

**AN EVALUATION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPONENT OF THE MATURE
STUDENTS' ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS INTO SELECTED GHANAIAN
UNIVERSITIES**

by

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Declaration

I, Ramos Asafo-Adjei, hereby declare that the thesis for the PhD studies at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature: 

Date: 5th November, 2020

Abstract

In Ghana, there are two main ways of gaining admission to the undergraduate university system. These are the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. The latter examination is mainly conducted internally by the universities in order to select the successful applicants for enrolment. This is on condition that the test takers have prior working experience in the fields that they want to attain their respective certificates and aged twenty-five years and above. This study mainly sought to evaluate the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities.

The present study adopted the multiple case study design as its primary technique. The sources of data used were responses from in-depth interviews and the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. Thematic content analysis and document analysis were employed to analyse the data. Berry's (2018) test development model underpinned this study. The sample for the study (mainly the lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions and the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations) were drawn from six universities. It was found that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations fell short of both the WASSCE and the IELTS standards in areas such as the uniformity of the questions set, the basic language skills tested, the criteria used for setting the questions and the topical areas (competences) tested in the examination.

It is recommended that a formal regulatory body be formed by Ghana's Ministry of Education to control and coordinate the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations as WAEC does for the WASSCE in order to enhance the standards of the examination.

Key words: Evaluation, English Language, Ghana, Mature Students, University
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to:

My late parents – Mr. Yaw Asafo-Adjei and Madam Juliana Takyi – who invested heavily in my education but did not live to see their son's work.

My wife: Mrs. Esther Asafo-Adjei,

And my children: Juliesta Efia Aso, Nana Amoako, Adwoa Kwartema and Nana Baffour Awuah

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List of Abbreviations

AD	-	Anno Domini
CDSEPT	-	Standards for Educational Psychological Testing
CEFR	-	Common European Framework of References for Languages
COPE	-	Certificate of Proficiency in English
FCE	-	First Certificate in English
ESL	-	English as a Second Language
ESOL	-	English for Speakers of other Languages
GMAT	-	Graduate Management Admission Test
GRE	-	Graduate Record Examinations
HKDSE	-	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
IELTS	-	International English Language Testing System
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
KNUST	-	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
LAWST	-	Law School Admission Test
MC	-	Multiple Choice
MCAT	-	Medical College Admission Test
MCQ	-	Multiple Choice Questions
MUET	-	Malaysian University English Test
NAB	-	National Accreditation Board
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCTE	-	National Council for Tertiary Education
PhD	-	Doctor of Philosophy
PNDC	-	Provisional National Defence Council
SAT	-	Scholastic Assessment Test
STANAG	-	Standardisation Agreement
SHS	-	Senior High School
TOEFL	-	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	-	Test of English for International Communication
TVET	-	Technical and Vocational Education Training

UCC	-	University of Cape Coast
UG	-	University of Ghana
VNS		Vietnamese National Standard
WAEC	-	West African Examinations Council
WASSCE	-	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the study

Xiaojiang (1991) avers that examinations are important in the activities of both teachers and learners and that all teachers and learners must confront or participate in examinations. Similarly, Boud (1995) indicates that examinations are integral components of the educational process. They are very key in assessing the impact of lessons and also in the measurement of the knowledge levels of candidates. Carroll (1980) defines examinations as procedures used by experts to obtain certain behaviours about individuals in order to understand such individuals better. Similarly, Brown (2001) describes examinations as a formalised set of techniques used to test an individual's ability. On their part, Hanna and Dettmer (2004) define examinations as the approaches through which experts collect data pertaining to the teaching and learning process.

According to the literature, there are four types of examinations. Berry (2018), for instance, identifies proficiency, placement, diagnostic and achievement as the four types of examinations. Proficiency examinations are meant to test test takers' abilities in a particular field (academic, business). Berry (2018) adds that placement examinations provide assessors with information based on which test takers can be placed on ideal/acceptable levels of language programmes; such placements are based on specific scores obtained by test takers in such placement examinations. Diagnostic examinations are used by experts to find out areas that test takers exhibit weaknesses so that appropriate/necessary support can be given to test takers to help them to improve. Berry (2018: 3) further posits that achievement tests 'are intended to reflect achievement or progress over a course of study and can be either formative, during a course of study, or summative, at the end of the course'. Hanna and Dettmer (2004) specify that formative examinations are used by assessors to provide feedback and information as learning goes on, while summative examinations are conducted after the learning process, and they are used to evaluate how learners absorbed information that they are taught.

Placement examinations is a means through which potential candidates are considered for university enrolment. For instance, Zwick (2002) indicates that in North America, there are numerous standard placement examinations. For college entrance, educators use, for instance, the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). For admission to graduate and professional school, educators use the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE), the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), the Law School Admission Test (LAWST) and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) (Fletcher 2009).

In Anglophone West Africa, the West African Examinations Council's (WAEC) West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and its equivalents are used by universities to select candidates for placement into various undergraduate courses of study. Another popular route in Ghana through which individuals who are desirous of gaining admission into universities (for undergraduate studies) use is an examination organised internally by the universities to select candidates for placement. This examination is known as "Mature Students' Entrance Examinations". Candidates are deemed qualified to write this examination on condition that they are not less than twenty-five years of age. Candidates must, additionally, have prior working experience (recognition of prior learning) in the fields that they seek to study. The common practice is that candidates are examined in four areas – English language, Mathematics, Science and a subject specific paper. Candidates are expected to pass all the papers before they are considered for placement.

This study focused on evaluating the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in Ghana. The reason behind this choice is that despite the central role that the English language plays in mature students' selection, teaching and learning in Ghanaian universities, from my readings, studies that evaluate the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations within the Ghanaian context are virtually nonexistent.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The Mature Students' Entrance Examinations have been administered in Ghanaian universities to admit students for over two decades without any detailed study into its effectiveness in measuring test takers' abilities. The present situation risks concealing flaws that could only be revealed and addressed to strengthen the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in Ghana through a study such as this one.

For this study, the English Language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations was evaluated. In testing for English proficiency, Powers (2010) reports that many universities and colleges often do not test all the important language skills/areas, and such practice has a propensity of affecting students' acquisition of academic literacy skills since other key aspects of academic literacy would not be tested. Criticisms such as Powers's (2010) caused the revision of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), for example, used by institutions of higher learning to measure the language abilities of test takers. Until 2005, TOEFL included only listening, writing and reading components. Donga Ilbo (2005), Hangeyorye (2005) and Jungang Daily (2005) as cited in Powers (2010) report that the speaking component was added because, even though test takers were successful in the TOEFL (and Test of English for International Communication [TOEIC]) tests, some lacked the speaking competences necessary for effective academic communication. In essence, the results of a language test that fails to test all the important skills of test takers may not be deemed comprehensive enough. This situation makes it critical for a study like this to be conducted to reveal the true picture of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in Ghana.

1.2 Objectives

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the basic language skills that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations test;
2. Determine the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana.
3. Explore the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions; and
4. Investigate how the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is benchmarked.

1.3 Research questions

The main research question of the study is 'what is the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities?' The specific research questions are:

1. Which basic language skills are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?
2. What are the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana?
3. What are the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions?
4. Which approaches are used to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

1.4 Significance of the study

From my readings, there have not been documented studies on the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in Ghana. This research will,

therefore, fill the existing lacuna within the Ghanaian context. Such insight into the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations will be vital for policy makers in education (including university managers and governments).

The universities' managers could use such information as a focal point to reform or repackage the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations with the aim of enhancing it (if the examinations are found to have any inherent weaknesses). Governments can also, based on the results, formulate apposite policies aimed at improving entrance examinations with special emphasis on higher education not only in Ghana, but in other countries that experience similar multilingual contact situations.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

Six universities in Ghana were used for this study. Out of this number, four were public universities and two were private universities. Two comprehensive universities and two technical universities were selected from the public university domain, whereas two comprehensive universities were selected from the private university domain. The use of private comprehensive universities only for this study was necessitated by the fact that almost all the private universities operating in Ghana are comprehensive.

The English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations past questions that had been administered for three years (2016, 2017 and 2018) were selected for the study. In addition, five interviews (one for each of the five universities) were conducted with the lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions. It was envisaged that these data would be enough to achieve the study objective.

1.6 Literature Review: A vignette

Despite the importance of the English language in mature student selection in Ghanaian universities, studies that evaluate the English language component of this examination within the Ghanaian context are virtually nonexistent. Currently, most of the existing researches that have been done have been conducted outside Ghana. In South Africa, for instance, studies such as Hernan (1995) and Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) have all dealt with university entrance examinations practices in South Africa. In addition, the level of work in other jurisdictions such as Japan and China (Bachman & Palmer 1982; Brown & Christensen 1987; Buck 1988; Brown 1990; Kellaghan & Greaney 1992; Watanabe 1992; Kunnan 1995; O'Sullivan 1995; Brown & Yamashita 1995; Stapleton 1996; Yoshida 1996a; Kikuchi 2006; Guest 2008; Everson 2009; Powers 2010) have all concentrated on evaluating English language entrance examinations into universities and have found weaknesses in areas such as: the components of the examinations, the competences tested by the examinations and the suitability of the examinations to the test takers.

For example, Guest (2008) sought to analyse the scope of the university entrance examinations in Japan. He found that writing and speaking were not tested on the Senta Shiken (the first step national examinations that all candidates seeking entrance to Japanese universities have to take before taking the individually organised university examinations), and that necessitated the inclusion of a listening aspect in 2006. Guest, additionally, found that the examinations were basically for placement purposes because they were meant to predict whether test takers were qualified enough to study in the country's universities. That is, his identification of gaps with respect to the areas tested compelled a review of the scope of the examinations subsequently for improvement.

Brown and Yamashita (1995) studied ten examinations each from private and public universities together with the nationwide "Center" examinations. Brown and Yamashita advanced that although, generally speaking, the individual items on the examinations were well written from the perspective of proofreading and quality of language, that does

not imply that the tests are perfect or they are perfectly fair to all test takers. The implication is that a lot more had to be done to better the standards of English language entrance examinations in the areas of the very difficult nature of the passages, the discrete point approach of the examinations and the passive nature of the examinations. Their suggestion that the universities and the professionals who develop the examinations consider following the Standards for Educational Psychological Testing (CDSEPT 1985) was key to improving the overall standards. In the United States, for example, examinations became more practical, reliable and valid only when students and their parents filed lawsuits against the various organisations that developed examinations. The CDSEPT was applied, and it improved the standards. Consequently, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations are very vital that test developers alone cannot be allowed to dictate the running of the examinations.

Some criticisms were leveled that the results from Brown and Yamashita (1995) did not have any relevance for teachers who prepare their students for entrance examinations (O'Sullivan 1995). Additionally, Brown and Yamashita were criticised because their recommendation that the examinations be revised was perceived as flawed for the reason that Brown and Yamashita (1995) were oblivious of the nuances of the conduct of the Japanese entrance examinations (Stapleton 1996; Yoshida 1996a; 1996b). In spite of those criticisms, Brown and Yamashita's (1995) study was recognised as "a reliable and solid first step in the process of evaluating Japanese university entrance examinations" (O'Sullivan 1995: 257).

In furtherance of the argument on the need for periodic assessment and evaluation of English language entrance examinations, Kikuchi (2006) monitored the examinations after a decade of Brown and Yamashita's (1995) enquiry to ascertain if the 2004 version of the examinations had registered any variations. Even though some variations were registered, the test items, the language competences measured and the differences in the test items were not markedly distinct. The texts or passages used in the examinations had high difficulty levels, and the educators, additionally, tested translation. His call for

further enquiries to analyse university entrance examinations to identify the effectiveness of the examinations is thus laudable.

Guest (2008) conducted an investigation to ascertain whether there had been any changes to Japan's National Center Examinations for University Admissions (Senta Shiken). Guest (2008) conducted this enquiry by matching the 1981 and 2006 examination questions. Specifically, the type of texts, topical areas examined and competences tested were analysed. Additionally, the scores allocated to the individual questions and divisions of the examinations were analysed. It was found that the competences demanded from the different candidates were good reading and listening skills. The text types also suited the different types of test takers with different learning needs. That is, the examinations covered diverse language areas such as higher-level reading and listening comprehension. The study, additionally, revealed that the examinations have a variety of formats and put a lot of emphasis on the assessment of higher-level mental abilities.

Following the present discussion, the trend in Ghana is very different. Evaluation and re-evaluation of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations have not gained the attention they deserve; this notwithstanding, evidence suggests that a growing number of both public and private universities use the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations to admit students.

High standards of the English language entrance examinations can be achieved by frequently reviewing and evaluating the examinations (Henning 1987; Alderson, Clapham & Wall 1995; Brown 1995). They present the different approaches to conducting such evaluations, specifically in the areas of reliability estimation, validity assessment and comparison of test development practice with accepted practices in literature. As Kimura and Visgatis (1995) explain, many of such evaluations are carried out through the use of test results which most universities hold in confidence, so accessing them is difficult. The case is not any different in Ghana. Another approach, according to Kimura and Visgatis (1995), is the examination of the features of published examination questions and

analysing them by highlighting areas which appear to be substandard based on expected standards in literature.

One prototypical study which used the latter approach was conducted by Brown and Yamashita (1995). Brown and Yamashita (1995) investigated different characteristics of some Japanese entrance examinations, in the areas of question type, reading text difficulty levels, competences tested and the dissimilarities that existed between the public and private universities' questions. The authors thus used expected standards in the literature to identify the aspects/sections of the examinations that needed improvement.

Content validation is another approach that has been used to evaluate English language entrance examinations. A similar approach has been espoused by Alderson, Clapham and Wall (1995). These researchers aver that content validation encompasses 'experts' making judgements in a methodical manner. The usual approach is to analyse the content of an examination and to compare it with a statement of what the content must be. Such a statement may be the tests specifications, it may be a formal teaching syllabus or curriculum, or it may be a domain specification.

One way to determine this is to match the difficulty levels of the examination material with what exists in the test specification and to ascertain if the questions were composed appropriately for a particular group of test takers. Difficulty of tests is seen as important by many researchers. In Henning's (1987: 49) view, "the single most important characteristic of an item to be accurately determined is the difficulty", and he further argues that:

when tests are rejected as unreliable measures for a given sample of examinees, it is due not so much to the carelessness of the item writers as to the misfit of item difficulty to person ability (op.cit.).

On the tasks involved in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, the literature suggests that there are many types of English questions, and each has particular competences that it assesses. Researchers such as Bachman and Palmer (1982), Kunnan (1995), Davey et al. (2007), Everson (2009) and Powers (2010) have all conducted various investigations with the aim of coming out with the answers to getting the most appropriate examination questions that can measure comprehensively, candidates' readiness to handle higher learning tasks. Powers (2010), for instance, indicates that examinations to ascertain proficiency levels of university entrance examination candidates to tell their readiness to handle higher academic/learning tasks ideally have to be comprehensive by measuring all the four components of language (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) which constitute broader traits of communication. That is, in order for the judgment of candidates' abilities in the English language to be fully reliable, nothing but all the four areas of English language testing should be considered.

Davey et al. (2007) considered the constitution of the English language component questions in China and found that the questions are made up of two sections: the first part was made up of multiple-choice questions, and the second part was made up of essays and English oral tests (Liu 1994). Chinese educators received loads of criticisms because the general belief was that the questions were undesirably theoretical; the expectation of the critics was that a more practical focus be given to the examinations (Zhang 1995). These criticisms led to major examination reforms by the Chinese educators to give the examinations a more practical orientation in the 1990s.

Buck (1988) studied the difficulties in examining listening comprehension in Japanese university entrance examinations. The findings revealed that listening comprehension test items such as noise tests, ordinary written cloze, dictation and sentence elicitation are rather negative approaches to examining listening comprehension. On the contrary, short-answer comprehension questions, open-ended longer questions, picture recognition tasks, completion tasks and grid completion are appropriate ways of testing test takers of the English language component of the Japanese university entrance

examination. Buck (1988) recommended that cloze passages (narrative passages) on summaries of texts are very suitable for entrance examinations. He, additionally, recommended short response questions, more complex open-ended questions and grid filling activities.

Kimura and Visgatis (1995) examined how difficult 48 reading comprehension texts from 33 junior colleges' examinations compared to 66 texts extracted from 4 high school English language textbooks. The texts used in the examinations were found to be markedly more difficult as compared to those found in the textbook. Schools were, consequently, encouraged to revise their examinations so that the examinations would be fair.

Based on the discussion thus far, it is obvious that the English language entrance examinations are crucial to admissions in most universities around the world, and Ghana is not an exception. It is argued in this study that it is crucial to evaluate the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities to serve as a starting point for further evaluations in order to guarantee high standards. On the basis of this, the present study becomes very crucial in the development of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations practiced in Ghanaian universities.

1.7 Methodology: An overview

The various methods that were applied to gather data for the study are presented here. The study paradigm, the study design, data and sources, population and sample size, the investigative tools, analyses of data and the conceptual framework are explained in this section.

1.7.1 Study paradigm

This investigation is hinged on the qualitative paradigm. As Creswell (2014) posits, the qualitative paradigm deals with investigating the meanings people or societies associate with their problems, with the key aim of understanding these problems. The investigation process involves the researcher formulating questions and methods, gathering data from the participant's setting, analysing data from specific to general ideas and making meanings of the solicited data.

1.7.2 Study design

Different procedural rules are applicable in the qualitative paradigm, and they outline and control the kind of data to collect, the data collection procedures and the data analysis method(s). According to Schurink (1998) and Creswell (2007), some types of qualitative designs include: grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, narrative and case study.

The case study design was adopted as this study's primary technique. Creswell (2007: 73) posits that case study research is a qualitative research that involves a researcher studying one case or a number of cases over a period of time, "through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information".

Specifically, the collective case study design was used for this study because this study aimed at studying in detail, the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations administered in Ghanaian universities. Six universities were selected – four public (two comprehensive and two technical) and two private (comprehensive). As Creswell (2007) puts it, in the application of the collective case study approach, one concern is picked (for this research, it is the evaluation of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities), but the researcher selects multiple cases to explain the issue.

1.7.3 Data collection sources

Both primary and secondary data were used for this research. Primary data were obtained from those lecturers involved in setting the questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in the universities. The primary data were elicited through an interview guide. The secondary data, on the other hand, were English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations past questions administered over three years – 2016, 2017, 2018. The past questions were obtained from the libraries of the universities where past questions are mostly kept. Those three years were used in order to strengthen future conclusions. Also, the WASSCE English language component past questions administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 together with the IELTS descriptive document were other forms of secondary data used in this study.

1.7.4 Population and sample size

The target population for the present research comprised: (1) the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations past questions administered by the selected Ghanaian universities and (2) the lecturers involved in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions. The past examination questions were used because they contain or house the test items that were analysed. The lecturers, on the other hand, participated in the study because their duties deal directly with the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions of their respective universities. Hence, the belief was that they would be in the position to provide enough data for this study.

A total of 18 English language past examination questions were used for the study. This number was considered adequate because the study focused on examining each question in more detail for its component parts in terms of the basic language skills tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public

(comprehensive and technical) and private comprehensive universities in Ghana. Five lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions participated in the study.

Table 1: Population of universities in Ghana and sample size for study

Type of University	Number of Universities	Number Selected in Each Category	Name of University*	Number of Past Questions Selected in Each University	Total Sample
Public (Comprehensive)	10	2	Comprehensive University 1	3	6
			Comprehensive University 2	3	
Public (Technical)	8	2	Technical University 1	3	6
			Technical University 2	3	
Private (Comprehensive)	81	2	Private University 1**	3	6
			Private University 2**	3	
Total	99	6	6	18	18

Source: Field survey, 2019

**Pseudonyms are given to the selected universities in observance of their right to anonymity.*

***The names imply, for this study, that these private universities are all comprehensive universities (See 1.5: 5).*

Based on statistics from the National Accreditation Board (NAB), Ghana presently has ninety-nine (99) universities. Eighteen (18) are public universities (ten [10] of them are comprehensive universities, whereas the remaining eight [8] are technical universities) and eighty-one (81) are private institutions that offer degree programmes (www.nab.gov.gh). The study adopted three sampling techniques, namely: multi stage sampling, purposive sampling and convenience sampling.

A quota sampling technique was used to select 18 English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations past questions from the varied universities found in Ghana. The first stage of the process involved a partitioning of the various universities into three quotas, namely: public (comprehensive = 10, technical = 8) and private (comprehensive) 81 (See Table 1: 14). The partitioning of the universities into quotas was to ensure that all the kinds of universities operating in Ghana were fairly represented in the study.

At the second stage of the selection process, two universities were purposively selected from each of the three groups yielding a total of six universities. The third stage focused on the convenience selection of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions from each of the selected universities. Specifically, questions administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 were selected.

Aside the selection of the desired number of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations past questions, five (one of the lecturers refused to grant the interview) English language lecturers who set the examination questions were selected purposively to partake in this research. The population and sample used to conduct the study are presented in Table 1.

1.7.5 Investigative tools

Two main instruments were employed to conduct this research, namely interview guide and documents.

1.7.5.1 Interview guide

Interview remains a very popular tool for collecting qualitative data (de Vos, Strydom & Delpont 2005; Creswell 2007; Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009) over other tools such as participant observation, participant journaling, researcher reflection and focus groups which play a secondary role in qualitative studies (Creswell 2007). Kvale (2006) defines in-depth interviews as approaches used to comprehend the world based on the interviewee's perspective and to uncover people's interpretation of their experiences. Seidman (1998: 1) avers that "You interview because you are interested in other people's stories".

An interview guide was employed to gather data for this enquiry. Interview guide has some of the benefits of both informal and structured interviews. Creswell (2007) espouses that interview guides allow the interviewer to follow pre-set questions, but not all of the prearranged probes, transitions and follow-ups are used during the interview. The interviewer, therefore, has the freewill to deviate from the interview questions as and when necessary to pursue unexpected findings and fruitful directions. Field and Morse (1994) also opine that interview guides are employed to gather data on a specific subject. Field and Morse (1994) add that whereas the subject is known, the responses cannot be anticipated. Based on the fact that some pre-set questions could be used in the interview and based on the flexibility to follow up on serendipitous prompts, the interview guide was preferred over the informal and structured interviews for this study.

In that regard, an interview guide was employed to collect data from the lecturers who are involved in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions in the selected universities. The in-depth interview method and its accompanying interview guide allowed the researcher to probe for details relating to the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions, the approaches that are employed to benchmark the examinations and the basic language skills that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations test by the six universities.

The in-depth interview method and its accompanying interview guide, additionally, aided in observing the behaviour and emotions of the lecturers. As Boyce and Neale (2006) indicate, interviews become necessary when the enquirer intends to arrive at detailed information about a participant's thoughts and attitudes or wants to explore new issues thoroughly. Finn and Jacobson (2008) aver that interviews allow the respondents to express vital issues relating to their environments; interviews, additionally, are significant tools for understanding a subject matter or phenomenon.

The researcher personally visited five of the six selected universities and interviewed the lecturers/examiners responsible for setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. In all, five in-depth interviews were carried out in five of the six selected universities because one of the lecturers turned down the interview request.

1.7.5.2 Document

All over the world, researchers are storing valuable data, and this has made the use of existing data for enquiries more relevant (Walliman 2006; Bowen 2009; Johnston 2014). The English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination past questions (which are documents) were utilised for this enquiry. Also, WASSCE English language component past questions were used in this study. These past questions covered a three-year period – 2016, 2017 and 2018. Additionally, a descriptive document on the nature of the IELTS was equally used in this study (See Appendix H: 319). Document, according to De Vaus (2001) and Creswell (2007), is one source through which data can be retrieved to be used in a case study.

1.7.6 Analyses of data

The approach for the analyses of the study was twofold – thematic content analysis and document analysis.

1.7.6.1 Thematic content analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data that were obtained through the in-depth interviews. The analyses were guided by three of the research questions – what are the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions, which basic language skills are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and how is the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations benchmarked?

This method of data analysis has been used in various studies that are content analysis based (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Babbie 1979; Fox 1982; Berg 1989). The analyses of data obtained from the interviews on the aforementioned research questions were done based on fourteen steps advanced by Burnard (1991: 462-464):

- 1) Notes were made on the topics discussed at the end of each interview.
- 2) The written-down data were read, sifted and the overall themes written down in order to allow the researcher to fully understand the experiences of the respondents.
- 3) The written-down data were re-read and many titles, as possible, were written to describe all components of the contents of the interview which excluded fillers obtained during the interviews. Berg (1989) calls this stage 'open coding'.
- 4) The lists of components were put into groups under broader titles in a bid to reduce the number of components.
- 5) The regenerated lists of components and their corresponding sub-headings were read through and related titles were taken out to arrive at final documents.
- 6) Two other researchers were tasked to develop their own categories without having seen the final documents prepared by the researcher. The three lists (for each of the five interviews conducted) were then discussed to make the necessary adjustments in order to ensure that the categorisations were valid.

- 7) The three documents (each set for one interview) were re-read along with the approved list of categories and subtitles in order to ascertain how well/fully the categories covered all the relevant details of the interviews. Where the situation required, modifications were made.
- 8) Every one of the transcripts was compared with the lists of components and subtitles and 'coded' based on the lists of components' titles. Different colourings were applied to differentiate the various categories.
- 9) The differently coded sections were cut from the lists of components and put into homogeneous groups.
- 10) The cut-out versions were posted on sheets and given the relevant titles and subtitles.
- 11) Some of the respondents were then selected and tasked to ascertain the correctness or wrongness of the categorisation.
- 12) All the sections were put together, and the original written-down data were saved in preparation of the writing up of the findings.
- 13) The full writing up of the findings was done on section basis by selecting the type of data that fit each section.
- 14) The data examples and the commentary were then linked to literature.

1.7.6.2 Document analysis

As Bowen (2009) avers, document analysis is a methodical process for reviewing and evaluating documents. Rapley (2007) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) espouse that document analysis involves the scrutiny of documents in order to understand the data contained in them. The English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination past questions, the WASSCE English language component past questions and the IELTS description document are examples of documents which fall under a group of documents which O'Leary (2014: 1) labels as 'public records'. Specifically, content analysis was utilised to explore the past questions. Bowen (2009) posits that content analysis involves organising information into categories such that they conform to the

central questions of the study. O’Leary’s (2014: 1) eight steps of conducting document analysis were followed in this study:

- 1) Relevant texts (in this study, the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities, the WASSCE English language component past questions and the IELTS description document) were gathered.
- 2) An organisation and management scheme was developed.
- 3) Copies of the original questions were made for annotation.
- 4) The authenticity of the questions was assessed.
- 5) The questions’ agenda and biases were explored.
- 6) The background facts (e.g. objective, style) was explored.
- 7) Questions were asked about the past examination questions in the areas of who produced them, why they were produced, when they were produced and the type of data they contained.
- 8) The contents of the questions were then explored.

Specifically, concepts or test items were organised into frequencies. The data were then organised according to the specific research questions of this study (Bowen 2009: 32).

