and Unused entities, which, if recovered and written down, would

only earn a candidate half-marks. (See Appendix D page 1.) To be awarded full marks (as more than 80% of the candidates were), they had to provide synonymous words (see Lyons, 1968:405) or phrases for either the attributes or the entities that were treated by the examiner as "given". Viewed as "given", the entities candidates supplied, ought not to be seen as New or Unused, but as TEXTUALLY EVOKED entities. Brown and Yule (1984:183) discussing Prince's Discourse Model see Evoked entities as "what Halliday and Chafe expect to find speakers treating as 'given'."

Part 2 of the question which asks candidates whether they think the writer of the passage believes that man is heading for extinction and to provide a reason for their answers, must be seen as requiring two responses, but arguably of the same kind.

The first response requires a yes/no answer and perhaps a case can be made for considering this an Inferrable. A candidate, however, who is asked whether the writer agrees that man is heading for extinction and can recover a phrase like " Man will survive" directly from the passage, simply needs to know that "survival" and "extinction" are normally in a relation of "oppositeness", what Lyons (1968:461) describes as "complementarity" - the denial of the one implies the assertion of the other. If one term complements the other and one is "given" then the other can be taken as "given". In this way then, a simple "No" answer should be seen as nothing more than a confirmation that survival is

not extinction. This line of thinking would classify the "No" answer as TEXTUALLY EVOKED.

Candidates could supply, as a reason for their previous answer, a sentence recovered directly from the text, such as "Man will survive as a species for one reason: he can adapt to almost anything" (line 11). Its direct recoverability makes it a TEXTUALLY EVOKED response.

Within the framework of Irwin's Ex-QAR taxonomy, "questions that ask for explicit microinformation ask for specific facts from individual sentences and therefore require students to chunk and recognize syntactic relations." (Irwin, 1986:143.) The four "major areas of concern" that candidates are expected to list are recoverable from individual sentences and are therefore MICRO-EXPLICIT questions. The instruction to use "your own words" however would test a candidate's vocabulary, and as such could be seen as adding a PRIOR KNOWLEDGE dimension to the question. The "No" required as an appropriate response to the second part of the item, cannot be seen on the surface of the text (see page 32) and so should be classified as a MICRO-IMPLICIT question. It calls on the reader to select "what is important from all the details in individual sentences", such as the force of the disjunct "But" of line 7, and conclude that the writer does not agree with the scientists who have worked out a timetable for the extinction of mankind.

The reason asked for in the second part of the item is, like

the "four major areas of concern" of part one, recoverable directly from the text and is therefore a MICRO-EXPLICIT question.

2. The syntactic arrangement of the rubric and the text sentences provided candidates with little real difficulty. The introductory statement of the rubric

> In the opening paragraph, the writer refers to the theory advanced by many scientists that man is on the way to extinction

is made up of a main clause, fronted by an adverbial phrase of place, followed by two clauses, one non-finite and one finite. The non-finite relative clause modifies the object of the main clause and the finite clause is appositive to the noun "theory".

Part 1 of the item

> Using your own words, list FOUR of the major areas of concern to environmental scientists as mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2

employs the commonly used imperative. The matrix clause is positioned medially between two non-finite adverbial clauses.

Part 2

> Do you think the writer agrees that man is in fact heading for extinction? Please give a reason for your answer

is a yes/no question made up of a main clause followed by two noun clauses, the second embedded in the first. The arrangement illustrates (and serves as a possible explanation for the question not being misinterpreted) the principle of resolution (Quirk et al 1985:1036) ie that the

final clause should be the point of maximum emphasis. Another reason that the question was not misinterpreted by most candidates (if not all) is that, despite the embedding, it follows "the dominant tendency of syntactic structure that the greatest depth of subordination is reached in the final part of the sentence." (Quirk et al 1985:1039.) The yes/no question is followed by a polite request that candidates supply a reason for the answer given.

The reason asked for is recoverable from a number of sentences in the text, but since attention was drawn to paragraphs 1 and 2, four sentences serve as reasons for the writer believing that man is not on his way to extinction. They are:

(1) I am tired of hearing that man is on his way to extinction... (lines 1 and 2);

(2) Man will survive as a species for one reason: he can adapt to almost anything. (lines 52 and 53);

(3) I am sure we can adapt to the dirt, pollution and noise of a New York or Tokyo. (lines 53 -55) and

(4) But that is the real tragedy - we can adapt to it. (55-56).

(1), (2) and (3) are right-branching and there is nothing in (1) to suggest that readers at this level may have had difficulty understanding it.

The colon use in (2) might have caused readers some difficulty, since there are a number of uses to which the colon is put, but it is nevertheless predictable as meaning "because", especially as it follows the word "reason"

directly.

(3) requires that readers insert the ellipted subject and verb of the subordinate clause (we can adapt to the pollution and we can adapt to the noise), but since ellipsis of this kind is always in the second clause, it provided readers with no difficulty.

(4) is a compound sentence and since compound sentences are acquired early in children's speech, they generally present few difficulties to readers. It is worth noting here (since it forms part of the discussion in 3 below) that it is the second main clause that really serves to show that the writer believes that man will survive.

3. Only two of the bottom 50 candidates might have misunderstood the first part of the question. None misunderstood the second part. 11B wrote as an answer to part 1:

- Animal life
- Nature itself
- Cities
- Mankind.

He has recovered "four of the major areas of concern to environmental scientists" and he has used his own words. What he has not done is to recover the areas of concern "as mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2." Very similar is the answer provided by 26B:

> Main areas of concern are wildlife, oson layer, Nature and death of mankind.

Neither has paid attention to the non-finite adverbial clause in final position, "as mentioned in paragraphs 1 and

2." The question of why both readers neglected the reference to paragraphs 1 and 2 raises the problem of which constituent in any given sentence carries the information focus. The problem has not been satisfactorily resolved. Generally speaking, some appeal would have to be made to the prosodic features of any given utterance. Both these candidates were awarded full marks for the second part of the question.

The second part of the question required candidates to interpret the request "Please give a reason for your answer" as an instruction to quote a line or two from the given passage, which would support the correct response to the yes/no question. All of the 50 weakest candidates did this, even though some responded wrongly by saying that the writer agreed that man was on his way to extinction.

Of the four possible sentences that candidates chose to offer as reasons for their answers, the most common was (2), "Man will survive as a species for one reason: he can adapt to almost anything." Fewer candidates used possibilities (1) and (3). What is noteworthy is that not one of the 50 weakest candidates chose to quote what is arguably the most explicit statement of the writer's opinion in the second clause of (4), "we can adapt to it". The most obvious reason for this is that readers began their search for an appropriate line from the beginning of the passage. Most, however, did not use the very first line and went on to find what they thought was a more appropriate reason, viz. the

first sentence of paragraph two or even the second. The third sentence was ignored for one of two possible reasons: when readers had found what they considered a better line than one that may have been identified previously, they stopped their search quite promptly without considering the next sentence; or they were stopped in their search by some feature of the next sentence. It is possible that the "But" of the next sentence, signaling as it does, a contrast of expectation (See Quirk et al.1985:935), creates some interference with the reader's predictions, and he is almost involuntarily brought to a stop.

A particular reader, 17B, found the last sentence of paragraph one difficult to segment. She wrote:

> The writer definitely agrees. In the first paragraph he states: "...extinction is in store for us."
>
> The sentence she draws on reads:
>
> But my own view of man as a biological animal suggests that something worse than extinction is in store for us.

She sees "extinction" as the subject of the nominal clause, and does not "chunk" it together with the rest of the noun phrase "something worse than" that, together with "extinction", forms the subject. As a consequence, she arrived at a "yes" answer rather than a "no".

Again, as in the second easiest question (see page 87), candidates did not need to construct a context that necessarily coincided with a sub-set of assumptions that examiners held.

TWO EASY ITEMS OF EQUAL DIFFICULTY.

1. Question 1 (T.E.D.1989:3) and question 9 (T.E.D. 1990:4) both have a difficulty index of .711, and provide an interesting comparison of the kind of item that both 1989 and 1990 candidates found equally difficult. Question 1 (T.E.D. 1989), based on the passage that contrasts East and West Berlin - see Appendix A page 3, reads:

> According to this extract, what characterizes the difference between West and East Berlin?

This question calls for the recovery of the attributes of two TEXTUALLY EVOKED items from the text. The candidate who was able to mention in an answer that the difference is one of West Berlin's vitality as opposed to East Berlin's drabness, or of West Berlin's glamorous, glittering image in contrast to East Berlin's abnormality, received full marks. The candidate who identified the attribute "socialist" (line 33) and inferred that West Berlin must then be "capitalist" was given credit for the inference.

An answer which received full credit despite not mentioning the Textually Evoked attributes was the answer supplied by 25T who wrote:

> Berlin is free from Communist rule and seemingly more in tune with Western sophistication unlike East Berlin which is trying to make up for the fact that it is ruled by the Communist government and become more modern and it is this that characterizes the difference between East and West.

Within the framework of Irwin's taxonomy (1986) this question would be categorized as being a MICRO-EXPLICIT

question but with some implicit dimension. What is implicit is the fact that West Berlin is capitalist and this could have been inferred.

Question 9 (T.E.D.1990:4), based on an advertisement that encourages the preservation of seals - see Appendix C page 4, reads:

> Has your attention been drawn to this advertisement? Refer to three different techniques that have been used.

The entities that candidates needed to recover as answers were INFERRABLES. Full marks were given to answers that mentioned bold headlines, the shocking picture and the bold secondary headline. Candidates were awarded marks for saying that the language was emotive and the "Beauty without cruelty" emblem attracted their attention. None of these answers is directly recoverable from the text and as such, must be viewed as Inferrables.

Irwin's EX-QAR taxonomy would classify this question under the heading of PRE-READING and PRIOR KNOWLEDGE. Part of what Irwin sees as prior knowledge are "background concepts" and as the question refers to "techniques that have been used", candidates would need to draw on whatever they may previously have been told about "techniques". This background information would most likely have been taught as "techniques used by advertisers." Any candidate unaware that certain attention-getting devices were at work in a text that is quasi-advertisement, could not, from the text itself, recover anything that would serve as an answer.

2. Syntactically, question 1 of the 1989 paper is a simple wh-question, with the wh-element functioning as subject of the clause. The main clause is fronted by the viewpoint subjunct "According to this extract...".

For the careful candidate, the question ought to have been a difficult one. The Q-element should be interpreted as singular in number, given the singular form of "characterizes" and the singular form "difference". Most candidates, however, made mention of more than one difference between East and West Berlin, and were given credit. Candidate 32T used no fewer than nine attributes to characterize the difference between the cities.

> West Berlin is under the West German government, and is therefore capitalist, and as such is prosperous, alive and modern. East Berlin is Communist, and is drab, old-fashioned and hasn't got the "glittering" image of the Western portion of the city.

The "ands" of the 2nd and 4th lines have (presumably) been taken to mean "as a consequence". Had they been taken as "in addition to", the answer would consist of nothing but a list of differences between the East and West parts of the city. The top candidate, (1T) who did interpret the question as requiring the mention of a single characteristic lost a mark for doing so. She wrote:

> The difference between East and West Berlin is characterized by the difference in life-styl - the bustling modern world of West Berlin and the uncertain life of East Berlin are sharply contrasted.

In this case, the careless phrasing of the question cost the careful reader a mark. Most candidates adopted the tried and

trusted examination technique and wrote down more than one characteristic in the hope that a mention is rewarded and a wrong mention is often not penalized. The technique paid off.

The sentence from which the memorandum took its answer begins on line 30. It reads:

> The government of Communist Party Leader Erich Honecker hopes that the face-lift will alter East Berlin's image as the drab socialist sister of the glamorous, glittering West.

It is a complex, right-branching sentence with two potential sources of difficulty. There is embedding within the subject noun phrase and this structure is extended by an appositive phrase.

"Communist Party Leader" is embedded in "The government" and "Erich Honecker" is in apposition to "Communist Party Leader".

The second possible source of difficulty lies in the extended postmodification of the direct object in the nominal clause. It carries two degrees of embedding; "the drab socialist sister" is a constituent of "image" and of "the glamorous, glittering West".

Both structures could cause an overload on working memory.

Syntactically, Question 9 (T.E.D. 1990:4) is made up of a simple How-question followed by a complex directive.

> How has your attention been drawn to this advertisement? Refer to three different techniques that have been used.

The question follows the normal rule with the Q-element in

initial position and, in this case, operating as an adverbial of process. The directive contains a main clause followed by a subordinate defining relative clause. The positioning of elements within both sentences is not in any way unusual.

Comment on the syntax of the text is not necessary since the pictorial and typographical information that candidates needed to recover as answers to this question is not organized syntactically (in its present sense).

3. Accounting for the relative ease with which candidates answered question 1 of 1989 and 9 of 1990 (71.1% of the total number of marks available for the questions were awarded) can be done in terms of the kinds of information that needed to be recovered as answers. (See Chapter 5 pages 110ff for discussion.) The potential difficulty of the syntactic organization of the first question (T.E.D.1989:3) did not impede processing by the readers in any way. This is evident in the answers which the weakest candidates provided. None of the candidates quoted below achieved more than a 25% overall mark for the examination.

1B: The West Berlin is characterized as a place where there is so much going on even at night. Night and day look the same. East Berlin has been seen as a very glamorous place. The difference between the two is that West Berlin does not have beauty, there is just movement of people possibly hoboes and East Berlin has the beauty...

2B: In West Berlin the monstrous walls force the abnormalities of the West, to maintain them, while they keep the streets of charm in the East as attractive and as lively as that of any other

metropolis in Europe.

3B: West Berlin is a place that can be described as always being on its feet. It's a place that keeps rocking all night long. East Berlin on the other hand is a place that can be described as being in a dormant stage, almost time to go into hibernation for good.

4B: In this extract the Communist Party characterizes the difference between East and West Berlin.

All four writers knew what was required of them yet none of these answers was awarded full marks.

Both candidates 1B and 2B have confused East and West Berlin in certain sentences they wrote. The problem appears to be referent assignment. 1B attaches the attribute "glamorous" to East Berlin rather than to West Berlin and it is noteworthy that this error occurs exactly at the point in the text-sentence where there is the embedding mentioned in 2 above. 2B has not identified the "Wall" as the Berlin Wall and sees people coming into East Berlin as passing ("past") monstrous walls. She has reasoned that if the people coming in to an "attractive, lively" city viz. East Berlin, were passing monstrous walls, then the monstrous walls must belong to West Berlin. This error can be seen as having its source in the reader's inability to identify the "Wall".

Both candidates have attributed to East Berlin such qualities as "charm" (line 51) or "beauty" (derived from line 45) but have failed to identify these characteristics as belonging exclusively to the Unter den Linden, rather than to East Berlin as a whole. The reference to East Berlin in the opening line of paragraph three could well have

metropolis in Europe.

3B: West Berlin is a place that can be described as always being on its feet. It's a place that keeps rocking all night long. East Berlin on the other hand is a place that can be described as being in a dormant stage, almost time to go into hibernation for good.

4B: In this extract the Communist Party characterizes the difference between East and West Berlin.

All four writers knew what was required of them yet none of these answers was awarded full marks.

Both candidates 1B and 2B have confused East and West Berlin in certain sentences they wrote. The problem appears to be referent assignment. 1B attaches the attribute "glamorous" to East Berlin rather than to West Berlin and it is noteworthy that this error occurs exactly at the point in the text-sentence where there is the embedding mentioned in 2 above. 2B has not identified the "Wall" as the Berlin Wall and sees people coming into East Berlin as passing ("past") monstrous walls. She has reasoned that if the people coming in to an "attractive, lively" city viz. East Berlin, were passing monstrous walls, then the monstrous walls must belong to West Berlin. This error can be seen as having its source in the reader's inability to identify the "Wall".

Both candidates have attributed to East Berlin such qualities as "charm" (line 51) or "beauty" (derived from line 45) but have failed to identify these characteristics as belonging exclusively to the Unter den Linden, rather than to East Berlin as a whole. The reference to East Berlin in the opening line of paragraph three could well have

prompted this error of reference.

