

Acknowledgements

The University of Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (Cambridge ESOL) would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry in Bavaria and all the members of the participating school offices for their support. We would also like to thank very much all the teachers involved in the first PET session in the Realschulen in Bavaria, who worked so hard training to become oral examiners. Many thanks also to staff at the Cambridge Institut, Munich, especially Philip Moore and John Jones, as well as the Senior Team Leader for Germany, Davine Sutherland for all their hard work and commitment to the success of PET in Bavarian Realschulen.

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1. Bavarian Realschulen PET 2003 results

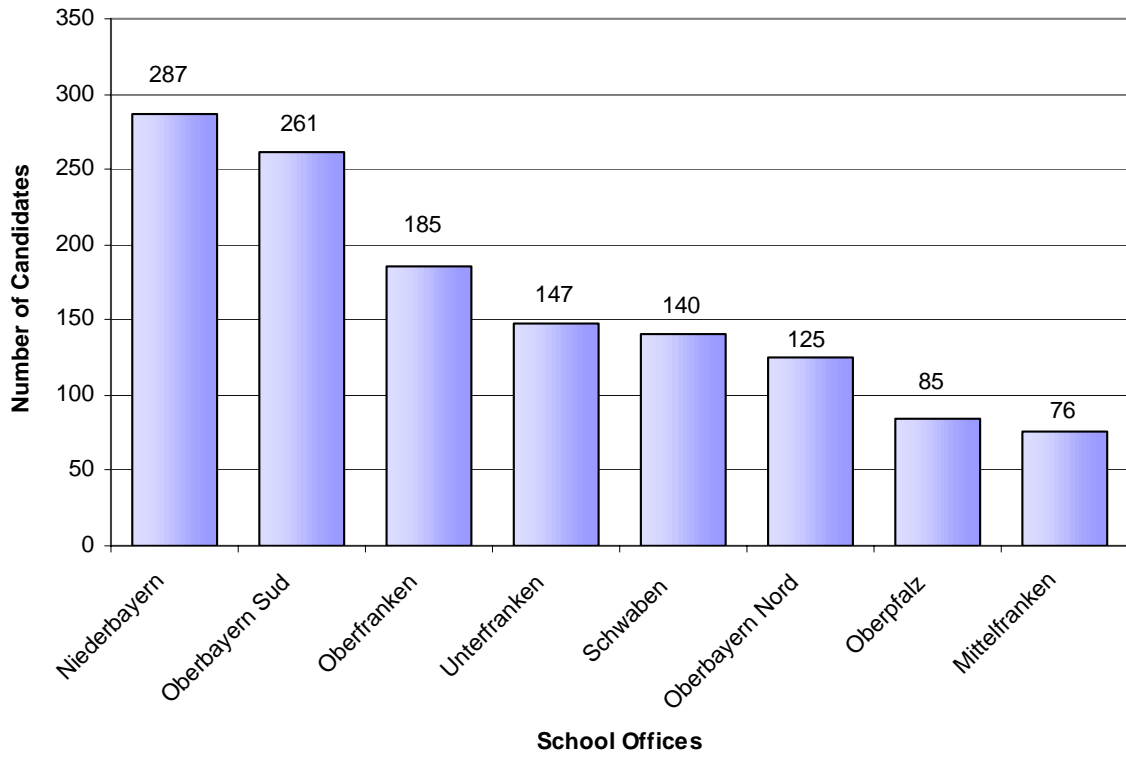
The Ministry of Cultural Affairs instigated the introduction in Class 9 of Bavarian Realschulen of the PET examination which gave Realschule pupils from a number of schools across the region the opportunity to take an internationally recognised language examination. An analysis of the Realschule English curriculum for 9th class pupils indicated that an appropriate target language level for these students is the **Threshold Level (B1)** in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework (Cambridge University Press 2001). At this level, the Preliminary English Test (PET), which is set by The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL), was selected as the most suitable international examination in English for the Realschule pupils.

After the PET had been selected, Cambridge ESOL agreed, as part of its support for the introductory session, to provide a report to the Ministry on the results of the first group of candidates to enter for the PET. This report compares the results of the Bavaria Realschule candidates with those of typical PET candidates in the rest of the world, and also, for the benefit of teachers and others involved in the project, describes some of the important and interesting features of the performance of the Realschule candidates, in the PET examination as a whole, and in individual skill areas.