1.8 Conceptual framework for the study

Most studies are hinged on theories that aim at explaining the core aspects of such studies and that guide how such studies are conducted. For this research, although there are many learning theories, for example, the behaviourist theory, the cognitive theory and the situated theory, the reverse has been the case for their closely related area – assessment. This is captured in the words of James (2006: 2):

Whilst exciting new developments in our understanding of learning unfold, developments in assessment systems and technology sometimes lag behind. Even some of the most innovative and novel developments,

say, in e-assessment, are underpinned by models of learning that are limited or, in some cases, out-of-date. This is understandable too because the development of dependable assessments – always an important consideration in large-scale testing – is associated with an elaborate technology which takes much time and the skills of measurement experts, many of whom have often acquired their expertise in the very specialist field of psychometrics.

On the basis of the difficulty in finding suitable assessment theories, this study adopted a test development model where the stages involved in quality English language test development were used as a basis to guide the evaluation of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities. Berry (2018) avers that a test development model which describes the process of test development clearly is the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) test development model. This is the model used by Cambridge to develop suites of proficiency and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (Saville 2003). This model involves five phases that test developers must consider and go through before arriving at the appropriate test or high-quality test, and these five phases have been corroborated and explained by Berry (2018). The five phases are: planning phase, design phase, development phase, operational phase and monitoring phase. This model was modified with the incorporation of constructs from the literature for it to suit the present study (See 2.8: 53).

1.9 Organisation of the thesis

This research is organised into the following chapters:

Chapter One contains a general introduction to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, methodology and the organisation of the study.

Chapter Two covers the literature review and the conceptual framework for this research. Literature pertaining to English language testing is reviewed. The conceptual framework on which the study rests is, additionally, presented in Chapter Two.

The methodology used to conduct this research is presented in Chapter Three. Methodology which encapsulates the research approach and design, data collection procedures, population and sampling techniques and data analysis procedures is presented in this chapter.

Chapter Four contains the analyses of data collected for Research Questions 1 and 2. The main findings obtained from the data analysis are additionally presented in this chapter.

Chapter Five covers the analyses of data collected for Research Questions 3 and 4. This chapter, in addition, covers the main findings obtained from the data analyses.

Chapter Six focuses on the summary of the findings, the conclusions of this research and recommendations.

1. 10 Chapter summary

A general overview of the study was presented here. Specifically, the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the study objectives, the research questions and the significance of the study were presented in this chapter. Furthermore, literature on the need for evaluation of English language examinations was briefly looked at, after which a fair insight into the methodology used to undertake this research was given. The theoretical framework which underpinned the conduct of this study was also introduced. The chapter ended with the presentation of the organisation of the entire research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Literature pertaining to the nature of examinations, with emphasis on English language examinations, is reviewed in this chapter. In addition, a holistic look at the field of examinations, research on the need for evaluation of English language entrance examinations and the basic language skills tested in English language examinations are presented here. The conceptual framework which underpins the conduct of this study ends this chapter.

2.1 A holistic look at the field of examinations

2.1.1 The emergence of examinations: A historical account

Examinations have very early beginnings; the earliest recording was registered about 2,000 years back during the reign of the Han Dynasty in China. The examinations conducted then were primarily aimed at gauging the abilities of individuals in order to determine those who could work as part of the government. The examinations grew over a century, till 605 Anno Domini (AD) when the examinations assumed a broader role (the imperial examinations) and were predominantly used to award degrees to candidates and to ascertain which aspect of the government their competences could best be utilised (Zhang 1995; Zwick 2002; Cheng 2008; Usher 2014).

Many of the examinations found in China were extremely partisan because only the rich were permitted to apply to take the examinations because only they could afford the luxuries of studying. The examinations were also quite narrow, relying on memorisation of Confucian texts and Chinese mythology. As the examinations were becoming more accessible to greater numbers of people, a more varied format which constituted poetry compositions, essays and rote memorisation was integrated into the examinations (Zwick 2002).

In the early 19th century, the examinations which were conducted in the then British occupied China started being practiced in Britain. This was done in order to embrace meritocracy over corruption which was rife in the British held Chinese areas. After the examinations had gained roots in Britain, it spread to Europe and to the New World (Zwick 2002; <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-history-of-standardized-testing.html>).

Examinations are seen by most historians as the first standardised test (Lai 1970; Hu 1984) and ancient China's greatest contribution to testing (Higgins & Sun 2002).

2.1.2 What are examinations?

Examinations are activities that are fully ingrained in educational systems across the world. That is, examinations are at the heart of education, and they are activities that all educationists and learners alike have to confront or participate in (Xiaojiang 1991; Boud 1995). A number of studies have advanced definitions for examinations (Carroll 1980; Fagbamiye 1998; Kellaghan & Greaney 2001; Brown 2001, 2003; Hanna & Dettmer 2004; Brown 2004; Uduh 2009), and some of these are discussed below:

Carroll (1980) states that examinations are approaches or instruments used to obtain certain behaviours about individuals so that inferences can be made with regard to the characteristics of individuals within a particular field/domain. Fagbamiye (1998) posits that examinations are tools for measuring and judging the standard of education in any country. Also, Brown (2001) defines examinations as formalised set of techniques for gauging a test taker's competences. Similarly, Brown (2003: 4) defines examinations as a "method for measuring a person's ability, knowledge or performance in a given domain". He adds that a well-constructed examination is the instrument that measures test takers' competences within a particular field or domain accurately.

Consistent with the latter definition is the notion that examinations are approaches that instructors use to collect data pertaining to the teaching and learning process (Hanna & Dettmer 2004). Uduh (2009) defines examinations as processes of finding out how much

of the objectives of specific tasks a learner has learnt. Kellaghan and Greaney (2001) espouse that examinations are procedures or activities that are constructed to gather information about the competency levels of learners.

Central to these definitions is the ‘unravelling’ attribute of examinations. That is, examinations play a central role in revealing behaviours about examinees so that such revealed information can be used to take informed decisions about the examinees (Brookhart 2004). In the present study, ‘examination’ is perceived to encapsulate ‘tests’ and ‘assessments’. Consequently, the study defines examination as any kind of instrument designed formally with the intention of determining the competences of test takers.

2.1.3 Functions or purposes of examinations

Examinations have core functions they play, and the functions inform the construct of the examinations. In the literature, many researchers have advanced various categories for describing or determining the functions or purposes of examinations (Jacobs et al. 1981; Cohen 1994; Black & William 1998a; Brown 2003; Trumbull & Lash 2013; Berry 2018).

Cohen (1994), for instance, suggests three key categories – administrative, instructional and research. Cohen (1994) further suggests that the specific reasons for administrative assessment include placement and promotion. For the instructional assessment, the aims suggested are diagnosis and assessment of curriculum. With respect to research assessment, evaluation and experimentation are the purposes identified as informing this category of assessment.

Brown (2003: 6) identifies two key purposes of examinations – formative and summative. He espouses that formative assessment involves, “evaluating students in the process of forming their competences and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process”. In other words, formative assessment helps learners to internalise and apply the skills/competences they have been exposed to by their instructors. Summative

assessments, according to Brown (2003: 6), “aims to measure or summarise what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction”. That is, the aim is to identify/test students’ level of understanding of the contents/inputs given to them by their instructors.

Berry (2018) identifies proficiency, placement, diagnostic and achievement as the four types of examinations. Proficiency examinations are meant to test the test takers’ abilities in a particular field (academic, business). Berry (2018) adds that placement examinations provide assessors with information based on which test takers can be placed on ideal/acceptable levels of language programmes; such placements are based on specific scores obtained by test takers in such placement tests. Diagnostic examinations are used by experts to find out areas that test takers exhibit weaknesses so that appropriate/necessary support can be given them to help them to improve. Berry (2018: 3) further avers that achievement examinations “are intended to reflect achievement or progress over a course of study and can be either formative, during a course of study, or summative, at the end of the course”.

Hanna and Dettmer (2004), commenting on the nature of formative and summative examinations, espouse that formative examinations are used by assessors to provide feedback and information as learning goes on, while summative examinations are conducted after the learning process, and they are used to evaluate how learners absorbed information taught them.

It can be observed from the above literature reviewed on the functions/purposes of examinations that there are divergent views among scholars as regards the categorisation of examinations. This notwithstanding, scholars hold the convergent views that examinations do not fulfil just a sole function and that the objective(s) of examinations often determine how a particular instrument is designed to help achieve that particular objective(s).

2.1.4 Methods of examinations

With respect to methods of examinations, a distinction is made between norm-referenced and criterion referenced tests (Knight 2001; Brown 2003). Knight (2001: 19) avers that, “norm-referencing test is comparative, telling us that this student is better than another, similar to a third and not as good as a fourth”. Similarly, Brown (2003) indicates that norm-referenced tests are fundamentally comparative. That is, these tests compare students with other students, and this comparison can be within the same class or nationally (for example the Matric in South Africa) or internationally (For example GRE). Brown (2003: 7) adds that, “the purpose of such tests is to place test takers along a mathematical continuum in rank order”. Other types of norm-referenced tests are SAT® and TOEFL®, and these tests, in Brown’s (2003: 7) view, have “fixed predetermined responses” and presentations which are easily gradable without much expenses.

Criterion-referenced tests, on the reverse, are mainly constructed to determine whether or not a test taker has met the expected objectives of a particular subject or course of study. As Knight (2001) puts it, criterion-referencing test is a system for awarding marks which is basically opposed to norm-referencing in that it is open to situations in which everyone can fail or get grade ‘A’. Brown (2003) states that criterion reference tests are designed to give test-takers feedback, typically in the form of grades or specific course or lesson objective. Considering the fact that this study is about language examinations and not examinations in general, I now turn my attention to language examinations.

2.1.5 Approaches to language testing: A brief history

The literature suggests that different language testing methods were proposed, and arguments were used as bases to support each of the proposed methods, albeit all of the approaches still prevail today (Farhady 1979; Brown 2003). Prator (1975) refers to these shifts as the ‘pendulum syndrome’. The periods within which these shifts were prevalent are: the pre-scientific, the psychometric-structuralist and the integrative-socio-linguistic (Spolsky 1978).

As Spolsky (1978) explains, the pre-scientific period was the period of the old grammar translation method. During this period, learners often had tasks of translating passages into/from a target language. These were scored purely on the basis of subjectivity of a few teachers. The statistical features of the tests were given minimal to zero attention by educators.

Through the audiolingual approach and structural linguistics, Lado (1957) and other pro-Lado scholars, who were of the belief that language is a combination of constituent forms such as the sentence, clause, phrase, word, morpheme and phonemes and skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing introduced the psychometric-structuralist period. The type of test which was popularised during this period is the discrete-point approach. These proponents believed that the best way to test language was to segregate language into different items and test these items separately to determine students' proficiency since they perceived language as systemic.

Carroll (1961), Jakobovits (1970) and Oller (1975) were, however, among the scholars who challenged the authenticity of the discrete point approach. Oller (1975), for instance, argued that language competence should be perceived/understood as one whole, and that it is not appropriate for language competence/ability to be broken down into units and tested separately. Consistent with Oller (1975), Carroll (1961) suggested that discrete linguistic components were not ideal measures of language competence; the ideal test, he maintained, ought to be rather based on the overall communicative effect of what an individual articulates. Carroll (1961) referred to this as integrative tests.

The integrative tests had several proponents (Carroll 1961; Oller 1975; Cziko 1982; Sauvignon 1982). Oller (1975) proffers that integrative tests aim to unearth the full communicative competences of learners. That is, these tests test the skills that are used in everyday communication. Throughout the literature, two types of tests – cloze test and dictation – have been identified as the prototypical integrative tests (Brown 2003).

Cloze tests are typically reading passages with the sixth or seventh word deleted so that test takers fill in the gaps. Oller (1975) ascribes to this form of integrative testing since it tests learners' competences of the words, syntactic structure, discourse structure, reading skills and strategies at the same time and thus best tests test takers' language proficiency. Consistent with the competences tested by cloze tests, dictation involves test takers listening to an audio or read-aloud passage after which they reproduce the information they listened to, through the use of right spelling.

However, as pointed out by Farhady (1979), the transition from discrete point to integrative testing has not been completed since both test types enjoy considerable patronage by educators. Farhady (1979) adds that the discrete and integrative tests are not any different as claimed by some scholars. In a study to identify whether the two tests are statistically different, Farhady provides statistical support that corroborated his position that the discrete and integrative tests are not statistically different as claimed by other scholars.

In an attempt to replace the discrete and integrative tests, a pragmatic approach was also advanced by Oller (1978). Oller (1978: 6) avers that the pragmatic approach is:

any procedure or task that causes the learner to process sequences of elements in a language that conform to the normal constraints of the language, and which require the learner to relate sequences of linguistic elements via pragmatic mapping to extra-linguistic content.

Put differently, he posits that pragmatic tests must be administered in context and under specific time constraints.

To conclude this section, it is evident from the literature that although various approaches to testing have been proposed in a bid to improve upon perceived weaknesses of already existing testing approaches, many of the approaches still enjoy patronage by language

assessors. The choice of a particular approach is dependent on the outcomes a particular assessor sets out to achieve in the administration of a particular test.

2.2 Research on the need for evaluation of English language entrance examinations

Entrance examinations play a crucial role in universities all over the world. A number of scholars have dealt with the evaluation of university entrance examinations (particularly English language entrance examinations) in different countries such as South Africa, Japan and China (O'Sullivan 1995; Brown & Yamashita 1995; Hernan 1995; Stapleton 1996; Yoshida 1996a; Davey, Chuan & Louise 2007; Sawaki, Stricker & Oranje 2008; Guest 2008; Powers 2010; Jinghua & Costanzo 2013; Mouton, Louw & Strydom 2013).

Brown and Yamashita (1995) studied ten examinations each from private and public universities together with the nationwide "Center" examinations in Japan. Brown and Yamashita (1995) advanced that although, generally speaking, the individual items on the examinations were reasonably well written from the perspective of proofreading and quality of language, that does not imply that the tests are perfect or they are perfectly fair to all test takers. The implication is that a lot more had to be done to better the standards of the English language entrance examinations in the areas of the very difficult nature of the passages, the discrete point approach of the examinations and the passive nature of the examinations. Their suggestion that the universities and the professionals who develop the examinations consider following the Standards for Educational Psychological Testing (CDSEPT 1985) was key to improving the overall standards.

In the United States, for example, examinations became more practical, reliable and valid only when students and their parents filed lawsuits against the various organisations that developed examinations. The CDSEPT was applied, and it improved the standards. Consequently, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations are very vital that test developers alone cannot be allowed to dictate the running of the examinations.

Some criticisms were leveled that the results from Brown and Yamashita (1995) did not have any relevance for teachers who prepare their students for entrance examinations (O'Sullivan 1995). Additionally, Brown and Yamashita (1995) were criticised because their recommendation that the examinations be revised was perceived as flawed for the reason that Brown and Yamashita (1995) were oblivious of the nuances of the conduct of the Japanese entrance examinations (Stapleton 1996; Yoshida 1996a; 1996b). In spite of those criticisms, Brown and Yamashita's study was recognised as "a reliable and solid first step in the process of evaluating Japanese university entrance examinations" (O'Sullivan 1995: 257).

Furthermore, Kikuchi (2006) monitored the examinations after a decade of Brown and Yamashita's (1995) enquiry to ascertain if the 2004 version of the examinations had registered any variations. Even though some variations were registered, the test items, the language competences measured and the differences in the test items were not markedly distinct. The texts or passages used in the examinations had high difficulty levels, and the educators, additionally, tested translation. His call for further enquiries to analyse university entrance examinations to identify the effectiveness of the examinations is thus laudable.

Hama and Okabe (n.d.) advance that students who have undergone six years of training after their elementary education graduate with unsatisfactory English competences (because experts cite that these graduates lack required/expected communicative competence for their level and also that their examinations focus on only Reading and Listening). The Japanese government, in an effort to reverse the negative trend, is replacing the current college entrance examination with an examination that emphasises building students' communicative competence.

In addition, Davey, Chuan and Louise (2007) studied the Chinese university entrance examinations. They aver that despite the large number of high school learners who write the examinations annually, limited information on the examinations is available in Western

literature, albeit many test takers' futures depend on the examinations and Western university managers put a lot of premium on the examinations. It was found that the English language instrument was divided into two sections. The first section comprises an objective test (specifically, Multiple Choice Questions [MCQs]). The second section, on the other hand, comprises providing answers in blank spaces, English language oral, writing and essays (Liu 1994).

Pertaining to the limitations of the examinations, their critics did not find the style of the examinations acceptable, since it tested subject knowledge at the expense of testing candidates' practical or problem-solving abilities (Zhang 1995). On the implications of the study, major revisions were made by the Chinese Education Ministry in order to make the examinations modern and also to make them more standard and fairer across the country.

Guest (2008) sought to analyse the scope of the university entrance examinations in Japan. He found that Writing and Speaking were not tested on the Senta Shiken (the first step national examinations that all candidates seeking entrance to Japanese universities have to take before taking the individually organised university examinations), and that necessitated the inclusion of a Listening aspect in 2006. Guest, additionally, found that the examinations were basically for placement purposes because they were meant to predict whether test takers were qualified enough to study in the country's universities. That is, his identification of gaps with respect to the areas tested compelled a review of the scope of the examinations subsequently for improvement.

Guest (2008) conducted an investigation to ascertain whether there had been any changes to Japan's National Center Examinations for University Admissions (Senta Shiken). Guest conducted this enquiry by matching the 1981 and 2006 examination questions. Specifically, the type of texts, topical areas examined and competences tested were analysed. Additionally, the scores allocated to the individual questions and divisions of the examinations were analysed. It was found that the competences demanded from the different candidates were good reading and listening skills. The text types also suited the different types of test takers with different learning needs. That is, the examinations

covered diverse language areas such as higher-level reading and listening comprehension. The study, additionally, revealed that the examinations have a variety of formats and put a lot of emphasis on the assessment of higher-level mental abilities.

Furthermore, Liao and Wei (2010) conducted a pilot study in December, 2006 immediately the TOEIC speaking and writing examinations were constructed and introduced in 2005 and 2006. They analysed the two examinations in order to ascertain whether the examinations achieved their intended aims. Specifically, the study determined how difficult the questions were, the relationship that the various sections of the examinations shared and the test score reliability. These researchers found that the questions were at a desirable level of difficulty for the test takers. Also, the correlations among the different parts of the tests were desirable. A similar finding was registered for the score reliability and inter-rater reliability. Minute areas of concern related to test difficulty such as some items displaying abnormal responses (many test takers scoring 0) because the marking schemes were not clear enough were immediately revised to ensure that the marking schemes were clearer.

Following the present analysis, it is evident that the trend in Ghana is very different. Evaluation and re-evaluation of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations have not gained the attention they deserve; this notwithstanding, a growing number of both public and private universities use the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations to admit students – a situation which makes it imperative for a study such as this one to be conducted.

2.3 Types of test items used in English language examinations

On the tasks involved in English language examinations, the literature suggests that there are many types of questions, and each has particular competence(s) that it seeks to assess. Researchers such as Bachman and Palmer (1982), Kunnan (1995), Davey et al. (2007), Everson (2009) and Powers (2010) have all conducted various investigations with the aim of coming out with the answers to getting the most appropriate examination

questions that can measure, comprehensively, candidates' readiness to handle higher learning tasks.

Buck (1988), for instance, examined the difficulties in examining listening comprehension in Japanese university entrance examinations. The findings revealed that listening comprehension test items such as noise tests, ordinary written cloze, dictation and sentence elicitation are rather negative approaches to examining listening comprehension. On the contrary, short answer comprehension questions, open-ended longer questions, picture recognition tasks, diagramme completion tasks and grid completion are appropriate ways of testing test takers of the English language component of the Japanese university entrance examinations. Buck (1988) recommended that cloze passages (narrative passages) on summaries of texts are very suitable for entrance examinations. He, additionally, recommended short response questions, more complex open-ended questions and grid filling activities.

On his part, Powers (2010) indicates that examinations that are used to ascertain the proficiency levels of candidates who take university entrance examinations have to be comprehensive. Powers adds that it is only when such examinations are comprehensive (measuring writing, listening, reading and speaking which constitute broader traits of communication) that the results can be regarded as reliable. That is, in order for the judgment of candidates' abilities in the English language to be fully reliable, nothing but all the four basic English language skills should be considered.

Kimura and Visgatis (1995) examined how difficult 48 reading comprehension texts from 33 junior colleges' examinations compared to 66 texts extracted from 4 high school English language textbooks. The texts used in the examinations were found to be markedly more difficult as compared to those found in the textbook. Schools were, consequently, encouraged to revise their examinations so that the examinations would be fair.

A review of English entrance examinations was conducted on the TOEIC by Chapman and Newfields (2008). It was found that the TOEIC, which is used by the majority of universities in Japan (Japan Institute of Lifelong Learning Report 2008) and which has more than four million test takers every year, was redeveloped in 2006 'after a close examination of the latest theories relating to language proficiency' (Institute for International Business Communication 2006: 4). Chapman and Newfields outlined what changes have been made and called for further improvements.

They pointed out that some of the principal changes made to the examination was the adaptation of a variety of accents (US, British, Canadian, Australia and New Zealand) to the listening component to complement the already existing North American accents. The overall duration of most of the listening and reading tasks was additionally measured, and the 20 4-option multiple choice (MC) photo was changed to 10 4-option photo statements. Moreover, 30 short conversations with 4-option MCQs were changed to ten longer conversations made up of three 4-option MCQs each. Also, 20 sentence level MC error recognition exercises were changed to 12 4-option MCQ blank word sentences embedded in a text.

Despite the changes that the test witnessed, Chapman and Newfields (2008: 33) indicate that "although we laud changes made in the 2006 revision of the TOEIC, in our opinion the changes have not been comprehensive enough". They cite areas of concern such as the test still being predominantly MCQ format, listening sections being presented in a way as to allow candidates to read the items and their corresponding possible answers (which makes it doubtful if it is truly measuring listening skills, and not reading comprehension) and the questions predominantly dealing with sentence-based comprehension instead of discourse level comprehension. Consequently, the validity (Douglas 1992; Buck 2001; Hirai 2002; Chapman 2005) of the maiden TOEIC has been criticised because of the weaknesses highlighted.

Chapman and Newfields (2008) recommend that more varieties of Asian English should be included (because the majority of the test takers come from Asia), that TOEIC should

depart from demanding descriptive responses from test takers to demanding extensive narrative/descriptive responses, that printed questions and answers in the listening section should be avoided and that alternate response formats (other than the usual MC format) be integrated. They further suggest that TOEIC moves away from sentential level tasks, gives more room for extensive note taking and provides a productive language ability component.

While Chapman and Newfields (2008) looked at the appropriateness of the improvements introduced to the 'New' TOEIC, Jinghua and Constanzo (2013) examined how listening, reading, speaking and writing competences are related through the use of TOEIC data. They also examined how listening and reading competences could ameliorate speaking and writing competences. They found that speaking, listening, reading and writing measure distinct aspects of the English language so much so that one cannot be substituted in a test for another. Jinghua and Constanzo (2013: 14) observe that:

They are moderately correlated, but the correlation is not sufficient for one skill to serve as a valid surrogate for another skill. The results are consistent with research on other English-language tests such as the TOEFL and IELTS tests. Listening, reading, speaking, and writing each measure distinct aspects of English-language proficiency and each of them makes a unique contribution to the measurement of English-language abilities.

Jinghua and Constanzo (2013) also found that listening is crucial and is intertwined with the other aspects of language such as speaking and reading. Jinghua and Constanzo's (2013) finding is corroborated by Manning (1987), Hale et al. (1988) and Sawaki et al. (2008).

Specifically, in the testing of speaking domain, Galaczi (2008) investigated the effectiveness of the paired test-taker interaction in the First Certificate in English (FCE) speaking test which is a test used in most standardised examinations such as the

Cambridge ESOL. The study, which served as a first step in highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the FCE paired test format, found that type of talk and test score shared a close relationship, and this provided validity evidence for the test scores. Also, learners at the lower echelons of language learning exhibit limited ability to interact with their colleagues, whereas the converse was the case for the learners at the higher level. The study filled the existing gap on the need for an FCE scoring rubric which was empirically based.

In a similar study, Brooks (2009) examined the interlocution involvement of adult ESL test takers in two different oral test situations – one with a colleague test taker and the other with the examiners. It was found that significant differences existed in the output of the test takers in the two different settings/scenarios. Brooks (2009: 341) posits that, “when the test takers interacted with other students in the paired test, the interaction was much more complex and revealed the co-construction of a more linguistically demanding performance than did the interaction between examiner and students”. Brooks’s (2009) recommendation that test taker interaction should rather be used by examiners who examine speaking is in the right direction since that approach stands to reveal more aspects of test takers’ speaking competences over the scenario where they interact with their examiners.

Galaczi (2014) investigated how interlocutors communicated at varying proficiency levels when they are engaged in the paired speaking test and highlighted the nuances involved in such paired interactions. Galaczi (2014) found that learners’ interactional competence is a broad concept comprising not just within-turn and between-turn topic development as observable in initiating and responding, but also turn-taking management and active listening.

In their study on writing, Yunus and Chien (2016) investigated SMK Oya Pre-U students’ perceptions on Malaysian University English Test (MUET) writing. Yunus and Chien (2016) found that the majority of the test takers perceived the mind mapping strategy as positive since it helped better their writing skills. Also, it was found that mind mapping

helped the test takers to better plan their writings, grasp a more holistic and in-depth comprehension of topics and be more innovative in their writings. Yunus and Chien's (2016) recommendations that test takers should be introduced to the mind mapping strategy at the pre-writing phase to position them as effective writers, that teachers should emphasise mind-mapping as a technique of teaching to encourage students to generate ideas for their writings and that curriculum developers and text book writers adopt the mind-mapping strategy to help test takers perform better in their writings are thus very laudable.

From the foregoing review, it is evident that a large variety of questions are used in university English language entrance examinations. Also, most of these questions are subject to modifications aimed at improving the overall construct of the examinations – a crucial English language entrance examination quality assurance activity.

2.4 Relationship among different language skills: Previous studies

A number of researchers have investigated the four fundamental language skills, that is, reading, writing, speaking and listening (Sawaki, Stricker & Oranje 2008; Powers, Kim & Weng 2008; Liao, Qu & Morgan 2010; Bozorgian 2012) in the areas of their relevance in language examinations and the relationship that these skills share.

2.4.1 Research done on TOEFL

Sawaki et al. (2008) investigated whether language competence can be perceived as independent components or not. Sawaki et al. (2008: 3) averred that “the current consensus in the field of language testing is that second language ability is multi-componential, with a general factor as well as smaller group factors”. Sawaki et al. (2008) thus, found that reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are distinct aspects of English language testing. The authors' finding is in consonance with what already existing studies conducted by Swinston and Powers (1980), Hale et al. (1988), Hale, Rock and Jirele (1989) and Stricker, Rock and Lee (2005) found.