The answer by 4B appears to be completely correct, given the singular form of the verb in the question posed (see 2 above).

Examiners, however, interpreted the question as asking candidates to provide a set of differences between East and West Berlin, and so 4B's answer was not considered full enough.

Very few candidates were awarded no marks at all for question 9 (T.E.D.1990:4), indicating that most knew what was required. Only two candidates of the worst 25 misinterpreted the question in some way. 16B wrote:

> The advertisement shows that also animals are adapting certain environments, by moving his head, trying to avoid being killed.

The difficulty experienced by a candidate such as this is not easy to comment on without employing some "think aloud" procedure. The candidate did not misinterpret many questions other than those relating to passage B. He came within 5% of passing the paper, but only managed 1 mark out of 14 for questions based on this passage. These observations lead one to suspect that the candidate had not had much practice in answering questions on advertisements, and his was a prior knowledge or pre-reading problem.

Another candidate who came within 3% of passing the paper (22B) wrote:

> Shock, shame and cruel techniques.

The answer is readily interpretable as something like "My attention has been drawn to this advertisement by the shock it evoked in me, by the shame it caused me to feel, and by reminding me of the cruel techniques used to kill seals." Had the candidate written this fuller answer, it is still doubtful as to whether she would have been awarded any marks. The examiners assumed that candidates had been taught something about "techniques" in advertising and were looking for answers relating to layout or boldness of type or some such approach to advertising technique. In effect what was required was shared assumptions between examiners and candidates about advertising techniques. Examiners saw it as a pre-reading or prior knowledge question, and candidates who treated it differently, such as 22B above, were awarded no marks at all.

What emerges from the scrutiny of the easy questions is that they are different from those that were difficult in terms of both the kind of information that serves as answers and the amount of context that candidates needed to construct. The ease of some of the questions can be accounted for in terms of prior-knowledge, ie candidates had most likely learnt specific items of information that served as answers to certain questions. Easy questions demanded the recovery of Evoked or explicit information, whereas difficult ones demanded the recovery of implicit information by inference from constructed contexts. But the syntax of the difficult

questions was not markedly more complex than the syntax of the easier questions.

These very general conclusions are examined in greater detail in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE.

This chapter consolidates the findings of Chapters 3 and 4 and will argue that Transvaal Education Department matriculants find certain kinds of comprehension question difficult, either because they do not have an adequate "sub-set of assumptions about the world" (see page 44), or more specifically, because they are asked to draw inferences from a complex relationship between a writer's style and his communicative intent.

The argument will be developed by reference to the ability of matriculants to process complex syntax and yet not be able to arrive at a state of comprehension that satisfies examiners. The reason for this is that candidates are not sufficiently equipped with contexts that they share with examiners, which in turn allow them to make the kinds of inference so necessary in comprehension tests.

An explanation of what inferences candidates were expected to draw is given, based largely on an account by Sperber and Wilson (1986) of the processes at work in utterance interpretation.

THE QUESTION OF SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY.

Enough research has shown (both in L1 and L2 studies) that language proficiency, and more particularly syntactic processing, plays an important role in comprehending written text (see Berman, 1984:139ff; Cooper, 1984:122ff; Perfetti,

1985:173 and Devine, 1988:260). But what is not certain is the extent to which readers rely on syntactic processing to construct meaning. Alderson (1984) and others have proposed a kind of linguistic "threshold", a ceiling of linguistic competence, below which a reader's ability to comprehend text is limited. Grabe (cited in Devine, 1988:267) believes that readers must reach a stage of automatic processing of the syntactic patterns before other processes can operate in the comprehension of text. This study supports the claim made by Grabe (1988) that linguistic knowledge (explained later as "the recovery of a semantic representation" - see page 116ff.) is only one part of the knowledge a reader uses in comprehending texts. At school-leaver level, other processes which are dependent on the recovery of other kinds of knowledge are at least as important as linguistic knowledge is. Candidates in the matriculation examinations under scrutiny appeared to have had little difficulty interpreting the syntax of either the instructions or the texts set, from which questions were derived.

Chapter 3 outlined the potential sources of syntactic complexity in the six questions that the majority of the sample population failed, and Chapter 4 described the potential sources of syntactic complexity of the five questions for which most candidates were awarded a mark of 70% or more. A comparison of potential complexity reveals that the difficult questions contained no more instances of complexity than did the easy questions.

TABLE 5.

* = Instances of potential difficulty in either question or text.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS	1	2	3	1	2	3	EASY QUESTIONS
Question 3 of 1989			*	*		*	Question 12 of 1990
Question 16 of 1989	*	*	*			*	Question 20 of 1990
Question 9 of 1989							Question 1 of 1990
Question 7 of 1990				*		*	Question 1 of 1989
Question 13 of 1990			*				Question 9 of 1990
Question 18 of 1989			*				

KEY: 1 = Structures difficult to predict

2 = Structures difficult to segment

3 = Structures that can overload working memory.

The table above does not, however, reflect difficulty *an individual* may have had in processing the syntax of a question or piece of text in the examination. This kind of difficulty may well have been experienced by candidate 2B in the 1989 examination who wrote as an answer to 16.2 (See page 45):

> It's obvious that if the canneries would eat the sardines if they dipped their mouths into the bay.

An answer like this, in response to the instruction to "Explain what he means when he says, 'The figure is advisedly chosen'", is difficult to explain without some immediate access to the repondent's train of thought at the moment of response. "Think-aloud" protocols may or may not confirm this sort of answer as being the result of syntactic processing.

Similarly, 18B's response to being asked to "Identify the

writer's use of three different senses in this description.." (question 12 of 1990) is difficult to explain for the same reason. She wrote:

> The sense of touch has been used when the slagheap is introduced because it is planless and functionless.

These answers may reflect a syntactic problem caused by other factors, such as an inability on the part of the readers to identify a cannery or slagheap. (See page 13 where this possible problem is mentioned.)

Both of the examples illustrated above were drawn from the most likely questions that may have provided candidates with syntactic problems. (Question 16 of 1989 and question 12 of 1990.)

However, despite these possible syntactic difficulties which may or may not help to account for answers as wrong as the two quoted above, the vast majority of questions which candidates found difficult, can be explained in terms of the *kinds of questions* asked. This assertion is, to some extent, borne out by reference to the answers provided by the weakest candidates to the syntactically complex questions in both examinations.

For instance, in attempting to answer question 16 of 1989, 1b (the weakest candidate) illustrates quite clearly that he understands the syntax of the question and the text-fragment from which the question was derived. In response to the question, "What can you deduce from this of his attitude to canned sardines?" he began by writing, "I deduce that he

hates the way sardines..." Or in his second answer to 16, the same candidate begins, "He means that it has been chosen because...". This, in response to "Explain what he means when he says..." Nothing in the way this candidate has phrased his answers signals a misunderstanding of the syntax of the question.

Asked why the writer had used semicolons in Passage A of the 1990 examination (the most difficult question of the 1990 examination), the weakest candidate replied:

> The use of the semicolon is to give us a longer break after each point...

It is difficult to see how the syntax of the question itself, or of the lines he was asked to comment on, could have been an obstacle to his understanding.

THE KINDS OF QUESTIONS WHICH CANDIDATES FOUND EASIEST AND MOST DIFFICULT.

Table 6 overleaf summarizes the kinds of questions candidates found most difficult and easiest in the two examinations.

Table 6

Question Number	Order of Difficulty	Kinds of Questions												
		Brand-new	Unused	Inferrables	Evoked Textual	Evoked Situational	Prereading & Prior Knowledge	Micro Explicit	Micro Implicit	Integrative Explicit	Integrative Implicit	Macro Explicit	Macro Implicit	Elaborative
3 of 89	1			*							*			
16 of 89	2			* *							*			*
9 of 89	3			* *							*			*
7 of 90	4			*							*			
13 of 90	5			* *										* *
18 of 89	6			*										*
Question Number	Order of Ease													
12 of 90	1				*			*						
20 of 90	2				*		*							
1 of 90	3				* *		*	* *	*					
1 of 89	4				*			*						
9 of 90	5			*			*							

The easiest questions.

The pattern which emerges from the classification in Table 6 above is clear. Candidates find Textually Evoked, Micro Explicit and Prior-knowledge questions easiest.

The Textually Evoked question is one that requires the candidate to recover some entity or entities represented in the text as NPs which the writer has treated as "on the counter" (Prince, 1981:235 - see page 24 above). By "on the counter", Prince means that the entity has, at some previous point in the discourse, enjoyed some mention.

Micro-explicit questions require the students to recover information that is explicit ie appears on the surface of the text, and in this sense can be likened to textually evoked information. This would explain why each of the easy questions classified as Textually Evoked is also classified as Micro-explicit.

There is an exception however, and it is question 20 of 1990. The "I" that candidates were required to write down as the correction to "your father and myself" is recoverable as an instance of anaphora, and therefore textually evoked. But it does not appear on the surface of the text, and therefore is not classifiable as strictly *explicit*. It should be noted that "explicit" here is used in the sense outlined in Chapter 2 (see page 31). Sperber and Wilson (1986:182) define explicitness as "a development of a logical form". ("Incomplete logical forms" are explained on page 118.)

From an examination of the four easiest questions that have been classified as requiring some pre-reading or prior knowledge, two kinds of prior knowledge can be distinguished. The first is the taught kind, that which a matriculation pupil can be expected to have been taught in class. The second kind is the linguistic knowledge one expects school-leavers to possess of their mother-tongue. Question 12 of 1990 and Question 9 of the same year illustrate the kind of taught knowledge examiners test. Question 12 of 1990 presupposes that the word "senses" will be taken to refer to the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. Teachers of English very commonly tell pupils that "descriptive writing" is made more effective by the use of words or phrases that "appeal to the readers' senses." Question 12 of 1990 has therefore also been classified as Unused within Prince's terms, since "its presence (in the reader's discourse model) can be taken for granted". (Prince, 1981:235.)

A second commonly taught topic in most South African English classrooms is "advertising". Question 9 of 1990 asks candidates to mention certain advertising "techniques." Most candidates would have been exposed throughout their secondary schooling to the idea that bold headlines or pictorial messages are effective advertising "techniques". But because one cannot be completely certain of this, the question has been classified as an Inferrable - the only easy question with this status.

The second kind of prior knowledge that examiners test and that candidates find easy to display is the knowledge of their language and the standard dialect most use.

Question 1 of 1990 asks candidates to express in their own words the four major areas of concern to environmental scientists. To account for the ease with which candidates were able to do this, one must suppose that the topic viz. environmental concern is frequently in the public eye and words like "destructive" or "crisis" or "pollution" are often replaced by "suicidal" or "crunch" or "contamination". Certainly, the accessibility of synonyms within this topical area is a result of its enjoying a wide and frequent exposure in the mass media.

Question 20 of 1990 has been shown (see page 83ff) to illustrate the ease with which candidates (sometimes quite unconsciously) use standard English pronouns. The fact that most candidates were awarded full marks for replacing "myself" with "I" indicates ironically that the examiners' opinion is quite wrong. The use of "myself" for "I" obviously does not reflect a "widespread grammatical error". (See Appendix C page 8.)

The single instance of implicitness in the group comprising the easy questions occurred in question 1 of 1990. Asked whether the writer agreed with the opinion that man is on his way to extinction, candidates needed to supply the word "no". The word does not appear on the surface of the text

and so was classified as implicit. (But see pages 89 and 90 for a fuller discussion.)

The most difficult questions.

Table 6 (see page 110) illustrates that the three most difficult kinds of comprehension questions are the Inferrables, the Integrative Implicit and the Elaborative questions. What this means is that the most difficult comprehension questions are those that call on writers of the test to access information that is inferrable, since all three kinds are characterized in the taxonomies used, as requiring some form of inference. What is interesting about this very obvious finding is that the questions candidates find most difficult are the very questions that test the most important aspect of comprehension, viz. the ability to draw inferences. It could follow from this finding that if matriculation comprehension tests set out to measure how well candidates were able to carry out the most important aspects of comprehension, most might fail. It is quite commonly accepted nowadays that "...the role of inference in comprehension cannot be overstressed." (Irwin, 1986:27.) Sperber and Wilson (1986:177) call inferencing "the main part of the comprehension process." The question however remains: given that inferencing plays a predominant role in the general operation of comprehending, what is it that readers are required to do to inference? Researchers have different views of the process (See Chapter 1, pages 6ff)

but an attempt at a fuller answer than that offered in Chapter 1 follows.

Question 3 of 1989: the most difficult question.

An initial and brief explanation of what constituted the difficulty candidates experienced in answering question 3 of 1989 was offered on page 44. It suggested that candidates were not able to meet necessary conditions of context construction. These necessary conditions should be viewed as a shared set of assumptions between examiner and candidate, as will become clearer in the explanation offered below (see pages 117,119,132).

The explanation relies entirely on work by Sperber and Wilson (1986), parts of which are useful for identifying what it was that made the questions difficult.

In the course of attempting to formulate a theory of human communication, based on the Gricean co-operative principle of relevance, they outline the tasks and subtasks a hearer needs to carry out in order to arrive at an interpretation of an utterance.

Essentially the tasks are: the construction of a semantic representation of the utterance, recovering the explicit content and recovering implicit content. Subtasks involved in the recovery of the explicit content comprise the disambiguation (if any) of the semantic representation: reference assignment and the enrichment of vague terms. The implicit content of an utterance is interpreted by the

recovery of possible implicature, poetic or other stylistic effects, metaphorical expressions, irony and illocutionary force.

Faced with having to "Explain ...what the writer intended when he remarks, 'Whatever may become of the sickle, the hammer can certainly be heard ringing across East Berlin'" (T.E.D.1989:3), a reader has first to recover the semantic representation of the sentence. This is done automatically by a native speaker of the language and is likened by Sperber and Wilson (1986:177) to a decoding process. The reader will recognise "Whatever may become of the sickle" as a token of the conditional-concessive clause type and understand it as "no matter what becomes of the sickle". The reader will automatically identify the main clause as agentless, and the grammatical subject as the instrument that can be heard ringing. The location is represented for the reader in the adjunct of the main clause. That this process (the grammar of the language assigning an appropriate semantic representation to the sentence) is automatic, is borne out by the fact that few native speakers found the syntax difficult to understand (see page 44).

In a case where the grammar assigns more than one semantic representation to a sentence, the reader is faced with the subtask of disambiguating the representation, ie selecting the representation that the writer has in mind.

In the hypothetical case of a reader assigning, to the subordinate clause, something like the exclamative "Whatever

will become of the sickle!", the representation would have to be discarded in favour of the concessive-conditional representation. The grammar of Englich would prompt a reader to do this, since exclamatives of this kind are not usually followed by main clauses. None of the candidates selected a representation of the initial clause that was not conditional-concessive. This may be seen as further evidence that candidates at matriculation level do not find the syntax of the texts presented very difficult.

Semantic representations alone are not sufficient for a full interpretation of a sentence. Sperber and Wilson (1986:193) argue that semantic representations are "incomplete" in a number of ways and that one of these ways is that they contain "indeterminate referring expressions such as pronouns..." Determining what certain expressions refer to, becomes a further sub-task in the recovery of the explicit content of the sentence. The use of the definite article before both "sickle" and "hammer" indicates that the writer expects his readers to recover the sense of these terms from outside the text, ie they are to be treated by the reader as exophoric references, since they are nowhere recoverable from the text itself.

In effect, a necessary condition needed to be met: the candidates and the examiners needed to share the assumption that the sickle and hammer are emblems of agriculture and industry on the communist flag. (See Chapter 3 page 45.)

Sperber and Wilson (1986:193) argue that "semantic

representations are incomplete logical forms, ie at best fragmentary representations of thoughts (and) that they are incomplete in more than one way: not just because they contain indeterminate referring expressions, such as pronouns, but also because they contain underdefined constituents..." The reader in the process of interpretation has, as the third subtask in the recovery of explicit content, to enrich those terms that are incomplete or vague. What is important here is that "Contextual information is needed to resolve what should be seen as the semantic incompleteness..." (Sperber and Wilson 1986:188).