1280 pupils participated fully in the May 2003 session of PET. The candidates were all 9th class Realschule pupils from 130 different schools throughout Bavaria. Overall the project was considered by both teachers and pupils to have been extremely successful as can be seen clearly from the results. From the 1280 pupils who took the exam, 96% passed, and 36% achieved a pass with merit. The success rate was high but the exam still provided a challenge as the number of pass with merits clearly demonstrates. The results therefore suggest that the Preliminary English Test is at the correct level for 9th class Realschule pupils and indicates a strong link between the Preliminary English Test syllabus and the school curriculum at this level.

Cambridge ESOL has examination centres across Germany and the Speaking Tests are carried out by Cambridge ESOL's trained Oral Examiners who are recruited, trained and monitored by Team Leaders, who, in their turn, are trained and monitored by the Senior Team Leader for Germany. For this introductory session, Realschule teachers were recruited according to the minimum professional requirements for Cambridge ESOL Oral Examiners and training was provided through the existing Team Leader System for Cambridge ESOL Speaking Tests. Monitoring was carried out by extensive recordings of examiner performance on audio cassette and evaluations of these samples were carried out by Team Leaders in Germany and in the United Kingdom. Enthusiasm and commitment to the project were shown by all the new Oral Examiners and the Team Leaders involved.

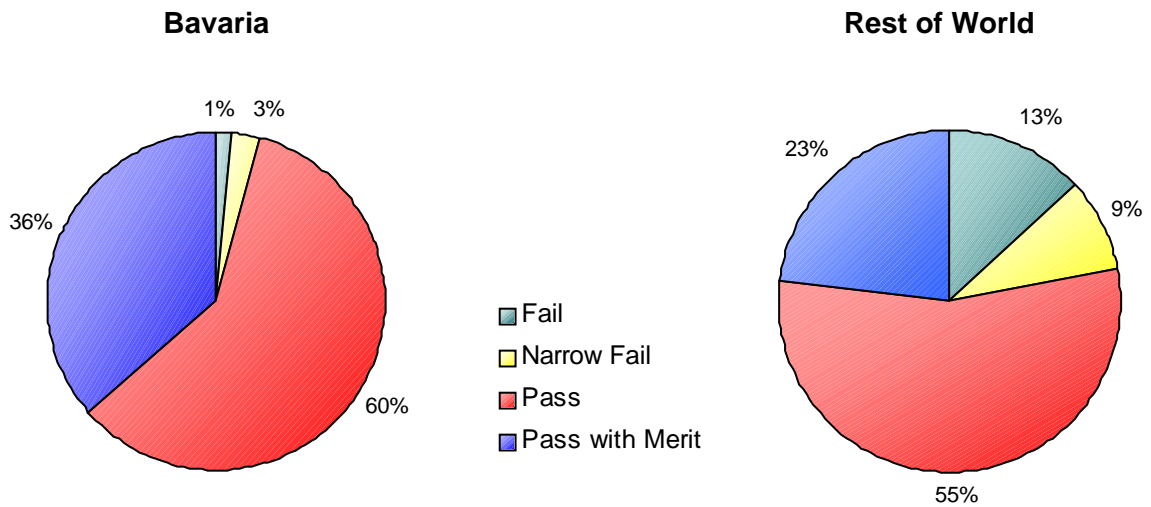
2. Distribution of candidates across school offices