2.4.2 Research done on IELTS

Whereas Sawaki et al. (2008) investigated whether listening, speaking, writing and reading are unitary or divisible, Bozorgian (2012) investigated how listening, reading, speaking and writing are related using the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) data. They collected data from 700 candidates, and the results showed that the marks gathered from reading, speaking, listening and writing showed moderate correlations. Specifically, the utmost correlation was registered between the listening and the reading marks, and the lowest correlation was registered between reading/speaking and writing/speaking. Listening recorded the utmost correlation pertaining to the total language proficiency, followed by TOEIC reading/writing scores. Bozorgian (2012), therefore, concluded that each of the four skills is unique. The recommendation that each of the four fundamental language competences be given serious consideration in language assessment/evaluation is, therefore, in the right direction.

2.4.3 Research done on TOEIC

Powers et al. (2008) conducted a study using TOEIC marks to obtain the test takers' conceptions of their (test takers') competences to undertake day-to-day English language tasks. Specifically, a survey which was made up of simple listening and reading tasks, for example, "I can understand the days of the week and the months of the year" and difficult statements such as, "I can understand a complex presentation or demonstration in an academic or work-related setting" was undertaken. The candidates were tasked to respond to these statements on a five-point scale (1 = not at all; 5 = easily). The totals of all the listening and reading tasks were calculated and analysed.

Another survey which focused on reading and writing can-do statements was conducted. In that survey, the authors aimed at finding how the speaking and writing marks and the candidates' own assessments of their abilities to undertake the can-do tasks correlated (Powers et al. 2009). Powers et al. (2009) found: (1) that the listening and reading sections were correlated which suggested that these sections have a contribution in the

gauging of test takers' English language competences (Powers et al. 2008) and (2) that the speaking and writing tests were correlated which suggested that these competences contribute individually in gauging test takers' English language competences (Powers et al. 2009).

Furthermore, Liao et al. (2010) examined if there were correlations between the TOEIC listening and reading test marks and the TOEIC speaking and writing test marks to ascertain if these tests test different English language competences. The results indicated that the test scores were correlated with one another, with the highest correlation between reading and listening scores (.73-.7), and the lowest between reading and speaking scores (.56-.57). The disattenuated correlation results also confirmed that the TOEIC tests test four different language competences. That is, although the four skills are related to a certain extent, every one of them tests unique aspects of English language competence that the other cannot test. In order for candidates to fully comprehend their language proficiency skills, the researchers recommended that the candidates should take all of the TOIEC tests (speaking, writing, reading, listening) in order to have a comprehensive language profile.

To round up this section, the four basic language skills are very crucial in determining the language profile of test takers. For this reason, it is pressing on test developers to ensure that all of these four basic language skills are: (1) tested and (2) tested appropriately.

2.5 Benchmarking

In the literature, many scholars have dealt with issues bordering on benchmarking, with some concentrating on English language evaluation. Their concentrations have been on practices in countries such as: South Africa, United Kingdom (UK), US, Vietnam and Hong Kong (Camp 1989; Rosnick, Nolan & Resnick 1995; Louis & BerVersloot 1996; Yorke 1999; Tsui & Andrews 2002; Bunton & Tsui 2002; Falvey & Corniam 2002; Scherman, Howie & Bosker 2011; Scherman, Zimmerman, Howie & Bosker 2014).

2.5.1 Definitions of benchmarking

Bernett (1999) defines benchmarking as a cyclical methodological process of setting standards which are aimed at improving quality of performance. Benchmarking also aims at providing educators with the necessary information which undergirds curriculum evaluation (Muijtjens, Schuwirth, Cohen-Schotanus, Thoben & Van der Vleuten 2008). Defining benchmarking on a similar line, York (1999) opines that benchmarking involves a continuous process of comparing the performances of an entity against the performances of others with the ultimate motive of using the results of the comparison to raise performance levels. In addition, benchmarking refers to the ongoing activity of gauging one's practices against the most advanced practices in existence (<https://www.oshatraining.org/notes/2fnotes04.html>).

These definitions imply that benchmarking always comes up when there is the need to ensure that standards are either not dropped or need to be improved in order to ensure that the target(s) that particular organisations set themselves (for this study it is the six selected universities that use the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations) are achieved.

2.5.2 Classification of benchmarking: General Perspectives

Evidence in the literature suggests that benchmarking is not a one-whole phenomenon. That is, the literature points to the fact that different types of benchmarking exist. Camp (1989), for instance, offers four categories of benchmarking, and these are:

- 1) Internal benchmarking;
- 2) Direct competitors;
- 3) External best practices or industry leaders; and
- 4) Processes which must bear some generic relationship with those targeted for benchmarking.

According to Camp (1989), benchmarking internal operations involves arranging relevant parameters on a continuum and using known differences to inquire about the effectiveness of activities within the organisation with the aim of improving performance. Benchmarking against direct competitors – another process which can help organisations to improve their performance levels – is perceived by Camp (1989) as a rather multifarious category of benchmarking since relevant details necessary for such benchmarking to be carried out may often be shielded from other competitors and thus not readily available in the public domain.

Regarding benchmarking against external best practice, organisations look up to high standards which have been set by key industry players and which have proven to be very successful. A typical example is the use of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge standards by other universities. The fourth domain involves cross-carpeting. That is, it involves an organisation going outside its domain to consider positive standard practices carried out in a different domain and adopting them for the improvement of standards.

In a similar attempt, the following classification of benchmarking is offered by Hefley, Foreman, Engle Jr. and Goodenough (1992):

- 1) Internal benchmarking: This involves a comparison of a process that happens within the organisation with another process which occurs within the same organisation. This implies that aspects of the desirable process(es) are then incorporated into the activities of the less desirable process(es) in a bid to improve upon the standards of the latter.
- 2) Competitive benchmarking: This is a head-on comparison between two direct competitors in which the organisation which finds lapses in its activities after benchmarking with its competitors makes conscious attempts to remedy the situation with the aim of improving the existing standards or performances.

- 3) Functional benchmarking: This is benchmarking conducted outside one's immediate industry. It involves comparing like practices and identifying areas to improve after which apposite strategies are implemented to bring about improvement in performances.
- 4) Generic benchmarking: This generally involves organisations adopting unrelated functional approaches that are applicable to them from other industries and incorporating such into their activities to bring about improvements in standards or performances.

However, Pervaiz and Ahmed (1998: 230) offered eight types of benchmarking. These are discussed below:

- 1) Internal benchmarking: This is a comparison of a process that happens within the organisation with another process which occurs within the same organisation. In other words, it is intra-organisational.
- 2) This has to do with an inter-organisational gauging and comparison of practices and systems.
- 3) Competitive benchmarking: This transcends product comparisons. Competitive benchmarking encapsulates comparisons of processes such as marketing and human resource practices. That is, organisations compare areas such as marketing and human resource practices to identify gaps so that concerned organisations can improve their own practices in such areas.
- 4) Industry benchmarking: This involves benchmarking practices, systems and operations against those of an entire industry. This type of benchmarking is broader in scope than external benchmarking.

- 5) Generic benchmarking: This is focused on emulating or surpassing excellent practices, systems or processes elsewhere, regardless of whether the target entity is similar to the organisation which is organising the benchmarking or not.
- 6) Process benchmarking: This specifically deals with comparisons between discrete practices, systems and processes.
- 7) Performance benchmarking: This involves “comparison and scrutiny of performance attributes such as price, time to market, reliability and robustness etc.”.
- 8) Strategic benchmarking: This type of benchmarking deals with issues bordering on strategy, and it is organised at a level above operational.

It is obvious from these explanations that benchmarking is essential in the operations of organisations, including educational institutions, if they want to maintain or even improve upon the quality of their outputs. It is clear that even though the literature suggests that different classifications of benchmarking exist, there is the recurring theme of benchmarking aiding organisations to improve upon their performances or maintaining their acceptable levels of performances. Consequently, it may be possible to claim that the universities selected for this study equally can use benchmarking to either maintain desirable standards or improve upon their existing standards.

Considering the fact that an aspect of this study is on language assessment benchmarking and not on benchmarking in general, I now turn my attention to language assessment benchmarking.

2.5.3 Research on benchmarking of English language examinations: Previous studies

Benchmarking of language assessment and its related issues have received considerable attention in the literature (Kornblum & Garschick 1992; Thomas & Monoson 1993; Grant 1995; Corniam & Falvey 1997; Sykes & Wilson 1998; Falvey & Corniam 2002). Most of these benchmarking tasks were undertaken to improve performances or clarity regarding the conduct of various examinations in different parts of the world.

Falvey and Corniam (2002), for instance, examined the model of English language which should be used as a standard model for English language teacher benchmarking in Hong Kong in the areas of pronunciation, stress, intonation, discourse, syntax and morphology. Falvey and Corniam (2002), additionally, examined what will constitute the acceptable level of English language proficiency that teachers of the English language need to attain.

It was found that an educated Hong Kong variety of English was deemed the standard model for English language teachers in the country. It was also found that pronunciation, stress, intonation, discourse, syntax and morphology were all linked to the standard Hong Kong model deemed the standard for the English language teachers.

In a related study, Bunton and Tsui (2002) considered Hong Kong's Benchmark Language Assessments for Teachers by questioning whose standards of the English language that the government, businesses, community, examination authority and the teaching profession itself expected teachers of the English language to aspire to. Bunton and Tsui (2002) found that native speaker norms were preferable, as the teachers themselves found using exonorms in the form of native speaker codes more useful and more convenient. Bunton and Tsui (2002: 63) found that in the minority, however, were the benchmark developers/advocates themselves who were found to prefer an "educated Hong Kong model".

Kantacıoğlu, Thomas, O'Dwyer and O' Sullivan (2010) investigated and presented initial findings from the familiarisation, standardisation and empirical validation stages of the Bilkent University School of English Language's attempt to link its Certificate of Proficiency in English (COPE) examination to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). After the investigation, Kantacıoğlu et al. (2010: 112) revealed that:

The level of the examination is now far clearer than previously understood while the quality of the papers has also improved due to the increased professionalism of the writing and delivery process...there have been improvements on the way in which assessment is viewed within the school.

Tannenbaum and Baron (2010) linked the TOEIC[®] Speaking, Writing, Listening and Reading scores to the Standardisation Agreement (STANAG 6001) language proficiency levels. This was an attempt by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) who are custodians of STANAG to have a clear cut or definite general English proficiency levels for military personnel. At the end, Tannenbaum and Baron (2010) were able to benchmark the STANAG to the TOEIC[®] by coming up with the following scoring criteria: 0 (no proficiency), 1 (survival), 2 (functional), 3 (professional), 4 (expert) and 5 (Highly articulate native).

In addition, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2013) benchmarked the 2012 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) English language Examination against the IELTS with the aim of establishing equivalence in the standards between the two examinations. According to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2013: 1), the results of the benchmarking suggested that:

Candidates attaining level 2 in the HKDSE English Language Examination achieved an overall IELTS band score of 4.79 to 5.07 while level 5** candidates achieved 7.51 to 7.77. Candidates with level 3 in HKDSE English Language, which is the minimum English Language requirement for admission

to local universities, achieved an overall IELTS band score of 5.48 to 5.68, indicating that their standards are between those of Modest Users and Competent Users on the IELTS scale.

Tannenbaum and Baron (2015) conducted an investigation to benchmark the minimum test scores for Writing, Reading, Speaking and Listening of the Vietnamese National Standard (VNS) English proficiency examination to the TOEIC test scores. The test scores were successfully adjusted for the VNS to suit the TOEIC standards, and this provided a clear path for the determination of performances of test takers for the VNS.

Also, Tannenbaum and Wylie (2009) set out to identify minimum scores on the TOEFL iBT™ and the TOEIC® that relate to the A1 to the C2 proficiency levels of The Common European Framework References for Languages (CEFR). They also set out to establish minimum test scores for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening for the CEFR based on the TOEFL iBT™ and the TOEIC® standards. A link was established between each section of the TOEIC assessment and level A1 to C1 of the CEFR, except for Reading at C1 level. According to Tannenbaum and Wylie (2009: 14), the outcome of the linkage was positive, and this aided educators and other stakeholders to “interpret the meanings of test scores in terms of the proficiency levels of the CEFR”.

From the foregoing review, it is possible to claim that English language benchmarking to ascertain possible aspects of examinations to improve is not in its infancy. The pieces of evidence from the literature indicate that scholars in language assessment have made giant strides in various parts of the world through the use of different types of examinations – both local and international – to conduct benchmarking to arrive at key decisions regarding their respective examinations. Based on the foregoing, the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examinations can equally be benchmarked to ascertain its veracity.

2.6 The WASSCE: An overview

Based on the fact that the WASSCE is the most commonly used examinations in Anglophone West Africa, including Ghana, to select test takers for placement into universities and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination is an analogous examination to the WASSCE, a general description of the WASSCE is given here.

2.6.1 Description of the WASSCE

For over four decades now, the WASSCE organised by the WAEC for final year students of high schools and for private candidates has been the dominant examination through which candidates are considered for admissions into tertiary institutions in Ghana. WASSCE is a standardised examination in which all candidates answer the same questions across the country. The examination is conducted in May/June for school candidates and October/November for private candidates.

With respect to the procedure for the school candidates, the entry period is September to November, and it lasts between six to eight weeks. School authorities register their candidates and upload their candidates' entry data on-line; the candidates' continuous assessment scores are, however, presented on CDs to WAEC. For the private candidates, the entry period is from February to May, and registration is done online. For the private candidates who register through accredited private institutions, the registration is done offline.

With respect to the subjects examined, the core subjects are: English Language, Integrated Science, Mathematics and Social Studies. For the elective subjects, candidates select specific subject areas based on the programme that they pursue. The programmes available are Agriculture, Business, Technical, Vocational, Visual Arts, General Programme and General Science. Candidates are expected to write either three or four of the electives and have a minimum of three passes in these elective subjects

plus passes in all the four core subjects to be deemed qualified for university placement (<https://www.waecgh.org/EXAMS/WASSCE.aspx>).

Table 2: WASSCE grading system

Credit Grades	WASSCE Grading System	Points
A	A1	1
B	B2	2
C	B3	3
D	C4, C5, C6	4
Pass Grades: Not Acceptable for Tertiary Admission		
E	D7, E8	Pass-no credit
Failing Grade		
F	F9	Fail

Source: <https://gh.usembassy.gov/education-culture/educationusacenter/educational-system-ghana/>

With regard to the grading system of the WASSCE, candidates who score between A1 to C6 for a particular subject are deemed to have passed that particular subject. Grades ranging between D7 to F9 are considered weak and may not be able to aid candidates to secure university placement. A breakdown of the WASSCE grading system is presented in Table 2.

2.7 Stages in the development of English language examinations

Most researches are hinged on theories that aim at explaining the core aspects of such researches and that guide how such studies are conducted. For this research, although there are many learning theories, for example, the behaviourist theory, the cognitive theory and the situated theory, the reverse has been the case for their closely related area – assessment. This is captured in the words of James (2006: 2):

Whilst exciting new developments in our understanding of learning unfold, developments in assessment systems and technology sometimes lag behind. Even some of the most innovative and novel developments, say, in e-assessment, are underpinned by models of learning that are limited or, in some cases, out-of-date. This is understandable too because the development of dependable assessments – always an important consideration in large-scale testing – is associated with an elaborate technology which takes much time and the skills of measurement experts, many of whom have often acquired their expertise in the very specialist field of psychometrics.

According to Berry, the ESOL test development model is a test model where the stages involved in quality English language test development are used as a basis to guide test development. This is the model used by Cambridge to develop suites of proficiency and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) (Saville 2003). This model involves five phases that test developers must consider and go through before arriving at the appropriate test or high-quality test, as explained by Berry (2018). The five phases are: planning phase, design phase, development phase, operational phase and monitoring phase.

2.7.1 ESOL test development model

The stages in Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model which underpinned the conduct of this study are explained below. These are planning phase, design phase, development phase, operational phase and monitoring phase.

2.7.1.1 Planning phase

This phase of the test development model deals primarily with the test designer taking a decision as to which particular type of test to develop, and such a decision is normally expected to be informed by the purpose of the test. Berry (2018) categorises tests into

four types – proficiency, placement, diagnostic and achievement. Proficiency tests are meant to test the test takers’ abilities in a particular field (academic, business). Placement tests provide assessors with information based on which test takers can be placed on ideal/acceptable levels of language programmes; such placements are based on specific scores obtained by test takers. Diagnostic tests are used by experts to find out areas that test takers exhibit weaknesses so that appropriate/necessary support can be given them to help them to improve. Berry (2018: 3) further argues that achievement tests ‘are intended to reflect achievement or progress over a course of study and can be either formative, during a course of study, or summative, at the end of the course’. Since all of these types of examinations have unique purposes, the principles for setting them ought to be clearly stated, and the contents must be developed to achieve those ends.

2.7.1.2 Design phase

This phase is concerned with considering whether the tasks can be replicated so that other forms of the test which ‘should be equivalent in terms of cognitive output generated’ (p. 3) can be produced. Additionally, this phase requires that the physical, psychological and experiential features of the candidates be considered and the feasibility of the test ascertained as regards whether the tasks in the tests can be completed within a given time period. At this point, a blueprint (detailed description) must be made where it will be trialled, then analysed, reviewed and revised.

2.7.1.3 Development phase

This phase involves building a holistic test system. Here, key factors for testing specific skills must be considered. For testing reading, Berry (2018: 4) indicates that some of the factors are: ‘text source, discourse type, domain, topic, length, vocabulary, grammar, text structure’. With respect to listening, some of the factors are: ‘number of participants, text speed, accent, pronunciation and number of times played’. Regarding speaking, some of the factors are: ‘possible modes of delivery, an interlocutor frame designed to ensure that each administration of a test has similar response conditions so that the references made

are comparable across learners, and the types of rating skills required'. Pertaining to writing, some of the parameters are: 'modes of delivery available, types of elicitation task, response formats and scoring criteria'.

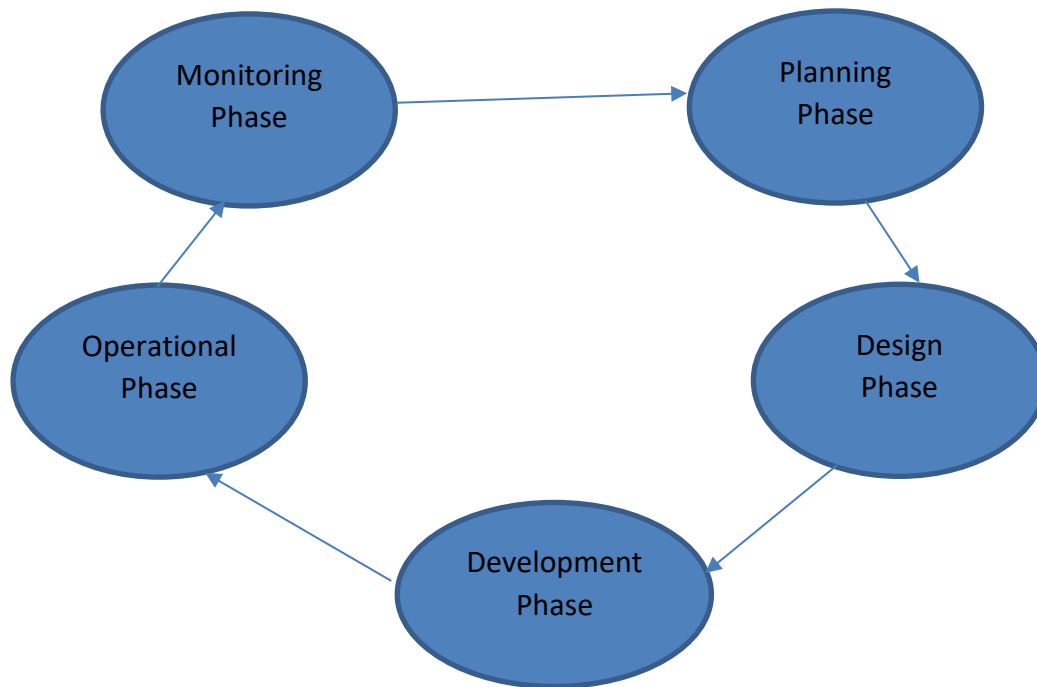


Figure 1: ESOL test development model

Source: Berry (2018)

2.7.1.4 Operational phase

This phase deals basically with the test administration. Any violations of the instructions aimed at ensuring the smooth administration of the test can negatively affect the validity of the test scores. Any problems that the test developer might have ignored at the previous stage can be observed at this stage.

2.7.1.5 Monitoring phase

This phase involves the test developer reviewing the test holistically (all questions, instructions and processes involved). As Berry (2018: 4) indicates, 'this review leads to

the evaluation and then the revision of the test. Ultimately, looping back to the planning phase of the test-development cycle'. This is expected to be an on-going process to preserve the quality of the examinations.

2.8 Conceptual framework for the study

Based on the difficulty in finding suitable assessment theories (See 2.7: 47), this study adopted Berry's (2018) ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) test development model as the ideal framework for evaluating the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities (See Figure 2: 55). The model was modified to make it more suitable for the study because the study did not consider the administration (operational phase) of the questions, but rather considered the nature and scope of the questions that are set. In addition, benchmarking of examinations, which is an examination quality assurance practice, was incorporated into the model to enhance the understanding of the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities.

With respect to the structure of the model, four phases with modified constructs from the literature are deemed as the necessary phases for English language assessors to use for placement examinations, typically the English language component of the Mature Students' entrance examinations into selected Ghanaian universities. The first phase (planning phase) deals fundamentally with the English language assessor determining the type of test/examination to use – proficiency, diagnostic, placement and achievement. Each of these tests performs a unique function, so it is crucial that a clear decision is made to engender the construct of the items. For this research, the examination is typically a placement examination.

After determining the type of examination, the design phase sets in to allow the language assessor to determine the replicability of the examination. The language assessor must then give an in-depth explanation of the examination and trial, analyse, review and revise

it. To improve the examination's quality, benchmarking of the questions, which from the experience of the researcher, is a major examination question quality assurance strategy must be conducted in this phase to ensure that clearly perceived high standards are replicated or even improved upon.

The third phase is the test development phase. Here, crucial parameters for testing particular language skills must be adopted. The model suggests four of these language competences – reading, speaking, listening, writing. For the testing of reading, some of the factors are: 'text source, discourse type, domain, topic, length, vocabulary, grammar, text structure' (p. 4). With respect to listening, some of the factors are: 'number of participants, text speed, accent, pronunciation and number of times played' (p. 4). Regarding speaking, some of the factors are: 'possible modes of delivery, an interlocutor frame designed to ensure that each administration of a test has similar response conditions so that the references made are comparable across learners, and the types of rating skills required' (p. 4). Pertaining to writing, some of the parameters are: 'modes of delivery available, types of elicitation task, response formats and scoring criteria' (Berry 2018: 4).

In order to further enhance the examination and maintain high standards, the monitoring phase, which is a comprehensive review of all the previously explained phases, is carried out. This process, which must be on-going at all times, is ultimately aimed at evaluating the question setting process and revising aspects which may be identified to need improvement. In the end, a careful execution of these phases will yield a comprehension of the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination into selected Ghanaian universities.

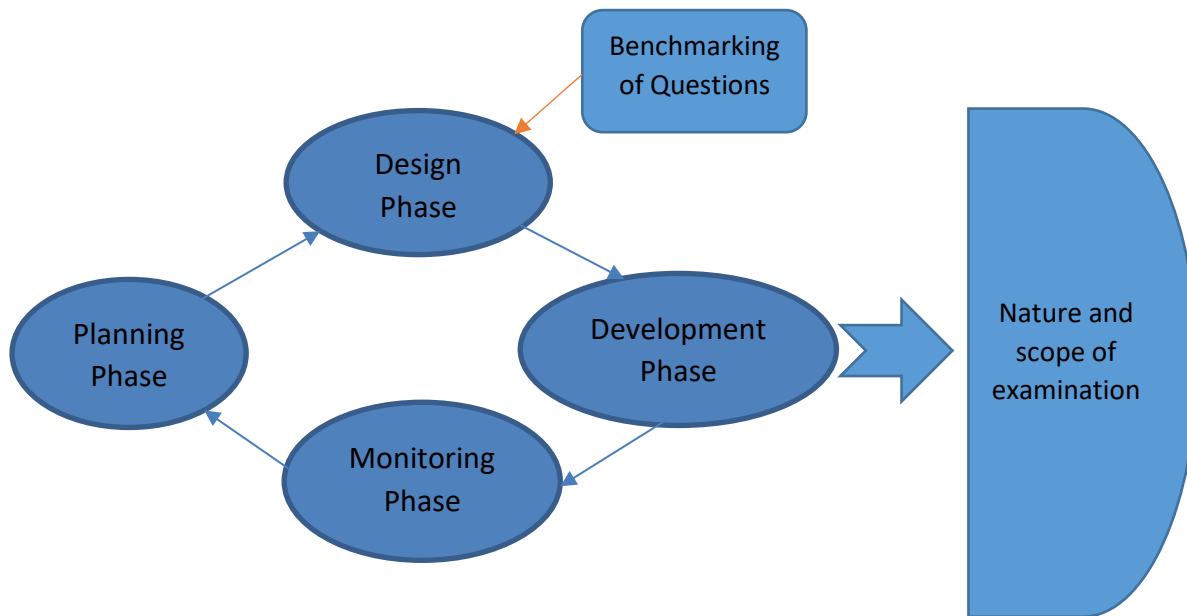


Figure 2: Examination evaluation model

Source: Berry (2018) modified

2.9 Chapter summary

Literature on the nature of examinations, with emphasis on English language examinations, was reviewed in this chapter. Specifically, a holistic look at the field of examinations, research on the need for evaluation of English language entrance examinations, the basic language skills tested in English language examinations and issues related to benchmarking of language examinations were presented here. The chapter ends with a conceptual framework that underpinned the conduct of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE ENQUIRY PROCESS

3.0 Introduction

In line with the study's principal objective which is to evaluate the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities, the research philosophy and design and the stages that the researcher underwent to achieve the research objectives are presented in Chapter Three. The areas covered include: the research paradigm, the study design, research methodology, study area, data and sources, target population, sampling techniques, investigative tools and data collection process. The ethical considerations which were applied in the conduct of this research are equally presented here.

3.1 Study paradigm

Fundamentally, a research paradigm is the lens through which researchers view the world and through which researchers make certain key decisions concerning the conduct of their enquiries. That is, a research paradigm constitutes the philosophical purpose based on which a study is conducted (Cohen & Manion 1994). Bogdan and Biklen (1998: p. 22) also posit that research paradigm refers to, "a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts and propositions that orient thinking and research". Also, Willis (2007) perceives a paradigm as a universal belief system, a world view, or a framework that underpins research and practice in a particular field. Research paradigm, therefore, plays a crucial role in shaping the conduct of researches (Creswell 2014). Researchers may use single or multiple paradigms in their studies, depending on the lenses through which they view their studies (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Creswell (2003) identifies four paradigms (postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism) which are subsequently discussed here.

Postpositivism researchers normally use a scientific approach to research. They normally view their studies as logically linked steps. These researchers also believe not in a single perspective of participants but rather in multiple or varied perspectives. They, additionally, follow rigorous approaches to collect and analyse qualitative data. These researchers, again, employ varied approaches to analyse data, use validity approaches and write their reports in the problem-questions-data collection-results-conclusions order (Creswell 2003; Willis 2007; Taylor & Medina 2013).