A matriculation candidate writing this paper in the month of November 1989, would have to have been informed of the most recent events in East Germany, the growing move to unite with the West. Without this contextual knowledge the candidate would most certainly have interpreted the terms "can " and "be heard" as pertaining to the then present - in this case November of 1989. An interpretation that saw the hammer ringing across East Berlin in a building spree during November of 1989 would have been a gross misinterpretation of the sentence that candidates needed to explain. They would have had to know that the sentence had been written at some time before November 1989, since at the time that this examination was written, hammers were being used in East Berlin to break down the "monstrous Wall". This is an interesting instance of history overtaking the Transvaal Education Department, since examiners are called upon to set

matriculation papers far in advance of the date on which they will be written.

As in the subtask of reference assignment, a reader's ability to enrich vague or imprecise terms such as "monstrous Wall" is dependent on his knowing "more than just the grammar of English" (Sinclair & Winkler, 1991). The enrichment of a term like "monstrous Wall" in a comprehension examination is dependent on the candidates' sharing assumptions about the wall with the examiner.

The third task a reader has to carry out to construct an interpretation of the sentence in question involves the recovery of the implicit content of the sentence. This process demands that the reader carry out a number of subtasks, one of which is recognizing the implicatures conveyed in the sentence.

Sperber and Wilson (1986:194) define an implicature as "a contextual assumption or implication which a speaker, intending her utterance to be manifestly relevant, manifestly intended to make manifest to the hearer."

Assuming that the writer of the sentence-fragment under discussion (lines 26-28 of passage A in the 1989 paper) intended it to be "manifestly relevant", (a full account of Relevance Theory is beyond the scope of the task at hand) then it needs to be established what contextual assumptions the writer of the sentence "manifestly intended to make manifest to the reader".

In the conditional-concessive clause "Whatever may become of

the sickle", contextual assumptions can be made, such as:

something may become of agriculture
that this something has the possibility of being disastrous, fortunate, threatening, encouraging, long-lasting, short-lived, profitable, unprofitable...

and so on.

The list is open, in Grice's terms, and "the implicatum will have just the kind of indeterminancy that many actual implicata do in fact seem to possess." (Quoted by Sperber and Wilson 1986:196.)

It is, in effect, just this indeterminancy of all the assumptions that a reader can make, that the writer of the passage wishes to make manifest to the reader. A matriculation candidate who did not recover the indeterminancy of all the possibilities open to agriculture in East Germany, cannot be said to have recovered the meaning of "Whatever may become of the sickle..."

A reader who is told to explain what the writer intended by making the remark he did, faces a further subtask. This subtask is related to the style the writer has adopted in conveying his intended message. Sperber and Wilson assert that a "choice of style is something that no speaker or writer can avoid" (1986:217ff). "From the style of a communication it is possible to infer such things as what the speaker takes to be the hearer's cognitive capacities and level of attention, how much help or guidance she is

prepared to give him in processing her utterance, the degree of complicity between them, their emotional closeness or distance." In choosing a style therefore a writer will make some assumption about the reader's abilities and contextual resources, and this is often reflected in what the writer chooses to leave implicit. Briefly then, in order to recover the writer's full intention in the sentence being discussed, the matriculation candidate needed to recognize the stylistic effects used by the writer of the sentence. This recognition is one of the necessary conditions that needs to be met in constructing a shared context between writer and reader.

In order to convey his uncertainty as to the future of the sickle, and, in contrast, to assure the reader of the positive role being played by the hammer in East Berlin, the writer has brought the two emblems of the communist flag into sharp juxtaposition. This contrast in the prospective destinies of the two major driving forces of a communist economy, has been brought about by the stylistic choice the writer made. The use of the agentless passive voice in both clauses has allowed the hammer to assume an agentive role in subject position in the main clause, rather than the patient role it may have occupied in an active construction such as "We can hear the hammer ringing across East Berlin." The positional adjacency thus achieved between "sickle" and "hammer" signals the contrast the writer intended the reader to recognise.

The matriculation candidate faced with interpreting the statement under discussion has still to recover the meaning conveyed in the two metaphorical expressions contained in the statement.

Sperber and Wilson claim however that no special abilities or procedures are required in the process. (1986:232ff.) Adopting their relevance-theoretic standpoint they assert that "metaphor and a variety of related tropes (e.g. hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche) are simply creative exploitations of a perfectly general dimension of language use." This "general dimension" (the search for optimal relevance in a communication) "leads the speaker to adopt o different occasions, a more or less faithful interpretation of her thoughts. The result in some cases is literalness, i others metaphor."

The writer of passage A (Appendix A page 2) adopted in the phrasing of the second clause of the sentence under examination, a metaphorical means to express the sound of the hammer, and this added a further dimension of meaning t the concept "the hammer". He wrote that "the hammer can certainly be heard *ringing* across East Berlin." The writer has simply added a further implicature to the proposition that "a hammer can be heard" (across East Berlin) and the recovery of this implicature is no different in procedural terms from the recovery of any other implicature(s) in the sentence.

The matriculation candidate in the recovery of a full interpretation of this sentence-fragment would have needed to bring together the encyclopedic entries "hammer" and "bell", the latter recoverable from some stereotypical or schematic knowledge of instruments that ring. In bringing together the two entries the reader would have related the bell ringing (perhaps to celebrate some occasion, in this case a building spree) to the hammer being used to carry out the building.

Had the reader accessed some unlikely instrument of ringing, such as "telephone", it would have been discarded as having no relevance to the "building spree" that was the immediate co-text.

If Sperber and Wilson are right in their explication of this process, then the metonymic terms "sickle" and "hammer" would have been accessed in similar fashion to "ringing". The interpretation of metaphor is perhaps the most common difficult task matriculants face, and seen as being no different from the recovery of other implicit information, it ought to enjoy a different kind of attention from what it does in the classrooms. The point will be developed later. (See pages 145ff.)

The recovery of the illocutionary force of an utterance is yet another subtask in the process of recovering the implicit information that an utterance carries. Sperber and Wilson argue however, that a considerable number of speech-acts "can be identified in terms of some condition on their

explicit content or implicatures", and they deny that "the interpretation of utterances involving such speech-acts requires any special pragmatic principles or machinery..." (1986:246)

The answers most candidates supplied to question 3 of the 1989 paper certainly support the first claim. Few answers paid much attention to the first part of the question, "Explain what you think *the writer intended* when he remarks..." This widespread omission indicates that candidates took for granted that a *remark* is, in the terms of Sperber and Wilson, "saying" something, rather than "telling" or "asking". These "generic" acts, Sperber and Wilson argue, "are universal and appear to be genuinely communicative." Candidates, in taking so little notice of the instruction to explain the writer's intention, took for granted that remarking is saying something. Most assumed that the illocutionary force of the remark did not need explanation, since it was recoverable from the explicit use, by the examiner, of "remark" anyway.

Another factor that lends some weight to the argument that explaining what a remark does, is just too obvious to bother with, is that no candidate in the population sampled interpreted the clause "Whatever may become of the sickle" as a question rather than what it is, viz. an assertive.

In summary then, this most difficult question required readers to construct contexts not strictly related to the grammar of their language. This context had to do with

sickles and hammers and what they have come to represent. Readers needed to have some sense of a changing East Germany in November of 1989 and of ringing sounds associated with celebrations. They needed to recognise that the writer was inviting them to consider an indeterminate number of possibilities related to the future of agriculture in East Germany, and why the writer chose to use certain words like "ringing" rather than omit them altogether. The question was difficult because so much disparate information needed to be marshalled, and then used to draw conclusions about the state of affairs in East Berlin, with which matriculants in the Transvaal were unlikely to be familiar. The question is in a very remarkable respect, different from the other five difficult questions.

Although readers needed to carry out the subtask of recovering the illocutionary force of the utterance, in order to interpret it fully (see page 123 above), and although the question explicitly asked for comment on the writer's *intention*, candidates ignored the instruction to do so for reasons offered above. They were not, rather ironically, penalized for this omission. The irony lies in the fact that an argument can be made which will claim that it is this very task, relating the illocutionary force, or the "Communicative intent" to a writer's stylistic choices, that candidates find most difficult.

The illocutionary force of an utterance should be seen here as reflecting illocutionary acts which the speaker of an

utterance "...can intend to perform by means of it." (Sinclair and Winkler 1991:9n.) Sperber and Wilson, discussing the roles of intentionality in communication, distinguish the "informative intention" of an utterance from the "communicative intention". They argue "...that communication involves producing a certain stimulus intending thereby (an) Informative intention: to inform the audience of something; (and a) Communicative intention: to inform the audience of one's informative intention." (1986:29).

Perhaps it is because the recovery of the communicative intention is dependent on the recovery of the informative intention that candidates had difficulty in answering questions which involved recovering the communicative intentions they needed to. The remaining five difficult questions, by virtue of what they ask candidates to do, compel them to recover communicative intent if they are to be in a position to answer the question at all.

The remaining five most difficult questions.

Questions 16 of 1989, 9 of 1989, 7 of 1990, 13 of 1990 and 18 of 1989 appear at a glance to be very different, but have already been shown to be similar in terms of the two taxonomies used to classify them; ie they require candidates to recover inferrable information (Inferrables) and to integrate this with other information either recovered from the text itself (Integrative Implicit) or from the

candidates' encyclopedic knowledge (Elaborative).

However, the five questions mentioned above share a more specific demand. They demand that candidates relate a particular stylistic feature in a given sentence to the communicative intention of the writer. In order to do this, the communicative intent of each sentence has to be inferred and then related to the stylistic feature that in all five cases is given.

Question 16 of 1989 draws the readers' attention to the metaphorical expression of the canneries eating and defecating sardines (see page 45) and asks candidates to deduce from this metaphor the writer's attitude to canned sardines. In a second part to the question, candidates are asked to explain what the writer means when he says, "The figure is advisedly chosen."

Leaving aside the question of whether the writer's attitude to canned sardines can be logically deduced from the image of canneries dipping their tails or mouths into a bay, the second part of the question illustrates the difficulty candidates faced in having to relate the metaphor to the writer's communicative intent.

An answer to this second part of the question requires, ostensibly, some paraphrase of "The figure is advisably chosen". But an answer something like, "The metaphor has been selected judiciously" would not have been acceptable. What the examiners required was something along the lines of an explanation as to why Steinbeck had chosen to write that

the canneries dipped their tails into the bay and not their mouths.

Put another way, the reader had to account for Steinbeck's authorial aside, he had to explain Steinbeck's chosen preference of one stylistic effect over another.

This operation involved the recovery of the possible stylistic effects which may have been brought about by the writer using "mouths" instead of "tails", and an inference, using the alternative possibility, as to Steinbeck's reason for the choice of "tails" rather than "mouths". Seen this way, as a question demanding the recovery of a stylistic effect and then an elaboration "on the author's intended message" (Irwin 1986:68), the question illustrates the point made on page 127 above. Candidates experience the greatest difficulty in relating stylistic effects to the writer's communicative intent.

The four remaining most difficult questions illustrate the same difficulty.

When candidates are asked to level criticism at a speaker's use of a particular word and to supply another more suitable one, as in question 9 of 1989, they are being asked to relate a particular stylistic effect to the communicative intent of the speaker.

The senior West German analyst, in explaining that "The East German authorities are making a big effort to improve the conditions of life in their part of Berlin..." has chosen the word "big" to describe the effort being made by the East

Berliners. In attempting to level a criticism at this choice, a candidate would need to recognise the communicative intent of the speaker, and to use his own sense of how well or badly a stylistic choice such as "big" conveys that intent.

Although question 7 of the 1990 paper is apparently very different from the other four most difficult questions, having to do with the conventions of punctuation marks (see pages 59-62 above), it can be argued that it is similar. The uses of the semi-colon are not so conventionalized as not to permit some choice on the part of the user. Partridge (1983:45ff) lists at least 11 uses of the semi-colon between principal clauses, each designed to influence interpretation in particular ways. The two uses of interest in a discussion of this particular question, are the use to which the semi-colon is sometimes put in listing items and the use to which it is put in conveying a cumulative effect.

Used as it is in lines 45 and 48 of Passage One (see Appendix C page 2) the semi-colon marks what Partridge calls "the cumulative development of ...exposition", in this case, some of the manifestations of the distant past in human nature. The intention is clearly more than simply providing the reader with a list, since later on, the writer does list stages on which each person acts his life (lines 58-60), but chooses in his listing, not to use the semi-colon. The semi-colons in lines 45 and 48 are intended to convince the reader, by cumulative weight, of the soundness of the

writer's argument that "nature manifests itself at almost every moment of our daily life."

The use of the semi-colon was a deliberate stylistic choice on the part of the writer and was intended to lend some force to his exposition. The memorandum (Appendix D page 1) acknowledges this stylistic use of the semi-colon, when it accepts that "Semi-colons help in accentuating/highlighting each point."

As with the other questions which make up the set of those that candidates found most difficult, a reader needed to relate a particular stylistic feature to the writer's communicative intent.

As in question 7 above, the examiners have pointed to a stylistic feature in question 13 of 1990 (the fifth most difficult question), and asked candidates to describe what they visualise from the simile. The second part of the question asks how the alliteration helps to intensify the sinister effect of the simile.

The question is similar to other difficult questions in that it demands the recovery of stylistic effects and deals with the relation between these and the communicative intent of the writer. There is a difference, however, and it may account for the question having been found slightly easier by most candidates. The difference is this: the examiners have identified for the candidates, what they perceive as the stylistic effect and the communicative intent. Candidates simply needed in the second part of the question

to explain the means by which the stylistic effect supported the communicative intent. Answering the first part of the question involved the recovery of the shared features of an entry like "circular saws" and "flames".

Sperber and Wilson (1986:227-237), in explicating the recovery of metaphorical utterances make the point that "... any natural or artificial phenomenon in the world can be used as a representation of some other phenomenon which it resembles in some respects."

In attempting to recover the resemblance between "circular saws" and "flames", the reader would proceed on the assumption that the two entities shared certain properties and that the writer had invited the reader to take a large share of the responsibility of discovering these shared properties. Put in Sperber and Wilson's (1986:60) terms, "the communicator can merely expect to stir the thoughts of the audience in a certain direction." Candidates who took the trouble to read the second part of the question before attempting an answer to the first, would have had their thoughts stirred "in a certain direction" viz. that the shared properties that the examiners had discovered were in some way "sinister", and that the resemblance lay in "sharp, jagged points..." (Appendix D page 3).

Candidates needed to create a new context in a way that "saws" and "flames" became a single entity which conveyed the sinister impression it did for the examiners.

The second part of the question does not expect the

candidate to recover the communicative intent of the utterance under scrutiny, nor does it require the candidate to name the stylistic effect the writer has used. The examiners' interpretation has been supplied and the candidate is asked to explain what it is about the stylistic device that creates a sinister effect.

This kind of question (18 of 1989 is another) requires a second order of recoverability; it requires the candidate to recover the communicative intent of the examiners rather than that of the writer of the passage.

It is a moot point whether George Orwell assumed that readers would recognise the alliteration he had used to create a (supposedly) sinister impression and further, that they would be able to identify the repetition of sibilants. (See Appendix D page 3.) That he assumed his readers would associate the /s/ with some sort of malevolence is also open to question.

The examiners here are asking candidates to recover their own recovery of Orwell's stylistic effects and communicative intent (hence "second-order recoverability" used above). The examiners have assumed that their readers will agree with their interpretation and have, rather narrowly, asked th to recover part of their interpretation which, for the purposes of the question, they deliberately omitted, viz. that sibilants create a sinister impression.

The opinion expressed above, that the examiners "rather narrowly" asked candidates to recover part of their

interpretation, calls for a short justification. The opinion is based on an argument advanced by Sperber and Wilson (1986:189) which claims that the disparity between propositional content and full semantic content cannot be closed by disambiguation and reference assignment alone. Certain terms need to be "enriched". "Sinister magnificence" is just such a term and can be enriched in ways that something like "sinister impression" cannot. A semantic representation of "sinister magnificence" can be enriched by the reader's recovering properties of magnificence that include, for instance, "brilliance". This "enrichment" most certainly seems intended by Orwell in his manifest use of such adjectives as "rosy", "fiery" and "red-lit".