3. Comparison of results with other candidates across the world

3.1 Overall comparison

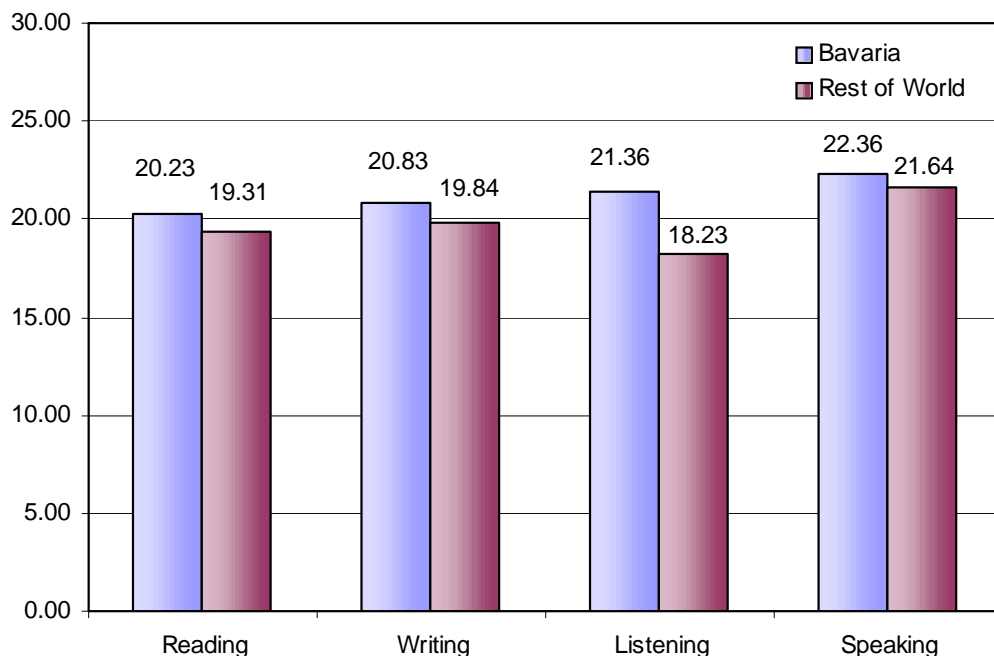
Realschule pupils compared favourably with students taking the same session of the exam in the rest of the world and it is hoped this will motivate Realschule pupils to go on to take higher level Cambridge ESOL examinations. 1% of Bavaria Realschule candidates received a fail, compared to 13% across the rest of the world; 3% received a narrow fail, compared to 9% across the rest of the world; 60% received a pass, compared to 55% across the rest of the world and 36% achieved a pass with Merit, compared to 23% across the rest of the world. Overall the total number of passes for Bavaria Realschule pupils was 1227 (a pass rate of 96% compared to 78% for the rest of the world).



3.2 Comparison of mean results by skill

The analysis of the performance of Bavaria Realschule candidates was broken down into the four different language skill areas: Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.

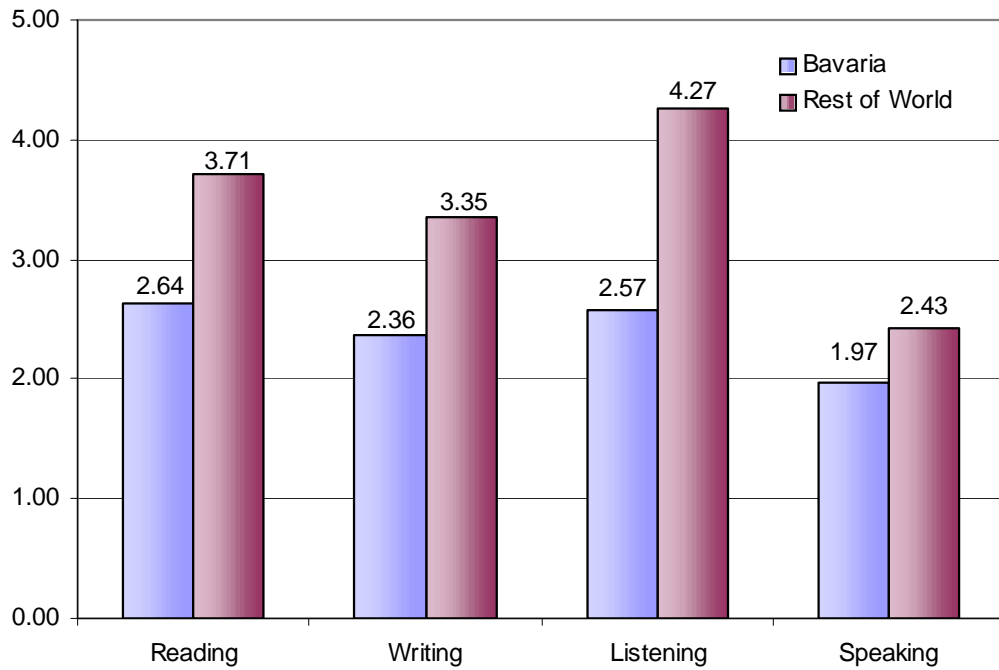
Out of a possible total score of 25 marks for each skill, Bavaria Realschule candidates scored an average of 20.23 in the Reading, compared to an average of 19.31 in the rest of the world. In the Writing they scored an average 20.83, compared to an average of 19.84 in the rest of the world. In the Listening they scored an average of 21.36, compared to an average of 18.23 in the rest of the world and in the Speaking they scored an average of 22.36, compared to an average of 21.64 in the rest of the world. The results therefore show that Bavaria candidates scored more highly than other candidates overall on all the components. The overall average for a Bavaria Realschule candidate (84.78 out of 100 marks) was higher than the overall average for the candidature as a whole (79.02 out of 100 marks).