For constructivism, researchers develop their subjective viewpoints about the world. These researchers do not attach single meanings to objects or things but rather attach varied meanings to objects or things in order to get a complexity of views to comprehend the world. These researchers often begin with broad or general questions in order to get the overall understanding of what participants do in their (participants') lives/settings. These researchers often focus on particular contexts or settings in which participants operate so that they can comprehend the historical and cultural backgrounds of the participants. In the end, the researchers interpret findings based on their personal experiences (Creswell 2003; Sarantakos 2012).

Advocacy/participatory paradigm primarily seeks to change marginalised groups, their environment or even the life of the researcher himself/herself. That is, these researchers, as part of their studies, involve actions that aim at bringing about the betterment of the situation(s) in which individuals or groups find themselves. As issues such as oppression, inequality, suppression and alienation are studied, their underlying causes are unveiled, and, through this, these researchers provide a voice for the marginalised groups or individuals. To make these marginalised groups heard, the enquirer may involve them in the construct of the research questions and data gathering, analysis and report preparation. The overall goal of this paradigm is to ameliorate the situation(s) of the marginalised (Creswell 2003).

Pragmatism derives from behaviours, circumstances and their aftermath, instead of antecedent situations (Patton 1990). Enquirers who use this paradigm emphasise the

problem of their enquiries and utilise every available procedure to comprehend the problem (Rossman & Wilson 1991). Pragmatism has no restriction with respect to a specific system of philosophy and reality. Pragmatism is applicable to mixed methods enquiries because such studies are underpinned by both quantitative and qualitative assumptions (De Vos et al. 2005). Pragmatists, additionally, believe that research constantly takes place in social, historical, political and other contexts. Additionally, researchers are free to choose which combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods to employ to best meet their studies' aspirations (Cherryholmes 1992; Creswell 2013; Creswell 2014).

The present study is grounded on two paradigms – postpositivism and constructivism. The study is grounded on the postpositivism paradigm because it uses multiple perspectives in the form of different interviews from different settings (See 3.8.1: 75) and follows rigorous approaches to qualitative data collection and analysis (See 3.8: 75 and 1.7.6: 17).

This study is grounded on constructivism because the researcher began with broad or general questions in order to get the overall understanding of the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities. Again, the enquiry focused on the particular contexts or settings (six universities in Ghana) in which participants operate to position the enquirer to better comprehend the phenomenon.

3.2 Study design

Parahoo (1997) explains a study design as a plan that describes when, how and where to collect data and analyse them. Burns and Grove (2007: 195) explain a study design as “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings”. Also, van Wyk (2012: 4) explains research design to mean “the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems to the pertinent (and achievable) empirical research”. Creswell (2014) posits that the study design

involves varieties of investigations that may use qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods procedures to provide particular directions for the conduct of a study, by specifically outlining and controlling the kind of data to collect, the data collection steps and the data analysis procedure. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006) avers that the core aim of research design is that, through its use, appropriate answers to the research questions can be provided through evidence.

One crucial aspect of a study design is the aim of the study. The aim/purpose can be a single or a combined approach of predictive, exploratory, evaluative and descriptive. The main aim of this research was to evaluate the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities (See 1.2: 3). An integration of exploratory, explanatory and descriptive approaches was, therefore, used. A detailed discussion of each of these approaches will be provided subsequently in this chapter.

De Vaus (2001) avers that whereas research designs provide the framework for determining the kind of evidence required to unambiguously answer the research questions, research methods deal with the approaches through which the data for the study are going to be collected. That is, for the research methods, issues such as whether or not to use observation, questionnaires and interviews are paramount whereas for the study design, the emphasis is on the appropriateness and sufficiency of the evidence to be collected to find responses to the research questions. The implication of this is that the scope of the study design informs the research methods that are chosen by the enquirer. The present study is equally guided by this fundamental difference.

3.3 Research methodology

Some researchers have attempted to explain these two terms and also to strike the differences that exist between them. Kothari (2004) argues that research methodology refers to the processes involved in the scientific conduct of research. Also, Leedy and Ormrod (2005)

define research methodology as a branch of logic which deals with logical principles which underlie the conduct of scientific enquiry. Somekh and Lewin (2005: 346) assert that it involves “the collection of methods or rules by which a particular piece of research is undertaken” and the “principles, theories and values that underpin a particular approach to research”.

Pole and Morrison (2003: 4-5) espouse that “methods can be seen to relate to the tool bag from which the researcher selects the most appropriate instrument with which to gather data and subsequently to analyse those data”. Kothari (2004: 7-8) posits that research methods “refer to the methods that researchers use in performing research operations”. That is, all the methods employed by the researcher as he/she studies the research problem is termed “research methods”.

This suggests that research methodology encapsulates the entire approach to a study, including key areas such as the paradigm and the theoretical framework whereas research methods is concerned with the approaches/processes/tools utilised for the collection and analysis of data (Mackenzie & Knipe 2008). In other words, research methodology sets the principles for the conduct of research while research methods implement these principles. The difference between research methodology and research methods is summed up by Kothari (2004: 8):

The scope of research methodology is wider than that of research methods. Thus, when we talk of research methodology we not only talk of the research methods but also consider the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explain why we are using a particular method or technique and why we are not using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher himself or by others.

The present study perceives methodology and methods as distinct. That is, methodology is perceived as the ideology that undergirds how the entire study is carried out, whereas

methods are perceived as the practices such as collection and analysis of data that aid researchers actualise the goals of their studies. Methodology can be qualitative, quantitative or mixed (Krathwohl 1993; Creswell 2003; Thomas 2003; Gorard 2004). This study adopted the qualitative methodology since the enquirer aimed to understand the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities by using unquantifiable facts rather than numeric data analysis.

3.3.1 Qualitative research

This study adopted the qualitative research approach because the intention was to thoroughly comprehend the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities. In the view of Creswell (2014), qualitative research, which is a data enhancer, involves the researcher investigating a phenomenon to comprehend the meanings individual/groups attribute to the phenomenon. The steps in such investigations include formulating research questions and procedures, gathering data in the participants setting, inductively conducting data analysis by building from specifics to general themes and interpreting the data to arrive at the right meanings. Creswell (2014) further contends that the report that is presented in the end is flexible with respect to its structure. Strauss and Corbin (1998), defining qualitative research design on a similar line, suppose that it is any type of enquiry whose results are not derived through statistical or mathematical methods.

On qualitative data collection, as Patton (2002), as cited in Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen (2006: 247), sets forth:

Qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents. The data from interviews consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge. The data from observations consist of detailed descriptions of people's activities, actions and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organisational

processes that are part of observable human experience. Document analysis in qualitative inquiry yields excerpts, quotations or entire passages from organisational clinical and programme records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys.

Patton (2002) and Ary et al. (2006) purport that qualitative enquirers aim at comprehending phenomena by concentrating on the holistic issue instead of reducing them into specifics. This is done with the intention of having a total picture and thorough understanding, rather than statistical analysis of data.

Some notable qualitative research approaches are: narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research and case study research (Creswell 2007). This research adopts the case study research (specifically the multiple/collective case study) so that the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities will be thoroughly understood.

Case study research deals with the researcher selecting a problem/phenomenon and selecting the site/context within which to study that particular problem/phenomenon so that the phenomenon will be very well understood. Creswell (2007: 73) espouses that case study "involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)." According to Babbie (2001: 285), there is little convergence among researchers as regards what a case is or what a "bounded system" is. The case being studied may refer to a process, activity, event, programme or individual or multiple individuals. A case may even mean a period of time instead of a group of people.

As Zainal (2007) states, case study explores and investigates contemporary real-life situations through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions

and their relationships. That is, case study affords the investigator the opportunity to closely scrutinize data for a particular setting, and this approach has the advantage of providing useful data for real-life situations and giving in-depth information about the behaviour of research subjects. Many researchers view this qualitative research approach as a methodology or as an all-inclusive research approach (Merriam 1998; Yin 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Creswell 2007). For the present investigation, case study is equally considered as the underpinning methodology or comprehensive research approach applied to fully comprehend the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities.

Case study researchers have the option to choose between qualitative and quantitative case studies based on the kind of phenomena they are investigating (Hosenfeld 1984; Block 1986; Yin 2003). Yin (2003) further argues that there are varieties such as exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case studies under the qualitative and quantitative researches.

On their part, Stake (1995) and Creswell (2007) identify three kinds of case studies based on intent – the simple/instrumental, the collective/multiple and the intrinsic case study. For the simple case study, the investigator selects a single case to investigate deeply depending on the investigator's focus on the case. Pertaining to the collective/multiple case study, the enquirer focuses on the phenomenon and chooses multiple cases/sites to study the phenomenon. In its conduct, the researcher investigates the phenomenon by replicating the procedures across all the selected cases (Yin 2003). With respect to the intrinsic case study, the investigator focuses on the problem because of its unfamiliar nature and investigates it to get a better understanding of it.

The collective/multiple case study was chosen to conduct this investigation. For the purpose of getting a better understanding of the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities, six universities in Ghana – four public (two comprehensive and two technical)

and two private (comprehensive) – were chosen for this study. Identical procedures were used to conduct the investigation across the six universities.

Researchers have advanced different approaches for carrying out case study investigations (Stake 1995; Mirriam 1998; Yin 2003). Five steps advanced by Stake (1995) were used to carry out this study:

- 1) For the purpose of obtaining a thorough understanding of the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected universities in Ghana, the case study approach was selected for this investigation.
- 2) Six cases were identified and used to conduct the investigation. That is, four public (two comprehensive and two technical) and two comprehensive private universities, making a total of six cases, were used for this study.
- 3) Varied approaches were employed to gather data for this enquiry. These were: (a) past questions of both the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities, the WASSCE English language component and the IELTS descriptive document and (b) an interview guide used to obtain data from the lecturers who are involved in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions.
- 4) Holistic analysis was used for the study. That is, the entire case was analysed.
- 5) The meaning of the case was finally reported. A phase that Lincoln and Guba (1985) called "lessons learned" phase.

The study additionally adopted the constructivist paradigm of exploration, description and explanation. These qualitative sub-methods helped in understanding the nature and

scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities.

3.3.2 Exploratory research

Exploratory researchers are fundamental or start-up researchers who seek to investigate phenomena that have not yet been investigated. That is, these researchers attempt to unearth information based on which further enquiries can be conducted (Neuman 2007). Because this study evaluates the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities (a research area which has not received research attention), it assumes the exploratory approach as it explores the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities, the basic language skills that are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities and how the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities is benchmarked. Based on the fact that exploratory studies are meant to enable researchers gain more insight into particular phenomena, this study was aimed at unravelling information in this emergent area.

3.3.3 Descriptive research

After the phenomenon has been explored, it is necessary that the outcomes are described vividly so that the research community can fully understand the phenomenon. This is where descriptive research comes in. Descriptive research fundamentally deals with offering a picturesque account of the phenomenon to make it as understandable as possible (Neuman 2007). In the current study, the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities, the basic language skills which are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities, how the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance

Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities is benchmarked and the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana were described.

3.3.4 Explanatory research

After describing the phenomenon, the next area of concern is to answer "why?". To this end, the study gives an in-depth explanation as to why things were as they were. Specifically, the reasons underlying the criteria the six universities used in setting the questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities and how the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities was benchmarked were given.

3.4 The study area

The Republic of Ghana is found along the Gulf of Guinea (West Africa). The country puts a lot of emphasis on education, and her '... educational system is considered one of the best in West Africa' (<https://www.justlanded.com/english/Ghana/Ghana-Guide/Educational/Introduction-to-education>). Consequently, it can be said that university education – which is the highest in the country – is also given equal attention. The National Accreditation Board (NAB), stipulates that Ghana presently has a total of ninety-nine (99) universities. Eighteen (18) of them are public universities (ten [10] are comprehensive universities whereas eight [8] are technical universities) and eighty-one (81) are private institutions that offer programmes leading to the award of degrees (www.nab.gov.gh).

The constitution of Ghana makes provision for education, particularly higher education. The 1992 Constitution states that higher education shall be made accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free

education. And every person shall have the right, at his own expense, to establish and maintain a private school or schools at all levels and of such categories and in accordance with such conditions as may be provided by law.

3.4.1 Public universities in Ghana (Comprehensive)

The earliest of such universities (University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast) were modelled around the British university system, particularly the University of London's system (Edu-Buandoh 2010). For instance, the first public university in Ghana (the University College of the Gold Coast, now University of Ghana) was established in 1948 under the auspices of the University of London (Agbodeka 1998). These universities were established with different mandates to foster higher learning in Ghana and West Africa, and their degrees were awarded from British universities until they gained autonomy to award their own degrees. Their main targets were liberal courses and a few technical and professional courses (Edu-Buandoh 2010). The other public universities were subsequently established (Ofori & Atiogbe 2012).

These public universities had the full support of government for the most parts of the 1960s to the mid1970s. However, they subsequently went through a lot of challenges because of the country's severe economic constraints. By the mid1980s, government support to the universities was relegated to the background because of structural reforms that were imposed on Ghana by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The World Bank and the IMF favoured basic and secondary education rather (Ofori & Atiogbe 2012). The existing universities faced the challenge of insufficient funding and increases in student populations; the necessary infrastructure to aid the systems to run smoothly were equally absent (www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/profiles/Ghana.htm). From 1991/1992 to 1998/1999, for example, enrolment increased by 165% (from 11,857 to 31,640) (www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/profiles/Ghana.htm). Also, the poor funding resulted in poor conditions of service which culminated in the universities' inability to attract and retain academic staff (Ofori & Atiogbe 2012).

Presently, the public universities (comprehensive) admit both local and foreign students. According to Edu-Buandoh (2010), these universities offer market-driven courses that cover varied subject areas and award all types of degrees. With respect to admissions, these universities make use of the WASSCE and the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations to admit students.

3.4.2 Public universities in Ghana (Technical)

The technical universities in Ghana started operating as government technical institutes, under the Ghana Education Service. In line with the government's reforms in the educational sector in the early 1990s, the government decided to establish a polytechnic per region. Consequently, each one of the then ten regions in Ghana had one polytechnic (Nsiah-Gyabaah 2009; <http://tertiaryeducationghana.blogspot.com/2015/03/polytechnics-in-ghana.html>). These polytechnics were established by the Polytechnic Act 321 (PNDC Law 1993) to be part of the Ghana Tertiary Education System. The polytechnics then started offering Higher National Diploma programmes in the 1993/1994 academic year (Takoradi Technical University 2018).

The polytechnics had the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) as their top advisory and constitutional agency. However, by law, direct governance and administration of the polytechnics were vested in their respective Councils and the Academic Boards respectively. The former was the highest policy formulator. The latter, the Academic Board, was responsible for determining academic policies, prescribing rules and regulations for operation and advising the Polytechnic Council on policy formulation. The Polytechnics were governed and administered in accordance with the Polytechnic Law (1992) and their respective statutes (Takoradi Polytechnic 2005).

The polytechnics were mandated by law to support the efforts of the universities by helping to improve access to higher education through the training of middle and higher-level manpower (Amedorme, Agbezudor & Sakyiama 2014; Takoradi Technical University 2018). Polytechnic education's relevance to Ghana's development cannot be

overemphasised (Nsiah-Gyabaah 2009; Amedorme et al. 2014), and the government's White Paper on Reforms to the Tertiary Education System (2004), as cited in Nsiah-Gyabaah (2009: 96), stated:

Polytechnics have a distinctive and important role to play in the middle level manpower development which is particularly critical for the effective implementation of decentralisation policies and planning reforms. Particular attention will be given to the areas of applied science and technology, arts, industrial commerce, secretarial and accounting practice, fine arts, social services, and communications practice...The provision of such programmes will complete the cycle of technical education and provide a capacity for higher-level technician training and practical research.

An Act of Parliament, the Technical University Act 2016 (Act 922) converted eight of the ten existing polytechnics into technical universities (Takoradi Technical University 2018). These technical universities now offer degrees and masters programmes mainly in the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) domain. These technical universities also admit students through the WASSCE and the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations system.

3.4.3 Private universities in Ghana (comprehensive)

Private universities began from Christian missionaries and Islamic organisations, and they were established for religious and educational purposes (Utuka 2008; Amponsah & Onuoha 2013). Most of these private universities are, therefore, sponsored by religious organisations (Varghese 2004; Teferra & Knight 2008). Also, most of these private universities are indigenously Ghanaian by ownership and administration; a few, however, are owned and run by foreigners (Boateng 2014).

The PNDC Law 319, 1993 established the National Accreditation Board (NAB) which was subsequently reformed by the NAB ACT 744, 2007 (Utuka 2008). NAB was the state institution responsible for regulating the activities of the private universities. They conducted full evaluation of all aspects of these private universities (Utuka 2008). One cardinal area of the evaluation was that the existing private universities had to show full proof of affiliation to the existing public universities before being allowed to run (Boateng 2014). They were expected to be affiliated for not less than ten years before being granted the opportunity to award their own degrees through a presidential charter (Boateng 2014).

Private university education in Ghana expanded, and this expansion was because of globalisation, increases in population and demands for higher certificates by employers (Armah 2016b). The then existing three public universities (University of Ghana [UG], University of Cape Coast [UCC] and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology [KNUST]) did not have the capacity to grant admission to the growing number of applicants who obtained acceptable results (Palmer 2005; Utuka 2008). For instance, in 2008, the University of Ghana received 22, 865 applications but were able to enroll only 8,774 (Boateng 2014). Subsequently, pressure on the existing comprehensive public universities to increase access to university education in Ghana and the World Bank's call for education in Ghana to be liberalised caused a quick springing up of private universities (Armah 2016b). The absolute monopoly of UG, UCC and KNUST was, therefore, non-existent again (Varghese 2004) since the private universities were needed to augment the efforts of the public universities (Abraham 2017).

The number of private universities have increased since 1993. In 1999, for instance, there were only two of them in the country (Boateng 2014), but they are now 91 (www.nab.gov.gh). In 2006, they admitted 9,500 (8%) of all tertiary students in Ghana (Feature Article 2009). The private universities are mostly comprehensive, and they employ few full-time lecturers; most of their faculty work on part time basis and are mostly PhD and master's degree holders (Utuka 2008). According to Arthur and Arthur (2016), the present private universities have introduced innovative market driven programmes and have flexible arrangements to meet different students' needs. One of such

innovations is the admissions conducted through the Mature Students' Entrance Examination system currently in practice.

3.5 Data collection sources

Primary and secondary data were used for this research. Primary data were obtained from those lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in the six universities. The primary data were elicited through an interview guide. The secondary data, on the other hand, were English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination past questions administered over three years – 2016, 2017, 2018. These past questions were obtained from the libraries of the universities where past questions are mostly kept. These three years were used in order to strengthen future conclusions (See 3.12.1: 86). In addition, the 2016, 2017 and 2018 WASSCE English language component past questions and an IELTS descriptive document were used in this study.

3.6 Target population

The target population for the present research comprised: (1) the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination past questions administered by the selected Ghanaian universities, (2) the WASSCE English language component past questions, (3) the IELTS descriptive document and (4) the lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. The past examination questions and the IELTS descriptive document were used because they contain or house the test items that were analysed and some details of the nature of the examinations respectively. The lecturers, on the other hand, participated in the study because their duties deal directly with the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions of their respective universities. Hence, the belief was that they would be in the position to provide enough data for this study.

A total of 18 English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations past examinations questions were used for the study. This number was considered adequate because the study focused on examining each question in more detail for its component parts in terms of the basic language skills tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana.

Also, a total of three WASSCE English language component past questions were used for this study for benchmarking purposes. These three past questions were selected to correspond with the years used to select the questions for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in order to provide an even ground/basis for the benchmarking of the two sets of examinations. Furthermore, on benchmarking, the IELTS descriptive document was used to elicit details about the basic language skills tested in the IELTS to enable comparisons to be made with the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance examinations into selected Ghanaian universities and the WASSCE English language component past questions. Five lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions participated in the study.

3.7 Sampling techniques

Sampling techniques come in two forms – probability and non-probability (Neuman 2007; Showkat & Parveen 2017). Whereas the probability sampling techniques normally fit quantitative studies, the non-probability sampling techniques are best suited for qualitative studies. Some examples of quantitative sampling techniques are: random sampling with and without replacement, stratified, cluster and systematic (Taherdoost 2016). Some types of non-probability sampling techniques are: convenience, purposive, quota and snowball (Showkat & Parveen 2017). Because this study is a qualitative study, the quota, purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed to collect the

data (See Table 1: 14). As noted by Showkat and Parveen (2017), through non-probability methods, researchers are able to study particular phenomena to gain valuable insights. Same was applicable to this study, as it evaluated the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities.

A quota sampling technique was used to select 18 English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination past questions from the six universities found in Ghana. The first stage of the process involved putting of the various universities into three quotas, namely: public (comprehensive 10; technical 8) and private comprehensive (81) (See Table 1: 14). Quota sampling involves segmenting the target population into mutually exclusive sub-groups. This segmentation, therefore, means that an individual can be a member of only one group (Brick 2011; Yang & Banamah 2014). Quota sampling was used for the study because it allows all sub-groups within the population to be represented (Yang & Banamah 2014). Similarly, for this study, it was adopted because it allowed all the three sub-groups – public (comprehensive and technical) and private comprehensive universities – to be fairly represented. Also, it afforded the researcher the opportunity to easily compare the individuals in the target population. That is, through quota sampling, the investigator had the opportunity to determine the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and private comprehensive universities.

At the second stage of the selection process, two universities were purposively selected from each of the three groups yielding a total of six universities. Also, six lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions were purposively selected to be part of this research. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher realises that specific data can be obtained only from particular participants basically because they are authorities on the phenomenon under study. Such participants may have acquired that knowledge because of a particular role they play or position they occupy, and this positions them to provide useful data for the enquiry. As Creswell (2007: 125) purports, “the enquirer selects individuals and sites for study

because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the study”.

Similarly, Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) proffer that purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of participants because of particular qualities they possess. Consistent with Creswell's (2007: 126) position that this type of sampling is usable “at the site level, at the event or process and at the participant level”, the six universities in Ghana were selected (site level) for the study based on the belief that they could provide enough data to answer the research questions. Additionally, the six lecturers (one from each of the selected universities) were purposively selected (participant level) because their duties dealt directly with the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions – a role which was envisioned would position them to provide enough data for the study.

For the third stage, there was a convenience selection of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions from each of the selected universities. Specifically, questions administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 were selected. Also, the WASSCE English language component past questions administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the IELTS descriptive document were conveniently selected for this study for benchmarking purposes. This technique implies the selection of items/elements from the population mainly on the grounds of ease and accessibility. That is, the researcher makes the selection on the basis of only accessibility and does not consider representativeness.

As Etikan et al. (2016: 2) espouse, convenience sampling is utilised when, “members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study”. Similarly, for this enquiry, convenience sampling was employed to choose 18 English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination past questions by selecting three each (2016, 2017 and 2018) from the six selected universities. In addition, the WASSCE English language component past

questions administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the IELTS descriptive document were conveniently selected for this study for benchmarking purposes. These selections were done because the questions were readily available to the researcher. Additionally, this sampling technique was used because it is prompt, uncomplicated and economical.

3.8 Investigative tools

Two main instruments were employed to conduct this research – interview guide and documents.

3.8.1 Interview guide

Interview remains a very popular tool for collecting qualitative data (de Vos, Strydom & Delport 2005; Creswell 2007; Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009) over other tools such as participant observation, participant journaling, researcher reflection and focus groups which play a secondary role in qualitative studies (Creswell 2007). Kvale (2006) defines in-depth interviews as approaches used to comprehend the world based on the interviewee's perspective and to uncover people's interpretation of their experiences. Seidman (1998: 1) states that "you interview because you are interested in other people's stories".

An interview guide was used to gather data for this enquiry. An interview guide has some of the benefits of both informal and structured interviews. Creswell (2007) espouses that interview guides allow the interviewer to follow pre-set questions, but not all of the prearranged probes, transitions and follow-ups are used during the interview. The interviewer, therefore, has the freewill to deviate from the interview questions as and when necessary to pursue unexpected findings and fruitful directions. Field and Morse (1994) also opine that interview guides are employed to gather data on a specific subject. They add that whereas the subject is known, the responses cannot be anticipated. Based on the fact that some pre-set questions could be used in the interview and based on the

flexibility to follow up on serendipitous prompts, the interview guide was preferred over the informal and structured interviews for this study.

In that regard, an interview guide was employed to collect data from the lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions in the selected universities. The in-depth interview method and its accompanying interview guide allowed the researcher to probe for details relating to the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions, the approaches that are employed to benchmark the examinations and the basic language skills that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations test by the six universities. The in-depth interview method and its accompanying interview guide, additionally, aided in observing the behaviour and emotions of the lecturers. As Boyce and Neale (2006) indicate, interviews become necessary when the enquirer intends to arrive at detailed information about a participant's thoughts and attitudes or wants to explore new issues thoroughly. Similarly, Finn and Jacobson (2008) aver that interviews allow the respondents to express vital issues relating to their environments; interviews, additionally, are significant tools for understanding a subject matter or phenomenon.

The researcher personally visited five universities and interviewed the lecturers responsible for setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. In all, five in-depth interviews were carried out in five of the selected universities because one of the lecturers turned down the interview request.

3.8.2 Document

All over the world, researchers are storing valuable data, and this has made the use of existing data for enquiries more relevant (Walliman 2006; Bowen 2009; Johnston 2014). The English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination past questions (which are documents) were utilised for this enquiry. Also, WASSCE English language component past questions were used in this study. These past questions

covered a three-year period – 2016, 2017 and 2018. In addition, the IELTS descriptive document was used in this study for benchmarking purposes. Document, according to Creswell (2007) and De Vaus (2001), is one source through which data can be retrieved to be used in a case study.

