



## DNM ENGLISH PRACTICE 22-04-2020

### Section One Reading

#### Article A: Harsh marks 'put pupils off languages

**(A)** Harsh and inconsistent marking is putting pupils in England off studying languages beyond age 14, a report says. The dawn of more rigorous GCSE<sup>1</sup>s will further reduce interest in languages, research by the British Council and Education Development Trust suggests. It says a focus on maths and sciences, as well as a perception languages are a hard option, is also de-motivating pupils and teachers.

**(B)** Exams watchdog Ofqual<sup>2</sup> said last year's languages results were "very stable". From September 2016, new GCSE and A-level modern language syllabuses will be taught in England, and new exams will be taken in the summer of 2018. The Language Trends Survey, in its 14th year of charting the state of language learning in England's schools, suggests these changes - particularly at A-level - will deter pupils from studying languages. It says: "The exam system is seen as one of the principal barriers to the successful development of language teaching. "The comparative difficulty of exams in languages in relation to other subjects, and widely reported harsh and inconsistent marking, are deeply de-motivating for both pupils and teachers."

**(C)** The report says the EBacc<sup>3</sup>, where pupils have to study English, a language, maths, science and history or geography to GCSE, "appears to be having very little impact on the numbers of pupils taking languages post-16". Uptake after GCSE is found to be a particular concern, with some state schools suggesting the small numbers of students opting to take languages at A-level means the subject is becoming "financially unviable".

**(D)** The proportion of the total cohort sitting a GCSE in a language dropped by one percentage point (to 48%) between 2014 and 2015, ending the rise in entries seen from 2012 onward, when the EBacc was brought in. Entries for each of the three main languages fell this year compared with 2014, French is down 6%, German is down 10% and Spanish is down 3%. Overall entries for languages at A-level are at 94% of their 2002 level, and they declined by 3% between 2014 and 2015 - French uptake declined by 1% and German by 2.5% while Spanish uptake rose by almost 15%.

**(E)** The report does note some positive developments, particularly at primary level, saying just over half of England's primary schools now have access to specialist expertise in the teaching of languages. But primary schools report finding it hard to fit languages into the curriculum time available and to recruit suitably qualified teaching staff. Teresa Tinsley, co-author of the report, said: "Languages are already one of the harder GCSEs, and teachers fear that with the new exams it will be even tougher for pupils to get a good grade. "Combine this with the expectation that a wider range of pupils will be sitting the exam and it is not surprising that teachers feel embattled. "Improving their morale and confidence in the exam system is crucial if languages are to thrive in our schools."

**(F)** A spokesman for the exam regulator, Ofqual, said: "We are committed to ensuring that all GCSEs, AS- and A-levels, including those in modern foreign languages, are sufficiently valid, produce fair and reliable results and have a positive impact on teaching and learning. "Last year's results in modern foreign languages were very stable, with only small changes in the proportions achieving each grade compared to the previous year. "We have looked into concerns that it is harder for students to achieve the highest grades in A level languages. "We found this is because of the way the exams are designed, rather than the nature of the subject content. "We are keeping this under review and will be further publishing information shortly."

**(G)** Referring to the new modern foreign language A-levels and GCSEs being taught from this September, the spokesman added: "Before we accredit a qualification, we check the exams will be designed to allow good differentiation - including that the best students will be able to achieve the highest grades - and whether they are properly based on the new subject content."

<sup>1</sup> General Certificate of Secondary Education

<sup>2</sup> Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

<sup>3</sup> English Baccalaureate



**(H)** Mark Herbert, head of schools programmes at the British Council, said: "The country's current shortage of language skills is estimated to be costing the economy tens of billions in missed trade and business opportunities every year. "Parents, schools and businesses can all play their part in encouraging our young people to study languages at school and to ensure that language learning is given back the respect and prominence that it deserves." Tony McAleavy, director of research and development at the Education Development Trust, said: "The reduction in pupils opting for GCSE and A-level languages is concerning, particularly coupled with teachers' lack of faith in the exam system. "Solutions are required to give languages a firmer place in the curriculum, to make languages more compelling for pupils who find the examination process a barrier and to boost teacher morale."

**Task1:** Choose the most suitable paragraph headings from the list of headings and write the correct letter, **A-H**, in boxes 1-8 on your answer sheet.

1. Data about studying ....
2. Stable results....
3. Heavy economic losses ....
4. Fairness of the exams ....
5. A hard option....
6. A-level changings....
7. The most important thing for languages to be able to prosper ....
8. Weak influence on pupils....

**Task2** Classify the events with the following dates. **A.** 2018 **B.** 2016 **C.** 2014-2015 **D.** None of the above

1. A Drop of GCSE to 48%....
2. New syllabus system arrives in England....
3. The start of new exams ....
4. The rise in entries ....
5. The decline of French by 1 percent ....

