



SERIES 4 EXAMINATION 2002

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS

LEVEL 4

(Code No: 4041)

MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER

Instructions to Candidates

- (a) *The time allowed for this examination is **3** hours.*
- (b) *Answer **all 4** questions.*
- (c) *All questions carry equal marks.*
- (d) *All answers must be clearly and correctly numbered but need not be in numerical order.*
- (e) *While formal accuracy is expected, adequate and appropriate communication is essential and candidates must judge the length of their answers in this light.*
- (f) *When you finish, check your work carefully.*
- (g) *The use of standard English dictionaries and cordless non-programmable calculators is permitted. Candidates whose first language is not English may use a bilingual dictionary.*

QUESTION 1(a)

Task

Read the following abridged article from *The Observer* newspaper and answer the questions that follow it. Credit will be given for answering the questions in your own words and demonstrating comprehension, rather than quoting directly from the text.

Too Complicated for Words

If we want good companies, we need to mind our language, says Simon Caulkin.

Slovenly language, according to George Orwell, both reflects and helps produce slovenly political thinking. In his 1946 essay 'Politics and the English Language,' Orwell lamented the strained link between language and political thought. At worst, the interplay creates language that is not just sloppy but corrupt - an instrument 'for concealing or preventing thought rather than expressing it'. Orwell's target today would almost certainly be *business* and the English language. Contemporary business English is everything Orwell decried - abstract, lifeless, cliché-ridden, self-serving - but with even more pervasive consequences.

As Orwell would have noted, as business encroaches on all aspects of life, so it has colonised the language. Ad-speak and management-speak are everywhere - including in politics.

The effect goes beyond the nonsensical (firms called Executive Kitchens or Executive Hostesses) and the comically portentous ('a long-range period of uncertain profit for airlines is highly probabalistic'). Because management is a practical art, bankrupt business language directly affects the way we work, manage and are managed.

A gulf has opened up between management talk ('management') and management action ('managing'). Management discourse, points out Anthony Hopwood, Dean of Oxford's Saïd Business School, is overwhelmingly produced by academics and consultants, not practitioners. Academics bring to it outside intellectual influences such as economics, western rationalist philosophy and quantitative analysis. Consultants likewise bring their own agenda - selling packaged concepts to a wide range of buyers. What it barely contains at all is 'managing' - what managers actually do.

The consequence of this dislocation has been called 'organisational hypocrisy': organisations say one thing and do another. The language of 'shareholder value' is simply disconnected from the factory floor. A complicated mechanism of incentives and deterrents has to be rigged up (or bought in from consultants) to get people pulling in the same direction.

Consider the most influential management technique of the 1990s, re-engineering. Behind re-engineering is the sensible idea of reorganising a company around the customer rather than internal functions. Unfortunately, re-engineering implies that it can be done as if to a machine, according to the laws of physics and mechanical engineering. But it can't. Organisations aren't machines. Simple in concept, re-engineering turned out to be entirely insensitive to local culture, context and purpose. You can't re-engineer a hospital, for example: you can only work through it department by department. The idea isn't necessarily stupid, but the metaphor is. The language set it up for failure. No wonder two-thirds of re-engineerings fail.

A lot of management is like this. Indeed, 'management' in the abstract is strictly speaking meaningless - it only makes sense when attached to the thing being done. Tellingly, languages such as French and German don't have native expressions for 'management'. Equally tellingly, they don't have pure business or management schools, either. Yet somehow or other, even without business schools or 'management', the rest of Europe 'manages'. It still has functioning health services and public transport, for instance. Coincidence? Contrast their pragmatic 'managing' policies - incremental improvement over time - with the galvanic lurches and sweeping reorganisation characteristic of the UK public sector.

QUESTION 1(a) CONTINUED

Take rail privatisation for example: a perfect encapsulation of the belief in grand concepts, almost untainted by connection with the reality of operations. A monument to abstract management, Railtrack's* response to a problem framed in the language of finance and competition was logical: it sacked the old line managers who knew about running trains and replaced them with people who dealt in markets and contracts.

Real management – reflective practice rooted in the active, local, concrete and specific – needs an equivalent language. Conversely, the only way to prevent such doomed idiocies as rail privatisation is to blow up the language they are expressed in. Simple, vigorous business English is not a matter of aesthetics, but a duty: the starting point for managing well.

(*Railtrack is the name of the company which until recently managed the railway lines and railway infrastructure in the UK.)