3.3 Comparison of standard deviation by skill

The standard deviation is a measure of 'dispersion' on how widely the scores in each sample are spread. In the Reading the standard deviation for Bavaria Realschule candidates was 2.64, compared to 3.71 in the rest of the world. In the Writing the standard deviation was 2.36, compared to 3.35 in the rest of the world. In the Listening the standard deviation was 2.57, compared to 4.27 in the rest of the world and in the Speaking the standard deviation was 1.97 compared to 2.43 in the rest of the world. The total standard deviation was 9.53, compared to 13.76 in the rest of the world.

The fact that there is a smaller range of variation in the Realschule Bavaria scores than in the scores for the rest of the world suggests that the Bavaria candidates are more consistent or coherent as a group. This is not surprising, given that these candidates are the same nationality and have been studying the same school English syllabus.



4. Report on Candidates' Writing Performance

by Annette Capel, Chair PET Reading/Writing

PET Writing Part 3 (Test 032)

4.1 Background information

This writing task is marked on-site by trained examiners, who use a dual scale general markscheme. Up to 5 marks each can be awarded for task and language, with the task assessment relating mainly to coverage of content points, but also addressing issues of format and organisation. See *Task performance* below.

Note that as from March 2004, the Writing component for PET will be different. The current Part 2 form will be replaced by a short communicative message, assessed on the inclusion of content and clarity of communication. The new Part 3 will offer a choice of either an informal letter or a story and for both tasks, the assessment focus will be mainly on language.

4.2 Overall performance

The Bavarian candidates performed strongly in relation to the candidature as a whole. The average mark for task was 4.59 (4.46 for the whole candidature) and for language, 4.02 (3.73 for the whole candidature). The number of 'double 5s', candidates scoring top marks for both task and language, is particularly impressive and represents a much higher percentage than other candidate groups. Conversely, very few scripts were awarded Band 2 or lower for task or language.

4.3 Task performance

The majority of candidates engaged with the task well. However, a few candidates appeared not to grasp the context of moving to another area and instead, misinterpreted 'move' as 'go on holiday'. This misunderstanding happened across the candidature as a whole, particularly among weaker candidates. Answers like these scored a maximum 2 for task (as described in the PET general impression markscheme, this was an inadequate attempt at the task set, with some misunderstanding).

In order to score a 4 or 5 for task, it is necessary to include all three content elements, with some elaboration. For this question, the content points were as follows: an indication of what is better about the new area, some information about how the candidate spends his or her free time there, and a description of at least one of the candidate's new friends. Very few candidates omitted a point, showing that they have been well trained for this part of the PET Writing component.

All three points were well elaborated and the Bavarian candidates were particularly good at making comparisons between where they used to live and the new area, which gave them an opportunity to expand the content point and to display knowledge of a range of structures (see *Language performance* below). Comparisons were made about diverse aspects of the new area, such as the air quality, the beauty of the surrounding countryside, the nightlife and shopping.

Candidates had no problems elaborating the second point and the discussion of free time activities was clearly accessible to everyone. Here too, there was an impressive range of content, from riding and skateboarding to walking the dog – and even the building of a tree house! For the third point, some good description was offered, usually either covering the physical appearance of the friends (one boy had met a girl who ‘looks like an angel’) or their personality, which was positively conveyed as: ‘very funny’, ‘a little bit crazy’ or ‘cool’.

As far as format is concerned, candidates showed themselves to be highly capable of writing an informal letter in English, as the use of adjectives above shows. Some candidates could only score 4 for Task because they had omitted to include a closing formula, for example *Lots of love*, *Bye for now*, *Take care*. A few others chose inappropriately formal formulae such as ‘Yours faithfully’, which should not be encouraged but would not have affected the task assessment.

Occasionally, candidates wrote answers that were too short. Answers of under 70 words are held to Band 2 or lower on the task scale (separate penalties come into play on the language scale for short scripts). As there is no penalty for scripts that are longer than the required length, students should always be encouraged to aim for the 100-word target. In this way, they have more opportunities to expand on the content points and are likely to score higher marks.