## Article B: Aphantasia: A life without mental images

**Close your eyes and imagine walking along a sandy beach and then gazing over the horizon as the Sun rises. How clear is the image that springs to mind?**

1. Most people can readily conjure images inside their head - known as their mind's eye. But this year scientists have described a condition, aphantasia, in which some people are unable to visualise mental images. Niel Kenmuir, from Lancaster, has always had a blind mind's eye. He knew he was different even in childhood. "My stepfather, when I couldn't sleep, told me to count sheep, and he explained what he meant, I tried to do it and I couldn't," he says. "I couldn't see any sheep jumping over fences, there was nothing to count."
2. Our memories are often tied up in images, think back to a wedding or first day at school. As a result, Niel admits, some aspects of his memory are "terrible", but he is very good at remembering facts. And, like others with aphantasia, he struggles to recognise faces. Yet he does not see aphantasia as a disability, but simply a different way of experiencing life.

### Mind's eye blind

3. Ironically, Niel now works in a bookshop, although he largely sticks to the non-fiction aisles. His condition begs the question what is going on inside his picture-less mind. I asked him what happens when he tries to picture his fiancée. "This is the hardest thing to describe, what happens in my head when I think about things," he says. "When I think about my fiancée there is no image, but I am definitely thinking about her, I know today she has her hair up at the



back, she's brunette. But I'm not describing an image I am looking at, I'm remembering features about her, that's the strangest thing and maybe that is a source of some regret."

- The response from his mates is a very sympathetic: "You're weird." But while Niel is very relaxed about his inability to picture things, it is often a cause of distress for others. One person who took part in a study into aphantasia said he had started to feel "isolated" and "alone" after discovering that other people could see images in their heads. Being unable to reminisce about his mother years after her death led to him being "extremely distraught".

### The super-visualiser

- At the other end of the spectrum is children's book illustrator, Lauren Beard, whose work on the Fairytale Hairdresser series will be familiar to many six-year-olds. Her career relies on the vivid images that leap into her mind's eye when she reads text from her author. When I met her in her box-room studio in Manchester, she was working on a dramatic scene in the next book. The text describes a baby perilously climbing onto a chandelier.
- "Straightaway I can visualise this grand glass chandelier in some sort of French kind of ballroom, and the little baby just swinging off it and really heavy thick curtains," she says. "I think I have a strong imagination, so I can create the world and then keep adding to it so it gets sort of bigger and bigger in my mind and the characters too they sort of evolve. I couldn't really imagine what it's like to not imagine, I think it must be a bit of a shame really."
- Not many people have mental imagery as vibrant as Lauren or as blank as Niel. They are the two extremes of visualisation. Adam Zeman, a professor of cognitive and behavioural neurology, wants to compare the lives and experiences of people with aphantasia and its polar-opposite hyperphantasia. His team, based at the University of Exeter, coined the term aphantasia this year in a study in the journal Cortex.
- Prof Zeman tells the BBC: "People who have contacted us say they are really delighted that this has been recognised and has been given a name, because they have been trying to explain to people for years that there is this oddity that they find hard to convey to others." How we imagine is clearly very subjective - one person's vivid scene could be another's grainy picture. But Prof Zeman is certain that aphantasia is real. People often report being able to dream in pictures, and there have been reported cases of people losing the ability to think in images after a brain injury.
- He is adamant that aphantasia is "not a disorder" and says it may affect up to one in 50 people. But he adds: "I think it makes quite an important difference to their experience of life because many of us spend our lives with imagery hovering somewhere in the mind's eye which we inspect from time to time, it's a variability of human experience."

**Task1:** Do the following statements agree with the information in the IELTS reading text?

**TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information

**FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information

**NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this

- Aphantasia is a condition, which describes people, for whom it is hard to visualise mental images.
- Niel Kenmuir was unable to count sheep in his head.
- People with aphantasia struggle to remember personal traits and clothes of different people.
- Niel regrets that he cannot portray an image of his fiancée in his mind.
- Inability to picture things in someone's head is often a cause of distress for a person.
- All people with aphantasia start to feel 'isolated' or 'alone' at some point of their lives.
- Lauren Beard's career depends on her imagination.
- The author met Lauren Beard when she was working on a comedy scene in her next book.

**Task 2** Complete the sentences below.

Write NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

1. Only a small fraction of people have imagination as \_\_\_\_\_ as Lauren does.
2. Hyperphantasia is \_\_\_\_\_ to aphantasia.
3. There are a lot of subjectivity in comparing people's imagination - somebody's vivid scene could be another person's \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Prof Zeman is \_\_\_\_\_ that aphantasia is not an illness.
5. Many people spend their lives with \_\_\_\_\_ somewhere in the mind's eye.

Aphantasia explained: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuWSh4n5Ail>

[Source](#) + [Source](#)