To argue that "magnificence" is not part of the technical device "alliteration" is to take a narrow view of the effect of sibilance, which is, after all, what the examiners were intent on getting candidates to recognise.

The sixth-most difficult question is no different from the four questions discussed above, in respect of what it demands from candidates. They needed to relate the writer's use of two particular stylistic devices viz. the use of repetition and alliteration to the writer's communicative intention.

Question 18 of 1989 quotes lines 29 and 30 of the passage by Steinbeck and draws the candidates' attention to the use Steinbeck has made of repetition and alliteration. The question/directive asks candidates how the sound of the

sentence, if read aloud, would add to its meaning.
Critical in this question is the expectation of the examiners, who, by using the phrase "reinforces meaning", require of candidates the recovery of more propositional content than is explicitly stated in the sentence quoted. The wording of the memorandum (see Appendix B page 3) confirms that this was indeed what the examiners expected. It reads: "Sound here reinforces meaning. Monosyllabic words create impression of machines at work. Repetitiveness of sound is linked to the repetitiveness of the production line."
Leaving aside the question of whether "Sound reinforces meaning" is equivalent to sound adds to meaning, one is able from the terms employed in the memorandum to establish that the two "additions", the examiners expected, to the propositional content of the quoted sentence are something like "machines are at work" and "the production line is repetitive".
But how was a candidate to decide on these two additional items of information to the exclusion of other possibilities?
As Sperber and Wilson (1986:204) put it, "He could...derive all the analytic implications of the explicatures, add to the context the encyclopedic entries of all their constituent concepts, explore the resulting set of contextual implications, and so on, indefinitely." (See Chapter 1, page 11 for Greene's description of the same

problem).

In an answer to this question, a candidate could have recovered the quite plausible implication that the alliterative /c/ was intended by Steinbeck to convey the cacophony of noise that comes from canneries in operation. This interpretation would be confirmable by reference to the next sentence. "The whole street rumbles and groans and screams and rattles..."

The repetition of the word "and" could well have been the stylistic device used by Steinbeck to convey a sense of the sequentiality of the operation, or to emphasise the variety of the tasks involved or as a device Steinbeck uses to enumerate similar activities. All three of these possibilities can be confirmed by reference to lines 26 and 27. "Then from the town pour Wops and Chinamen and Polaks, men and women in trousers and rubber coats and oilcloth aprons."

This question on repetition is similar to the fifth-most difficult one based on flames and circular saws. It requires recoverability of two orders. The first, recoverability of the relationship between stylistic effects and writer's communicative intent; and second, recoverability of stylistic effect and the examiners' own interpretation of the writer's communicative intent.

This chapter has outlined in some detail what it was that candidates had to do to answer the six most difficult questions "correctly". But do questions which ask

candidates to infer what examiners infer of a writer's intent from stylistic features selected by the examiners actually measure "comprehension"? The question is taken up in Chapter 6. The chapter above has attempted to show that five of the six required a particular kind of inferencing procedure and in this attempt, has identified a link between "difficulty" and "implicitness". The two notions are very general and require considerable refinement. Research on the kinds of questions that are of a "high" or "low" order is part of this refining process and some of the problems being addressed in this research are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX.

This final chapter attempts to relate recent research in Britain to some of the issues raised in this study and makes some observations, claims and suggestions.

TESTING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS.

In ongoing research, J Charles Alderson et al continue to ask such questions (amongst others) as to whether there is any justification for viewing comprehension as a set of separable skills or whether there is any demonstrable correlation between difficulty in a reading test and "high" or "low" order questions (1990:425).

Although Alderson is concerned with issues not raised in this study, such as the content validity of reading tests and the problems associated with whether a question is of a "high" or "low" order, there are common concerns worth mentioning. Three particular preliminary conclusions drawn by these researchers are, to some extent, borne out in this investigation.

1. Perhaps the most uncontentious preliminary conclusion is that "It is unlikely that any test item can be unambiguously said to be testing any one skill." (1990:436)

The word "skill" is problematic and Alderson uses it when referring to, by now, traditional taxonomies such as Bloom's (1956), or Munby's (1978). Alderson (1990:437) implicitly draws a distinction between "ability", "skills" and

"processes" when he remarks that, "Much reading research uses tests of comprehension in order to make inferences about reading ability, reading skills and reading processes." But whatever the distinctions are, Alderson concedes that, "The theoretical nature and status of these skills, and their interrelationships are far from clear..." (1990:425).

This present investigation has attempted to use the word "skill" sparingly, preferring "ability" or "capacity" when the need arose. However, what does not appear to be in question, is the contention that, in the process of answering a comprehension test item, readers need to recover different kinds of information from different sources if they are to arrive at an answer that satisfies local examiners. An attempt at describing this multi-dimensional ability, and based on the theoretical framework provided by Sperber and Wilson, was made in chapter 5 (see pages 115ff). This approach does at least have the advantage of allowing one to view "skills" in a somewhat different light from the way traditional taxonomies view skills. By attempting to specify the tasks and sub-tasks a reader must perform in the interpretation of an utterance, Sperber and Wilson's terms allow one to avoid the problematic term "skills", and see the business of comprehension as a general or global ability involving the carrying out of a number of tasks and sub-tasks.

2. The second preliminary conclusion concerns the way

subjects approach items. In a pilot study conducted by comparing subjects' accounts of their thoughts while attempting to answer questions on their reading, Alderson (forthcoming) tentatively asserts that "the two subjects sometimes approach the items in different ways, and different processes are involved."

This assertion appears to be supported by the present study. Particularly in the fifth and sixth most difficult items in the T.E.D. examinations, candidates who were asked to recover information that was dependent on imaging or affective responses, arrived at very different answers. The processes that they employ in arriving at these answers are not easy to infer from the products (the written answers available) but some idea of how the products differ can be seen at a glance on pages 67,69,74 and 75. What is remarkable here is the diversity of the products in spite of deliberate attempts by examiners to elicit "correct answers". Their use of what, in chapter three, have been called "trigger words" such as "alliteration" or "simile" does not seem to have interfered with highly reader-specific responses.

3. The third preliminary conclusion is that "difficulty was often associated with knowledge of particular lexical items, with particular test methods, or with the involvement of macro-skills like writing as well as reading." (Alderson, forthcoming.)

Although the present study does not address the problems of

test methods nor the difficulties that may arise when candidates are asked to produce an answer in writing (see Chapter 1 page 3), it does suggest that "difficulty is often associated with knowledge of particular lexical items." The "particular lexical items" that provided Transvaal matriculants with some difficulty were only of two kinds though.

In question 3 of 1989 the items "hammer" and "sickle" were not elaborated on sufficiently, (see page 44) and candidates were consequently awarded low marks. Lexical items of this kind then, which are rich in connotation, or carry specific symbolic meanings, if included in test questions, will make for some difficulty among candidates. This is not to say that the test question which uses items of this sort is necessarily a good discriminator. In fact, this particular item, for the sample population used, yielded a discrimination index of only .347, indicating just how widespread the difficulty is, of lexical items such as these, among both good and weak candidates. The second kind of lexical item that provided candidates with some difficulty in the examinations scrutinized, was the "technical" word. In questions 16 of 1989 and 13 of 1990 the terms "figure", "simile" and "alliteration" occur. Items such as these would normally be taught intensively in Transvaal schools, indeed both "simile" and "alliteration" are part of a section in the new Standard Five syllabus (to be implemented in 1993) under the heading "Figures of Speech." But the

problem with "technical terms" of this kind is not that candidates don't know what they mean. The problem (as explained in Chapter 5) is that examiners interpret these stylistic devices (and others, such as the semi-colon) in terms of *their* understanding of how these devices work in conveying a message. Often the candidates' interpretations of how stylistic devices work are at odds with the interpretations of the examiners.

In respect then of ongoing research in the field of reading, (and all that it entails) the present investigation appears to confirm that it is unlikely that a single test item can be said to be testing any single "skill". It is very likely that questions which ask candidates to image or questions which involve affective responses are approached in different ways.

SOURCES OF DIFFICULTY IN T.E.D. COMPREHENSION TESTS.

Besides the difficulty associated with particular lexical items referred to above, other sources of difficulty are manifest in the two T.E.D. examinations that were the objects of this investigation.

The syntactic complexity of the questions set or the fragments of text from which the questions were derived, cannot be ruled out as a factor which contributes to difficulty of processing.

Embedding of the kind illustrated on page 48, where a relative clause embedded in a conditional clause, which is

itself embedded in an adverbial clause, as in the case of question 16 of 1989, could have led to candidates' not recovering the full metaphor.

The best candidate of 1989 avoided trying to explain the metaphor. As an answer she wrote:

> Steinbeck means that the figure of speech used is apt and fitting.

One can infer (of course, many other inferences can be drawn - see pages 51 and 52) that she chose to avoid explaining the metaphor, despite the examiners' including it in the rubric, because she found the embedding too burdensome to carry in working memory.

Interrupting constructions, evident in question 13 of 1990 (see page 66), may have contributed to a reader's inability to visualize vividly the flames escaping "from beneath the cowls of foundry chimneys."

Backward referencing such as that demanded from candidates in question 18 of 1989 may have proved difficult for some candidates. The question is phrased in such a way that the Q-clause, positioned as it is at the end of a long rubric, necessitates the recovery of a whole sentence distanced from the demonstrative "this" by two explanatory sentences (see page 71).

Reference assignment was most certainly a source of difficulty for candidate 3B in 1990. See pages 59 and 60 for a full discussion of his problem. The two worst candidates in 1989 had some difficulty too, in assigning reference,

when they were unable to recover the meaning of "The Wall" (see pages 101 and 102). Some of the difficulties that candidates experienced in the two papers examined in this study may have been teacher- or examiner-induced.

Certain questions were phrased in such a way that candidates may have had difficulty interpreting them. Question 12 of 1990 with its unusually long instruction, its unnecessary nominalization and the omission of a conjunction, which would have made a clausal relationship clearer, could have been rephrased in such a way as to make the instruction potentially less confusing - see pages 79 and 80 for a full discussion of the question.

Examiners were not careful enough in their phrasing of questions 1 of 1989 and 20 of 1990. The first question of the 1989 paper asks candidates for a single characteristic difference between East and West Berlin, but examiners expected more than a single difference (for two marks). Question 20 of 1989 refers to "the pronoun" in the sentence "Your father and myself are not happy". The determiner might be perceived as a pronoun by candidates who had not been taught a newer terminology.

But teacher-induced difficulty, probably far more pervasive and pernicious than the infrequent careless phrasing in examinations, is the unintentional and covert encouragement pupils receive, to use the stock response. Answers to questions which use "technical terms" such as "alliteration", "simile", or even "semicolon", seem to

reflect a too-ready willingness on the part of the weaker pupil to supply a definition for the term, irrespective of the question asked. (See pages 66,67 and 73.) Pupils may be subjected to the learning of these terms for their own sake, rather than being taught the terms as useful means to certain ends.

Certain major assumptions are made by examiners, as to what constitutes "shared knowledge" between examiners and candidates.

The most obvious instance of an assumption of this kind is evident in the examiners' use of words such as "sense" or "techniques" (see pages 81,82 and 103). These are words that will, in the normal course of teaching in Transvaal schools, take on a particular communicative value within the discourse of comprehension testing.

There are, however, more critical assumptions made by examiners. It is a questionable practice to assume that an interpretation which is arrived at during the course of the setting of the paper, will necessarily be similar to the interpretation a candidate will arrive at during the writing of a paper. In a public, school-leaving examination, of course, items cannot be tested beforehand.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the kinds of inferences that needed to be drawn in the interpretation of the most difficult questions and what emerges there, quite clearly, is the candidates' need to relate a particular stylistic device (or effect) to the writer's communicative intent. This

interpretive procedure is subjective to say the least, and other plausible interpretations of the items which caused this kind of difficulty are offered on pages 132ff.

The major finding in this investigation relates to the point made in the previous paragraph. Five of the six most difficult questions were questions in which examiners had related a stylistic feature to a writer's intent and asked candidates to explain the relationship. (See page 127ff.) Matriculation candidates in the Transvaal, who wrote the 1989 and 1990 English Higher Grade Language and Comprehension papers, were confronted with having to explain and confirm the inferences examiners made when setting the paper. This kind of inferencing is probably only peculiar to comprehension testing, and may be called "second-order inferencing."

Assertions such as the one above serve only to raise further issues. One such issue is the problem of trying to pin down exactly what comprehension is. The interpretations which examiners construct as answers to the questions they set are dependent on variable factors, such as the training in reading that examiners undergo. Since examiners in the Transvaal are usually appointed from the ranks of practising teachers of English, the training that these teachers receive becomes vitally important in the process of trying to understand what it is that constitutes, in their view, "comprehension". An analysis of the six most difficult questions in these comprehension examinations, reveals a

dominant concern with metaphorical expression, stylistic choice and traditional "figures of speech." These concerns characterize a training in English Literature at teacher-training institutions and this training is a powerful factor in determining what it is that school-leavers are asked to do in comprehension and language examinations.

In the two comprehension and language examinations that are the subject of this investigation, what a school-leaver is asked to do with the most difficult questions is to read and interpret in ways that English Literature graduates read and interpret. The advisability of such practice in [illegible]n examinations in this country at present and in the future, is questionable. Comprehension and language examinations ought to be testing language use in ways that are not based on narrow literary interpretations.

The state of education at present in the Republic of South Africa is in turmoil and the status of English as an "official" language is not assured in a future dispensation. Of course it is likely that English will be one of the languages in which future school-leavers are examined. This likelihood alone should prompt teachers of English to examine critically the kinds of questions they ask, which, certainly in the case of these most difficult items, define what "comprehension" skill in examinations is taken to be.

Having expressed this major note of reservation about the advisability of asking the kinds of difficult questions that were asked in the two examinations under scrutiny, I should

add that there are speakers of English within the present school system who will be called on in language and comprehension examinations to construct new contexts from new and unfamiliar passages of prose. For this group of school-leavers, training in the kind of comprehension question this study identifies as difficult, might prove profitable. Two very general suggestions can be made to aid teachers preparing candidates who will face the major difficulties of context construction and relating stylistic effect to a writer's communicative intent.

1. In order to help candidates overcome the difficulties they face in what, throughout this study, has been called "context construction", a far greater amount of time and effort needs to be spent in extending and enriching students' "domain knowledge". This kind of knowledge can be understood to incorporate the knowledge of those particular lexical items which, in particular contexts, are rich in connotation or carry specific symbolic meanings (referred to most recently on page 140).

Investigating the relationship between domain knowledge and aptitude, Yekovich et al (1990:275) report that "a high amount of domain knowledge allowed low-aptitude individuals the ability to make rather complex inferences and to perform the same as their high aptitude counterparts... Apparently, domain knowledge not only makes relevant information accessible to cognitive processes, but it also extends one's processing capabilities within the domain."

Findings of this kind and evidence presented in this study should convince Transvaal Education Department planners and inspectors and examiners of the importance of encouraging teachers in English classes to spend as much time and effort as they can in context construction or enhancing their students' domain knowledge. In effect this means that teachers should be making a very real and determined effort to get pupils reading and talking and writing about as wide a range of topics as they possibly can. Restrictive syllabuses that "have to be covered" must not be allowed to impede the business of providing pupils with vast amounts of domain knowledge and opportunity for context construction that allow such things as hammers and sickles to be meaningfully interpreted.

2. The second suggestion that teachers might like to consider in their preparation of English mother-tongue speakers for comprehension questions of the kind that ask pupils to relate a particular stylistic effect to a writer's communicative intent, is this: direct pupils onto the "high road" of writing.

Asking teachers to approach comprehension teaching via writing may appear to be a round-about way of getting to the destination, but Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983:25) in describing where the "high" road of writing leads, explain that

> Children on the high road, we believe, start to think about what they are writing down on paper as having

> relations to various other things in their minds. Most importantly, they may begin to see that there is a relationship, and not necessarily an identity, between what they write and what they mean. Accordingly, they may begin to devote mental effort toward enhancing this relationship... Writing becomes a task of representing meaning rather than of transcribing language...
>
> There are other relationships which, when taken into account, further transform the writing task... There is the relationship between the way one has represented a meaning and other possible ways of representing it in writing.
> *Work on this relationship leads to incorporating conscious attention to style as a part of the writing task.* (My italics.)