The other factor included in the task scale of the general impression markscheme relates to the amount of effort required by the reader; in other words, how well the writer has organised the content and planned and executed the letter. The Bavarian candidates performed outstandingly in this respect, using a variety of linking devices and producing answers that were a genuine pleasure to read.

4.4 Language performance

The Bavarian candidates demonstrated above-average language ability. There were many 4s and 5s awarded for language and even the Band 3 scripts displayed plenty of ambition, although the accuracy was flawed. As the general impression markscheme shows, a distinguishing feature of Band 2 scripts, as opposed to Band 3, is the presence of impeding errors, where communication breaks down as a result of serious language errors. Another feature of Band 2 is ‘erratic’ control, especially in past tenses and in the spelling of PET-level vocabulary. Neither of these features were issues in the Bavarian group’s answers.

As already said, most answers demonstrated good ambition. At PET, even if candidates are unable to produce a complex sentence accurately, examiners can reward such ambitious attempts. The following examples come from scripts that received a 4 on language, and show fairly good ambition, coupled with some non-impeding errors:

*I don't know how to explain but they're more funny and mutch straighter.
One of him is called "Kalle", and he's really fat. But I wouldn't say it to him of course.
I've never met a 30 year old woman who is enjoying Death- and Blackmetal.*

Within the answers that scored 5 for language, there was a truly impressive range of both structures and vocabulary, often including language above PET level. These answers showed confident use of language, with complex sentences containing relative clauses, a variety of tenses or comparative structures. Minor errors were still present, but did not prevent the candidate being awarded a 5. For example:

In the new area where I have moved to are a lot of things which you can do in your free time.

Here in Heidelberg we have much more place and the air is much cleaner than in Munich.

The biggest advantage to live here is that there are a lot of people with the same interests.

I now have joined a streethockey club where I can play games twice a week.

Some Band 5 candidates achieved a very natural tone and wrote in consistently informal language. In Cambridge ESOL examinations, the actual assessment of register only comes into play beyond PET level (at FCE and above), but using good informal language clearly made a positive impression on PET examiners and helped these candidates to gain top marks:

There are many forests, and you know how I love forests!

The most time I spend with Tim, a funny and nice guy and we often can't stop laughing when we are together.

Considering possible areas for improvement in the future, the following language errors often occurred in Band 3 answers and do cause problems for German speakers:

misuse of present continuous tense

We are going to football matches or on a lake in our free time.

When the weater is bad, I'm listening music.

present perfect tense and use of for/since

I have visited a picture gallerie yesterday.

Anna is in the club since two years.

countability

She has brown hairs and blue eyes.

He has short fair hairs.

subject-verb agreement, especially third person present simple

He go in-line skating with me every day.

He is very funny and he treat me so nice.

word order in sentences

They are very funny and make always jokes.

I like here very much the school.

pronouns

I am so happy that I met they.

Boris is very sweet. A lot of girls like his.

unnecessary pronoun or interference of reflexive forms

When school has finish we all meet us.

I hope that we can see us soon.

Accuracy in spelling is a problem for many PET candidates, although on the whole, spelling seemed to be less problematic for the Bavarian group. The most common errors involved words ending in -y, for example 'prettyer', 'partys', and there were some instances of mis-spelling of the relative pronoun, 'wich'.

4.5 Conclusion

The Bavarian candidature as a whole performed strongly on this Part 3 PET Writing task. Teachers should be particularly proud of their students' language ambition and

fluency, together with their generally good control of language at this intermediate level. Future candidates, as explained above, will not have the same constraints as regards the inclusion of content points, so should embrace the task topic fully and display their language range, whether they choose to answer the informal letter or the story.

5. Report on Candidates' Speaking Performance

By Jill Buggey, Chief Oral Examiner, Speaking

5.1 Candidate Task Achievement

In general, I would say that the candidates from Bavaria managed the test very well, and seemed confident and at ease with the test format. The majority of candidates were average or good PET level (scoring 3 – 5 on the different criteria). The statistics bore this out, as Bavaria scored slightly higher than the Rest of the World in all criteria.

