

Report

0313-1

Faculty Vitality Grant Third-Year FSG Writing Assessment Spring 2002

Task: Last year you studied in [country] and lived directly with a [language]-speaking family. While there, you especially enjoyed telling one of the family members who was about your age about what you were reading in your classes. Write a letter to this person in which you: 1) related briefly what you have been doing *since your return* to the US three months ago; 2) tell him/her the plot of a particular story you have read; 3) explain why you liked it or did not like it; 4) describe briefly what you like or do not like about this and the other classes you are taking; and 5) ask him/her about the rest of the family and what they have been doing since you left.

Can be done w/o past tense

Scoring Guide

Note: Scan the content quickly to determine if the major parts of the task are represented. The sample may still be adequate if either 1 or 5 is missing, but NOT both, and if 3 or 4 is missing, but NOT both. If parts are missing, the parts that are there must be richer than otherwise in order to yield enough material to judge. It is also possible that related parts may blend into each other and that elements of a part may appear in more than one place. Not only must the language fit the description in order to merit a given score; the message must include the specified kind and quantity of content.

Rule of thumb for quick judgment of 4/Advanced-Mid or higher: several sentences with two or more connected clauses, with correct management of the connectors (German: word order in dependent clauses; **French: subjunctive where required by conjunction; **Spanish**); past-tense morphology correct much more often than not; differentiates between past tenses consistently (but not perfectly), where the distinction is necessary; uses genuine future tense if it is necessary; pronouns almost perfect in choice of person, number and gender, with no consistent pattern of case error; management of adjectives more resembles the native speaker than the non-native (FSG: reliable gender and number; FS post-positioning; G distinguishes all needed cases)

6 Sup	Aside from a few unsystematic errors of minor grammar, precise vocabulary, and idiom, the sample is indistinguishable from native-speaker writing. It has a natural tone, probably conveyed by more than a few "flavor" words.
5 AH	In both areas of narration there are frequent stretches of essentially native-speaker language, where overt errors are lacking, though "flavor" words and idioms may not be rich. Clear distinction is made between casual and systematic narration. There are no regular patterns of error in choice of tense, tense morphology, noun gender, pluralization, choice of preposition, basic adjustment of preposition (FSG contraction, etc.; G: secondary adjective pattern may be unreliable, but articles will be very accurate).
4 AM	see Rule of Thumb above. Award the 5 ONLY if the sample is distinctly above this level—well more than half-way to the 6.
3 AL	Produces a few grammatically correct sentences of more than one clause, with definite connection between clauses, and many single-clause sentences that have only slight errors. Selection between past tenses is not random, but there are frequent errors of both selection and morphology. Basic gender coding is reliable for pronouns and articles, but there are many errors in management of descriptive adjectives. Uses prepositions (or equivalents) like next to, before, after, during, until if they are called for, but makes small errors in related words. Similar with conjunctions like before, after, etc. (FS: clear attempt at subjunctive if required by conjunction, but serious morphological errors).
2 IH	Award the 2 ONLY if the sample is distinctly more like 3 than 1, not just clearly better than 1. The language shows bursts of Advanced-Low quality, but there are several errors in simple morphology, syntax and vocabulary. Sentences/clauses are frequently connected, whether by conjunction, time phrases, or pronouns referring to antecedents in a previous clause. Some distinction of casual and systematic narration (up-to-now vs. back-then). Morphology of common verbs in past tense is often correct. Almost always codes for gender, number, and case, but makes many errors beyond the high-frequency instances (ex: handles he/him well but not always they/them).
1 IM	Sentences are generally separate units, except where the connection is simple ("and," "but"). More complex connections often show distortion (errors in conjunction, time phrases). Past tense shows frequent errors beyond the handful of highest-frequency verbs (be, have, go, say, must). Does not vary formulation when expressing similar meanings (ex: repeats "I think" instead of varying with "It is possible that..." or "In my opinion"). Everyday vocabulary is weak enough that concrete facts and attributes are unclear, and there is essentially no ability to circumlocute.

more masks

discard the numbers add DL

Faculty Vitality Grant Third-Year FSG Writing Assessment Sp02

Task: Last year you studied in [country] and lived directly with a [language]-speaking family. While there, you especially enjoyed telling one of the family members who was about your age about what you were reading in your classes. Write a letter to this person in which you: 1) related briefly what you have been doing since your return to the US three months ago; 2) tell him/her the plot of a particular story you have read; 3) explain why you liked it or did not like it; 4) describe briefly what you like or do not like about this and the other classes you are taking; and 5) ask him/her about the rest of the family and what they have been doing since you left.

NOTE: The French version used in Spring 2002 varies as follows: omits the discussion of the story (parts 2-4); focuses on what the writer has been doing recently rather than what the host family has been doing; includes a section requesting that the writer give advice to a friend who is going to visit the locale in 2003. Therefore the scoring here concentrates on the common features of the two tasks: systematic narration of the past and the up-to-now past (a comfortable letter, by common convention, will include reference to recent activities of both the writer and the recipient; systematic expression and justification of opinion (whether response to story or advice to friend). The features of the non-common parts can be used to ascertain more carefully the main trend of the rating based on the common parts of the task, especially where the performance appears to be above IH but not clearly AM (German: richer use of past tense, maybe even past perfect; French: comfortable use of subjunctive for offering counsel).