What I am suggesting is this: by directing pupils onto the "high" road of writing, the teacher is providing them with opportunities to transform the writing task. They will begin to explore different ways of representing meaning, and will consciously begin to manipulate stylistic devices in ways that reflect their communicative intent. Young writers who have wrestled with ways of best representing a wide variety of states or events are well prepared to understand other writers' efforts at representing sardines being disgorged or flames sawing through a thick atmosphere or the monotony of working in a cannery, whether in Walvis Bay or Monterey.



BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Adendorff,R.D. (1989:33). "Political Cartoons as a Resource in the ESL Classroom." In The Eltic Reporter Vol 14 No. 2.

Alderson, J.C. (1984). " Reading: a reading problem or a language problem?" In (eds) J. C. Alderson & A. H. Urquhart Reading in a Foreign Language. New York: Longman Inc.

Alderson,J.C. & Urquhart,A.H. (eds) (1984). Reading in a Foreign Language. New York, Longman Inc.

Alderson,J.C. & Short,M. (1989)."Reading literature". In (ed) M. Short. Reading, Analysing and Teaching Literature. London: Longman.

Alderson,J.C. (1990). "Testing Reading Comprehension Skills (Part One)". In Reading in a Foreign Language 6(2), 425-438.

Alderson,J.C. (forthcoming) Testing Reading Comprehension Skills (Part Two): Test-takers'Accounts.

Barrett,T.C. (1979). "Taxonomy of reading comprehension" In (eds) R.Smith & T.C.Barrett. Teaching reading in the middle grades. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.

Bereiter, C. & Scardamalia,M. (1983). "Does learning to write have to be so difficult?" In (eds) Freedman,A., Pringle,I. & Yalden,J. Learning to Write: First Language/ Second Language. London: Longman.

Berman, R.A. (1984). "Syntactic components of the foreign language reading process." In (eds) Alderson,J.C. & Urquhart, A.H. Reading in a Foreign Language. New York: Longman.

Bloom, B.S. et al. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. London: Longman.

Bransford, J.D.and Johnson,M.K. (1973). "Consideration of some problems of comprehension." In (ed) W.Chase. Visual Information Processing. New York: Academic Press.

Brown,G. & Yule,G. (1984). Discourse Analysis. Cambridge University Press.

Carroll,J.M. & Bever,T.G. (1976). "Sentence comprehension: a case study in the relation of knowledge and perception." In Carterette,E. & Friedman,J. (eds) The Handbook of Perception, Vol 7: Language and Speech. New York: Academic Press.

Chafe,W.L.(1976)."Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics and point of view." In (ed) Li,C.N. Subject and topic. New York: Academic Press.

Chafe,W.L. (1982). "Integration and involvement in speaking, writing and oral literature." In D. Tannen (ed) Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy. Norwood: Ablex.

Chomsky,N. (1965). Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Clark,H.H & Clark,E.V. (1977). Psychology and Language: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Collins,A., Brown,J.S. and Larkin,K.M. "Inference in Text Understanding". In (eds) Spiro, R.J., B.C and Brewer, W. Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cooper,M. (1984). "Linguistic competence of practised and unpractised non-native readers of English." In Alderson,J.C. & Urquhart,A.H. (eds) Reading in a Foreign Language. London: Longman.

Davies,A and Widdowson,H. (1974). "Reading and Writing". In Allen, J.P.B. and Pit Corder,S. The Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics: Vol 3: Techniques in Applied Linguistics. Oxford University Press.

de Beaugrande,R. and Dressler, W. (1981). Introduction to Text Linguistics. London: Longman.

Devine, J.(1988). "The relationship between general language competence and second language reading proficiency: implications for teaching." In Carrell, P., Devine, J. & Eskey, D. Interative Approaches to Second Language Reading. Cambridge: C.U.P.

Enkvist,N.E. (1990). "Seven problems in the study of coherence and interpretability." In Connor,U. & Johns, A.M. (eds) Coherence in Writing. Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL Inc.

Fillmore, C.J. (1968). "The case for case." In (eds) Bach, E and Horms, R.T Universals in Linguistic Theory. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Flores d'Arcais,G.B. & Schreuder,R. (1983). "The process of language understanding: a few issues in contemporary psycholinguistics." In Flores d'Arcais G.B. & Jarvella,R.J. (eds) The Process of Language Understanding. Chichester: Wiley.

Garrett,M.F., Bever,T.G. & Fodor, J.A. (1966). "The active use of grammar in speech perception." In Perception and Psychophysics, I 30-32.

Garrod,S., O'Brien,E.J., Morris,R.K. & Rayner, K. (1990). "Elaborative Inferencing as an Active or Passive Process". In Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition. Vol 16 (2) 250-257.

Gernsbacher,M.A; Varner, K.R.& Faust,M.E. (1990). "Investigating differences in general comprehension skill." In Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition. Vol 16 (3):430-445.

Goetz,E.T.and Armbruster,B.B.(1980). "Psychological Correlates of Text Structure." In (eds) R.J.Spiro, B.C.Bruce and W.F.Brewer. Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Ablex.

Goodman,K. (1967). "Reading: a psycholinguistic guessing game." In (eds) H.Singer & R. Ruddell Theoretical models and processes of reading Newark, Del: International Reading Association.

Grabe, W. (1988). "Reassessing the term 'interactive'". In (eds) P. Carrell, J. Devine & D. Eskey Interactive approaches to second language reading. Cambridge University Press.

Greene,J.(1987). Memory, Thinking and Language. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1967). "Notes on transitivity and theme in English: Part 2". In: Journal of linguistics Vol 3.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). An introduction to functional grammar. London: Edward Arnold.

Harris,M. and Coltheart, M.(1986). Language Processing in Children and Adults. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Irwin, J.W. (1986). Teaching Reading Comprehension Processes. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,Inc.

Johnston, P.H. (1984). "Assessment in reading." In Pearson, P.D. (ed) Handbook of Reading Reasearch. New York: Longman.

Johnson-Laird,P.N. (1988). The Computer and the Mind. London: Fontana Press.

Just,M.A. & Carpenter,P.A. (1980)."A theory of reading: from eye fixations to comprehension." in Psychological review No.87.

Kimball,J. (1973). "Seven principles of surface structure parsing in natural language," In Cognition. 2 15-47.

Kingman,J.(1988). Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language. London, H.M.S.O.

Kintsch, W. (1974). The Representation of Meaning in Memory. Hillsdale, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kintsch, W. & van Dijk,T.A. (1978). "Toward a model of text comprehension and production." In Psychological review No.85.

Leech, G. (1969). A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry. London: Longmans.

Lyons, J. (1968). Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics. Cambridge Univeristy Press.

Martins, D. (1982). "Influence of Affect on Comprehension of a Text." In: Text, Vol. 2, 1/3, 141-154.

Mazzie,C.A. (1987). "An Experimental Investigation of the Determinants of Implicitness in Spoken and Written Discourse." In Discourse Processes Vol 10:31-42.

Mellon,J. (1981). "Language Competence" In (ed) C.R. Cooper The Nature and Measurement of Competency in English National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana Illinois.

Miller,G.A. & McKean,K.O. (1964). "A chronometric study of some relations between sentences." In Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 16 297-308.

Minsky, M. (1975). "A framework for representing knowledge". In: (ed) Winston, P.H. The Psychology of Computer Vision. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Morris, D. (1977). Manwatching New York: Harry M Abrams, Inc.

Munby,J.L. (1978). Communicative Syllabus Design. Cambridge University Press.

Murray,S.(1985). "Reading and Understanding: the influence of background knowledge on reading comprehension." In Eltic Reporter Vol 10(2) 4.

Olson, D. (1977). "From utterance to text: the bias of language in speech and writing." In Harvard Educational Review 47, 257-281.

Partridge, E. (1983). You Have a Point There. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Pearson, P.D. & Johnson,D.D. (1978). Teaching reading comprehension. New York: Holt,Rinehart and Winston.

Pearson, P.D., Hansen, J. and Gordon, C. (1979). "The effect of background knowledge on young children's comprehension of explicit and implicit information". In: Journal of Reading Behaviour. 11. 201-210

Pearson, P.D (ed). (1984). Handbook of Reading Research. New York: Longman.

Perera, K. (1984). Children's Writing and Reading. London: Basil Blackwell.

Perfetti, C.A. (1985). Reading Ability. New York: Oxford University Press.

Perkins,K.& Brutten, S.R. (1988). "Using a facet design to asssess the effects of the form, the source, and the frequency of information necessary to answer ESL reading comprehension questions." In Language Learning Vol.38 No.1.

Prince,E.F. (1981). "Toward a taxonomy of given-new information" In (ed) P. Cole Radical Pragmatics New York: Academic Press.

Purves, A. (1981). "Competence in Reading". In (ed) C.R. Cooper The Nature and Measurement of Competency in English. National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois.

Quirk, R. and Greenbaum, S. (1973). A University Grammar of English. London: Longman.

Quirk,R., Greenbaum,S., Leech,G.& Swartvik, J. (1985). A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language. London: Longman.

Rumelhart,D.E. (1976). Toward an interactive model of reading. (Technical report No.56. San Diego: Centre for human information processing.) University of California.

Rumelhart, D.E. (1981). "Schemata: The building blocks of cognition." In: Guthrie, J.T. (ed) Comprehension and teaching: Research reviews. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Sanford,A.J. & Garrod,S.C. (1981). Understanding written language. Chichester: Basil Wiley.

Schank, R.C. and Abelson, R. (1977). Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Schlesinger,I.M. (1968). Sentence Structure and the Reading Process. Mouton: The Hague.

Siler,E.R. (1974). "The effects of syntactic and semantic constraints on the oral reading performance of second and fourth graders." In Reading Research Quarterly, 9, 583-602.

Sinclair,M. and Winkler,W.K. (1991). Relevance Theory: Explaining Verbal Communication. SPIL PLUS 18 University of Stellenbosch.

Sperber,D. and Wilson, D. (1986). Relevance. Communication and Cognition. Basil Blackwell.

Van de Velde, R.G. (1981). "Textuality and Human Reasoning." In (eds.) van Dijk,T.A. and Petofi,J.S. Text Vol.1(4) 385-406. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.

Wanliss, P. (1988). A Preliminary Investigation into the Levels of Readability of Comprehension Passages Set in the Senior Certificate Examinations of the Four Provincial Education Departments. Unpublished M. Ed. dissertation. University of Stellenbosch.

Warren, W.H., Nichols, D.W., & Trabasso, T. (1979). "Event chains and inference in understanding narratives." In: (ed) Freedle, R.O. New Directions in Discourse Processing. Vol. 2. Hillsdale, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Widdowson,H.G. (1978). Teaching Language as Communication. Oxford University Press.

Widdowson,H.G. (1979). Explorations in Applied Linguistics. Oxford University Press.

Wilson, C.R. and Hammill, C. (1982). "Inferencing and comprehension in ninth graders reading geography textbooks". In: Journal of Reading. 25. 424-427.

Yekovich, F.R. et al (1990). "The Influence of Domain Knowledge on Inferencing in Low-Aptitude Individuals." In (eds) Graesser,A.C. & Bower, G.H. Inferences and Text Comprehension. San Diego: Academic Press, Inc.

Yule,G. (1981). "New, current and displaced entity reference". In Lingua Vol 55: 41-52. North Holland Publishing Company.

ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE
HIGHER GRADE
(Second Paper –
Comprehension and Language)

HG 12/2

THIS EXAMINATION PAPER CONSISTS OF 10 PAGES

HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2

TRANSVAAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION NOVEMBER 1989

P.T.O.

Copyright reserved

ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE
HIGHER GRADE
(Second Paper -
Comprehension and Language)
HG 12/2

TRANSVAAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION NOVEMBER 1989

TIME: 2½ hours

This paper consists of four sections. ALL questions are COMPULSORY. It is suggested that you spend at least 15 to 20 minutes studying the passages and the questions before you attempt any answers. Although passages A, B and C deal with different aspects of three major cities, there is no need for you to look for a common theme linking the different sections of the paper. Wherever possible, use your own words.

SECTION A

In the years after the Second World War, Berlin has developed a very specific character that has established it as a unique city. This extract, and the questions, examine that character.

West Berlin is a place that hardly ever sleeps. The pubs only close for a one-hour sweepout, and the Ku'damm is never empty. Writing in the '30s, Thomas Wolfe called the two-mile-long thoroughfare the largest coffee house in Europe. The description still fits, though the human current along the boulevard has changed since Wolfe's day. Businessmen wearing tight-fitting dark suits (and too much aftershave) rub shoulders with flame-haired punks, ageing hippies in mink-trimmed leather hats and sign carriers advertising the New Eden night club.

The frenetic activity is a leftover from the old Berlin, which in the '20s and '30s was considered to be the world's most effervescent, most creative capital. But the steady ebb and flow is also a result of more modern conditions, a kind of unconscious strategy for dealing with the confinement, isolation and uncertainty that are part of life in an enclave 110 miles removed from West Germany and surrounded by a Communist country.

Whatever may become of the sickle, the hammer can certainly be heard ringing across East Berlin, which is embarked on a building spree that will last until the end of the century. The government of

Communist Party Leader Erich Honecker hopes that the face-lift will alter East Berlin's image as the drab socialist sister of the glamorous, glittering West. Explains a senior West German analyst: "The East German authorities are making a big effort to improve the conditions of life in their part of Berlin and eliminate the impression of abnormality. They want people to come in past the monstrous Wall and find an attractive, lively capital that has the normal life of a European metropolis."

In many ways, East Berlin has that already. Unter den Linden is one of Europe's, and perhaps the world's, most beautiful boulevards, running more than three-quarters of a mile from the Marx-Engels Bridge (formerly the Schlossbrücke) with its eight heroic marble sculptures, to the metal railing that blocks access to the Brandenburg Gate. It is a street of charm: store windows displaying Meissen prcelain in exquisite blue-and-white patterns, antiques, shops offering fine prints, art galleries where abstract paintings sell for up to $1,800.

From: TIME (18 August 1986)

1. According to this extract, what characterises the difference between West and East? (2)

2. The extract states that the 'frenetic activity' (line 15) in West Berlin may be attributed to two factors. What are these? (2)

3. Explain what you think the writer intended when he remarks, 'Whatever may become of the sickle, the hammer can certainly be heard ringing across East Berlin ...' (line 26) (3)

4. In your own words, and in one sentence, summarise the explanation the senior West German analyst offers of the improvements in East Berlin (lines 36-42). (2)

5. What does the change of name, from the Schlossbrücke to the Marx-Engels Bridge, tell of the Communist takeover after the war? (2)

6. What do you understand by the term, 'a senior West German analyst'? (line 35) (2)

7. The writer refers to West Berlin as being an 'enclave' (line 23). In our media the term is often used with reference to Walvis Bay. What does this word mean? (2)

8. Why is 'monstrous' (line 40) such an effective word for the analyst to use in describing the Berlin Wall? (2)

P.T.O.

9. The West German analyst speaks of the 'big effort' (line 37) being made to improve the conditons of life in East Berlin.

9.1 What stylistic criticism may be levelled against his use of the word 'big' in this context? (2)

9.2 Supply a more suitable word with which to replace it. (2)

SECTION B

In his book 'Arabia through the looking glass', Jonathan Raban makes a study of the Arabs and their culture. In this extract he has just arrived in Qatar in Saudi Arabia. His impressions make for interesting reading.

I went out to look at the place for myself. It was at that moment in the evening when the low sun goes squashy in the Gulf and coats everything with a soft thick light the colour of broom. It gilded the wailing six-lane highway. It gilded the sandy roadside where I walked. It gilded the long trail of garbage - the crushed Pepsi cans, discarded Frigidaires, torn chunks of motor tyre, cardboard boxes, broken fan-belts lying in the dust like snakes, the building rubble, polystyrene packing-blocks, and a rather long-dead goat. So many cars had been junked at the side of the road, and reared, rusting, on their axles, that it seemed legitimate to wonder whether people here threw Pepsi cans out of cars or cars out of Pepsi cans. There were ruins, but they were not picturesque: squalid little rectangles of mud whose walls had fallen out, leaving a pathetic detritus in view - a few stained and ripped cushions, a child's graffito, a wrecked tricycle. A very pregnant, yellow, vulpine bitch - a degenerate descendant of the Saluki family bared its teeth at me from the heap of rubbish which it was defending; and a rat the size of a domestic cat ambled coolly through a pile of fluttering multi-coloured rags.