Part 1

Some of the candidates knew each other while others did not, but this did not affect their performance here. If anything, it makes for a more realistic conversation if they do not know each other. The topics covered tended to be limited to names, home town, school, family and hobbies, which are the expected areas at PET level. Some candidates however, extended the conversation to talk about future work plans, parents' jobs, pets, summer holiday plans etc. This is good as it shows good interactive communication skills and also enables candidates to show a wider range of vocabulary and tenses. Some candidates were very good at asking and answering questions, picking up on each other's topics and expanding/changing the topic very naturally. Questions like "Do you like it?", "Are you good at it?" encourage the other candidate to develop his/her ideas and show very good interactive communication skills. Other candidates found it more difficult to sustain the conversation and tended to dry up after a very short time. Some further practice in listening and responding to a partner, showing interest in what they are saying and picking up on their points may be useful. There was no evidence of any long, prepared speeches.

Part 2

In general, the candidates seemed to be well prepared for this interactive task, using the prompts systematically and showing good communication skills at PET level. They were able to give opinions/advice, agree and disagree and make alternative suggestions and choices, e.g. "*Maybe you're right*", "*perhaps she could...*", "*Yes, but what about...*", "*So, I think ... would be the best.*" Sometimes the range of language produced was not very wide, however. "*They could...*", "*He can...*". It might be useful to teach the students a variety of forms for expressing different functions. One pair I heard were able to give reasons for their opinions, develop their ideas, discuss pros and cons of the different possibilities and summarise. A less interactive pair of candidates found it more difficult to do this, which resulted in them merely giving their own opinions of the prompt pictures, and finishing the task too quickly. "*He can take a bath...I think it's the best idea...*" "*I believe he can sleep*". In this case, the interlocutor needed to prompt and encourage the candidates to produce more language. Students should be encouraged to discuss all the prompts first, giving arguments for and against each one, before giving their opinions of which is the best (or whatever the task requires). Candidates should be encouraged to fill the time available, and keep talking and involving their partner throughout this part. Candidates should also not be afraid of using their own ideas as well as those on the sheet.

Part 3

The stronger candidates had a good command of descriptive vocabulary on the whole, and were able to structure their descriptions well, including some attention to detail, as well as describing the main focus, and speculating about the people/scene. *“It seems to me it’s definitely in a German city.... or a European city due to how the houses are built”, “I think it might be dinner or a meal in the morning or afternoon”*. Vocabulary was also sometimes quite good in this part, including for example *“, neighbourhood, crowded, trying on shoes*. Weaker candidates had more difficulty here and found it hard to sustain their turn for 1 minute, e.g. *“the man is having a watch... the woman wears a blue hat...”*. Weaker candidates tended to avoid using paraphrasing strategies, which could have been useful when the word was not known. Some descriptions were rather list-like with little expansion or attempt to speculate, and repetition of *“I can see...”*.

Part 4

This part was done reasonably well. The candidates seemed familiar with interacting with their partner and some interesting and fluent conversations took place, with candidates asking each other questions and showing interest in their partner’s ideas, e.g. *“Would you like to start?”*, *“What do you like to eat on special days, like Easter or Mother’s Day?”*. Some of the weaker candidates started the discussion with a monologue, which then resulted in the candidates merely taking turns to speak rather than developing a ‘real’ conversation.

One problem in part 4 was that some candidates tended to wander away from the topic into very general conversation, and occasionally some re-direction by the Interlocutor was needed. Candidates need to be advised to listen carefully to the task instruction, which clearly tells them which area to talk about, and try to keep to this or develop it in a logical way.

5.2 Candidate Performance

As I have already mentioned, the candidates performed generally well (average or above average PET level) and global achievement was generally good.

5.3 Grammar and Vocabulary

As to be expected, the range of candidates’ performance on this scale was quite wide. However, there were some instances of recurring errors, probably due to L1 interference, which are worth noting. These include:

- Tense errors generally, especially mixing up past and present forms and incorrect use of simple and continuous forms e.g. *“They have dinner and breakfast together”* (are having). *“They all enjoy it”* (are enjoying). *“Three girls who are already choosed some food”* (have already chosen). *“I wasn’t in holidays”* (I haven’t been on holiday), *“I’m coming from Germany”* (come), *“I’m often going out with my friends”* (go), *“I’m riding since 6 years”* (have been riding for 6 years).
- Collocation problems e.g. *“make something on a computer”*, *“go to watch some shops”*.
- Omission of 3rd person ‘s’ e.g. *“the man read the newspaper”*.
- Preposition errors e.g. *“sitting on the computer”*, *“she’s looking to the camera”*, *“on the photo I can see”*, *“give to them a drink”*, *“in the back, you can see...”*, *“the people in front of the photo are...”*