The link between the case study approach and the data gathering methods, as employed in this investigation, are summed up by De Vaus (2011) in Figure 3:

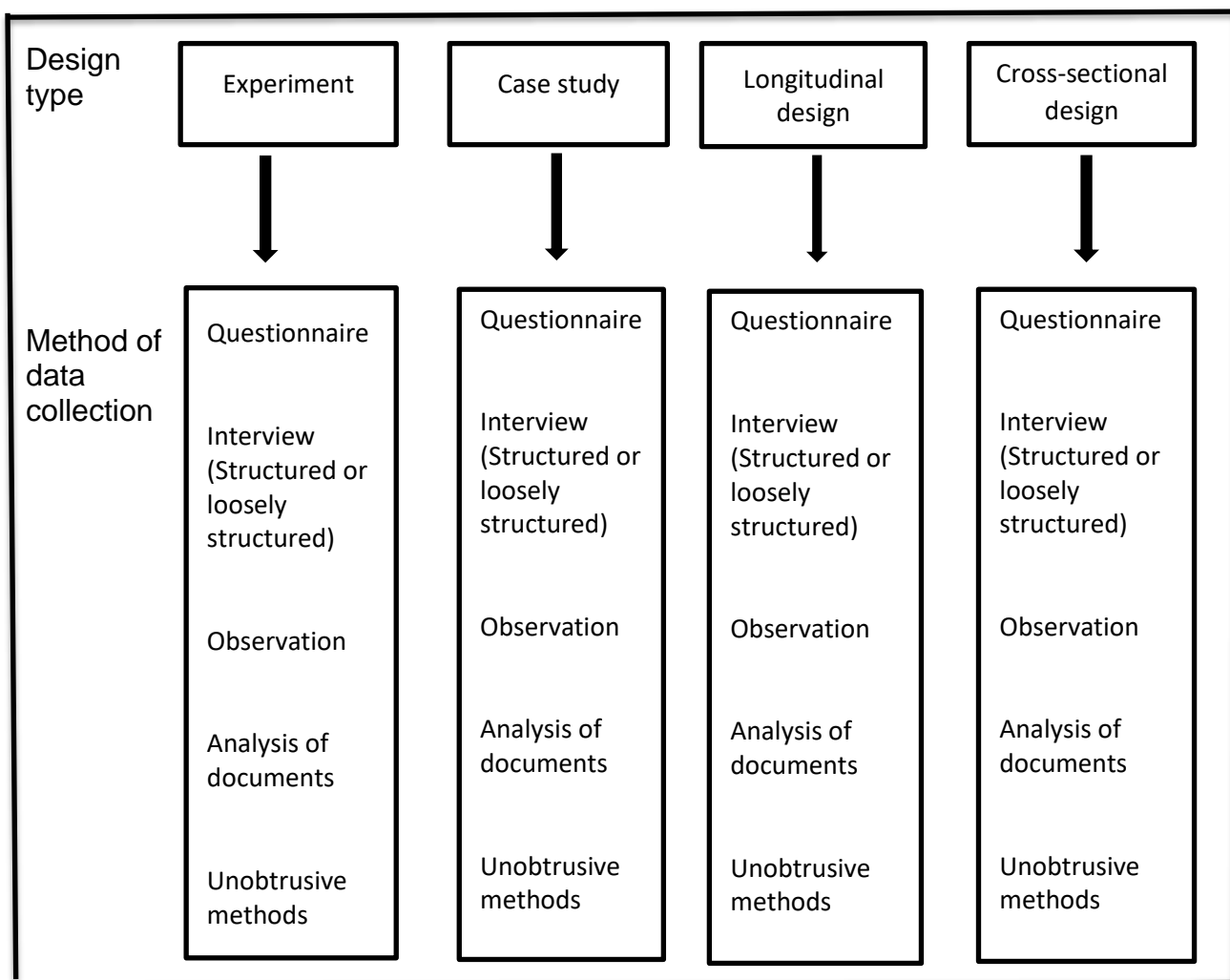


Figure 3: Relationship between research design and particular data collection methods

Source: De Vaus (2011)

3.8.3 Field notes

Field notes were, additionally, used in this study to gather primary data. Key issues related to the basic language skills tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, the criteria used to set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions and the approaches used to benchmark the examinations were noted by the researcher during the interviews for the sake of future references. Field notes are comprehensive descriptions of subjects' activities and the setting (Arkava & Lane 1983; Schurink 1998).

Field notes were crucial to this study as they helped save valuable data which could have otherwise been lost had the field notes not been taken. These issues were handwritten in a book prepared specifically for that purpose. This allowed the researcher to reflect on the issues, interpret and analyse them (Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009).

3.9 Data Collection

The specific data collection techniques used to obtain the data for the study are presented in this section. The presentation is done sequentially according to each research question.

3.9.1 Which basic language skills are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

For this research question, an interview guide was used to conduct semi-structured interviews with the five lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. In the Interview Guide (See Appendix E Section Two: 212), specific areas such as the basic language skills the lecturers test in the examinations and the specific test items the lecturers generally use to test the basic language skills were explored. Field notes were, additionally, taken as a backup to the audio recordings done during all the five interview sessions. Apart from the semi-

structured interviews, the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 were explored to elicit data pertaining to the basic language skills tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

3.9.2 What are the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana?

For this research question, the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018, the WASSCE English language component administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the IELTS descriptive document were used to elicit data pertaining to the basic language skills tested for the three types of examinations. The same sources provided data pertaining to the topical areas or language competences tested specifically in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and the WASSCE English language component.

3.9.3 What are the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions?

Pertaining to this research question, an interview guide was used to conduct semi-structured interviews with the five lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. In the Interview Guide (See Appendix E Section One: 212), specific areas such as the processes the lecturers follow to set the questions, whether they have any assessment model that they follow in setting the questions, whether they consider the type of examination to inform the construct of the test items, whether they consider the characteristics of the test takers in the design of the questions and whether they pre-trial the questions before administration were

explored. Field notes were also taken as a backup to the audio recordings done during all the five interview sessions.

3.9.4 Which approaches are used to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

Regarding this research question, an interview guide was used to conduct semi-structured interviews with the five lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. In the Interview Guide (See Appendix E Section Three: 212), specific areas such as whether there is any standard examination anywhere in the world that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is benchmarked against, how (if so) the benchmarking is done and the possible similarities and differences between the examinations (if the lecturers benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations against any other examination) were used in the investigation. Field notes were also taken as a backup to the audio recordings done during all the five interview sessions.

Apart from the semi-structured interviews, the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018, the WASSCE English language component administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the IELTS descriptive document were used to elicit data pertaining to the basic language skills tested for the three types of examinations and the topical areas or language competences tested specifically in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and the WASSCE English language component.

3.10 Data collection process

Before the commencement of the data collection process, the researcher composed a proposal which was presented to the Department of English of the University of Venda

on 13th September, 2018 for scrutiny and possible suggestions for improvement. Thereafter, on 1st March, 2019, as per the laid down research procedures of the University of Venda, the improved proposal was presented to the School of Human and Social Sciences Higher Degrees Committee for further verification. The proposal was then presented to the University Senex for final recommendation and approval. On 29th October, 2019, the ethical clearance was received from the University of Venda Research Ethics Committee; this cleared the path for the data gathering process to commence.

Letters were immediately dispatched to the six universities in a bid to seek approval to conduct the study there. The data gathering process started from 5th November, 2019 and ended on 8th February, 2020. With respect to the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into the selected universities, the researcher, through personal visitations to the selected universities, was able to collect the expected three questions from each university (See 3.7: 72); therefore, 18 questions were gathered for analysis. For the WASSCE English language component past questions, only the 2018 edition was available for sale at the WAEC office. They could not provide the 2016 and 2017 editions. The researcher, therefore, had to search for these past questions from the libraries of some Senior High Schools.

With respect to the in-depth interviews, the interview guide was used. The interview guide had three sections (See Appendix E: 212). The first section contained questions that explored the criteria that the lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into their respective universities used to set the questions. This was designed in a bid to find answers to Research Question 3 (See 1.3: 4). The second section contained questions in respect of the basic language skills that are tested in the examinations. This section was designed to partially find responses to Research Question 1 (See 1.3: 4). The third section was made up of questions that sought to explore how the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions were benchmarked by the selected universities. This section was designed to find answers to research question 4 (See 1.3: 4).

Apart from the composed questions which constituted the interview guide, further probing and clarifications were made on serendipitous areas. Where the interviewees brought in issues unrelated to the core purpose for conducting the interviews, the researcher found ways of redirecting the line of questioning to fit the purpose for the conduct of the interviews. These were done in consonance with the posit of Creswell (2007). Creswell (2007) espouses that interview guides allow the interviewer to follow pre-set questions, but not all of the prearranged probes, transitions and follow-ups are used during the interview. The interviewer, therefore, has the freewill to deviate from the interview questions as and when necessary to pursue unexpected findings and fruitful directions.

Pertaining to the conduct of the interviews, visitations were made to the selected universities. Rapport was created between the researcher and the individual interviewees in order to ensure that the atmosphere was relaxed to allow for a free flow of ideas, since all the interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis. Prior to the commencement of each interview, the Informed Consent Form and the Participant Information Sheet (See Appendix C: 209 and Appendix D: 210) were given to the interviewees to offer explanation to them as regards the nature and scope of the study. The interviewees were required to sign the informed consent form as evidence of their assent to partake in the study. Each interview lasted approximately thirty (30) minutes.

3.11 Data analysis

The specific techniques that were used to analyse the data for the study are presented in this section. The presentation is done sequentially according to each research question.

3.11.1 Which basic language skills are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

Regarding this research question, both Burnard's (1991) fourteen steps of conducting thematic content analysis (See 1.7.6.1: 17) and O'Leary's (2014) eight steps of conducting document analysis (See 1.7.6.2: 19) were used on the data. In specific terms,

thematic content analysis was used to analyse the responses obtained from the five semi-structured interviews conducted. Document analysis, on the other hand, was used to analyse the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. These techniques were applied on the data to engender understanding as to the basic language skills tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance examinations in the six selected universities.

3.11.2 What are the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana?

For this research question, O'Leary's (2014) eight steps of conducting document analysis (See 1.7.6.2: 19) was applied on the data. That is, this technique was used to understand how the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions administered by the six selected universities in 2016, 2017 and 2018 were similar and different in the domain of the topical areas/language competences tested.

3.11.3 What are the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions?

For this research question, Burnard's (1991) fourteen steps of conducting thematic content analysis (See 1.7.6.1: 17) was used to analyse the data. That is, thematic content analysis was used to analyse the responses obtained from the five semi-structured interviews conducted. These two techniques were applied on the data to engender understanding in specific areas such as the processes the lecturers follow to set the questions, whether they have any assessment model that they follow in setting the questions, whether they consider the type of examination to inform the construct of the test items, whether they consider the characteristics of the test takers in the design of the questions and whether they pre-trial the questions before administration.

3.11.4 Which approaches are used to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

For this research question, both Burnard's (1991) fourteen steps of conducting thematic content analysis (See 1.7.6.1: 17) and O'Leary's (2014) eight steps of conducting document analysis (See 1.7.6.2: 19) were used on the data. Specifically, thematic content analysis was used to analyse the responses obtained from the five semi-structured interviews. Document analysis, on the other hand, was used to analyse the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018, the WASSCE English language component administered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the IELTS descriptive document.

These two techniques were applied on the data to engender understanding as to how the lecturers benchmarked the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions and how the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions compared to the WASSCE English language component in the areas of the basic language skills tested and the topical areas/ language competences tested. In addition, the researcher applied these two data analysis techniques on the data to understand how both the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and the WASSCE English language component compared to the IELTS in the area of the basic language skills tested.

Figure 4 presents a visual representation of the sources of data for this study and their corresponding approaches used to analyse them:

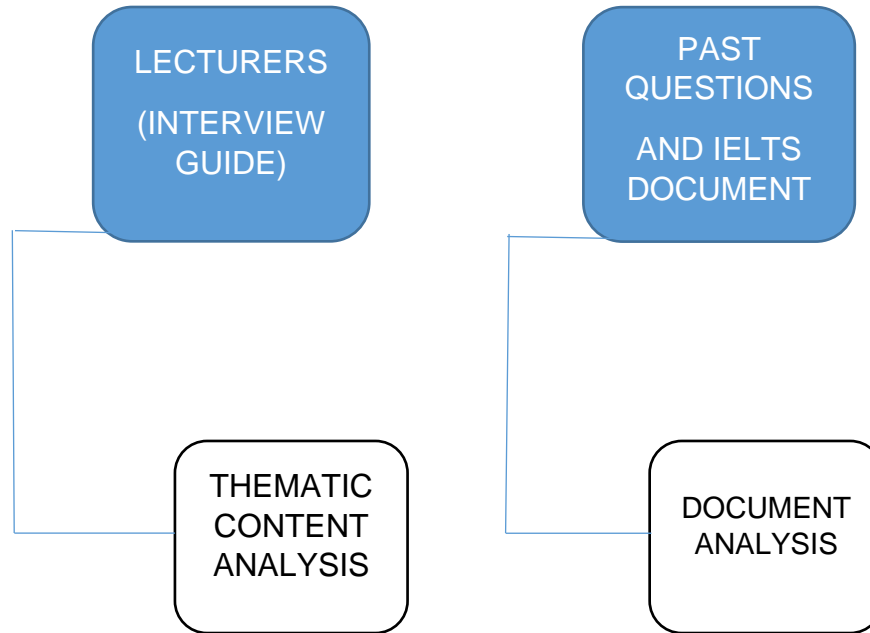


Figure 4: Sources of data and approaches to data analyses

3.12 Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the use of more than a single method to gather data on a particular phenomenon. As Denzin (1978: 294) avers, triangulation is ‘the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon’. Several reasons account for why researchers use triangulation, for example, to enhance the overall understanding of the subject matter under investigation (Denzin 1978; Miles & Huberman 1984; Morse 1989; Munhall & Boyd 1993). This notwithstanding, the key factor that informs the choice of triangulation by most researchers is that triangulation helps to avoid or control biases, thereby improving the validity and reliability of studies (Jonsen & Jehn 2009).

For this enquiry, apart from increasing the study’s reliability and validity, triangulation is used to gather data from diverse sources to deepen the comprehension of the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities. As Greene and Caracelli (1997) contend, the complex nature of social phenomena requires diverse kinds of methods to be able to understand the intricacies.

3.12.1 Types of triangulation

Different types of triangulation exist, and they are normally meant to enhance the dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability of studies in qualitative enquiries. Patton (2002) and Brown (2005) suggest the following:

- 1) Investigator triangulation: This involves using several researchers to interpret the data in order to reduce and understand any differences/biases that the different researchers may have.
- 2) Methods triangulation: This involves comparing data derived through different methods (e.g. qualitative and quantitative).
- 3) Theory triangulation: This approach refers to the use of a number of theories to interpret the issue under investigation.
- 4) Source triangulation: This type involves comparing data derived from diverse qualitative approaches (e.g. documented accounts, interviews)
- 5) Time triangulation: This involves collecting data at different time periods.
- 6) Location triangulation: This approach refers to the gathering of data at different sites/locations (e.g. six different universities).
- 7) Multiple analysis triangulation: This approach involves the use of different interviewers, observers and analysts to compare the collection and interpretation of data.

This study used source triangulation, location triangulation and time triangulation. Source triangulation involves comparing data obtained from different qualitative sources. Consequently, the study used document in the form past questions of the English

language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and the interview responses from the lecturers involved in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in the six selected universities as the main sources of data. This was done to advance the validity and reliability of the enquiry (Jonsen & Jehn 2009).

Also, location triangulation, which involves gathering data at different sites/locations to get a thorough understanding of the issue under investigation, was used in this enquiry. In that regard, this investigation used six different universities in Ghana to engender the comprehension of the scope and nature of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into the selected Ghanaian universities. These six universities comprised four public (two comprehensive and two technical) universities and two private (comprehensive) universities.

Lastly, time triangulation, which involves collecting data at diverse time periods, was used for this study. Three different time periods within which the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities were set were employed in this investigation. Specifically, the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations for 2016, 2017 and 2018 were used for the study, and this approach, according to Brown (2005: 31), "helps in examining the consistency of the data and interpretations over time".

3.13 Ethical considerations

Ethics are integral to the conduct of research (Guillemin & Gillam 2004), and this made it necessary for some ethical procedures to be observed to protect the universities and individuals who participated in this investigation. In this regard, ethical clearance was sought from the Research and Innovation Directorate of the University of Venda, South Africa, before the study commenced. Permissions were also sought from the selected universities to meet their rights to free consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent.

Moreover, all the lecturers who were interviewed in the five universities (See 3.5: 71) were given a Participant Information Sheet which contained necessary information about the study to help them make informed decisions as regards their participation in the study. Apart from this, the lecturers were asked to show their voluntary participation in the study by signing a detailed Informed Consent Form. The lecturers were not exposed to any danger because their identities and responses were protected and used solely for academic purposes (Kumar 2012). The researcher also applied the apposite data gathering methods, analyses and reporting in order to avoid any form of intellectual dishonesty. Literature that are used in this study have been duly acknowledged.

3.13.1 Trustworthiness of the study

In the literature, there is a divide as to whether qualitative research can exhibit the trustworthiness that is normally associated with quantitative studies. The positivists doubt the trustworthiness of qualitative enquiries since “their concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in naturalistic work” (Shenton 2004: 63). Joppe (2000: 1) espouses that:

Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit “the bull’s eye” of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others.

In other words, validity concerns itself with the correctness of a study’s findings. On the contrary, Joppe (2000: 1) explains reliability as:

The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as

reliability, and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.

Fundamentally, reliability refers to researchers' ability to reproduce a particular study's findings if that study's methods are followed to the letter.

On the other side of the divide are researchers such as Guba (1981), Pitts (1994) and Silverman (2001). These researchers have found ways of addressing the concerns pertaining to the validity and reliability of qualitative enquiries by choosing other terminologies to highlight the distinction between the two opposing paradigms. In order to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative enquiries, Guba (1981), for instance, proposed four parameters that are necessary in the conduct of such studies. His four parameters are widely accepted by researchers (Shenton 2004). These four are: credibility (for internal validity), transferability (for external validity/generalisability), dependability (for reliability) and confirmability (for objectivity). The following sub-sections deal with how these four parameters were applied/realised in this qualitative study.

3.13.1.1 Transferability

If external validity within the positivist paradigm is concerned with how the results of an enquiry can be used in new situations (Merriam 1998), then transferability is about the ability of a particular study's findings or conclusions to be generalised within other situations and populations (Ritchie & Lewis 2013). Consistent with Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Firestone (1993), sufficient information pertaining to the study sites have been given in this study so that readers can transfer this enquiry's results. Also, the methodology, the methods and the data analysis have been thoroughly described to allow researchers to make such transfer.

3.13.1.2 Dependability

Dependability means if an enquiry were replicated within the same context(s) using the same methods and respondents, identical/same outcomes should be achieved. For dependability to be achieved, Shenton (2004) avers that the processes that were used to carry out the study should be clearly presented/reported so that researchers will be in a position to carry out all such nuances that were involved in the original study. This study passes the test for dependability because all the important details as regards the research practices that were followed have been presented to position researchers to fully comprehend the enquiry processes followed and their effectiveness.

3.13.1.3 Confirmability

Specifically, confirmability involves steps that are taken to ensure that what is reported is, as far as possible, the ideas/positions/sentiments expressed by the research participants, not the researcher. One way to ensure this is through the use of triangulation. In this study, three kinds of triangulation – source, location and time triangulation – were used to control bias on the part of the researcher. Also, all beliefs and assumptions underpinning the decisions made and the methods used in the study have been explained. As Shenton (2004: 73) espouses, there must be “in-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinised”. Accordingly, a thorough methodological description is offered in this enquiry to satisfy the test for confirmability.

3.13.1.4 Credibility

In the positivist paradigm, the equivalent of internal validity is credibility. Internal validity, according to Shenton (2004: 64), deals with whether the “study measures or tests what is actually intended”, and credibility has to do with “how congruent are the findings with reality?”. Among the constructs identified by Guba (1981) as possible constructs of credibility in qualitative studies are triangulation and ‘thick’ description of the issue under investigation. With respect to this study, three types of triangulation were used (source

triangulation, location triangulation and time triangulation). Additionally, all the interpretations presented are based on 'thick' descriptions of the data that were elicited from the different sites and participants for the study.

3.14 Chapter summary

The methodological beliefs that underpinned this enquiry were presented here. Specifically, the research paradigm, the study design, research methodology, the study area, data and sources, target population, sampling techniques, investigative tools and data collection processes were presented in this chapter. Other areas presented in this chapter are triangulation and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA (1)

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the data on which the current study is grounded are presented, analysed and discussed. The sources of the data and the steps involved in the attainment of these data have already been presented in Chapter Three. The study objectives and research paradigms guided the process of gathering of these data (See Chapter Three: 56). The study's main objective was to evaluate the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities.

The qualitative research approach and the multiple/collective case study design, specifically, were used for this study. The multiple/collective case study design was used for this study in order to allow the researcher to get a better understanding of the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities. Accordingly, Yin (2003) espouses that this type of case study focuses on the phenomenon (in this case, it is the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities) and selects multiple cases/sites (in this study, they are the six selected universities) in order to study the issue by replicating the procedures across all the selected cases.

In-depth (semi-structured) interviews and documents were the two data collection tools used for this study. Data from the semi-structured interviews provided information pertaining to the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions, the basic language skills tested and how the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination is benchmarked. The data from the documents (past examinations questions) provided information on the basic language skills that the English language component of the

Mature Students' Entrance Examinations test and the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana.

This chapter is divided into two sections. An analysis of the data from the documents (past questions) as related to Research Question 1 (Which basic language skills are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?) and Research Question 2 (What are the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public [comprehensive and technical] and private [comprehensive] universities in Ghana?) are presented in this first section. It is worth noting that apart from using documents in the form of the past examination questions to gather data to answer research question 2, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the lecturers who set the questions to elicit further data to answer this same research question. Consequently, O'Leary's (2014) eight steps of conducting document analysis were followed to conduct the document analysis (See 1.7.6.2: 19) whereas Burnard's (1991) fourteen steps of conducting thematic content analysis was employed to analyse the data from the interviews (See 1.7.6.1: 17).

Pertaining to Research Question 1, the literature suggests that there are many types of English questions, and each has particular competence(s) that it seeks to assess. Researchers such as Bachman and Palmer (1982), Kunnan (1995), Davey, Lian & Higgins (2007), Everson (2009) and Powers (2010) have all conducted various investigations with the aim of coming out with answers to getting the most appropriate examination areas that can measure, comprehensively, candidates' readiness to handle higher learning tasks.

The areas that the literature has emphasised as necessary for test takers to be tested in order to arrive at comprehensive language profiles for them are: Speaking, Writing, Listening and Reading (Hale, Rock & Jirele 1989; Stricker, Rock & Lee 2005; Chapman

& Newfields 2008; Sawaki, Stricker & Oranje 2008; Powers, Kim & Weng 2008; Liao, Qu & Morgan 2010; Powers 2010; Bozorgian 2012; Jinghua & Constanzo 2013). It is, therefore, not surprising that internationally accepted tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC and the IELTS all test these four basic language skills to test the language profiles of such test takers (See 2.4: 38).

In the light of the aforementioned, the researcher sought to identify the basic language skills that the universities tested according to the years of administration of the questions (2016, 2017 and 2018). For the presentation of the summary of the basic language skills tested by the individual universities, ticked boxes indicate that a particular basic language skill is tested; empty boxes, on the other hand, indicate that a particular basic language skill is not tested (See Table 3: 96).

4.1 Basic language skills tested

Data from past questions

To prevent awkwardness in this analysis, the study assumes that ‘Technical University’ means Public Technical University, ‘Comprehensive University’ means Public Comprehensive University and ‘Private University’ means Private Comprehensive University (See Table 1: 14). Particularly for the private universities, the caption ‘Private University’ is used because almost all the private universities operating in Ghana are comprehensive (See 1.5: 5), so it is assumed that, by default, any reference to ‘Private University’ implies that it is a comprehensive university.

4.2 Technical University 1

A breakdown of the test items of Technical University 1 and the basic language skills they measure are presented in this subsection.

4.2.1 The 2016 instrument

This edition was organised into three sections – Sections A, B and C. The Section A contained 10 sentence-based Subject-Verb Agreement questions, and candidates had to select one of two options for each sentence. The Section B contained a Reading Comprehension passage which had four questions (three inductive and one deductive). The Section C, tested Essay Writing. Two essay-type questions (one narrative and the other expository) were given to test takers to select one and to compose an essay to answer it. Question 1 tasked test takers to write a story that illustrates the saying “Nothing good comes easily”, and Question 2 tasked test takers to write an essay in which they explain, at least, three causes of the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus. With respect to the basic language skills tested in this examination, only two of the four basic language skills were tested, as Sections A and C tested Writing whereas Section B tested Reading.

4.2.2 The 2017 instrument

For 2017, the instrument was divided into four sections – Sections A, B, C and D. Section A was based on Spelling. Here, test takers were given five sentences with ten words randomly misspelled, and test takers were expected to re-write the sentences by correcting all the wrongly spelled words. Section B was a summary passage with four inductive questions. In addition, Section C contained a Reading Comprehension passage with four questions (one deductive and three inductive). Section D tested Essay Writing. Here, a single question on the causes of road traffic accidents was the task. With regard to the basic language skills tested in this examination, while Section A and D tested Writing, Sections B and C tested Reading.

4.2.3 The 2018 instrument

This instrument had five sections – Sections A, B, C, D and E. Section A tested the Identification of Parts of Speech in a 10-sentence format. Particular words, as used in context, were emboldened for candidates to identify the word classes that the

emboldened words belonged. Section B tested capitalisation of Proper Nouns, as used in context, in five sentences. Here too, all the proper nouns which ought to be initially capitalised were written with initial lower-case letters and test takers tasked to rewrite the five sentences by providing initial capitalisation to the proper nouns. Section C tested Subject-Verb Agreement, and this was done by giving ten sentences with two options each for candidates to select the correct answer. Section D tested Clausal Elements. Here, five sentences were given to test takers for them to identify the clausal patterns. Section E tested Reading Comprehension using three inductive questions and a vocabulary test based on three words used in the passage. For the latter, test takers were expected to provide synonyms that could replace the three selected words in context. Pertaining to the basic language skills tested in this examination, Sections A, B, C and D tested Writing while Section E tested Reading.

4.2.4 The general scope of the instruments

To paint a clearer picture of the skills tested over the three years, a summary of the basic language skills tested by Technical University 1 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Basic language skills tested by Technical University 1

Basic language skill	Year		
	2016	2017	2018
Reading	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓
Listening			
Speaking			

Source: Author's construct, 2020

The results of the summary from Table 3 indicates that, across all the three years that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations were tested, Reading and Writing were the only skills that were tested, and they were tested consistently. However, Listening and Speaking were not tested.

4.3 Technical University 2

An analysis of the test items of Technical University 2 and the basic language skills they test are presented in this subsection.

4.3.1 The 2016 instrument

This instrument was divided into two (2) sections – Section A and Section B. For Section A, the test takers were given three (3) essay-type questions, out of which they were to select one and respond to it. Two of these essay questions were expository, whereas the other one was narrative. Question 1 tasked test takers to write an essay in which they express their views on the need for all Ghanaians to practice good hygiene. Question 2 demanded that test takers write an essay in which they explain some possible causes of maternal mortality in the country. Also, Question 3 tasked test takers to write an essay about their mother. For Section B, a summary passage (narrative) was given to the test takers, after which they were given two inductive questions for them to provide responses (See Appendix F4: 224). With respect to the basic language skills tested, only Reading and Writing were tested. That is, whereas Section A tested Writing, Section B tested Reading.