(Adapted from an article in The Observer, January 2002)

- (i) What did Orwell criticise in the language used to describe politics? (2 marks)
 - (ii) What is 'nonsensical' and 'comically-portentous' about the 2 examples of Business English language in paragraph 3? (2 marks)
 - (iii) Are academics and consultants involved in 'management' or 'managing' and what distinction is the author making? (2 marks)
 - (iv) Why, according to the author, can't you re-engineer a hospital? (3 marks)
 - (v) What contrast does the author make between France and Germany and the UK in language and action? (3 marks)
 - (vi) Why was Railtrack's reaction to their problems in one sense a logical one? (1 mark)
 - (vii) What is the implication of the word 'untainted'? (1 mark)
 - (viii) What is the implication of the expression 'doomed idiom'? (1 mark)
- (15 marks)

QUESTION 1(b)

Situation

You are the Managing Director and owner of a small company. You feel that management jargon is used too much in the communications of the company and, having read this article, decide to write a memo to all your employees instructing them to avoid the use of such jargon and clichés. You also feel strongly about the use of long words, complicated language and passive constructions – which you feel are too often used so that nobody needs to take responsibility for an event.

Task

Use ideas from the article to **write the memo** and enclose a copy of the article for the staff to read. Be firm but make yourself available for discussion with the staff if they wish.

(10 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Situation

Your company (a manufacturing supply company) is discussing the introduction of an automated e-mail reply service to deal with customer enquiries. You recently went to a conference on New Technology Developments and attended a presentation on this subject.

Task

You have been asked to write a report/discussion paper for a meeting of the Customer Services Management Team. Below are your notes relating to the issue from the conference. **Write the report/discussion paper.**

NOTES: NEW TECH CONFERENCE, CINCINNATI, SEPTEMBER 2002

E-mail automated reply software presentation

(1) History of Product

Software Type 1

First approach to reading e-mails was purely statistical – looks for key words, frequency/repeated words and sentence patterns – matches them up against possible responses. Software "learns" by using feedback from previous replies, ie right and wrong answers. Simpler technology, flexible, adaptable and cheap. But often inaccurate – bit of a blunt instrument.

Software Type 2

Rule-based grammatical approach – looks for word endings, subject, verbs etc. Usually more accurate than statistical approach, but expensive (to buy and maintain). Doesn't deal well with bad grammar and often inflexible.

Software Type 3

Hybrid of 1 and 2

Company 1 = Banter, San Francisco firm (used by several large companies). First looks at words, word endings and short phrases. Eg "three weeks ago" = time-frame/ "can you" = request /043729-2-04-023" = order number. Then – "semantic engine" made especially for client company. Real-world knowledge and company knowledge stored in engine – computer makes 'intelligent decision'.

BUT – many major clients (eg Wells Fargo) still use people to check through replies.

[Can set a minimum "confidence score" – ie if the computer thinks it can't give the right reply then it's checked by humans.]

Company 2 = YY Technologies of Mountain View, California. Linguistic approach and reduces everything to meaning relationships between the words. Also uses real-world knowledge base of company and customers. Software is intended only to answer the small number that it is confident about – everything else is passed on.

QUESTION 2 CONTINUED

(2) General Points

Lots of good reports on the software currently in the market. Seems to be good technology.

Obviously, saves a great deal of money on customer services, eg expensive training and high turnover of workers.

But technical problems.

- Incoming e-mails: wrong spellings/bad syntax/confused meanings
- Computers cope with some of this and can cope with business jargon, slang etc
- Sometimes could still lose customers because of completely wrong replies.

Suggest try YY technologies, but probably wait until technology develops further.

Contact address for presentation PP Reps.@TATAS.com

(25 marks)

QUESTION 3(a)

Situation

You are an investment consultant, working for Myers Brooks & Partners, Mansion House, Blackfield, Surrey GF15 4JL. About a year ago, you advised a client (Frank Sneed, The Orchard House, Little Greening, Hanstead, Kent MA24 3NM) to invest in Chinese Telecom companies. You have recently changed that advice. The client has written to ask for more details as to why you are now advising him to sell his shares in 'China Mobile'.

Task

Summarise the information in the following article in the form of a letter to answer his query. You do not know the client personally, so the tone should be polite and quite formal.

(12½ marks)

A Billion Voices Calling?

High hopes for China's mobile-phone market have been dashed.

Which is the biggest mobile-phone market in the world? The answer, since July, is China's. A country in which until a few years ago the only people who could afford mobile phones were Triad mobsters now has 121m users. BDA, a Beijing consultancy, forecasts that the number will rise to 370m by 2005, enough to persuade many investors – even after telecoms shares have dived all round the world – that China was, and would remain, a magic market.