Scoring Guide and Key Profile

Note: Not only must the language fit the description in order to merit a given score; the message must include the specified kind and quantity of content (with adjustment as follows shortly). So first scan the content quickly to determine if the major parts and subparts of the task are represented. The sample may still be adequate if some parts are missing. But the attempts at past narration and supported opinion must be there, however they succeed, in order for the core functions and contexts to be represented. If non-essential parts are missing, the parts that are there must be richer than otherwise in order to yield enough material to judge. It is also possible that related parts may blend into each other and that elements of a part may appear in more than one place.

Rule of thumb for quick judgment of Advanced-Mid

Most features should be present *and* "yes;" a few features may not be richly represented, but - if present - the feature will not be systematically incorrect.

1. half a dozen sentences with two or more connected clauses, with correct management of the connectors (German: word order in dependent clauses; ••French: subjunctive where required by conjunction; ••Spanish••); some multiple-clauses can be replaced with extremely rich prepositional connectors ("for this reason" replacing "because + clause");
2. past-tense morphology correct much more often than not;
3. differentiates between past tenses consistently (but not perfectly), where the distinction is necessary; in French and German, consistently observes the avoir/être / haben/sein distinction in the present perfect;
4. does NOT follow English present perfect (or pp. progressive) to narrate the up-to-now past ("For a week now...");
5. uses genuine future tense if it is necessary (proximate future as alternate to constructed future is OK where not otherwise impossible);
6. pronouns almost perfect in choice of person, number and gender, with no consistent pattern of case error;
7. management of adjectives more resembles that of the native speaker than the non-native (FSG: reliable gender and number; FS post-positioning; G distinguishes all needed cases in marking of article, and systematically if not perfectly distinguishes -e and -en).
8. uses several hypotactic (subordinating) conjunctions (not just their correlate prepositions or infinitive phrases) to organize temporal or logical sequence ("so that you will / might")
9. NO instances of substitution of the infinitive for a conjugated verb

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	Global	Accuracy*	Text Type	Narrative Framework	Hypothesis
Exceeds level (Advanced High or above)	Rich language production with native flavor and few errors. Choice of language is native-like.	Errors virtually never interfere with communication or distract the writer from the message.	Extended discourse (multiple paragraphs). Rich use of connectors with few errors.	Highly accurate past tense often associated with subordinate conjunctions.	Clearly distinguishes past and present subjunctive of ordinary verbs. Subjunctive in combination with modals contains many errors.
Meets level (Advanced Mid or Low)	All parts of task accomplished with distinctly non-native flavor. Tasks II and/or III show breakdown to Intermediate level (when language should be advanced). Task I must be advanced.	Can be understood without difficulty by readers unaccustomed to dealing with non-native writers.	Coherent paragraphs. Rich use of connectors with some inaccuracy.	Uses past tense as appropriate. Morphological and syntactic errors do not exceed correct language forms.**	Distortion of past tense to express hypothesis. Likely confuses past and present subjunctive.
Nearly meets level (Intermediate High)	Task I accomplished with mostly somewhat sparse strings of sentences. Tasks II and/or II very sparse or missing.	Can be understood with some difficulty by readers accustomed to dealing with non-native writers.	Clusters of simple sentences and/or some compound sentences.	Uses past tense frequently with morphological and syntactic errors.**	Same as below plus use of modals and contrastive phrases (e.g., "but," negation) to express hypothesis.
Clearly does not meet level (Intermediate Mid)	Task I comprehensible through vocabulary rather than sentence structure. Tasks II and III extremely, sparse, faulty, or missing.	Can be understood with much difficulty by readers accustomed to dealing with non-native writers.	Simple sentences. Few connectors.	Uses little or no past tense.	Uses conjunctions rather than verb morphology to express hypothesis. Few or no adverbials (e.g., "possibly") to express hypothesis.

* The term "accuracy" includes grammar, pragmatic competence, vocabulary.

** "Syntactic errors" refers to verb placement. "Morphological errors" refers to middle and high-frequency subject-verb agreement.

Rationale / Function of the test: It attempts to distinguish between Advanced and merely Intermediate-High, because: 1) Advanced proficiency is essential to success at the 400 level and in the major; 2) The Advanced user can live a full adult life in the language, including some occupational use and dealing with complications; 3) the Advanced (but not the Intermediate High) user has the minimum proficiency necessary for teaching the language.

Scoring procedure:

Note: The following assumes that the student has managed the topic by writing fairly distinct sections for each of the parts 1, 2 and 3. If that is not the case, rate the sample as a whole, but look first most carefully for examples of weakness at the Intermediate-Mid level and success at the Advanced level (not that the sample will likely contain both of those, but rather that their presence or absence will help determine a more restricted range).