4.3.2 The 2017 instrument

A similar organisation of structure was registered for the 2017 version of the questions. That is, this version was also in two sections – Section A and Section B. For Section A, three essay-type questions were presented to candidates for them to select one and respond to it. One of these questions was argumentative. For the remaining two, one was expository whereas the other was descriptive (See Appendix F5: 226). Pertaining to Section B, a reading comprehension text was presented for candidates to read and respond to the 8 questions that were asked at the end of the passage. Out of the 8 questions, four were inductive (Questions b, c, g and h), one was deductive (Question d) and one tested knowledge on a literary device (Question e). In addition, Vocabulary was

tested (Question a) as well as Clausal elements (f). Pertaining to the basic language skills tested, like the 2016 questions, only Reading and Writing were tested. Specifically, Section A tested Writing while Section B tested Reading.

4.3.3 The 2018 instrument

For the 2018 edition, there were two sections (Section A and Section B). Test takers were expected to select one question from Section A and answer all the questions in Section B. The Section A, specifically, contained three essay-type questions. Question 1 tasked test takers to explain why they chose to study in Technical University 2. Question 2 tasked test takers to explain why rape victims need counselling and Question 3 demanded that candidates describe their favourite relative. The Section B, on the other hand, contained a reading comprehension passage with 8 questions (a-h). In specific terms, four of the questions (Questions a, c, d and e) were inductive while Question b was deductive. Parts of Speech (Question f), Synonymy (Question g) and a Figure of Speech (Question h) were also tested (See Appendix F6: 228). Pertaining to the basic language skills tested here, whereas Section A tested test takers' Writing skills, Section B tested their Reading skills.

4.3.4 The general scope of the instruments

To get a clearer picture of the skills tested over the three-year period, a summary of the basic language skills tested are presented in Table 4.

It is evident from Table 4 that Technical University 2 tested Reading consistently across the three-year period (2016, 2017 and 2018) under consideration in this study. The trend for Writing was not different, as it was equally tested in 2016, 2017 and 2018. The reverse was registered for both Listening and Speaking, as no attempt was made to test candidates' competences in these two basic language skills.

Table 4: Basic language skills tested by Technical University 2

Basic language skill	Year		
	2016	2017	2018
Reading	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓
Listening			
Speaking			

Source: Author's construct, 2020

4.4 Private University 1

A breakdown of the test items of Private University 1 and the basic language skills they measure are presented in this subsection.

4.4.1 The 2016 instrument

The instrument for Private University 1 for 2016 was divided into three parts (Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3). Specifically, Part 1 contained three essay-type questions, and test takers were expected to select one out of the three questions and answer. Question 1 demanded that test takers argue for or against the position that the mass media plays an important role in shaping the opinions of the younger generation. Question 2 tasked test takers to write an essay for publication in one of the national dailies on the importance of university students dressing properly. For Question 3, test takers were tasked to discuss some of the factors that engender fire outbreaks in market centres in Ghana and also to suggest solutions to the causes.

With regard to Part 2, a comprehension passage was given to the test takers to read after which they were expected to provide answers to seven questions. Particularly, on the seven reading comprehension questions, whereas Question 7 tested Synonymy, the remaining six questions elicited, from the test takers, inductive responses based on the text.

Part 3 was subdivided into three sections (Section A, Section B and Section C). Section A tested Punctuation. Here, test takers were given a paragraph which lacked some necessary punctuations, and the test takers were tasked to rewrite the paragraph by incorporating all the missing punctuation marks. As regards Section B, test takers were given five grammatically wrong sentences (sentence fragments, dangling modifiers, run-on sentences etc.), and the task was for the test takers to correct the sentences by rewriting them. Pertaining to Section C, five Subject-Verb Agreement based MCQs were given to test takers to select which of the four options (a-d) that they deemed right (See Appendix F7: 331).

On the evidence of the foregoing presentation, it is obvious that with respect to the basic language skills tested in this examination, Writing and Reading (Part 1 = Writing; Part 2 = Reading; Part 3 = Writing) were the only skills tested.

4.4.2 The 2017 instrument

With respect to the 2017 questions for this university, the instrument was organised into three parts (Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3). Part 1 was made up of three essay-type questions, out of which candidates were to select one and answer. Question 1 sought candidates' views on the position that hip life (a contemporary genre of Ghanaian music that is a blend of Ghana's traditional 'highlife' and the United States of America's hip-hop) songs are not educative but are rather sexually provocative. Question 2 elicited candidates' views as to whether technology has done more harm than good. Question 3 tasked test takers to write an essay in which they discuss some possible causes of the rise of suicide cases among Ghanaian youth. Candidates were to proffer solutions to the problems discussed.

Part 2 contained a reading comprehension passage with 11 questions for candidates to answer. Questions 1-10 were MCQs with 4 options (a-d), and the responses sought were based on the text. Question 11 tested Synonymy, as test takers were tasked to provide

words or phrases to replace a list of words (selected from the passage) (See Appendix F8: 239).

Part 3, which generally tested structure and usage, was made up of 3 sections (Section A, Section B and Section C). Section A, tested Punctuation. Here, candidates were given 10 sentences which lacked the necessary punctuation marks, and they were tasked to rewrite the 10 sentences by providing the appropriate punctuation marks. Section B contained 5 faulty sentences (run-on, wrong verb use and dangling modifiers); test takers were expected to rewrite the correct form of the sentences correcting by the errors. Section C tested Subject-Verb Agreement. Here, five sentences with two verb options each were provided for candidates to select which of the verbs correctly fit each sentence.

A similar line of basic language skill measurement was registered for this test instrument as compared with the 2016 instrument. That is, Part 1 and Part 3 tested test takers' Writing competences. Part 2, on the contrary, tested test takers' Reading competences.

4.4.3 The 2018 instrument

The 2018 instrument for Private University 1 was equally divided into three parts (Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3). Part 1 contained 3 essay-type questions, and candidates had to answer one out of the three questions. Question 1 demanded that candidates write an essay in which they suggest ways of controlling drug abuse. For Question 2, candidates were tasked to discuss whether religion is an important part of human society such that every member of society has to subscribe to a particular religion. Regarding Question 3, candidates were tasked to write an essay on whether politics has done more harm than good in Ghana.

The Part 2 of the instrument contained a reading comprehension passage with five questions for candidates to answer. Three of the five questions were inductive (Question 1 Question 2 and Question 4). Question 5 was deductive and Question 3 tested Synonymy.

Pertaining to Part 3, which was on Structure and Usage, three sub-sections were identified (Section A, Section B and Section C). Specifically, Section A was made up of 5 wrong sentences (sentence fragments, lack of coordination, run-on sentences, dangling modifiers and misplaced modifiers), and candidates were tasked to correct them by rewriting the correct versions. Section B tested Subject-Verb Agreement. Here test takers were presented with a paragraph that contained subject-verb agreement errors; the candidates' duty was to produce the corrected versions of the paragraph. Section C tested Punctuation. A paragraph which lacked the necessary punctuations was presented to the examinees for them to rewrite and incorporate the necessary punctuation marks into the paragraph. Regarding the basic language skills tested in this edition, it was realised that only Reading and Writing (Part 1 = Writing; Part 2 = Reading; Part 3 = Writing) were tested.

4.4.4 The general scope of the instruments

To gain a better understanding of the situation in Private University 1 across the three-year period, a summary of the basic language skills tested are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Basic language skills tested by Private University 1

Basic language skill	Year		
	2016	2017	2018
Reading	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓
Listening			
Speaking			

Source: Author's construct, 2020

The results from Table 5 indicate that Private University 1 tested two of the four basic language skills across the period under consideration in this study. In other words,

Reading and Writing were given all the attention to the neglect of the other two essential basic language skills (Speaking and Listening).

4.5 Private University 2

An analysis of the test items of Private University 2 and the basic language skills they tested are presented in this subsection.

4.5.1 The 2016 instrument

For Private University 2, the 2016 instrument was divided into 4 sections (Section A, Section B, Section C and Section D). The Section A was made up of 5 essay-type questions. Candidates were supposed to respond to two of the questions by choosing Question 1 and selecting any one of the remaining four questions. Specifically, Question 1 demanded that candidates write a letter to the Director of Health Services in their respective communities discussing, at least, three ways of improving the quality of health care in their community. For Question 2, examinees were to write a letter to their friend stating three reasons they (candidates) decided to study at Private University 2. Regarding Question 3, candidates were to write a story ending with 'If I had known the truth, I would not have acted the way I did'. For Question 4, candidates were expected to write an article for publication in a national newspaper on the need to promote local industry in their country. Question 5 tasked candidates to describe a city that they have visited recently.

Section B was a Reading Comprehension test. A passage with 8 questions (a-h) was presented to candidates to read and respond to them. Out of the 8 questions, five were inductive (Questions a, b, c, d and e), one was deductive (f), one tested clausal elements (g) and the other one tested Synonymy. Section C contained a summary passage with a single question, and test takers were expected to read the passage and summarise it. The last Section (Section D) was divided into four parts. Clausal Elements (Questions 1-

4), Antonyms (Questions 5-8) and Usage (Questions 9-20) were the topical areas tested here (See Appendix F10: 251).

From the foregoing discourse, it is evident that pertaining to the basic English language skills tested in this version at Private University 2, only Reading (Section B and Section C) and Writing (Section A and Section D) were the skills that received attention.

4.5.2 The 2017 instrument

The 2017 instrument was divided into 4 sections (Section A, Section B, Section C and Section D). Section A was divided into four parts. Clausal Elements (Questions 1-4), Antonyms (Questions 5-8) and Usage (Questions 9-20) were the topical areas tested here (See Appendix F11: 259).

Section B was a Reading Comprehension test. A passage with 8 questions (a-h) was presented to candidates to read and respond to them. Out of the 8 questions, five were inductive (Questions a, b, c, d and e), one was deductive (f), one tested clausal elements (g) and the other one tested Synonymy. Section C contained a summary passage with a single question, and test takers were expected to read the passage and summarise it.

The Section D was made up of 5 essay-type questions. Candidates were supposed to respond to two of the questions by choosing Question 1 and selecting any one of the remaining four questions. Specifically, Question 1 demanded that candidates write a letter to the Director of Health Services in their respective communities discussing, at least, three ways of improving the quality of health care in the community. For Question 2, examinees were to write a letter to their friend stating three reasons they (candidates) decided to study at Private University 2. Regarding Question 3, candidates were to write a story ending with 'If I had known the truth, I would not have acted the way I did'. For Question 4, candidates were expected to write an article for publication in a national newspaper on the need to promote local industry in their country. Question 5 tasked candidates to describe a city that they have visited recently.

This then presupposes that like the 2016 instrument, only two basic language skills were tested (Section A = writing; Section B = reading; Section C = reading; Section D = writing).

4.5.3 The 2018 instrument

This edition was made up of four sections (Section A, Section B, Section C and Section D). Section A contained six essay-type questions, and candidates were expected to answer two questions from this section (Question 1 and any other one from the remaining five). Question 1 tasked candidates to write a letter to their Municipal Chief Executive discussing the causes of regular floods in the major cities of their country and suggesting solutions to the causes mentioned. Question 2 demanded that candidates write an article on the benefits of the free Senior High School policy in Ghana for publication in a national newspaper. For Question 3, test takers were to argue for or against the position that public universities are better than private ones. Pertaining to Question 4, test takers were asked to write a letter to their friend living abroad. In this letter, candidates were expected to explain the importance of private universities to their friend. Regarding Question 5, test takers were to write a speech, in the capacity of newly-elected chairpersons of their community Youth Association, highlighting, at least, three causes of littering and suggesting ways of controlling them. Question 6 demanded, from candidates, an essay that illustrates the saying 'Look before you leap'.

As regards Section B, there was a reading comprehension passage with six questions (a-g). Deductive questions (a, b, c), both inductive and deductive questions (d), Clausal Elements (e), a figure of speech (f) and Synonyms (g) were found to be the specific areas and/approaches used to test test takers' reading comprehension abilities. Section C contained a summary passage with two deductive questions which tasked examinees to summarise various aspects of the text (See Appendix F12: 266). Generally, Section D covered Lexis and Structure. Usage (Questions 1-15) and Register (Questions 16-25) were the specific areas tested in this domain.

For the basic English language skills tested in this version, it can be observed that two basic skills which are Reading (Section B and Section C) and Writing (Section A and Section D) were tested.

4.5.4 The general scope of the instruments

In order to get a clearer understanding of the skills tested over the three-year period, a summary of the basic language skills tested is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Basic language skills tested by Private University 2

Basic language skill	Year		
	2016	2017	2018
Reading	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓
Listening			
Speaking			

Source: Author's construct, 2020

It is evident from Table 6 that Private University 2 tested Reading consistently in 2016, 2017 and 2018. A similar pattern was established for Writing, as it was equally tested in 2016, 2017 and 2018. However, candidates' competences in Speaking and Listening were not tested in this university.

4.6 Comprehensive University 1

The test items of Comprehensive University 1 and the basic language skills they tested across the three-year period are presented and analysed in this subsection.

4.6.1 The 2016 instrument

This instrument was divided into three sections (Section A, Section B and Section C). Section A was made up of 20 4-option (a-d) MCQs. Out of those 20 questions, Questions 1-7 tested Antonyms, Questions 8-12 tested Usage while Questions 13-20 tested Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions.

Section B contained essay-type questions. The test takers were given three questions to select one and respond to it. Question 1 tasked candidates to write an article suitable for publication in a national newspaper on the menace of secret cults in schools and colleges. For Question 2, test takers were required to write a letter to the Headmaster of their former school or college discussing the positive impact of computers on education. With respect to Question 3, test takers' duty was to argue for or against the motion, "Learning about the past has no value to those of us living today".

The Section C tested Reading Comprehension. Candidates were given a reading comprehension passage with eight questions. Four of the questions (Questions a, b, c and e) were inductive and one (Question g) was deductive. Also, one question tested a figure of speech (Question f), one question tested Clausal Elements (Question g) and one other question tested Synonymy (Question h). Pertaining to the basic language skills tested, whereas Section A and Section B tested test takers' Writing skills, Section C tested their Reading skills.

4.6.2 The 2017 instrument

The 2017 instrument for Comprehensive University 1 was made up of three sections (Section A, Section B and Section C). Section A was made up of 10 MCQs with four options each (a-d) which were further sub-divided into Section I and Section II. Synonyms (Questions 1-5) and Antonymy (Questions 6-10) were the vocabulary areas tested in this domain.

Section B contained four essay-type questions, and candidates were expected to respond to one of them. Question 1 demanded that candidates write a letter to their pen friend telling him/her three problems facing candidates' countries and suggesting solutions to the problems mentioned. For Question 2, candidates were tasked to describe a traditional marriage ceremony they had witnessed and mention two things they admired about the programme. Question 3 elicited an essay response beginning with, 'At first I thought it was a joke but...'. For Question 4, test takers were expected to write an essay in which they give account of an excursion they had made with their course mates to a place of interest in their country by describing what they saw and what they gained.

Section C had one reading comprehension text with 11 questions. There were five inductive questions (Questions 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7) three deductive questions (Questions 4, 5 and 8), one question on Clausal Elements (Question 9), one question on Synonymy (Question 10) and one question on Antonymy (Question 11) (See Appendix F14: 281). With respect to the basic English language skills tested, only Reading and Writing were tested in this instrument. That is, Sections A and B tested Writing whereas Section C tested Reading.

4.6.3 The 2018 instrument

The 2018 instrument for Comprehensive University 1 was made up of three sections (Section A, Section B and Section C). Section A was made up of 10 MCQs with four options each (a-d) which were further sub-divided into Section I and Section II. Synonyms (Questions 1-5) and Antonymy (Questions 6-10) were the vocabulary areas tested in this domain.

Section B contained four essay-type questions and candidates were expected to respond to one of them. Question 1 demanded that candidates write a letter to their pen friend telling him/her three problems facing candidates' countries and suggesting solutions to the problems mentioned. For Question 2, candidates were tasked to describe a traditional marriage ceremony they had witnessed and mention two things they admired about the

programme. Question 3 elicited an essay response beginning with, ‘At first I thought it was a joke but...’. For Question 4, test takers were expected to write an essay in which they give account of an excursion they had made with their course mates to a place of interest in their country by describing what they saw and what they gained.

Section C had one reading comprehension text with 11 questions. There were five inductive questions (Questions 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7) three deductive questions (Questions 4, 5 and 8), one question on Clausal Elements (Question 9), one question on Synonymy (Question 10) and one question on Antonymy (Question 11) (See Appendix F14: 281). With respect to the basic English language skills tested, only Reading and Writing were tested in this instrument. That is, Sections A and B tested Writing whereas Section C tested Reading.

4.6.4 The general scope of the instruments

In order to get a clearer picture of the skills tested over the three-year period, a summary of the basic language skills tested are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Basic language skills tested by Comprehensive University 1

Basic language skill	Year		
	2016	2017	2018
Reading	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓
Listening			
Speaking			

Source: Author’s construct, 2020

It is clear from Table 7 that, at Comprehensive University 1, Reading was consistently tested across the three-year period (2016, 2017 and 2018). A similar pattern was identified for Writing, as it was also tested in 2016, 2017 and 2018. However, the opposite

was the case for both Listening and Speaking, as no attempt was made to identify candidates' competences in these two primary and equally essential language skills.

4.7 Comprehensive University 2

An analysis of the test items of Comprehensive University 2 and the basic language skills they test are presented in this subsection.

4.7.1 The 2016 instrument

The 2016 edition of English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination question for Comprehensive University 2 was set using 25 MCQs with four options (a-d) each. Usage (Questions 1-10), Antonyms (Questions 11-15), Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions (Questions 16-20) and Synonyms (Questions 21-25) were the specific areas tested. It is worth noting that only Writing (which is one of the basic English language skills) was tested in 2016 (See Appendix F16: 296).

4.7.2 The 2017 instrument

This instrument was made up of 25 MCQs with four options (a-d) each. Out of these 25 MCQs, five of them were tagged to a reading comprehension passage. There were two inductive questions (Questions 1 and 2), one Synonymy question (Question 3), one figure of speech question (Question 4) and one Antonymy question (Question 5). Apart from these five-reading comprehension-related questions, test takers' competences in Usage (Questions 6-18), Synonymy (Questions 19-22) and Antonymy (Questions 23-25) were tested. With respect to the basic English language skills tested, it is apparent that only Reading and Writing were tested here (See Appendix F17: 300).

4.7.3 The 2018 instrument

The 2018 instrument was made up of 25 MCQs with five options (a-e) each. Out of the 25 MCQs, six of them elicited responses related to a reading comprehension text. The questions were inductive (Questions 1, 2 and 3) and inductive (Question 6). The remaining questions tested Synonymy (Question 4) and a figure of speech (Question 5). Aside these six-reading comprehension-related questions, test takers' competences in Usage (Questions 7-12), Synonyms (Questions 13-17) and Antonyms (Questions 18-20) were tested. The other area tested was literature. In this domain, whereas questions 21-25 tested literary devices, Questions 24 and 25 elicited responses for a one-stanza unseen poem. Pertaining to the basic English language skills tested, Reading and Writing were the two skills that received attention (See Appendix F18: 305).

4.7.4 The general scope of the instruments

To get a clearer picture of the skills tested over the three-year period, a summary of the basic language skills tested in Comprehensive University 2 are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Basic language skills tested by Comprehensive University 2

Basic language skill	Year		
	2016	2017	2018
Reading		✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓
Listening			
Speaking			

Source: Author's construct, 2020

It is evident from Table 8 that Comprehensive University 2 tested Reading in 2017 and 2018 and not in 2016. Writing, on the other hand, was tested over the three-year period. The reverse was registered for both Listening and Speaking; these two equally crucial language skills were completely overlooked.

Data from the semi-structured interviews

As already indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the views of the lecturers who set the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations were sought on the issue of the basic language skills that they set out to test in the examinations. This additional data gathering approach was deemed necessary for confirmability (See 3.13.1.3: 90) and triangulation purposes (See 3.12: 85). Five interviews were conducted except for Public University 2. In that University, the lecturer opted not to grant the researcher the interview. The information presented here are, therefore, based on the data from the five remaining universities.

The respondents were asked to state the basic language skills they test in the examinations and the reasons underlying their choices. According to the lecturer of Technical University 1:

“Reading and writing. We have a situation where, generally, a big cross-section of the vocational and technical community believes that people who are enrolled in professional programmes do not even need language skills, so that attitude does not even promote focusing so much on the English pronunciation and all that...here, focus is not on the language skills per se. It's more on people's knowledge on the professions and the programmes they are going to be enrolled in. My fear is that if we did speaking, we may disadvantage people, so, even if we had that, I will insist on it for some programmes (Secretaryship and Management Studies and Media and Communication) and not for all programmes.”

In the view of the assessor from Technical University 2:

“I test essay to see how they express themselves on paper. For the reading comprehension and summary, I will say how they are able to understand a passage and how they are able to answer questions from it. I do not test speaking and listening because of time.”

The response from the assessor of Private University 1 was:

“Over the period, it’s been reading and writing. The nature of the exam will not permit us to engage in listening assessment because it’s the one that requires the sit and write. Listening and speaking are important, but I have not thought about them yet...[laughs].”

For Private University 2, the response was that:

“We are able to test for reading summary and comprehension. We also test their writing skills. That’s a key aspect of the exams...listening and speaking are not major things because of time. Also, we don’t test these because of the number of years they have been out of school...you may not get anything.”

The Lecturer from Comprehensive University 1 stated that:

“We test their writing skills and then we test their reading comprehension skills. We are not able to test the phonetic (listening) skills because of their number and the lack of the gadgets that we should use in doing that. It’s also taken for granted because they assume that for a student to write this assessment, he would have gone through the Ghana education system from P1 to SHS, so having sat in the classroom to be taught using English language for about thirteen years, it is assumed that they have enough skills.”

The results from these interviews corroborate the pattern found in the past questions. That is, Reading and Writing which are secondary basic language skills are tested frequently in the six universities over the three-year period under consideration in this study – a trend that is very laudable. The evidence from the analysis of the past questions further suggest that Writing received the most attention. Perhaps, the emphasis may have

skewed more in the favour of Writing because, as Yunus and Chien (2016: 1) postulate, “writing has been widely regarded as a crucially essential skill in the teaching and learning of English as a Second Language (ESL) as it is a comprehensive skill that helps reinforce vocabulary, grammar, thinking, planning, editing, revising, and other elements”.

However, the primary basic language skills (Speaking and Listening) were overlooked in the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examinations across the six universities. Despite the logistical problems, time, negative perceptions about the technical and vocational educational system and the general lack of will on the part of the assessors to test these crucial basic language skills, it is very essential that Speaking and Listening are tested.

This is the case because considering the fact that none of the four basic language skills can replace the other in determining a language learners’ language proficiency (Swinston & Powers 1980; Manning 1987; Hale et al. 1988; Sawaki, Stricker & Oranje 2008; Powers, Kim & Weng 2008; Liao, Qu & Morgan 2010; Bozorgian 2012; Jinghua & Constanzo 2013), the present situation makes the examination deficient in the area of predicting future performances of candidates in the mainstream university system. Again, since only two of the four basic language skills cannot paint a comprehensive picture about candidates’ language profiles, decisions to admit or not to admit candidates based on the results of these questions may be flawed.

The situation becomes even more alarming because Jinghua and Constanzo (2013) espouse that, on the acquisition of the English language, Listening is crucial and is integrated with all the other components such as speaking and reading. This suggests that, of the four skills, Listening is very crucial, and that makes it necessary for listening to be considered in such a crucial placement examination. Its absence, in the instruments considered over the three-year period, casts doubts over the comprehensiveness of the questions.

Additionally, internationally recognised English language selection examinations such as TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS and Berry's (2018) ESOL Test Development Model (See 2.4: 38) have Listening and Speaking as integral components. This is a lacuna found in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations – a situation which does not make the examination comprehensive. This finding corroborates the posits of Powers (2010) who reports that many universities and colleges often do not test all the important language skills/areas and that affects candidates' acquisition of academic literacy skills since other key aspects of academic literacy would not be tested.

Section 2: Research Question 2

4.8 Differences and similarities in competences tested by the three types of universities

The literature suggests that there are many types of questions that universities use to assess candidates for enrolment purposes, and each question has particular competence(s) that it seeks to assess (Bachman & Palmer 1982; Kunnan 1995; Davey et al. 2007; Everson 2009; Powers 2010). In this regard, an attempt was made in this section to identify the differences and similarities that exist in the topical areas/competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public [comprehensive and technical] and private universities in Ghana in order to paint a clearer picture about the examinations. O'Leary's (2014) eight steps of conducting document analysis (See 1.7.6.2: 19) were followed to analyse the data for this section.

The topics/competences that were tested by the universities for the three-year period were collated. Thereafter, the specific universities that used each test item in a specific year were indicated. With respect to the presentation of the results, a comparison of the technical universities, the private universities and the comprehensive universities is first done sequentially to identify their various patterns. Thereafter, all the three groups are put side by side to identify both the similar and different topical areas or competences that they test. Boxes that are ticked indicate that a topical area was tested. Blank boxes,

on the other hand, indicate that a particular topical area was not tested in the examination in a particular year for a particular university.

4.8.1 Technical universities

The results of the competences examined by Technical University 1 and Technical University 2 are presented in Table 9. The presentation involves the topical areas (competences) that each technical university tested together with the years that they were tested.

Table 9: Topics (competences) tested by the technical universities

Topical area (Competences)	Technical University 1			Technical University 2		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Subject–Verb Agreement	✓		✓			
Reading Comprehension	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Essay Writing	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Spelling		✓				
Summary		✓		✓		
Word Classes Identification			✓			
Clausal Elements			✓		✓	✓
Synonymy			✓			✓
Literary Devices						✓

Source: Author's construct, 2020

Table 9 indicates that gauging of test takers' competences in Concord, Word Classes Identification, Spelling and Literary devices varied between the two technical universities. The results suggest that whereas Subject-Verb Agreement (2016 and 2017), Spelling

(2017) and Word Classes Identification (2018) were tested by Technical University 1, their Technical University 2 counterparts did not test these competences at all.

The reverse was, however, registered for Literary Devices, as only Technical University 2 tested this domain (2018). With regard to Synonymy (Technical University 1 = 2018; Technical University 2 = 2018) and Summary (Technical University 1 = 2017; Technical University 2 = 2016), it is evident that both competences were not popular competences tested by the assessors of these universities. However, Reading Comprehension and Essay Writing emerged as the most popular competences tested across the two technical universities.

4.8.2 Private universities

The results of the competences assessed by Private University 1 and Private University 2 are presented in Table 10. The presentation involves the topical areas (competences) that each private university tested together with the years that they were tested.

The findings from Table 10 reveal that there were key variations in the competences tested by the two private universities, albeit some similarities were registered. With respect to the similarities, the results suggest that Subject-Verb Agreement, Synonymy, Reading Comprehension and Essay Writing were the most frequently tested competences across the two universities.