It looked more like the scene of a recent civil war than a utopian city-state. Yet there was something about it which I recognized - the careless absentmindedness of the very rich. No one leaves more squalor in his wake than a passing millionaire: some hireling will clear up the mess afterwards, and to be tidy is to reveal a streak of mean thrift. Really lavish waste is one of the most certain of all signs of wealth. The man who can afford to create stinking eyesores, then negligently turn his back on them, is displaying his money just as arrogantly as the man who furnishes his house with solid gold doorknobs and diamond-crusted coffee tables. In a poor country, the junked cars would have been either stripped or restored; the Frigidaires lovingly salvaged; even the cardboard boxes would have been dragged away to make improvised dewllings. Here they were simply litter - the overspill of some vast and smelly garbage bag. As the corpulent rats had evidently discovered, this was a handsome treasury of filth.

10. From the context of the passage decide what the colour of broom (line 4) must be. (1)

11. The writer refers to a child's 'graffito' (line 16). Most of us are more familiar with the word 'graffiti'. What does it mean, and what is the difference between these two words? (2)

12. 'It looked more like the scene of a recent civil war than a utopian city state.' (line 21-22)

12.1 What justification does Raban have for likening this scene to the scene of a recent civil war? (2)

12.2 What does 'utopian' mean, and what justification can you find in the text for anyone to think of Qatar as utopian? (2)

13. Explain the paradox found in the final line of the extract. (2)

SECTION C

An altogether different street is Cannery Row, made famous by John Steinbeck in his book of the same name. The following edited extract opens the novel:

CANNERY ROW in Monterey in California is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream. Cannery Row is the gathered and scattered, tin and iron and rust and splintered wood, chipped pavement and weedy lots and junk-heaps, sardine canneries of corrugated iron, honky-tonks, restaurants, and little crowded groceries, and laboratories and flop-houses. Its inhabitants are, as the man once said, "whores, pimps, gamblers, and sons of bitches," by which he meant Everybody. Had the man looked through another peep-hole he might have said: "Saints and angels and martyrs and holy men," and he would have meant the same thing.

In the morning when the sardine fleet has made a catch, the purse-seiners waddle heavily into the bay blowing their whistles. the deep-laden boats pull in against the coast where the canneries dip their tails into the bay. The figure is advisedly chosen, for if the canneries dipped their mouths into the bay the canned sardines which emerge from the other end would be metaphorically, at least, even more horrifying. Then cannery whistles scream and all over the town men and women scramble into their clothes and come running down to the Row to go to work. Then shining cars bring the upper classes down: superintendents, accountants, owners who disappear into offices. Then from the town pour Wops and Chinamen and Polaks, men and women in trousers and rubber coats and oilcloth aprons. They come running to clean and cut and pack and cook and can the fish. The whole street rumbles and groans and screams and rattles while the silver rivers of fish pour in out of the boats and the boats rise higher and higher in the water until they are empty. The canneries rumble and rattle and squeak until the last fish is cleaned and cut and cooked and canned and then the whistles scream again and the dripping, smelly, tired Wops and Chinamen and Polaks, men and women, straggle out and droop their ways up the hill into the town and Cannery Row becomes itself again - quiet and magical. Its normal life returns. The bums who retired in disgust under the black cypress-tree come out to sit on the rusty pipes in the vacant lot. Doc strolls from the Western Biological Laboratory and crosses the street to Lee Chong's grocery for two quarts of beer. Henri

P.T.O.

the painter noses like an Airedale through the junk in the grass-grown lot for some part or piece of wood or metal he needs for the boat he is building. Then the darkness edges in and the street light comes on in front of Dora's - the lamp which makes perpetual moonlight in Cannery Row. Callers arrive at Western Biological to see Doc, and he crosses the street to Lee Chong's for five quarts of beer.

Before answering the questions, read this extract again. Paying careful attention to Steinbeck's particular style and to his use of figurative language.

14. How can you tell from this description that Steinbeck is not so much a traveller passing through, but rather someone who intimately knows and loves the place he is writing about? (3)

15. Look carefully at Steinbeck's use of the word 'waddle' to describe the fishing boats' entry into the harbour (line 15). Why is this a particularly effective word for him to have used in this context? (3)

16. Examine his comment: 'The figure is advisedly chosen, for if the canneries dipped their mouths into the bay the canned sardines which emerge from the other end would be, metaphorically at least, even more horrifying.' (lines 18 to 21)

16.1 What can you deduce from this of his attitude to canned sardines? (2)

16.2 Explain what he means when he says, 'The figure is advisedly chosen'. (2)

17. In describing the start of the working day in the canneries, Steinbeck begins three successive sentences with the word 'Then'. Normally such repetition would be frowned upon. Examine Steinbeck's deliberate use of this stylistic device. What does he achieve by it? (2)

18. 'They come running to clean and cut and pack and cook and can the fish.' (line 29) Here, too, Steinbeck uses repetition, this time of the word 'and'. He also uses alliteration. If this sentence were read aloud, how would the sound of it add to its meaning? (3)

19. SUMMARY

A publication devoted to Steinbeck and his work is being planned. A footnote on Cannery Row is required. Write a factual report on life on Cannery Row, based only on the information given in the passage. Include all the details you think necessary, but confine your report to no more than 100 words. Pay particular attention, also, to the audience of students of literature for which the publication is intended. (15)

SECTION D

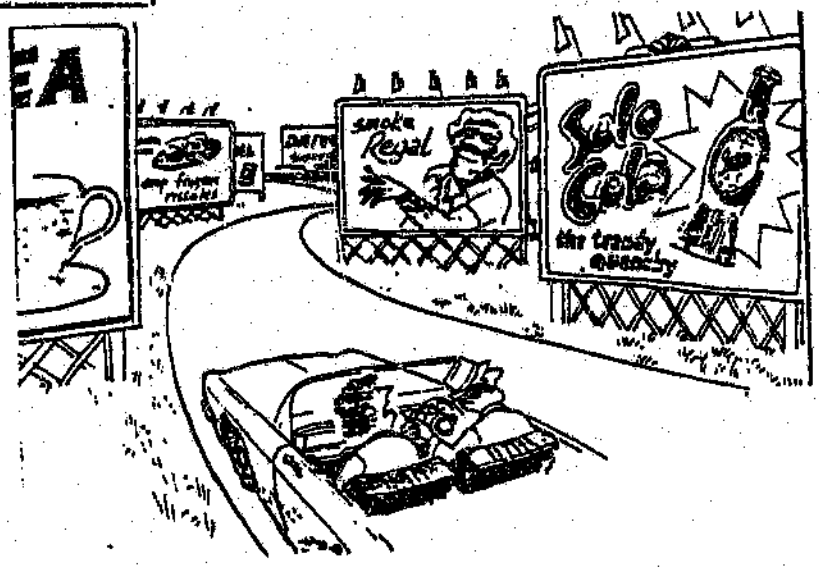
In this section you are asked to examine the following TWA advertisement as well as the two cartoons reproduced from 'Punch'. In the TWA advertisement the paragraphs have been numbered 1-10 for your convenience.

CARTOON 1

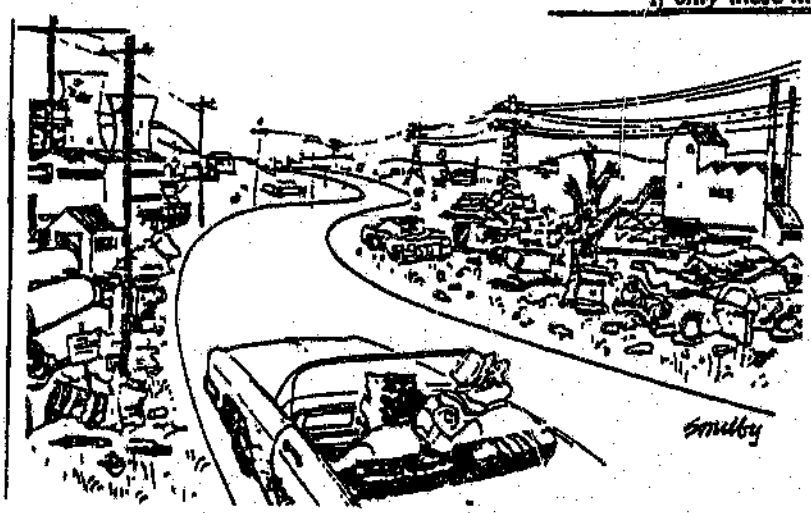


"Height thirty thousand feet, flying time four and a half hours . . . we hope you will enjoy your flight."

CARTOON 2



"If only these hideous billboards weren't here . . ."



Even at 41,000 ft, we're not above criticism.

1 *It's not unknown for airlines to have their critics. But how many actually reward them with money?*

2 *At TWA, we employ a group of men and women who make their living by flying our planes. Their job? To tell us what it's like being a passenger on TWA.*

3 *And although it's regarded as one of the most important jobs on the airline, for obvious reasons very few people know who they are.*

4 *They pay for their flight like any other passenger. They check in like any other passenger. And once on board, they're treated like any other passenger.*

5 *In fact, the only difference between them and other passengers is that, throughout the journey, they'll be taking # tes.*

6 *On the aircraft, for instance, they'll look not only at the food and wine, but also at the date on the magazines. (Last week's news is bad news.)*

7 *They'll assess the standards of the in-flight service. (Sometimes by playing the demanding passenger.)*

8 *And they'll meticulously check the details. Small things like whether extra coffee is offered before you have to ask for it.*

9 *Finally, when the notes are completed, they go into a report. A report which goes to someone who thinks that a good way to run an airline is to start from the passengers' point of view.*

10 *He will read the report, the good points and the bad, and he'll act on it. He's the head of the airline. The Chairman of TWA.*

TWA

For the *best* of America.

20. What image of its airlines does the TWA advertisement wish to promote? (2)

21. 21.1 What marketing strategy does TWA employ to ensure that passengers believe this image? (2)

21.2 Why is it important that very few people should know the identity of TWA's internal airline critics? (2)

21.3 'Last week's news is bad news'. In terms of the information contained in paragraph 6, explain why 'Last week's news is bad news'. (2)

22. Explain the pun in the opening bold text heading to the advertisement. (2)

23. Examine Cartoon 1. Both the advertisement and cartoon 1 look at similar aspects of air travel, namely, the comfort of the passengers.

23.1 In contrast to the advertisement, what 'reality' of air travel is depicted here? (2)

23.2 Give two words to describe the expression on the face of the man sitting in the middle seat. (2)

23.3 Apart from the obvious distraction offered by the baby, what further source(s) of inconvenience does the man in the middle seat have to endure? (2)

23.4 Why is the visual aspect of this cartoon so vital in making it humorous? (2)

24. Now look at Cartoon 2.

24.1 Jonathan Raban in writing on Qatar and the Arabs (Section B) and this cartoon make a similar statement about modern society. What is it? (2)

24.2 This cartoon depends rather on irony than on obvious humour for its effect. Why does the reader 'smile' on seeing the second frame? (2)

24.3 In what way may this cartoon be considered satirical? (2)

24.4 Why is there no text attached to the second frame? (2)

25. The questions that follow ask you to examine issues of language and style from the TWA advertisement.

25.1 Rewrite paragraph 1 as one sentence, making whatever changes are necessary. (2)

25.2 Paragraph 2 contains the following statement: 'At TWA, we employ a group of men and women who make their living by flying our planes.' In context this is ambiguous.

25.2.1 Explain the ambiguity. (2)

25.2.2 Rewrite the sentence, inserting the preposition required to remove this ambiguity. (2)

25.3 Paragraph 3 makes use of the word <u>it's</u>. Indicate the difference between <u>it's</u> and <u>its</u>.

25.4 Look at the structure of the sentences in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10. Each of these paragraphs contains an example of the same grammatical omission.

25.4.1 What is this omission?

25.4.2 Choose any one of the sentences concerned and rewrite it so as to eliminate the error. (2)

25.5 The phrase <u>passengers' point of view</u> (paragraph 9) may be perceived as containing an error. Either correct this error, or justify the correctness of the phrase. (2)

TOTAL: 100

22. Explain the pun in the opening bold text heading to the advertisement. (2)

23. Examine Cartoon 1. Both the advertisement and cartoon 1 look at similar aspects of air travel, namely, the comfort of the passengers.

23.1 In contrast to the advertisement, what 'reality' of air travel is depicted here? (2)

23.2 Give two words to describe the expression on the face of the man sitting in the middle seat. (2)

23.3 Apart from the obvious distraction offered by the baby, what further source(s) of inconvenience does the man in the middle seat have to endure? (2)

23.4 Why is the visual aspect of this cartoon so vital in making it humorous? (2)

24. Now look at Cartoon 2.

24.1 Jonathan Raban in writing on Qatar and the Arabs (Section B) and this cartoon make a similar statement about modern society. What is it? (2)

24.2 This cartoon depends rather on irony than on obvious humour for its effect. Why does the reader 'smile' on seeing the second frame? (2)

24.3 In what way may this cartoon be considered satirical? (2)

24.4 Why is there no text attached to the second frame? (2)

25. The questions that follow ask you to examine issues of language and style from the TWA advertisement.

25.1 Rewrite paragraph 1 as one sentence, making whatever changes are necessary. (2)

25.2 Paragraph 2 contains the following statement: 'At TWA, we employ a group of men and women who make their living by flying our planes.' In context this is ambiguous.

25.2.1 Explain the ambiguity. (2)

25.2.2 Rewrite the sentence, inserting the preposition required to remove this ambiguity. (2)

25.3 Paragraph 3 makes use of the word <u>it's</u>. Indicate the difference between <u>it's</u> and <u>its</u>.

25.4 Look at the structure of the sentences in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10. Each of these paragraphs contains an example of the same grammatical omission.

25.4.1 What is this omission?

25.4.2 Choose any one of the sentences concerned and rewrite it so as to eliminate the error. (2)

25.5 The phrase <u>passengers' point of view</u> (paragraph 9) may be perceived as containing an error. Either correct this error, or justify the correctness of the phrase. (2)

TOTAL: 100

APPENDIX B

HG 12/2

165/1

MEMORANDUM

ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE HIGHER GRADE PAPER II

Remember that the memorandum is not a set of model answers: It indicates the direction that answers can/should take. It uses words from the text, where candidates should use their own. It uses point-form answers; candidates should not. The better candidates' answers will frequently deviate from the memo.

Remember also that these are first language candidates. They are expected to be able to write fluent, correct English. Penalise when this is not done, as directed by your chief marker.

SECTION A

1. | West Berlin | v | East Berlin |
   |---|---|---|
   | activity & vitality | | drabness) The answer is here |
   | glamour | | abnormality) Accept this as |
   | capitalistic | | communistic) well |

   (2)

2. a leftover form the '20s and 30s (effervescence and creativity)

   a strategy for dealing with confinement, isolation and uncertainty
   (Candidates preferably to use own words. Both aspects required for full marks.) (2)

3. (A more testing question now, after two easier ones. The better candidate has an opportunity to emerge.)
   Hammer ringing - a building spree; change; symbol of industry; also a symbol of communism (2)
   the sickle - agricultural; change to an industrial society is underway; sickle is in its descendancy (1)
   [3]

4. (Must be <u>own words</u>. Must be <u>one sentence</u>. Must be a <u>summary</u>. Penalise. The following answer is adequate for full marks.)

   The authorities are attempting to create the impression of a normal, vibrant European city where people live well. (2)

5. Change of names - to <u>impose</u> a particular atmosphere. (Accept any answer that points to this and is not a re-writing of the question.) (2)

6. senior - leading/respected
   analyst - political commentator/authority on political matters. (2)

TRANSVAAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Copyright reserved

7.