- 1) Check briefly to ascertain whether the student has indeed written about the specified topics, rather than substituting something else. Example for part 1: Student substitutes for *narration* about educational decisions a *description* of personal characteristics and preferences. Note, however, that the sample may be ratable (but at no higher than the Intermediate level) if parts 2 and 3 are skimpy or even missing.
- 2) Score part 1. If it is only Intermediate-Mid, it is almost certain that parts 2 and 3 will be of very low proficiency. Look at them briefly, and if that is so, terminate the scoring. If either part 2 or 3 looks Intermediate-High or better, arrange to consult with a second rater.
- 3) If Part 1 is probably Intermediate High, but not clearly Advanced, score part 2. If part 2 is not clearly well into the Advanced level, look only briefly at part 3; if part 3 is then at the same level as part 2, terminate the scoring. If part 3 appears better than part 2, arrange to consult with a second rater.
- 4) If Part 1 is clearly Advanced, score part 3. If part 3 is clearly Advanced-High or better, terminate the scoring and rate accordingly ("clearly exceeds"). If part 3 is not clearly Advanced-High or better, terminate the scoring and rate accordingly ("meets").

	global	verbs	other grammar	other
Sup	Aside from a few unsystematic errors of minor grammar, precise vocabulary, and idiom, the sample is indistinguishable from the writing of a native speaker who carries out the same task.	As for 5, but verb errors are truly rare		It has a natural tone, probably conveyed by more than a few "flavor" words.
AH	In both areas of narration there are frequent stretches of essentially native-speaker language, where overt errors are lacking, though "flavor" words and idioms may not be rich.	Clear distinction is made between casual and systematic narration. There are no regular patterns of error in choice of tense, tense morphology,	No regular patterns of error in noun gender, pluralization, choice of preposition, basic adjustment of preposition (FSG contraction, etc.); G: secondary adjective pattern may be unreliable, but articles will be very accurate)	Award the AH ONLY if the sample is distinctly above this level--well more than half-way to the Sup.
AM	Half a dozen multi-clause sentences with correct management of the connectors.	Past-tense morphology and choice of tense reliable. NO instances of failure to conjugate (=use of unaltered infinitive).	pronouns almost perfect in choice of person, number and gender, with no consistent pattern of case error; management of adjectives more resembles that of the native speaker than the non-native	Does not imitate English up-to-now present perfect; uses genuine future where called for.
AL	Produces a few grammatically correct sentences of more than one clause, with definite connection between clauses, and many single-clause sentences that have only slight errors.	Selection between past tenses is not random, but there are frequent errors of both selection and morphology. (FS: clear attempt at subjunctive if required by conjunction, but serious morphological errors).	Basic gender coding is reliable for pronouns and articles, but there are many errors in management of descriptive adjectives. Uses prepositions (or equivalents) like next to, before, after, during, until if they are called for, but makes small errors in related words. Similar with conjunctions like before, after, etc.	
IH	The language shows bursts of Advanced-Low quality, but there are several errors in simple morphology, syntax and vocabulary. Sentences/clauses are frequently connected, whether by conjunction, time phrases, or pronouns referring to antecedents in a previous clause.	Some distinction of casual and systematic narration (up-to-now vs. back-then). Morphology of common verbs in past tense is often correct.	Almost always codes for gender, number, and case, but makes many errors beyond the high-frequency instances (ex: handles he/him well but not always they/them). Possessives other than my/your are unreliable in choice, not just in morphology. (some distinction of F te/toi, G dir/dich; less frequent forms (lui, ihm), if there, show distinction, but barely)	Award the IH ONLY if the sample is distinctly more like AL than IM, not just clearly better than IM. A few past tenses and "that" (conjunction) is not sufficient.
IM	Sentences are generally separate units, except where the connection is simple ("and," "but"). More complex connections often show distortion (errors in conjunction, time phrases). Does not vary formulation when expressing similar meanings (ex: repeats "I think" instead of varying with "It is possible that..." or "In my opinion"). Everyday vocabulary is weak enough that concrete facts and attributes are unclear, and there is essentially no ability to circumlocute.	Past tense shows frequent errors beyond the handful of highest-frequency verbs (be, have, go, say, must).	Noun-gender coding reliable for much survival vocabulary and most biologically-clear gender. High-frequency object pronouns frequently distorted in choice or morphology (F: te/toi; G: dich/dir). If called for, differentiation of adjectives and possessives according to gender and number is more than random but clearly inaccurate even when gender is biological	IM will show serious distortion, somewhere, in almost every sentence that consists of more than 3 syntactical units.
IL	A few manifestly constructed short sentences (not memorized core sentences), almost all with some morphological or syntactic distortion. Distortions of even survival vocabulary.	Past tense limited to a few instances of be/have and maybe one isolated other.	Noun-gender coding inaccurate even for survival vocabulary and biologically-clear gender. Distortions even in I/you pronouns. Adjectives show very little differentiation of gender/number (and, in German, no differentiation of case)	IL will show serious distortion, somewhere, in almost every short, truly constructed sentence (rather than a memorized, high-frequency unit ["I like..."]).