Over the past few weeks, however, much of that magic has vanished. China Mobile, the mainland's dominant operator, with 73% of the market, announced half-year results that were superb in every respect bar one: average revenues per user were down by 35%. The drop took analysts by surprise and sent China Mobile's shares into a tailspin. Shares in China Unicom, the smaller rival in the country's duopoly, followed. Suddenly, soaring forecasts of market size seemed worth rather less. Looked at one way, China's market for mobile telephony appears as promising as ever. Fewer than one in ten of the 1.25 billion Chinese has a mobile phone, compared with 4 out of 10 Americans and 5 out of 10 Europeans. In China, reckons Wang Xiaochu, China Mobile's chairman, a penetration of 3 in 10 is achievable within a few years. This is more optimistic than the government's official forecast but still plausible.

QUESTION 3(a) CONTINUED

But where are the extra two to be found? Most Chinese with any spending power to speak of already have mobiles and use them shamelessly, as anyone who has sat in a cinema in China can attest. To sign up new subscribers, China Mobile and China Unicom are having to reach out to poorer people. One way they are doing this is by offering not the usual service, where users talk and pay the balance of their accounts in arrears, but a prepaid discounted package. Of China Mobile's 14 million new customers in the first half of this year 95% took this option. Such subscribers tend to keep talk-time to a minimum. Frivolous communication, including dating, happens increasingly through short text messages, which are cheap.

Although China's overall market is a long way from saturation, the lucrative segment of it may not be far off. This is not a total disaster, says Ted Dean, Managing Director of BDA, since low-yield subscribers also cost less – operators do not need to send prepaid customers any bills, for instance. But it does mean that China's future subscribers will be less profitable than its existing ones. To make matters worse, the regulator has hinted that it intends to give 2 more licences to mobile operators perhaps later next year.

The lesson is that China's markets are rarely as good as they seem. Even in mobile phones, there is still a lot of money to be made – Motorola, an American manufacturer of handsets and top seller in China, for instance, says that it has fatter profit margins there than anywhere else in the world. But investors tend to be carried away by an over-optimistic projection of China's markets, and pay over the top to enter them.

China's coastal urban middle class has been bingeing on everything from life insurance to cars and computers. It is the rural population, however, that makes the Chinese numbers so big, and selling to them is another matter.

(Adapted from an article in The Economist)

QUESTION 3(b)

Situation

You work in the information department of an international recruitment company. You write a monthly bulletin on the employment situation in various countries throughout the world.