8. Answers must point to connotation and denotation. Its huge size, but also what it represents. (2)

9. 9.1 a flat word/dead word/cliche.
Candidate should expand on this. The word "big" has little meaning as used in this context. It is non-specific, overworked and too colloquial.
9.2 Award 0,5, 1, 1,5 or 2 depending on answer.

SECTION B

10. yellow/gold (1)

11. graffito - singular; graffiti - plural (1)
(Only 1 mark if candidate does not indicate which is singular and which is plural.) =(2)

12. 12.1 wreckage, ruins, dead animal.
Answers should point to all of the above and link these to the aftermath of war. (2)
12.2 wealth. (Any answer that indicates this.) (1) Clearly this is no poor state. Not even the junked cars have been stripped, as would be the case in a poor country.(1)
=(2)

13. Answer must indicate an understanding of paradox.
handsome filth) accept either, or
treasury of filth) both aspects (2)

SECTION C

14. His intimate knowledge of the place is obvious as is his affection for it. Writing from personal experience. Candidates may point to the first paragraph, to his tone, to his familiarity with life on Cannery Row, and to his use of first names (Doc, Lee Chong, Henri). (3)

15. (Another opportunity for the top candidates to emerge. Expect good answers for 3.)

16 16.1 Answers must point to his disparaging (negative) attitude to sardines. (2)
16.2 Figure = figure of speech.
Advisedly chosen = appropriate comparison.
(Answer must embrace both aspects for 2 marks.) (2)

17. (Here, too, the candidate's sensitivity to style, mood, tone is being probed.) Candidates must link repetition of "them" to repetitiveness of the working day. Sound and meaning. Serving as a link between the sentences, uniting them.
(2)

18. As for number 17. Sound here reinforces meaning. Monosyllabic words create impression of machines at work. Repetitiveness of sound is linked to the repetitiveness of the production line. (3)

19. Candidates must
(a) write factually,
(b) limit their answers to 100 words,
(c) write to the indicated audience.
Penalise the inclusion of non-factual information. The following points might help:

1. Cannery Row is in Monterey, California.
2. While it may have intangible qualities,
3. it is definitely rundown.
4. Fishing and the canneries - main industry.
   Boats fish at night and deliver the catch in the morning.
5. Working class - pedestrians.
   Executives - motor cars.
6. Cosmopolitan
7. Boats unload the catch and work commences.
8. Noisy activity. Busy, tiring work.
9. After the workers retire Cannery Row is quiet again.
10. The locals then come out and go about their business.

Mark globally out of 15. Then analyse according to a ratio of 9 marks for factual information given and 6 for style. The 9 for factual information need not embrace all the points above.

SECTION D

20. Image of a caring airline, one that is concerned about passenger comfort. (2)

21. 21.1 T.W.A. tells in its adverts of its use of employees who, while pretending to be ordinary passengers, actually assess and report back on the standards of in-flight service. (2)
21.2 To ensure anonymity and therefore these employees receive treatment no different from that of any other passenger. (2)
21.3 The presence of "Last week's news" would point to a lack of care/poor standards/falling attention to detail, as indicated by not having the latest "news" available (2)

22. Candidates must illustrate an understanding of the pun. (2)

23. 23.1 In this case discomfort is occasioned by other travellers. Travel is not all glamour and comfort. (2)
23.2 Award 0,5, 1, 1,5 or 2 depending on appropriateness of answer. (2)
23.3 Smoke from male passenger; elbow in ribs; noise from loudspeaker.

Any two of the above for 1 mark each. (2)

23.4 Contrast between text and picture is important. The words on their own are not funny at all. Irony dependent on both. (2)

24. 24.1 Mankind spoils his environment. He "junks" i... (2)

24.2 Any acceptable explanation of the humour of the cartoon. (2)

24.3 Understanding of satire essential. (2)

24.4 The picture tells it all. Text is superfluous in frame two. (2)

25. 25.1 While it is not unknown for airlines to have their critics, (one may wonder) how many actually reward them with money. (Any such answer. Deduct 1 mark for any error of style, language, punctuation, spelling in candidate's answer.)

Accept : It's ... critics, but ... money? (2)

25.2 25.2.1 The sentences actually suggest pilots. Clearly pilots are not intended here. Hence the ambiguity. (2)

25.2.2 "At T.W.A. we employ a group of men and women who make their living by flying <u>on/in</u> our planes." Accept any suitable <u>preposition</u>. (2)

25.3 it's = it is its = possession (2)

25.4 25.4.1 Lack of finite verb. (2)

25.4.2 Two marks if correctly done. (2)

25.5 Accept : passenger's point of view, or passengers' points of view. (2)

<u>TOTAL : 100</u>

APPENDIX C

ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE
HIGHER GRADE
(SECOND PAPER)
COMPREHENSION AND LANGUAGE

HG 12/2

HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2
HG 12/2	HG 12/2	HG 12/2

THIS PAPER CONSISTS OF 10 PAGES

TRANSVAAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION NOVEMBER 1990

P.T.O.

Copyright reserved

ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE
HIGHER GRADE
(Second Paper)
COMPREHENSION AND LANGUAGE
HG 12/2

TRANSVAAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION NOVEMBER 1990

TIME: 2½ hours

This examination paper consists of FIVE SECTIONS on a related topic. It is suggested that you spend 20 minutes reading through the entire paper. Then study each passage and answer the questions that follow in the time allocated to each section, to ensure that you have 25 minutes at the end to complete the summary. Please bear in mind that the summary is based on the issues raised in EACH of the preceding four sections.

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS, using the given numbering system. Please head each section clearly and leave a few lines open between each answer. Rule off after each section.

SECTION A (30 minutes)

PASSAGE ONE

I am tired of hearing that man is on his way to extinction, along with most other forms of life. Like many others, I am alarmed by the destructive effects of our power-intoxicated technology and of our ungoverned population growth; I know that scientists have even worked out a specific timetable for the extinction of mankind. But my own view of man as a biological animal suggests that something worse than extinction is in store for us.

Man will survive as a species for one reason: he can adapt to almost anything. I am sure we can adapt to the dirt, pollution and noise of a New York or Tokyo. But that is the real tragedy - we can adapt to it. It is not man the ecological crisis threatens to destroy but the quality of human life, the attributes that make human life different from animal life.

Wild animals can survive and even multiply in city zoos, but at the cost of losing the physical and behavioural splendour they possess in their natural habitat. Similarly, human beings can almost certainly survive and multiply in the polluted cage of technological civilisation, but we may sacrifice much of our humanness in adapting to such conditions. Like animals, men tend to make some form of adjustment to dangerous conditions, when these develop slowly without giving clear signs of the deleterious effects. Paradoxically, most of the threatening situations we face today have their origins in the immense adaptability of mankind.

Ecologists and medical scientists have been chiefly concerned with the undesirable effects of the physical environment of man. But the creative aspects are more interesting and more important in the long run. A human environment must allow ways for man to express his aboriginal nature, to satisfy those needs that are rooted in the Stone Age, however great the outward changes brought by urbanisation and technology.

The survival of the distant past in human nature manifests itself at almost every moment of our daily life. We build wood fires in steam-heated city apartments; we keep plants and animals around us as if to maintain direct contact with our own origins; we travel long and far on weekends to recapture some aspect of the wilderness from which our ancestors emerged centuries ago.

The problem of the environment involves the salvation and enhancement of those positive values which man uses to develop his humanness. It involves, ultimately, a social organisation in which each person has freedom in selecting the stage on which to act his life: a peaceful village green, the banks of a river, the exciting plaza in a great city. Survival is not enough. Seeing the Milky Way, experiencing the fragrance of spring and observing other forms of life continue to play an immense role in the development of humanness. Man can use many different aspects of reality to make his life, not by imposing himself as a conqueror on nature, but by participating in the continuous act of creation in which all living things are engaged. Otherwise, man may be doomed to survive as something less than human.

RENE DUBOS

Department of Environmental Bio Medicine at Rockefeller University

From: LIFE MAGAZINE

SECTION A

1. In the opening paragraph, the writer refers to the theory advanced by many scientists that man is on the way to extinction. (Line 1)

   1.1 Using your own words, list FOUR of the major areas of concern to environmental scientists as mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2. (4)

   1.2 Do you think the writer agrees that man is in fact heading for extinction? Please give a reason for your answer. (2)

2. What point is the writer making about mankind's future by his reference to animals in city zoos (line 19)? (3)

3. Account for the writer's use of the word 'Paradoxically' in line 30. (3)

4. From its context within paragraph 3, deduce the meaning of the word 'deleterious' (line 29). (2)

5. Explain whether the word 'rooted' (line 39) is used literally or metaphorically in this context. (3)

6. What evidence is there in paragraphs 4-6 to suggest why we South Africans occasionally feel a need to escape to places such as the Vaal Dam, the Drakensberg or the Natal coast? Please answer briefly in your own words. (3)

7. Explain why the writer's use of the SEMICOLON may be considered a better punctuation mark to use than a comma or a full stop in lines 45 and 48. (3)

8. The writer maintains that there are certain elements needed in life if man is to survive as a fully-human being. Refer to paragraphs 4-6 and deduce what these three elements are. Please use your own words. (3)

(26)

SECTION B
PASSAGE TWO

(15 minutes)



9. How has your attention been drawn to this advertisement? Refer to three different techniques that have been used. (3)

10. The intention of this advertisement is threefold. Show that you are aware of this by stating:

    10.1 What FACTUAL INFORMATION it is providing (2)
    10.2 What CAUSE it is propagating (2)
    10.3 What EMOTIONAL RESPONSE it is attempting to arouse (2)

11. This advertisement is a blatant example of SENSATIONALISM. Sensationalism has been defined as the conspicuous arousal of excessively strong and irrational emotion for a specific purpose.

    By referring to appropriate words and phrases, show how your response is being manipulated by the sensationalism of the writing in the advertisement. (5)

(14)

SECTION C (40 minutes)

PASSAGE 3.1

It is only when you get a little further north, to the pottery towns and beyond, that you begin to encounter the real ugliness of industrialism - an ugliness so frightful and so arresting that you are obliged, as it were, to come to terms with it.

A slag-heap is at best a hideous thing, because it is so planless and functionless. It is something just dumped on the earth, like the emptying of a giant's dust-bin. Often the slag-heaps are on fire, and at night you can see the red rivulets of fire winding this way and that, and also the slow-moving blue flames of sulphur, which always seem on the point of expiring and always spring out again. And the stench! If at rare moments you stop smelling sulphur it is because you have begun smelling gas. Even the shallow river that runs through the town is usually bright yellow with some chemical or other.

At night, when you cannot see the hideous shapes of the houses and the blackness of everything, a town like Sheffield assumes a kind of sinister magnificence. Sometimes the drifts of smoke are rosy with sulphur, and serrated flames, like circular saws, squeeze themselves out from beneath the cowls of the foundry chimneys. Through the open doors of foundries you see fiery serpents of iron being hauled to and fro by red-lit boys, and you hear the whizz and thump of steam hammers and the scream of the iron under the blow.

GEORGE ORWELL

PASSAGE 3.1

12. Good descriptive writing usually appeals to at least one of our five senses. Identify the writer's use of three different senses in this description, providing an appropriate quotation from the passage for each sense. (3)

13. Examine this image from paragraph 3:
'serrated flames, like circular saws, squeeze themselves out ...'
(line 12).

    13.1 What do you visualise from this simile? (3)

    13.2 How does the alliteration help to intensify the sinister impression of this image? (2)

PASSAGE 3.2

The rider hunched over the bars of his motorcycle and moved north into the smoky rain. The squalid fringes of Leeds. No model suburban housing. It seemed to him that the road drove through a largely empty plain on which, at random, senselessly, a stone house, a factory, a garage, a brick warehouse lay abandoned, grey and soiled. A no-man's land in the evening rain. A limbo.

And then on the left, half seen in the blur of his glasses, he suddenly saw something that startled him. Something huge was burning, like a town incinerated by the blitz, abandoned and guttering in the steady rain. The air above it was choked with sulphurous smoke that slowly boiled upward, silently, from the smeared fires. Massy cylinders and dark grids loomed out of the rain - the charred steel skeleton of the smoking foam, whose smell his nostrils finally caught. It was the smell of steel mills, the smell of his own industrial city. Hunched over the bars, the cobbled pavement like slick wet slate beneath the hissing tires, the rain beginning a cold trickle down his neck under the plastic hood, he lost all sense of discomfort, warmed by the foul landscape and the bleared fires of the blast furnaces.

DAVID KING

14. Refer to the opening paragraph of this extract.

14.1 Identify three features that make this scene depressing. (3)
14.2 How does the punctuation contribute to this mood? (3)

15. At the end of the opening paragraph, the writer refers to the outskirts of Leeds as a 'limbo'.

15.1 From the dictionary extract on page 7, find TWO different definitions of the word 'limbo' that correspond to the use of the word in the passage. (2)

15.2 From the dictionary extract, examine the derivation of the word 'limbo'. Indicate from what LANGUAGES it is derived and what the ENGLISH MEANINGS of the original word were. (3)

15.3 What is the plural of 'limbo'? (1)

limb[1] (-m) *n.*, & *v.t.* I. *n.* Leg, arm, or wing; *escape* with life and ~, without grave injury; *tear* ~ from ~, completely dismember with violence.

limb[2] (-m) *n.* Graduated edge of quadrant etc.; edge (*eastern, lower*, etc., *limb*) of sun, moon, etc.; broad part of petal, sepal, or leaf. [f. F *limbe* or f. L *limbus* hem, border]

li'mbeck. Var. (arch.) of ALEMBIC.

li'mber[1] *n.*, & *v.t.* I. *n.* Detachable front of gun-carriage (two wheels, axle, pole, and ammunition-box as seat). 2. *v.t.* ~ (up), attach limber to (gun), fasten together (two parts of (gun-carriage, or abs.). [ME *limo(n)r*, app. rel. to med. L *limonarius* (*lime* -*onis* shaft); for -b- cf. *slumber*]

li'mber[2] *n.* (Naut.) Gutter on either side of keelson for drainage to pump-well. [f. F *lumière* light, hole, limber, f. Rom. **luminaria* f. pl. of L *luminare* lamp (LUMEN)]

li'mber[3] *a.*, & *v.t.* I. *a.* Flexible; lithe, nimble. 2. *v.t.* ~ (up), make limber (person, body etc., or abs.). [perh. f. LIMBER[1], w. ref. to movement of shafts]

li'mbo *n.* (*pl.* ~s). Region on border of hell, supposed abode of pre-Christian righteous persons and unbaptized infants; prison, confinement; condition of neglect or oblivion. [ME, f. med. L phr. *in limbo*, f. *limbus* (see LIMB[2])]

Li'mburger (-g-) *n.* Soft white cheese with characteristic strong smell, orig. made in Limburg. [Du., f. *Limburg* in Belgium; see -ER[1]]

Collins Concise English Dictionary

16. Compare the descriptions of the cities in Passages 3.1 and 3.2.

How are the descriptions of Sheffield and Leeds SIMILAR in terms of the following?

16.1 Setting (2)
16.2 Atmosphere (2)
16.3 Industrial activity (2)

17. Despite the ugliness of the scene he describes, each writer implies that there is also a certain positive quality, if not beauty, implicit in the scene.

17.1 Refer to paragraphs 2 and 3 of Passage 3.1 (Sheffield).

Quote ONE image from EACH paragraph that you feel suggests a certain attractiveness in the scene and then explain the reason for each choice. (4)

17.2 Carefully examine the last sentence of Passage 3.2 (Leeds). The rider's response to the city has now undergone a subtle change. What is this change in response and what word or words indicate this change? (3)
(33)

P.T.O.

SECTION D
PASSAGE FOUR

(15 minutes)

THE GARBAGE MAKERS

NEW YORK - A mother whale and a father whale were swimming along the coast with their adolescent son whale when the mother sighted a school of people on the beach.

"What's that?" asked the son whale, who had never seen a school of people before, or even a stray person.

"That's people, son" said the father whale. "You see them all up and down this coast at this time of year. They cover themselves with oil and lie up there on the sand and boil themselves until they sizzle."