As regards the differences, Punctuation (2016, 2017 and 2018), Dangling Modifiers (2016, 2017 and 2018), Run-on Sentences (2016, 2018 and 2018), Misplaced modifiers (2016 and 2018) and Sentence Fragments (2016, 2017 and 2018) emerged as the unique topical areas tested by Private University 1. For Private University 2, Clausal Elements (2016, 2017 and 2018), Antonyms (2016 and 2017), Usage (2017, 2017 and 2018), Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions (2016 and 2017), Literary Devices (2018) and Registers (2018) emerged as the unique competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

Table 10: Topics (competences) tested by the private universities

Topical area (Competences)	Private University 1			Private University 2		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Subject–Verb Agreement	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Reading Comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Essay Writing		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Summary				✓	✓	✓
Synonymy	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Punctuations	✓	✓	✓			
Dangling Modifiers	✓	✓	✓			
Run-on Sentences	✓	✓	✓			
Misplaced Modifiers	✓		✓			
Sentence Fragments	✓	✓	✓			
Clausal Elements				✓	✓	✓
Antonyms				✓	✓	
Usage				✓	✓	✓
Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions				✓	✓	
Literary Devices						✓
Registers						✓

Source: Author's construct, 2020

4.8.3 Comprehensive universities

The results of the competences tested by Comprehensive University 1 and Comprehensive University 2 are presented in Table 11. The presentation involves the topical areas (competences) that each comprehensive university tested together with the years that the competences were tested.

Table 11: Topics (competences) tested by the comprehensive universities

Topical area (Competences)	Comprehensive University 1			Comprehensive University 2		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Reading Comprehension	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Essay Writing	✓	✓	✓			
Clausal Elements		✓	✓			
Usage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Antonyms	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Synonyms		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Literary Devices	✓				✓	✓

Source: Author's construct, 2020

The evidence from Table 11 suggests that there were both similarities and variations in the competences tested by the two universities. For the similarities, it was identified that Reading Comprehension, Synonyms and Antonyms were the commonest competences tested by the two universities. Pertaining to the differences, it was found that whereas Comprehensive University 2 paid a lot of attention to Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions (2016, 2017 and 2018), their counterparts from Comprehensive University 1 did little in this area (2016). Moreover, whereas Essay Writing and Clausal Elements were tested by Comprehensive University 1, their counterparts from Comprehensive University 2 did not test these areas at all.

4.8.4 Merger of topics (competences) tested by all three types of universities

In order to identify the similarities and the differences that exist in the competences tested by the three types of universities, the competences tested by the technical universities, the private universities and the comprehensive universities were juxtaposed in Table 12.

The presentation involves the topical areas (competences) that each university tested together with the years that the competences were tested. This was done by selecting every unique topical area tested by the two technical universities, the two private universities and the two comprehensive universities and entering the result.

From Table 12, Reading Comprehension and Essay Writing emerged as the most popular and most tested English language competence areas among the universities selected for this study. That is, these competence areas were tested consistently by the universities across 2016, 2017 and 2018. The results further reveal that only the technical universities tested test takers' competences in Word Class Identification (2017 and 2018) and Spelling (2017). The other two types of universities did not venture into these English language competency areas.

Also, it is evident that only the private universities tested test takers' competences in Dangling Modifiers, Run-on Sentences, Misplaced Modifiers and Sentence Fragments. Moreover, whereas the private universities and comprehensive universities tested test takers' English language competences in areas such as Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions, Usage, Antonyms and Clausal Elements, their counterparts in the technical universities were silent on these areas.

It is, again, worth noting that, generally, the scope or coverage of the English language competences tested by the private universities was broader as compared to that of the technical universities and the comprehensive universities.

More so, a disparity was established among the public universities (technical universities and comprehensive universities). Evidence from Table 12 suggests that the comprehensive universities were doing better than the technical universities, as the scope of competences tested by the comprehensive universities was broader than that of their technical university counterparts.

Table 12: Similarities and differences in topics (competences) tested by the three types of universities

Topical area (Competences)	Type of University								
	Technical Universities			Private Universities			Comprehensive Universities		
	Year			Year			Year		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Subject-Verb Agreement	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Reading Comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Essay Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Summary	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Synonymy			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Punctuations				✓	✓	✓			
Dangling Modifiers				✓	✓	✓			
Run-on Sentences				✓	✓	✓			
Misplaced Modifiers				✓		✓			
Sentence Fragments				✓	✓	✓			
Clausal Elements			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Antonyms				✓			✓	✓	✓
Usage				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Literary Devices			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Registers						✓			
Spelling		✓							
Word Classes Identification		✓	✓						

Source: Author's construct, 2020

These findings suggest that the three types of universities studied do not follow a uniform pattern in respect of the competences that they test in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. For instance, differences were registered in the competences tested for Technical University 1 and Technical University 2 (See Table 9: 116), Private University 1 and Private University 2 (See Table 10: 118) and Comprehensive University 1 and Comprehensive University 2 (See Table 11: 119).

It was expected that, at least, the technical universities, the private universities and the comprehensive universities will each have a uniform pattern that could set them apart from their other counterparts, that is, if that were even necessary. Obviously, this was not the case. Moreover, based on the fact that the WASSCE is the standardised examination that all the universities operating in Ghana mainly use to admit candidates and that the WASSCE has an identifiable standard, it was expected that, generally, a uniform pattern of skill or competences tested would be registered in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions across all the universities used in this study. This, unfortunately, was not the case.

The implication is that whereas the WASSCE English language component, an analogous examination of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, guarantees a common ground for test takers' English language competences to be tested to aid the universities in the selection qualified test takers for admission, the reverse was the case for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. This inconsistency is undesirable. This is because after being granted admission, all the candidates with both WASSCE and English language

component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations background are put together in the mainstream and given the same lessons. This does not augur well in respect of the future performances of the admitted WASSCE and English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations candidates.

4.9 Chapter summary

This chapter was divided into two sections. The presentation, analysis and discussion of the data related to Research Question 1 (Which basic language skills are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?) were carried out here. Thereafter, the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data related to Research Question 2 (What are the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public [comprehensive and technical] and private universities in Ghana) were carried out.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA (2)

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, data pertaining to research questions three and four are presented, analysed and discussed. The research questions are restated here as follows:

Research question three:

What are the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions?

Research question four:

Which approaches are used to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

Section 1: Objective 3: The criteria used in setting questions

5.1 Main Theme: The criteria used in setting questions

This Chapter is divided into two sections. The first section involves an exploration of the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into the universities' questions. As mentioned in Chapter Two Section 2.6, one key way of ensuring examinations quality is through the use of standardised examinations question setting criteria. In this direction, aspects of Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model guided the exploration of this first section.

The focus, specifically, was on the processes followed by the examiners to set the questions, if a standard assessment model was used, whether the type/nature of the examinations informed the construct of the questions and whether the characteristics of the test takers were considered in the design of the questions. Others include: whether

the questions are pre-trialed before administration, whether the questions are reviewed over time and whether the examiners have been trained in language assessment. Burnard's (1991) fourteen steps of conducting thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data pertaining to this first section (See 1.7.6.1: 17).

5.2 Criteria used in setting questions

Seven thematic areas were identified with respect to the criteria used in setting the questions. The details are presented here.

5.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Processes followed to set questions

Universally, one very important aspect of language assessment is the processes followed to set the questions. In order to understand the situation, as it prevails in the selected universities, the examiners were asked to indicate the processes they follow to set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions.

The examiner from Technical University 1 stated that:

"Ideally, institutions should have parameters that should guide examiners in setting questions, but we do not have a formal plan like that or any formal standard, so it falls on the examiner to design a system... I expect people who are coming in to be able to articulate their expertise. In effect, we are looking at the four communicative areas – reading, listening, speaking and writing, but the exam takes care mainly of speaking parts and the other parts are incorporated into the written aspects."

On the part of the examiner of Technical University 1, it is evident, through this response, that there was no standardised process that the university prescribed, so it was entirely left to the discretion of the examiner to set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions. This assertion is made based on the

examiner's own admission that ideally, institutions ought to have such formalised processes to be followed by examiners, but that such a situation was non-existent in Technical University 1. It is also clear from the analysis of the basic language skills tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions of this university (See Table 3: 96) that major contradictions exist between the findings and responses elicited from this examiner because this examiner cited that candidates are expected to "articulate" their expertise and that the other three communicative skills (Writing, Listening and Reading) are woven into the written aspect of the examination. Meanwhile Listening emerged as one of the basic English language skills that were consistently overlooked by Technical University 1 over the three-year period.

All in all, the researcher realised, based on the inconsistent responses, that in the absence of a university standardised language assessment process, the examiner equally did not have a clear process that was followed to set the examination questions. The lack of a consistent or standardised process to guide the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions leaves room for possible errors which can be inimical to the standards of the examinations.

The examiner of Technical University 2 mentioned that:

"The University doesn't have...what I do is because for so many years I have been setting the questions, I follow the same routine. There are two aspects of the paper – the essay column and the comprehension or the summary column, so I find any passage for them...you see, I have a book on comprehension and summary, so what I do is that I normally pick some of the passages... I just go into that book, I pick one of the passages at random and then I use it for the second part of the paper. And then for the first part, that is the essay column, that one I use my discretion. If there is any issue that is being discussed around the country, then, of course, I use that one, and I find two other areas either on

descriptive essay, narrative essay, expository or argumentative. The essence is just to test the students' proficiency in how they use language to express themselves."

The picture, as painted by the examiner of Technical University 2 suggests that, like Technical University 1, Technical University 2 does not have a standardised process in place to guide the examiner in the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. Evidently, this situation leaves this very crucial examination entirely in the hands of the examiner. Since the required checks and balances needed, had there been a standardised process, are likely not to be present, the likelihood that there will be identifiable lapses in the examinations are obvious.

For instance, the examiner talks about 'just' selecting passages 'at random' to set the comprehension and summary aspects of the examination. The choice of words here is even suggestive of a pedestrian approach to selecting what is supposed to be used in testing the candidates of this crucial placement examination. This raises concerns about the overall standards of the examination questions set by Technical University 2 over the three-year period.

For Private University 1, the examiner revealed that:

"I do it alone...it's guided by the syllabus for the programme, and the programme, we cover, at least, about eight topics. Usually, we select just about six to fashion out the questions...the syllabus covers areas on punctuation, concord, faulty sentences, comprehension, paragraph writing, essay writing, sense relations and basic English skills. I set three different questions then I take it[sic] for internal moderation under the supervision of one moderator. Then we discuss before we take it[sic] for external moderation for it to be crosschecked, and, then based on that, we decide on which one to use for the exam."

This response suggests that there is an identifiable process in place for Private University 1 as regards the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions. The existence of a syllabus that serves as a guide in the setting of the questions and the use of both internal and external moderation, to a large extent, will ensure that possible individual lapses that may occur in the questions are controlled to ensure good standards of the questions.

In Private University 2, it was mentioned that:

“A number of English lecturers set the questions and then there is a selection. After that it should go for moderation. That’s one key thing we do. We have lecturers who deal with moderating the questions, so they should have it, at least, a week or more so that it can be moderated.”

Regarding Private University 2, it is evident that there is a definable process which is followed in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions. Obviously, gathering a pool of questions, selecting test items from this pool of questions and subjecting the selected items to internal moderation gives enough room for cross-fertilisation of ideas. This situation is ideal in two senses: (1) potential lapses in the questions will be reduced, if not eliminated and (2) the University has an identifiable pattern it follows in the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions.

For Comprehensive University 1, the examiner revealed that:

“There’s serious confidentiality involved in the exams...people do not know that I set any questions. That is the system the Provost there has set right from the beginning. Three months to the time, he writes to appoint you. There is a book that is used in running programmes for those who want to write the mature exams...a book written by a team in the

University. You are given a copy of the book which is an examination guide... then you look at the various topics that are treated in the book. In the composition, you have argumentative essays, expository essays...narrative essays...descriptive essays...then topics in grammar – synonyms and antonyms, parts of speech, elements of literature. So, from then, you now set the questions, and you submit the questions to the Provost, at least, about a month to the time.”

The response here implies that Comprehensive University 1 has a well-defined process in place that guides the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. Specifically, dates with respect to the appointment of examiners, setting of the questions and submission of the questions are followed timeously. Apart from these, that the examiner's identity is shrouded in secrecy, that there is a university standard book that serves as an examination guide and that the examiner follows the guide fully in selecting the topical areas or competences to test in the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, are positive. Such a situation engenders, to a large extent, better quality of the examination questions as set by this examiner.

In summary, it is clear that the Universities considered in this study follow different paths with respect to the processes involved in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions – a situation that is not standard. The major deviation was registered for Technical University 1 and Technical University 2 who appeared not to know what they were about. Considering that this a crucial examination because it is used to admit potential candidates to handle higher learning tasks, leaving aspects of the examinations entirely in the hands of examiners has the potential of affecting the overall quality of the examination. As Brown and Yamashita (1995) aver, having a standard process for all universities is key to improving the standards of the examinations.

5.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Use of an assessment model

As the IELTS uses Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model to help ensure and maintain high standards of the examination, the situation as pertains in the universities used in this study was explored. In this direction, the examiners were asked to indicate if they followed any assessment model in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions.

The examiner of Technical University 1 responded that:

“(Laughs) A formal model, no! So it’s up to the individual ...I have to explore, so I research other similar examinations...I like to use international standards...I explore their areas, and then I try and see how I can redesign such to suit our candidates and environment...if we were doing things right, and if we had a system, the system would be able to guide the examiner...but we don’t have.”

At Technical University 2, the examiner stated that:

“No. I don’t do that...I don’t really follow any particular model per se.”

With respect to Private University 1, the examiner also mentioned that:

“Not really such defined model ...that this is what you should do in that sense.”

Also, the examiner of Private University 2 stated that:

“From my end, I cannot pinpoint a specific module.”

In Comprehensive University 1, it was revealed that:

“They have not had any model. But I am in the area of assessment...so I use my background knowledge as an assessor, so you know what pertains in terms of examining.”

Evidence from the respondents suggests that there is no language assessment model that is followed in all the universities to guide in the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions. Again, it is evident that the examiner from Technical University 1 admitted to the need for such a model to guide how the questions are set, albeit this examiner had not made any attempt to identify a particular model to follow. It is, therefore, safe to claim that the questions were set in an unclear manner in the absence of the use of a standardised model across the universities.

This finding leaves a lot to be desired since there is enough room for possible lapses to occur in the setting of the questions – a situation that has the propensity of affecting the quality of the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions. As Berry (2018) argues, by systematically following a model such as the ESOL test development model, examiners can be confident that they have developed a high-quality assessment that will provide reliable and useful information about their learners. That, unfortunately, is not prevalent in the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examinations in the selected Ghanaian universities.

5.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Consideration of type of examination in the construct of questions

Examinations do not fulfil just a sole function; the objective(s) of examinations often determine how a particular instrument is designed to help achieve that particular objective(s) (Jacobs et al. 1981; Cohen 1994; Black & William 1998a; Brown 2003; Trumbull & Lash 2013; Berry 2018).

Considering the fact that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is primarily a placement test, this domain was explored. The respondents were asked if they considered the type of examination to inform the construct of the questions, and, if so, how they went about it.

According to the examiner of Technical University 1:

“Yes, I consider that...the person is going to the classroom to read...so I look for reading comprehension...the person has to demonstrate a higher level of understanding of issues from the individual perspective as well as the general. They have to also be able to use language because they will write...so I deal with usage too, so the examinations fall in these parts.”

The examiner of Technical University 2 revealed that:

Not really. You know the essence of this whole thing is that the students that are coming to write should have gone through formal education, especially the second cycle, so with that idea, you expect that certain students coming to write this exam should have gone through certain little basics of language training, so that is all what we actually consider. Beyond that, we don't really follow anything per se. I don't follow any serious processes like that.”

Also, for Private University 1, it was mentioned that:

“That's yes (laughs and looks confused), but it's largely dependent on the decision of the supervisor...it's with the supervisor...the one supervising the programme...sometimes understanding, comprehension, analysing literal and inferential meanings...basic writing skills in that sense.”

The situation as prevalent in Private University 2 was that:

“We have to prove that they have a certain level of competence when it comes to language. That’s a key thing. We look at how they are able to compose essays, how they are able to organise ideas, how they are able to argue. All these things are considered because we know that where you want to go is more tougher[sic] than the SHS, so we look at these things in setting the questions.”

For Comprehensive University 1, it was revealed that:

“Exactly, we do that...we consider that very seriously in setting the questions so that questions or test items should be able to differentiate a good student from a bad student so that discrimination will be very clear for us to know who to pick...because it’s for selection, we are very particular about the difficulty level, so the difficulty level is at the SHS level (WASSCE) because that’s the standard exam for selecting people for universities.”

Apart from the examiner of Technical University 2 who stated categorically that the University does not consider the type of examination to inform the construct of the questions and that of Private University 1 whose position was ambivalent, it is clear that the other examiners knew what they were about. That is, they took decisions on the type of questions and language competences based on the fact that the examination is primarily a placement or selection examination. The situation at Private University 1 was that of ambivalence, as the examiner was unable to convincingly respond in the area of what exactly was done in respect of this subject matter.

That the majority of the respondents considered the type of examination in the setting of the questions is a positive finding that is in consonance with the posits of Berry (2018). This author suggests that, as part of standard language assessment practice, examiners

ought to consider the type of examination in the development of the questions or test items. However, there is more to be done in this area for Technical University 2 and Private University 1 since their position largely is in opposition to the posits of Berry (2018).

5.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Consideration of test takers' characteristics

As part of the approaches followed to set examinations questions is the consideration of the characteristics of the test takers in order to arrive at questions that are suitable or fitting for the test takers (Berry 2018). This domain was, therefore, explored to identify if the respondents considered the characteristics of the test takers and, if they did, the particular characteristics they considered.

The examiner of Technical University 1 stated that:

“Yes, definitely. The first year that I did the questions I had a shock because I had very high expectations of these people...but the exam proved me wrong...these are people who have not learnt for a long time. They may have the experiences, but handling the classroom environment is a problem...I look at their professional background and the age in setting the questions.”

This response suggests that this examiner, perhaps, is not setting the questions to the required standards, considering that the test takers' characteristics such as age, professional background and period spent out of school have an effect on the way the test takers are able to handle the questions. That the characteristics of the test takers are taken into considering is a positive finding, since it makes the questions fitting and suitable for the test takers (Berry 2018). On the reverse, the likelihood that these questions are not set to the expected standards is not desirable.

For that of Technical University 2, it was mentioned that:

“I will say yes and no. To some extent, my major preoccupation is to observe that at that time they should have some basics of language training. Most of these people, it’s been a long time they went to school, but the fact is that you expect them to have gone through second cycle as per the NCTE requirement. They should be more than 25 years. They should have some work experience. So we consider these three things.”

Even though this respondent was rather ambivalent initially as to whether the characteristics of the test takers are considered, the mid-to-latter part of the response suggested that the period the test takers have spent out of school, their minimum age requirement and their working experience are considered in the setting of the questions. The worrying aspect of this is that, this examiner, being the main person in charge of setting the questions should have been able to categorically state that, indeed, the characteristics of the test takers are considered or not. That the examiner was unable to do this, perhaps, suggest that the characteristics of the test takers may, after all, not be a key issue considered in the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions. This situation contradicts standard language assessment practice (Berry 2018).

The Private University 1 examiner revealed that:

“Not necessarily because the common characteristic about them is they are all workers...they are all over 25 years...the work differences do not matter in that sense because you have people from varied backgrounds.”

It is evident from this response that although this examiner is fully aware of the defining characteristics of the test takers, such defining characteristics are overlooked in the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions. This situation is not desirable since the questions set may not be fitting enough

for the test takers and therefore affect decisions that will be made on the examination results – a situation Berry (2018) does not ascribe to.

On the part of the examiner of Private University 2, the situation was that:

“Generally, we have students from varying backgrounds, but we usually have the standardised thing so we don’t...we look at the standard...at the same time, I look at their age not to give them a lot of recalling questions that may be challenging for them.”

This response indicates that this examiner’s intention is to set the questions with the intention of arriving at standard questions by not considering the characteristics of the test takers. Meanwhile, the literature suggests that standard questions must be set with the characteristics of the test takers in mind. It was, therefore, comforting that the examiner admitted to considering their age. However, the age consideration suggests that the expected approaches used in gauging the test takers’ competences are compromised. Consequently, this examiner appears not to be practicing the best ways of arriving at standardised yet suitable questions for the test takers. This situation contradicts standard language assessment practice (Berry 2018).

Also, the examiner of Comprehensive University 1 revealed that:

“It’s considered. I look at their nature before setting the questions so that I can differentiate between the good student and the bad student and be able to pick the cream of the students...sometimes I look at their academic ability.”

For this examiner, the only concern is to get candidates who are academically good to handle higher learning tasks. Issues such as age and professional background which are common characteristics of the test takers are not mentioned. Consequently, consideration of the characteristics of the test takers in this University is not something that is practiced holistically.

All in all, as Berry mentions in the ESOL test development model, the physical, psychological and experiential characteristics of the test takers should be considered in language assessment. As evidenced from the responses elicited from the examiners of these universities, it is obvious that even though some of the examiners made attempts to consider the characteristics of the test takers, their attempts are not appropriate. This situation, again, casts doubts over the authenticity of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions used by the selected universities.

5.2.5 Sub-theme 5: Pre-trial of questions

According to Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model, one of the crucial activities language assessors need to observe in the preparation of the examination questions is to pre-trial the questions. This is done with the view of identifying possible lapses in the examination questions so that the appropriate corrections can be made in order to arrive at the desired questions for a particular examination. This domain was, therefore, explored in this study in order to identify whether the respondents pre-trial the questions, and, if they did, how they went about it.

The examiner of Technical University 1 stated that:

“No, and that doesn't happen because of the absence of formal parameters (See 5.2.1: 125) and timing because the Department gets the information (to set the questions) at the very tail end of the process...sometimes a week, sometimes, days...there's not adequate time for pretrial.”

For Technical University 2, it was mentioned that:

“No. Apparently, I sometimes recycle these questions, so, to some extent, I'll say that they have been pre-trialed because sometimes a

passage I actually used six years ago, I bring the same passage, and, then, some of the essay questions, I just change the wording, but technically it's the same question, so I'll say they've gone through the pretrial stage."

Also, in Private University 1, the examiner responded that:

"Not so, not so. We don't do such a thing."

Similarly, the examiner from Private University 2 revealed that:

"No, no...as a university, we don't do that."

However, the examiner of Comprehensive University 1 stated that:

"I do my pre-trial, I do that. It's not a very large scale. Because it's a mature exam, I try it on maybe one or two students who have completed the SHS and also I know are not writing the mature exam. And I do it at a time they are not expecting there will be any mature exam...I trial it to see how they'll respond before I submit it as a question."

Apart from the examiner of Comprehensive University 1 who admitted to conducting pre-trial of the questions to establish the veracity or otherwise of the questions so that, if necessary, appropriate corrections can be made to improve upon the questions, the examiners of the other universities did not exercise this crucial language assessment activity at all. This means there is always room for lapses to occur with respect to the nature and even scope of the questions. This lacuna casts doubts over the veracity of the questions used by these universities because pre-trialing, which constitutes a major language assessment quality assurance activity, is ignored. As Berry (2018) indicates in the ESOL test development model, pre-trial is one of the key activities that language assessors must undertake in the assessment process.

5.2.6 Sub-theme 6: Review of question-setting process

Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model prescribes reviews of the question-setting process. Closely linked to the pre-trial of questions is the review of the entire question-setting procedure over periods of time in order to identify if all aspects of the process are desirable. Undesirable aspects can then be identified and improved upon. This crucial language assessment domain was, consequently, explored to identify whether the question-setting process of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into the selected universities are reviewed, and if yes, how it is executed.

The examiner of Technical University 1 revealed that:

“Yes. As I said, because there is no opportunity for pre-trial, you need to look at the performance so the performance (of the test takers) direct me to go through the questions to determine what works and what doesn't work...so sometimes the content changes.”

For Technical University 2, the response was:

“Sure. What I have realised is that most of them ignore issues of topical concerns that I use. They come to the examination room without any idea at all...so most of them, even though you have topical questions, they don't attempt that one[sic]. They go with the simple questions, but I have made some compulsory before, and the failure rate was massive, so I put it there, but I don't make it compulsory.”

With respect to Private University 1, the examiner mentioned that:

“Yes, please...that even informs the way the questions are asked...we use previously set questions to inform us on the ways to improve the next questions.”

For Private University 2, it was revealed that:

“Of course, we do. We look at some of the questions... if they ask for just simple things, we decide that such questions shouldn't be used because the focus is to test their competence.”

Pertaining to Comprehensive University 1, the examiner stated that:

“Yes, I try to do that...every year, after they have written the exams, we look at the questions as a team...we have formed a group called Team Leaders...we look at the nature of the questions to see whether there are some loopholes or any problems associated with them... we look at the scripts...we also consider students' answers against the questions and expected answers to see if there are any weaknesses so that the following year, we can improve upon these.”

All universities responded in the affirmative, albeit the review processes were different for the universities. Whereas some looked at it from the individual narrow scale, one looked at it from a more comprehensive and thorough perspective (Comprehensive University 1). Even though most of the approaches used are not comprehensive and as thorough as should be, it is positive that all of the examiners appreciated the need for such a key step in the language assessment process and that modest attempts, by and large, were in place to effect this important language assessment step. This positive finding is in consonance with the postulations of Berry (2018) who prescribes that the entire question-setting process should be reviewed to highlight possible areas that may need strengthening.

5.2.7 Sub theme 7: Training of examiners in language assessment

Universally, another crucial aspect of language assessment is the competences of the language assessor, so this domain was explored. A well-trained language assessor is better placed to examine language test takers better than one who is not well-trained. An attempt was, therefore, made to find out whether the examiners of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations have received some training in language assessment by their employers or not.

The examiner of Technical University 1 revealed that:

“No...formal, no. I just explore...that’s a minus for the institution...people who are handling language should be (trained), but we don’t have that.”

For Technical University 2, the response was:

“No, no, no...personally, once by the Linguistics Association of Ghana. That’s four years ago.”

With respect to Private University 1, the examiner mentioned that:

“Yes. We received some trainers from UCC to take us through what is expected in language assessment...there was a lecturer who was doing it (setting the questions), and she had to leave, so she gave me some sort of in-house training before the Cape Coast people came.”

For Private University 2, it was revealed that:

“On language assessment, I don’t remember attending any such training.”

Pertaining to Comprehensive University 1, the examiner stated that:

“The University runs courses for all lecturers in evaluation and language assessment. We do that very consciously. We look at how to write essay-type tests...how to write objective-type tests.”

The responses here suggest that only Private University 1 and Comprehensive University 1 train their language examiners on language assessment. The opposite was the case for the other universities. It was expected, as universities handling such a serious selection examination such as the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, that the key players who are the examiners would be equipped to have the requisite know-how to be able to set standard questions fit for their purpose. Unfortunately, three of the five universities (who constitute the majority) failed in this regard. It is, therefore, not surprising that a lot of key areas that Berry (2018) prescribes as necessary for language assessors to observe and practice are ignored. This situation is not the best since individuals who are not well-placed are put in such a sensitive position to set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. This, ultimately, has the propensity of affecting the quality of the questions that are set.