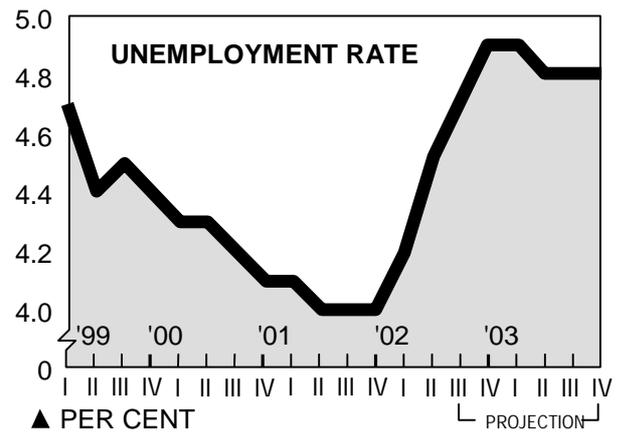
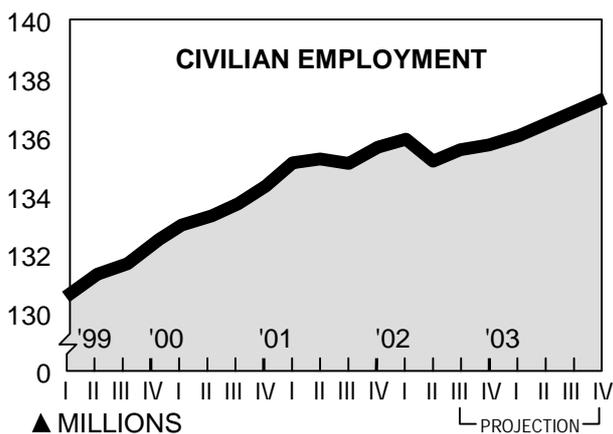
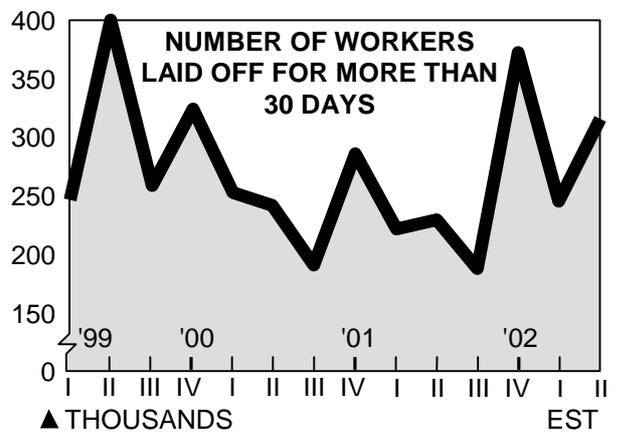
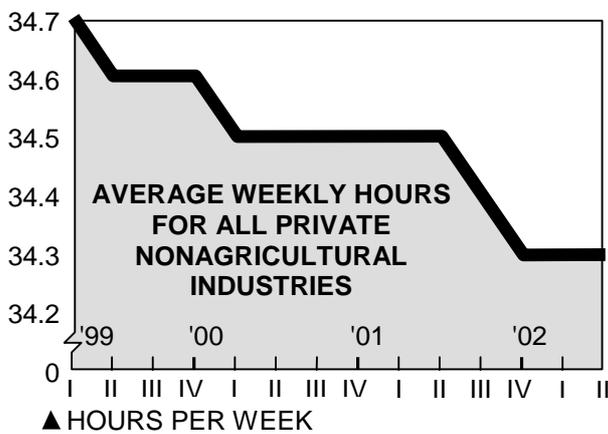
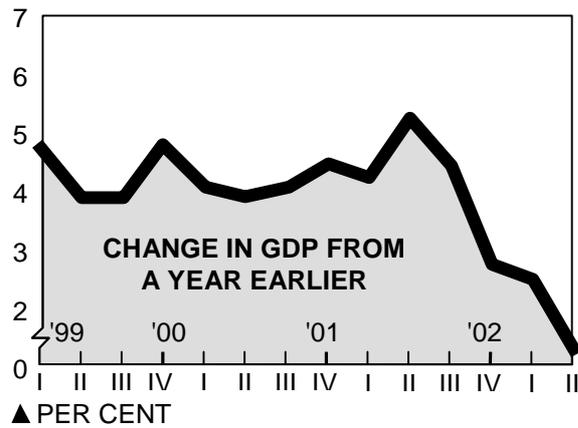
Task

Look at the graphs representing trends in the economy and in employment in the USA. Write a short description and analysis of this data for the last 12 months – the date today is 1 September 2002; figures after this date are projections.

(12½ marks)

(Total 25 marks)

QUESTION 3(b) CONTINUED



QUESTION 4

From the information given, continue and complete the 2 extracts in a way that is appropriate in content and style.

The list of key words should be used for guidance; some or all of the words may, but do not have to be, included in the text.

(a) **Situation**

You work for a business journal, World Business Magazine, 42 Fleet Street, London W1V 9TT, which is currently preparing a supplementary directory (Spring 2003 Executive Education and MBA Directory) listing business schools which offer degrees such as MBAs and other business training.

Task

Write a **letter** to be sent to the Principals of Business Colleges that are prospective advertisers in the directory.

Describe:

- the journal for which you work
- the advantages of advertising in the directory
- some promotional incentive.

Although the first lines of the body of the text are given, you should lay out the letter in an appropriate style with headings etc. Invent any further content as appropriate. For the purpose of this letter the name and address of the addressee should be: Dr K Grimes, Dolly Business College, Goddington Road, Dolly, Shropshire LU3 7BJ.

(insert letter headings etc here)

Dear Dr Grimes,

Targeting prospective students for your college should not be a hit and miss affair.

Key Words

1 million readers / prestigious business journal / influence and decision-making / special report – online-learning directory / opportunity / targeted advertising / 15% reduction / closing date.

(12½ marks)

QUESTION 4 CONTINUED

(b) Situation

You work in the public relations department of an electronics company, ZYTEC Ltd. The company is undertaking a 3-year plan to improve group operating profits by 30%. To do this the company intends to:

- reduce the number of employees by 10% in the coming year – 5% by compulsory redundancies and 5% by other means (eg voluntary)
- increase sales by 8%, mainly from the German market, where a new distribution contract has recently been agreed
- secure a first deal for supply of electronic equipment to the airline industry to generate a further 2% increase in turnover.

Task

Draft the press release containing all this news.

(Insert correct headings here)

Zytec today unveils its 3-year plan to move into the forefront of electronic components supply in Europe.

Keywords

targets / expansion / new contract / rationalisation / reductions / loss-making operations / CEO quote

(12½ marks)

(Total 25 marks)

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