"Why did the Great Whale make people anyhow?"

"There are some things," said the mother whale, "that even whales can't understand. We must accept the world as it is and live in harmony with it."

The father whale called their attention to a small group of people who had detached themselves from the school and were getting into a metal box mounted on wheels. When they were all inside, the metal box moved along the beach throwing up a great cloud of sand and destroying vegetation and birds' nests.

At that moment six beer cans came flying out of the box, followed by a bag containing a half-eaten hot dog, a mustard jar, some banana peels and an empty plastic body-oil container.

"Maybe that's the reason the Great Whale made people," said the young whale. "To make garbage."

"The world doesn't need garbage," growled the father whale.

"Your father has been very sensitive about garbage," the mother whale explained, "ever since he dived into 800 tons of fresh sludge that had just been dumped off the New Jersey coast. Your father and myself were not happy. He smelled like a sewer for weeks."

The whales made for deep distant water and later that night, as they drifted off the Gulf Stream, admiring the stars, a large ship passed by and spilled oil over them, but they remained in harmony with the world as it was, and afterwards dreamed of the unfortunate people far behind them making garbage through the sweet summer night.

- The New York Times News Service.,

RUSSEL BAKER (The Star)

18. After a careful reading of this article, do you feel it is merely frivolous (i.e. lighthearted and trivial) or is it satirical? Justify your decision by referring to the content, intention and tone of the article. (5)

19. You no doubt smiled when reading this passage. Refer to one example that you found funny and explain the humour. (3)

20. Towards the end of the second-last paragraph the following sentence appears:

'Your father and myself were not happy.'

This reflects a widespread grammatical error most people make nowadays. Rewrite the sentence by merely correcting the pronoun. (2)
Please underline the correction. (10)

SECTION E
CARTOON AND SUMMARY

(30 minutes)



"No, thanks. I'm a vegetarian. I don't believe in killing animals."

21. On what does this cartoon depend for its humour? Refer, in your answer, to the literary device that underlies the humour. (2)

22. Please turn over to page 10 for the summary.

SECTION E
CARTOON AND SUMMARY

(30 minutes)

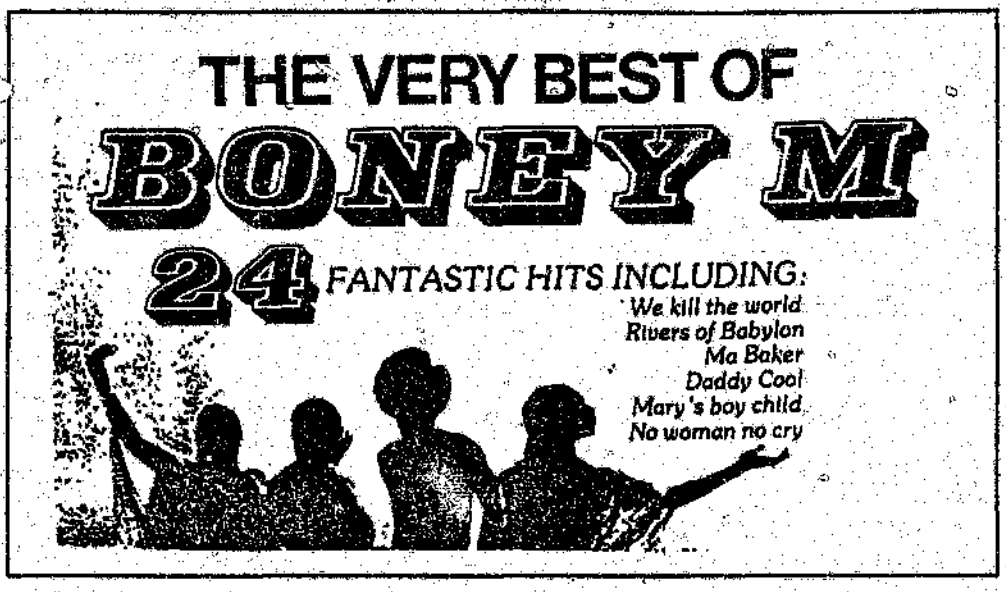


"No, thanks. I'm a vegetarian. I don't believe in killing animals."

21. On what does this cartoon depend for its humour? Refer, in your answer, to the literary device that underlies the humour. (2)

22. Please turn over to page 10 for the summary.

22. SUMMARY



The pop group 'Boney M' is planning to re-release one of its popular albums featuring the hit song 'We Kill the World'. The record company requires a short 100 word article, to be printed on the record sleeve, on the topic of the environmental crisis today.

By consulting EACH of the preceding passages and the cartoon, use the information to write the required article. Write in connected sentences and use short paragraphs. To assist you in formulating a logical arrangement of the specific issues mentioned, use the following guidelines, BUT DO NOT incorporate them as sub-headings in your summary of <u>100 words</u>:

The sea	(Passage Four)	Refer to 2 issues.
The environment	(Section E: Cartoon)	Refer to 1 issue.
Animals	(Passage Two)	Refer to 1 issue.
Industrialisation	(Passages 3.1 and 3.2)	Refer to 2 issues.
Man's survival	(Passage One)	Refer to 2 issues.

Title your summary 'Don't Kill the World' and at the end of the summary indicate in brackets the EXACT number of words you have used.
(Spend about <u>25 minutes</u> on the summary.) (15)

TOTAL: 100

APPENDIX D

HG 12/2
179/1

ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE HIGHER GRADE
(SECOND PAPER : COMPREHENSION AND LANGUAGE)

MEMORANDUM

The suggested answers are merely a guide as to what can be expected of the candidates under examination conditions. As this is a Higher Grade examination, good candidates must be given credit for divergent, but appropriate answers, to ensure an acceptable spread of marks among the H.G.Group.

*Determine overall competence of candidate by FLUENCY of first few answers.
*Underline errors of syntax punctuation, spelling etc.
*Tick correct words/phrases/parts of an answer. Mark subsections on left. Totals on right.

SECTION A (Answers mainly factual, deductive).

1. 1.1. destructive effects of modern technology/progress
uncontrolled population growth
environmental pollution
noise pollution
ecological crisis (4)

1.2. No. (1)
Man is adaptable (and won't be affected by environmental decay) (1) (2)

2. Animals survive out of their natural environment in zoos (1), but lose their 'physical and behavioural splendour' (1).
Humans will sacrifice their essential humanness in this adaptation. (1) (3)

3. Threatening situations should have destroyed man, but our adaptability allows us to survive (1) and create further life-threatening situations (2)
= a paradox (3)

4. deleterious = dangerous, adverse, harmful
(bad = 1) (2)

5. 'rooted' is used metaphorically (1) as a need can't take root in something (2) (3)
If a sound reason for saying it is 'literal' is given, allocate 2 marks

6. Man needs to express his aboriginal/primitive nature
or
The survival of the distant past, manifested in most things we do. (1)
e.g. fires/plants/animals in our homes. (1)
travel distances to recapture the wilderness/ natural environment/being part of nature (1) (3)

7. Semicolon used to separate different, but related concepts in a list (2) and showing that they form part of a whole (1). Full stop would remove the concept that the ideas are linked/connected (1). Comma is incorrect as the sentences are complete in themselves and too long (1) for a minor punctuation mark. The conjunction 'and' would make the sentence long, clumsy and puerile (1). Semi-colons help in accentuating/highlighting each point. (1)

TRANSVAAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Copyright reserved

8. Creative aspects :-

- express our fundamental human/primitive nature
- anything that makes man fully human
- free social organisation to express himself
- experiencing the sensitivity of natural phenomena
- being part of creation (3)

Candidates must use OWN words. No examples required.

SECTION B (Mainly interpretation/personal response)

9. Bold headline (eye catching/dramatic/sensational)
Picture (leading eye to text)
Bold Secondary headline (shock tactic)
Logo
Use of emotive language in headlines (3)

10. 10.1. Killing a young seal/clubbing its head
Seal skinned alive for its fur.
Asking for donation/Beauty without cruelty. (2)

10.2. Cause :
Beauty without cruelty (2)
Against use of animal products for frivolous adornment and beauty (2)

10.3. Emotion :
Sympathy/revulsion/shock/anger (2)

11. Unthinking, irrational, emotional response : baby seal
bloody cup
murderous club
experienced killers
smashing...eye
blind side
searing pain
skinned alive
Clubbing a baby to death (3)

Candidates need to indicate how response is aroused (shock, sympathy; play on reader's emotions through horrific images.) (2) (5)

SECTION C (Responding to metaphorical language)

Passage 3.1.

12. Visual : "a slag heap .....dumped on the earth"
"see the red rivulets of fire...."
"slow moving blue flames"
Smell : smelling sulphur, "smelling gas"
Sound : "whizz and thump of steam hammers"
"scream of iron". (Half a mark for sense and half for quotation) (3)

13. 13.1. Something like "sharp, jagged points of flame spurting up around the edges". (3)

13.2. Sibilants create a hissing, sinister impression (2)

PASSAGE 3.2.

14. 14.1. smoky rain; squalid fringes; empty plain; random house, factory etc; grey and soiled; no-man's land. (3)

14.2. Two short disjointed sentences; staccato effect; don't flow smoothly and naturally, followed by a long, heavily punctuated sentence forcing one to absorb the depressing details; sentence slowed down, etc. (3)

15. 15.1. Limbo = border of hell
condition of neglect or oblivion (2)
(prison, confinement = half a mark)

15.2. Derived from FRENCH (1) from LATIN (1)
= hem, border (½ + ½) (3)

15.3. limbos (No mark for limbo's or limbows) (1)

16. COMPARISON :

16.1. setting : industrial city, ugly (2)
(smoky 1/2; dark 1/2)

16.2. atmosphere : depressing; lifeless; harsh; sinister (2)

16.3. activity : ironworks; smelting (2)

17. 17.1. beauty = (Para. 2) "red rivulet of fire winding....."
"slow moving blue flames of sulphur....."
(Para. 3) "drifts of smoke are rosy with sulphur...."
"fiery serpents of iron.... under the blow"
(1 + 1 for explanation x 2) (4)

17.2. A sense of identity/contentment with a homely environment (2) : "he lost all sense of discomfort" / "warmed....." (1) (3)

SECTION D (Scope for better candidates; Discriminator questions)

18. Article is satirical (1)
Content : Whales being affected by human pollution (1)
Intention : Criticism of human behaviour : foolishness
selfishness
irresponsibility
Aiming to highlight the above AND
force people to reform (2)
Tone : lightheared/humorous/satirical (1)
(Candidates must not confuse tone with register)
(A-symbol candidates should score full marks.
Weak candidates should be marked down). (5)

19. Humour : "School of people" = inversion of collective noun;
"cover with oil....sizzle" = objective distancing reveals absurdity;
people made to create garbage = satirical/recognisable foible
etc. (1 mark for humorous incident + 2 for explanation)
(3)

20. "Your father and I were not happy"
(NOT ME !) (2)

21. Irony (1) : man won't kill animals but content to destroy trees. (1) (2)

22. SUMMARY (Synthesis of information)

Issues required

- sludge being dumped off the coast (1) (Passage Four)
- ship spilling oil over the whales (1)
- chopping down of forests (for commercial reasons) (1) (Section E:Cartoon)
- Killing seals and skinning them alive to be used as fur coats (1) (Passage Two)
- slag heaps, polluted rivers and air/smoke emission, (1) (Passages 3.1. and 3.2
ugly factories destroying countryside (1)
- man can adapt to the above, (1) but to retain his humanity he needs to express his basic creative instincts as part of the natural order (1) (Passage One)

TOTAL : 8 MARKS

The Summary is to be marked on its factual content (8 issues = 8 marks) and on it fluent style (7 marks) = 15

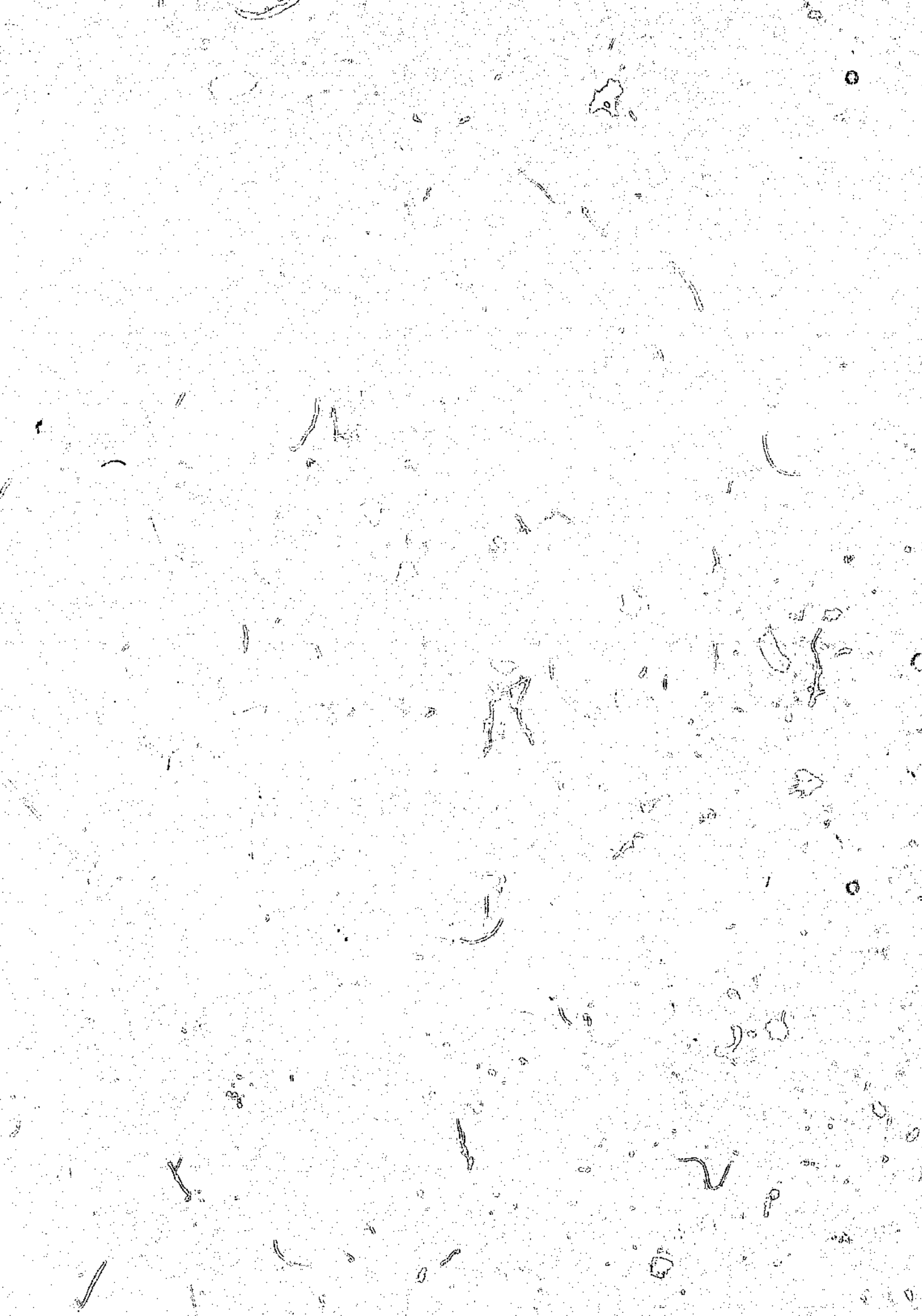
Mark Allocation : 8 marks for content
7 marks for style (i.e.syntax, smooth sentence construction, organisation)

Style Mark : 7 Excellent; Fluent and easy to read
6 Very good, but not stylistically perfect
5 Good, but with a few stylistic errors
4 Acceptable style; but flawed. Probably poor synthesis of sentences
2, 3 Jerky, awkward style. A weak candidate
1 Virtually illiterate

Penalty : Only deduct 2/3 marks if you sense the summary is excessively long.

(15)

GRAND TOTAL : 100



Author: Bam Carl Laurence.
Name of thesis: Inferencing And Syntactic Complexity As Two Determinants Of Comprehension Difficulty.

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2015

LEGALNOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page)for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.