- Word order e.g. *“I go every day running”, “I like to travel round the world, but it’s not every time possible”, “”, “we have all time very fun”, “and see everything what in the sea lives”, “so she can study at night also”.*
- Countables e.g. *“they have much fun”, “you can learn much”.*
- Articles e.g. *“It’s a wonderful nature”, “I’d like to work in the BMW if I pass the school”.*
- Modals e.g. *“I would a house” (would like), “He can walking”, “Would we give them a present?” (shall).*
- Agreement e.g. *“I like playing volleyball and meet my friends”, “The woman has brown hairs”, “There are 5 persons”, “one of the people have..”, “What is your hobbies”.*
- Other problems: *“How many brothers and sisters do you got?”, “per example”, “do something other”, “he may be good paid”.*

Some examples of good vocabulary have already been mentioned, when reporting on part 3 of the test. Some of the problems included: *“material”* (equipment), *“sellwoman”* (saleswoman), *“dreamwork”* (ideal job), *“They’re all very funny”* (They’re having a lot of fun), *“she’s a really good cooker”* (cook). There were some instances of using a German word when uncertain of the English one e.g. *“I have a balkon”* (balcony), but not excessively.

5.4 Discourse Management

The stronger candidates I listened to were able to sustain connected speech appropriately and develop and organise their contributions well, e.g. *“maybe he should just try cooking himself, maybe out of a cookbook, maybe by watching TV or maybe his mother could help him. They’re all good ideas”.* Weaker candidates had more trouble connecting ideas and tended to over-use ‘and’ and ‘but’, e.g. *“I think to work in the kindergarten is easy because you only must play with the children, and look at them and...but...I think work in the garden is not so good because... you must work with your hands and you will be very dirty, yes.”*

Often candidates tended to leave their sentences unfinished with ‘and’ or ‘but’, rather than show when they had come to the end of what they wanted to say.

They were also able to speculate and expand, e.g. *“I think two of them would have children because on the wall there is a picture which could be painted by a child”, “maybe they would be married or something like this.”* However, linkers tended to be simple – *and, but, so*, and weaker candidates found it difficult to use even these linking words, using very simple, short and often unconnected phrases, particularly when describing the photographs. Even when candidates did develop their utterances, it was often done with rather hesitant delivery, which gave an impression of disjointed communication. This is an area where most candidates could improve.

5.5 Pronunciation

Pronunciation was generally very clear, and on the whole the candidates were easy to understand with little strain. Some problems included:

- Over-pronunciation of ‘r’, e.g. *near, children, bedroom*
- Over-pronunciation of /z/, e.g. *houses, rooms*
- Mispronunciation of some individual sounds, e.g. *coast (cost), discuse (discuss), lek (lake), wery (very)*
- Wrong word stress, e.g. *comfortable* with 4 syllables)

Some candidates tended to overuse rising intonation when making statements, particularly when describing something, and many candidates need to widen their range of pitch and intonation, and speed up their pace of delivery in general. Elision and word stress were generally good.

5.6 Interactive Communication

This area has already been mainly covered in the section on task achievement. In general, I felt the candidates interacted very well with each other and were generally sensitive to turn-taking.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to re-iterate that the candidates have generally performed well in the tests, both regarding their ease with the format of the test and also the level of their performance at PET. They showed a good ability to deal with possible real-life situations and relevant tasks in English. This conclusion seems to tie in with the statistics comparing the performance of the Bavarian candidates with the rest of the candidature in the world, which shows an extremely close relationship on all scales of the Speaking Test.

Appendix A Summary of support provided by Cambridge ESOL

Cambridge ESOL provided the following financial, professional and administrative support for the Bavaria PET session in May 2003

- Funding of Team Leaders for Cambridge ESOL Speaking Tests to carry out induction, training and co-ordination of Oral Examiners as outlined in Cambridge ESOL's minimum professional requirements for Oral Examiners
- Funding of expenses incurred at the above meetings
- Costs of monitoring the Oral Examiners
- Significant support from Senior Team Leader for Cambridge ESOL Speaking Tests, Germany
- Despatch of materials directly to the venues.
- 20% discount on Preliminary English Test fees.



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
ESOL Examinations

English for Speakers of Other Languages

**University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations
report on the first Preliminary English Test
session with Realschule pupils in Bavaria**

August 2003