5.3 Section 2: Objective 4: How the examination is benchmarked

5.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Enquiry into whether the examination is benchmarked

As Boud (1995) indicates, examinations are integral components of the educational process, so ensuring that they fulfil the tasks they set out to fulfil is very crucial. Universally, one way of ensuring that examinations test what they ought to test is through benchmarking the examination to existing or known standards. Based on the fact that benchmarking of standards results in improving performances (Camp 1989; Bennett 1999; Schuwirth et al. 2008), the examiners were asked to indicate whether they benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against any other standard examination administered anywhere in the world. Burnard's

(1991) fourteen-step approach to conducting thematic content analysis was used to analyse this data. The responses, analyses and discussions are presented here.

At Technical University 1, the examiner mentioned that:

“I sometimes I go to IELTS, and I sometimes pick one of their items...Even if I don’t use their items, I follow the principles.”

The examiner from Technical University 2 stated that:

“...we compile a lot of WAEC or WASSCE examinations over the years (past questions), so most of these passages are from WASSCE or WAEC examinations, so I’ll say that, technically speaking, it’s something that we can say can that we benchmark it to the WAEC standard.”

The examiner of Private University 1 revealed that:

“We use the external moderation of Comprehensive University 1...which mentors us to ensure the standards. What I have seen over the years is that these moderating universities don’t show you their mature English language questions, so they are moderating to meet a standard which they don’t let you see, so it’s about they telling you to do it this way or that way.”

Like Technical University 2, the examiner at Private University 2 disclosed that:

“For me I somehow somehow look at it from the angle of the WASSCE, so you will see that most of the aspects there are WASSCE aspects.”

On the same subject matter, the examiner of Comprehensive University 1 mentioned that:

“We always benchmark it against what the West African Examinations Council does – that’s the WASSCE.”

It is clear from the responses obtained that aside the assessor from Private University 1, the other assessors were fully in control of decisions regarding the need to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions and also the type of examination they had to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions against. Specifically, whereas the assessor from Technical University 1 mentioned the IELTS as the examination that the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions is benchmarked against, the rest of the assessors pointed to the WASSCE. For Private University 1, it was found that they were mentored by Comprehensive University 1, so their standards or how the examination is benchmarked is determined by Comprehensive University 1.

As evidenced in the response from the assessor of Comprehensive University 1, the university itself benchmarks its own English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions against the WASSCE. It was, therefore, deduced that Private University 1’s benchmarking is equally the WASSCE. The finding that virtually all the universities used in this study benchmarked their English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions is positive in respect of the standards of the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions, as the benchmarking against internationally recognised examinations such as the IELTS and the WASSCE will go a long way to ensure high standards of the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions.

This falls within the classification of benchmarking by Camp (1989). Camp (1989) avers that benchmarking against external best practice occurs when organisations look up to high standards set by other key industry players in order to aspire to reach such high standards.

5.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Reasons behind choice

Closely related to decisions to benchmark the examination is the reason behind such decisions. In order to ascertain why the examiners chose the WASSCE and the IELTS, they were asked to indicate why they benchmarked the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against the WASSCE and the IELTS. It is worth noting that, out of the five universities, only Private University 1 could not provide a response. This was the case because the examiner of Private University 1 could not identify how the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations were benchmarked, so data on this follow-up enquiry could not be elicited.

In the view of the examiner of Technical University 1:

"...because their items usually are short, so sometimes I use their standards...because, once again, because we don't have anything, I think that you need a standard. The difficulty is that because the people are not hmm! The language skills are not there, in the end it's very difficult to follow these standards but the benchmarking helps me as an examiner to set the right questions."

The examiner of Technical University 2 indicated that:

"Because the entry requirement is normally WAEC standard and because people need to have WASSCE grade this and all that – like a pass mark in English. So the idea is that if WASSCE is the requirement they are looking for students to be able to pass and enter the tertiary institution, then, of course, if you want somebody to come into the system through the mature system, it makes sense to actually place it at that level."

Their counterpart in Private University 2 revealed that:

“It’s the same standard that most universities demand to admit students into the mainstream.”

Also, the examiner of Comprehensive University 1 mentioned that:

“That is the standard exam for the whole sub-region and its well-recognised, so that’s what we benchmark it against.”

It is evident from the submission of the examiner of Technical University 1 that convenience and the lack of an established standard on the part of Technical University 1 caused this examiner to benchmark the examination against the IELTS. This presupposes that this choice of IELTS is a personal one and not an institutional one. It is also clear that the lack of confidence in the abilities of the test takers culminated in the examiner expressing sentiments of possibly not following the standards of the IELTS rigidly. In other words, the examiner doubted whether the test takers could handle tests set to the IELTS standards. That is, the deduction is that the IELTS standards are not even followed thoroughly by this examiner.

Unlike Technical University 1, the examiners of Technical University 2, Private University 2 and Comprehensive University 1 revealed that the WASSCE is the examination they benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examinations against. The recurring theme in their reason for benchmarking the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examinations against the WASSCE was that the WASSCE is the standard examination recognised for admission of candidates into universities. Additionally, their responses indicated that they followed the standards of the WASSCE fully. These findings corroborate the posits of Camp (1989) that organisations benchmark against external best practice in order to look up to high standards set by other key industry players to improve their own standards.

5.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Similarities and differences between the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and the WASSCE

In order to establish whether the examiners from Technical University 2, Private University 1 and Comprehensive University 1 who indicated categorically that they followed the WASSCE standard followed it to the letter, they were asked to indicate whether they could identify some similarities and differences between the two sets of examinations. This domain was explored for triangulation purposes (See 3.12: 85).

The examiner from Technical University 2 stated that:

“I’ll say no, I’ll say yes. On the issues of topical concern, you know WAEC doesn’t do that per se. They just pick topics on descriptive, expository, argumentative and narrative for the essay and probably some letter writing aspects. But the only difference is that we have issues of topical concern for our candidates to be able to speak about issues around. Apart from that everything is more or less the same.”

The response here suggests that this examiner did not identify any major deviations in the standards between the WASSCE and Technical University 2’s English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions. In other words, the standards were very much comparable. Unfortunately, this stance of this examiner contradicts what was found when the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions of Technical University 2 were compared to the WASSCE on the level of the basic language skills tested and the competences or topical areas tested by both examinations. The expectation was that the examiner’s response would corroborate the findings in the document analysis of the questions. That there was such a vast inconsistency in the examiner’s response and that of the questions is suggestive of the fact that a lot more needs to be done in the area of ensuring that the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions of Technical University 2 matches the standards of the WASSCE.

It was found in Private University 2 that:

“For the similarities, we do Summary. It’s there. Comprehension is there. Essay Writing, we both have it and the objectives. We look at Idiomatic Expressions, Synonyms, Antonyms, Concord, Tenses, Literary Devices. The difference is on the form because the WASSCE has two papers, but here, one. Everything is combined, so we sit once, and, also, here we write two essays, WASSCE (writes) one.”

It is obvious that this examiner identified a number of topical areas that were in congruence with the topical areas tested in the WASSCE. It is, therefore, not surprising that this university came closest to matching the WASSCE standards with regard to the topical areas or competences tested (See Table 18: 160). With respect to the differences, the admission that there were notable form differences suggest that the standards of the WASSCE was not being followed to the letter. This indicates that a lot more has to be done in making the English language component of the Mature Students’ Entrance Examination questions comparable to the WASSCE standards.

Pertaining to Comprehensive University 1, the examiner mentioned that:

“In the WASSCE, they write four types of essays (descriptive, narrative, argumentative and expository), and we also do the same thing. In the WASSCE, they set comprehension questions along the same lines we do by looking at the factual questions, inductive, deductive. Then they set vocabulary items. We have that. They set objective questions. We also do the same. Literature is also tested. But the differences are that we don’t give them a single passage for the Summary Writing, but that’s what the WASSCE does. In our case, we use the same comprehension question and ask them one or two questions as summary questions...WASSCE tests three basic language skills. We test two.”

From this response, it can be deduced that there are many topical areas or competences that both examinations have in common. But the divergences were also obviously known by the examiner. For instance, for the examiner to show knowledge that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions conducted in this university was deficient in the area of the basic language skills tested in comparison to the WASSCE was worrying. The expectation was that such knowledge would cause the examiner to act to ameliorate the situation, but this shortfall was not remedied in any of the three English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions analysed in this study. All in all, although good attempts had been made, as much as possible, to make the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions of this university comparable to the WASSCE standards, a lot more needs to be done to accomplish this.

5.4 Benchmarking against the WASSCE

Many scholars have dealt with issues bordering on benchmarking of English language examinations because of the central role benchmarking plays in ensuring high standards of the activities of organisations (Camp 1989; Rosnick et al. 1995; Louis & BerVersloot 1996; Yorke 1999; Tsui & Andrews 2002; Bunton & Tsui 2002; Falvey & Corniam 2002; Scherman et al. 2011; Scherman et al. 2014).

Considering the fact that the majority of the examiners mentioned the WASSCE English language component as the examination that they benchmarked their English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against, it became necessary that these two sets of examinations were compared to identify the extent to which the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions matched up to the WASSCE English language component standards in the areas of the basic language skills they both test and contents (topics or specific language areas) tested. These two domains were used because they formed part of the basis upon

which Brown and Yamashita (1995) and Guest (2008) conducted their enquiries into some Japanese entrance examinations and the Senta Shiken, respectively.

For the presentation and analysis, the two sets of examinations were compared on yearly basis, first for the basic language skills tested and second for competences/topical areas. A ticked box indicates that a particular skill or competence was tested; a blank box, on the contrary, indicates the opposite.

5.4.1 Comparison for 2016

5.4.1.1 Basic language skills

The basic language skills tested in the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations for the selected universities in 2016 were compared, and the results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13: Basic language skills comparison for 2016 questions

Basic language skill	WASSCE	Tech. Uni. 1	Tech. Uni. 2	Private Uni. 1	Private Uni. 2	Comp. Uni. 1	Comp. Uni. 2
Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Listening	✓						
Speaking							

Source: Author's construct, 2020

It is evident from Table 13 that not all the basic language skills were tested in the WASSCE English language component itself. That is, Reading, Writing and Listening were tested, but speaking was not tested (See Appendix G: 311). Pertaining to how the various universities measured up in this domain, it was observed that all but only Comprehensive University 2 failed to test Reading in the year under consideration. For Writing, all the universities were noted to test this basic language skill in 2016. With

respect to Listening, it is evident that even though the majority of the assessors of the universities reported that they benchmarked their questions against the WASSCE English language component, whereas this basic language skill was tested in the WASSCE English language component, the reverse was found to be the case for all the universities considered in this study.

Based on the fact that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations are equally part of an alternative examination through which some candidates gain entry into universities in Ghana, it would have been appropriate that the standards of the WASSCE English language component with respect to the basic language skills are comparable. The present situation is, therefore, not ideal. As Sawaki et al. (2008) aver, writing, speaking and listening skills are distinct aspects of English language testing. Failing to test some and not all of these skills, therefore, affect the comprehensiveness of an examination.

5.4.1.2 Topics (competences)

Closely related to the basic language skills tested in the two examinations is the topics (English language competences) tested in the examinations. In this wise, the topics (English language competences) tested in the WASSCE English language component were derived from the past questions. After that, the competences that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations conducted by the six universities tested that were same as those tested in the WASSCE English language component were compared. As already mentioned, none of the universities tested Listening which happened to be tested in the WASSCE English language component in 2016, 2017 and 2018. For that matter, this presentation and analysis is limited only to the topics (competences) tested in the WASSCE English language component for only Reading and Writing.

5.4.2 2016 Topics (competences)

The competences tested in the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in 2016 were compared to identify the extent to which the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations compared to the WASSCE English language component standards. The results are presented in Table 14.

Table 14: Topics (competences) for 2016 questions

WASSCE Topics (competences)	Tech. Uni. 1	Tech. Uni. 2	Private Uni. 1	Private Uni. 2	Comp. Uni. 1	Comp. Uni. 2
Antonyms				✓	✓	
Synonyms			✓	✓	✓	✓
Usage				✓		✓
Registers						
Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions				✓	✓	✓
Literature					✓	
Essay Writing	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Reading Comprehension	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Summary		✓		✓		
Clausal elements				✓		

Source: Author's construct, 2020

The results from Table 14 suggest that even within the Reading and Writing domains that English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations tested same as the WASSCE English language component, there were great disparities in the topical areas (competences) tested in the WASSCE English language component and that of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations of the various universities in 2016. That is, the English language component of the Mature

Students' Entrance Examination questions was silent on most of the competences tested by the WASSCE English language component. Pertaining to Antonyms, it was registered that only Private University 2 and Comprehensive University 1 tested this competence area. That is, the other four universities were totally silent on this competence area.

For Synonyms, whereas Private University 1, Private University 2, Comprehensive University 1 and Comprehensive University 2 tested this competence, their counterparts from the technical universities overlooked this area. Pertaining to Usage, the results further suggest that only Private University 2 and Comprehensive University 2 tested test takers' competences in these areas. The situation was even worse for Registers, as none of the universities considered this domain in their 2016 English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. Regarding Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions, it is evident that three of the universities (Private University 2, Comprehensive 1 and Comprehensive University 2) tested test takers' competences in this domain. The other three universities totally overlooked this domain tested in the WASSCE English language component. The situation for Literature was equally not desirable, as only Comprehensive University 1 made an attempt to test test takers' skills in this domain.

With regard to Essay Writing, the results from Table 14 indicates an improvement in the number of universities that attempted to test this competence area. Technical University 1, Technical University 2, Private University 1 and Comprehensive University 1 were all noted to have tested test takers in this competence area. The pattern registered for Reading improved further. That is, out of the six universities studied, only Technical University 2 and Comprehensive University 2 failed to test this domain. Also, Summary received little attention in the year under consideration. That is, only Technical University 2 and Private University 2 tested this domain. Like Literature, only one university (Private University 2) tested test takers' competences in Clausal Elements, as this topical area received little attention.

Furthermore, it is evident that out of the ten topical areas/competences tested by WAEC in the WASSCE English language component in 2016, Private University 2 (8 competences) emerged as the university that came closest to matching the WASSCE English language component standards. This university was followed by Comprehensive University 1 (6 competences) and Comprehensive University 2 (3 competences). Unfortunately, Technical University 1 (2 competences), Technical University 2 (2 competences) and Private University 1 (2 competences) did very little in matching the topics/competence areas tested by WAEC in 2016.

In addition, Essay Writing and Comprehension emerged as the most popular competences tested by the universities because these competences received most of the attention. On the reverse, Literature, Clausal Elements and Registers were the least popular competences tested by the six universities in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

The disparities established here present a challenge for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. It is evident that most of the examiners disclosed that they benchmarked their English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against the WASSCE English language component (See 5.3.1: 142). Considering the fact that the WASSCE is the standard and internationally recognised examination mainly used across Anglophone West Africa to admit candidates into universities, it was expected that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions would measure up to the WASSCE English language component standards in order to guarantee an even ground with respect to the quality of candidates admitted into the concerned universities.

On the evidence of the findings in Table 14, it can be said that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is generally woefully inadequate in comparison with the WASSCE English language component in the area of the topics/competences tested. This situation calls for a revision of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

5.4.3 Comparison for 2017

5.4.3.1 Basic language skills

The basic language skills tested in the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations for the selected universities in 2017 were also compared. The results are found in Table 15.

Table 15: Basic language skills comparison for 2017 questions

Basic language skill	WASSCE	Tech. Uni. 1	Tech. Uni. 2	Private Uni. 1	Private Uni. 2	Comp. Uni. 1	Comp. Uni. 2
Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Listening	✓						
Speaking							

Source: Author's construct, 2020

The results from Table 15 suggest that in 2017, out of the four basic language skills, only Reading, Writing and Listening were tested in the WASSCE English language component (See Appendix G: 311). For the universities, it can be observed that whereas all of them followed the pattern of the WASSCE English language component by gauging Reading and Writing, the reverse was the case for Listening. In other words, Listening, which was tested in the WASSCE English language component in 2017, was not tested by any of the six universities.

This finding suggests that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions are not comprehensive. It, again, indicates that the standards of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination do not match up to the WASSCE English language component standards. As Bozorgian (2012) posits, each of these four skills is unique. Liao et al. (2010) add that although the four skills are related to a certain extent, every one of them tests unique

aspects of English language competence that the other cannot test. It is, therefore, incumbent that the assessors test all these four basic language skills.

5.4.3.2 2017 Topics (competences)

The competences tested in the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in 2017 were compared to identify the extent to which the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations compare to the WASSCE English language component standards. The results can be found in Table 16.

A similar line of language competence areas tested was registered for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in 2017. That is, generally, not much was done by the universities to match up to the WAEC English language component standards. Evidence from Table 16 suggest that, for Antonyms, only three of the universities (Private University 1, Comprehensive University 1 and Comprehensive University 2) tested these competence areas. For Synonyms, whereas Private University 1, Private University 2, Comprehensive University 1 and Comprehensive University 2 tested this competence area, their counterparts from the technical universities ignored this area.

Pertaining to Usage, it was found that, like Antonyms, only three of the universities (Private University 1, Comprehensive University 1 and Comprehensive University 2) tested test takers' abilities in this domain. That is, the other three universities were silent on this domain. Like 2016, Registers was overlooked by all the six universities. Regarding Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions, the results suggest that only two of the universities (Private University 1 and Comprehensive University 1) tested this topical area. Literature received scanty attention, as five of the universities disregarded this competence area (See Table 16: 157).

Table 16: Topics (competences) for 2017 questions

WASSCE Topics (competences)	Tech. Uni. 1	Tech. Uni. 2	Private Uni. 1	Private Uni. 2	Comp. Uni. 1	Comp. Uni. 2
Antonyms				✓	✓	✓
Synonyms			✓	✓	✓	✓
Usage				✓	✓	✓
Registers						
Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions				✓	✓	
Literature						✓
Essay Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Reading Comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Summary	✓			✓		
Clausal elements		✓		✓	✓	

Source: Author's construct, 2020

Essay Writing and Reading Comprehension were found to receive the most attention by the universities. That is, Reading Comprehension was tested by all the universities in 2017 whereas only one university (Comprehensive University 2) failed to test Essay Writing. Pertaining to Clausal Elements, evidence suggests that not much was done in testing this topical area also; only three of the universities (Technical University 2, Private University 1 and Comprehensive University 1) tested test takers' competences in this area.

It was established that Private University 2, like 2016, was the University that came closest to matching the WASSCE English language component in the competences/topical areas tested. That is, out of the ten topical areas/competences tested by WAEC in the WASSCE English language component in 2017, Private University 2 tested eight of those. Private University 2 was closely followed by Comprehensive University 1 (7 competences) and Comprehensive University 2 (5 competences). The

three remaining universities tested only three competence areas each (See Table 16: 157).

The discrepancies registered here constitute a drawback for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. It is obvious that most of the examiners disclosed that they benchmark their English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against the WASSCE English language component (See 5.3.1: 142). Considering that the WASSCE is the main standard and internationally accepted examination mostly used by universities in Anglophone West Africa to admit candidates, the expectation was that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions would match the WASSCE English language component since the latter is an analogous examination to the WASSCE English language component in order to guarantee an even ground with respect to the quality of candidates admitted into the concerned universities.

Based on the patterns realised in Table 16, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations are generally woefully inadequate in comparison with the WASSCE English language component. This situation casts doubts on decisions made regarding the admissions of candidates through the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into the selected universities.

5.4.4 Comparison for 2018

5.4.4.1 Basic language skills

The basic language skills tested in the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations for the selected universities in 2018 were compared, and the results are presented in Table 17.

Like 2017, a similar pattern of questioning was registered for the 2018 questions. That is, only Reading, Writing and Listening were assessed in the WASSCE English language component (See Appendix G: 311). For the universities, it can be seen that whereas all

of the six of them followed the pattern of the WASSCE English language component by testing Reading and Writing, Listening was overlooked.

Table 17: Basic language skills comparison for 2018 questions

Basic language skill	WASSCE	Tech. Uni. 1	Tech. Uni. 2	Private Uni. 1	Private Uni. 2	Comp. Uni. 1	Comp. Uni. 2
Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Listening	✓						
Speaking							

Source: Author's construct, 2020

This finding is not ideal because: (1) it indicates that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions are not comprehensive and (2) it indicates that the standards of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination does not match up to the WASSCE English language component standards. Bozorgian (2012) espouses that each of these four skills is unique. Liao et al. (2010) advance that although the four skills are related to a certain extent, every one of them tests unique aspects of English language competence that the other cannot test. It is, therefore, necessary that the assessors of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations test all these four basic language skills.

5.4.4.2 2018 Topics (competences)

The competences tested in the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations in 2018 were compared to identify the extent to which the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations compare to the WASSCE English language component standards. The results are found in Table 18.

Table 18: Topics (competences) for 2018 questions

WASSCE Topics (competences)	Tech. Uni. 1	Tech. Uni. 2	Private Uni. 1	Private Uni. 2	Comp. Uni. 1	Comp. Uni. 2
Antonyms				✓	✓	✓
Synonyms	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Usage				✓	✓	✓
Registers				✓		
Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions					✓	
Literature		✓		✓		✓
Essay Writing		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Reading Comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Summary		✓		✓		
Clausal elements	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Source: Author's construct, 2020

The findings in Table 18 reveal that, again, major discrepancies existed between the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions in the area of the topics/competences tested by both examinations. It is obvious that the reach/scope of the WASSCE English language component could not be matched by all the six universities selected for this study. In specific terms, only three of the universities (Private University 2, Comprehensive University 1 and Comprehensive University 2) tested Antonyms in 2018. A similar trend was registered for Usage, as the same three universities tested test takers' abilities in this domain. Registers was found to be tested by only Private University 2 whereas Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions was equally tested by only Comprehensive University 1. The implication is that the other five universities respectively failed to pay any attention to these two domains.

Pertaining to Literature, Technical University 2, Private University 2 and Comprehensive University 2 tested test takers' competences in this competence area. Their other counterparts were silent on this domain. Whereas only two of the universities tested Summary in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, (Technical University 2 and Comprehensive University 2), four of the universities tested Clausal Elements (See Table 18: 160).

The results further suggest that Reading Comprehension was the most tested competence area, as all the universities unfailingly tested this domain. On the reverse, Registers and Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions received scanty attention. That is, both competences were tested only once in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

It is also evident from Table 18 that Private University 2 performed best in matching up to the competences or topical areas tested in the WASSCE English language component. That is, out of a total of 10 competence areas identified to be tested by WAEC in the WASSCE English language component, Private University 2 tested nine of these areas in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. Private University 2 was closely followed by Comprehensive University 1 (7 competences), Technical University 2 (6 competences), Comprehensive University 2 (5 competences), Technical University 1 (3 competences) and Private University 1 (2 competences).

The inequalities registered here is problematic for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. It is clear that most of the examiners mentioned that they benchmark their English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against the WASSCE English language component (See 5.3.1: 142). Based on the fact that the WASSCE is the standard and internationally recognised examination mainly used across Anglophone West Africa to admit test takers into universities, it was expected that the language competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations would match up to

the WASSCE English language component standard in order to guarantee an even ground in respect of the quality of candidates admitted into the selected universities.

Unfortunately, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations are generally woefully inadequate in comparison with the WASSCE English language component in the area of the competences tested in both examinations. This situation renders decisions made based on the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations problematic since the examination lacks the quality inherent in the WASSCE English language component.

5.5 Comparison of basic language skills tested in the IELTS, the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations

Based on the fact that the WASSCE English language component tested test takers in three of the basic language skills (See 4.1: 94) and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions could not match up to the WASSCE English language component standards because it tested only 2 of the four basic language skills, it became necessary to investigate the extent to which the WASSCE English language component itself (seen as a constituent of the main conduit for admissions into universities in Anglophone West Africa) matched up with another internationally recognised examination – the IELTS.

This comparison was carried out because it is a practice applied by language assessors around the world to help improve upon their handling of their language assessments (Tannenbaum & Wylie 2009; Kantacıoğlu et al. 2010; The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority 2013; Tannenbaum & Baron 2015).

The IELTS was used to benchmark the other two examinations because the IELTS itself hinges on Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model – the model from which most of the constructs of the conceptual framework of this study were derived. For the

presentation, the three types of examinations were put side by side. The four basic language skills were provided after which the ones found to be tested by all the examinations were ticked. An empty box indicates that a particular basic language skill was not tested. The results of the comparison of the basic language skills tested in the IELTS, the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations are presented in Table 19.

Table 19: Basic language skills tested in the IELTS, the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations

Basic language skill	IELTS	WASSCE	Tech. Uni. 1	Tech. Uni. 2	Priv. Uni. 1	Priv. Uni. 2	Comp Uni. 1	Comp. Uni. 2
Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Listening	✓	✓						
Speaking	✓							

Source: Author's construct, 2020

From Table 19, it is evident that, like the WASSCE English language component, all the universities used in this study tested Reading. This suggests that both the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations matched the IELTS on this basic language skill. A similar line of testing was registered for Writing, as all the universities tested this basic language skill in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and WAEC also tested this domain in the WASSCE English language component.

However, the pattern changed for Listening. The results suggest that even though the WASSCE English language component tested this domain as did the IELTS, the converse was the case for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, as none of the six universities tested this basic language skill.

The situation exacerbated for Speaking. For this very important basic language skill, the results indicate that whereas it was tested by the IELTS, both the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations failed to test test takers' competences in this domain.

These suggest that the WASSCE English language component itself tested three basic English language skills (Reading, Writing, Listening), so its scope is broader than the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, but narrow as compared to the IELTS. The implication is that the WASSCE English language component itself is not comprehensive because it failed to test Speaking as the IELTS did. This situation poses two key problems: (1) a widely recognised examination such as the WASSCE English language component cannot be deemed a comprehensive examination and (2) the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations also fails to attain the necessary standards because what is perceived by examiners as the standard (WASSCE English language component) examination itself has its inherent flaws because it is not comprehensive.

The TOEFL, for example, used by institutions of higher learning to measure the language abilities of test takers was criticised heavily for not being comprehensive because it did not test all the four basic language skills. Until 2005, the TOEFL included only Listening, Writing and Reading components. Donga Ilbo (2005), Hangyeorye (2005) and Jungang Daily (2005) as cited in Powers (2010) report that the speaking component was added because, even though test takers were successful in the TOEFL (and Test of English for International Communication [TOEIC]) tests, some lacked the speaking competences necessary for effective academic communication. As Powers et al. (2008), Liao et al. (2010) and Bozorgian (2012) opine, the results of a language test that fails to test all the important skills of test takers cannot be deemed comprehensive enough.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter was also divided into two sections. The presentation, analysis and discussion of the data related to Research Question 3 (What are the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions?) were carried out here. Thereafter, the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data related to Research Question 4 (Which approaches are used to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?) were carried out.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

Examinations play a key role in educational institutions across the world. In other words, examinations are at the heart of the functioning of educational institutions across the world, and Ghana is not an exemption. In actuality, decisions on selection/placement of candidates in higher education in Ghana is dependent on two main types of examinations – the WASSCE and the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. The latter has gained a lot of popularity within the Ghanaian higher educational landscape. It generally has four components – Science, Mathematics, General paper and English language. Evidence suggests that little is known and documented about the English language component of this examination within the Ghanaian setting, as most of the investigations conducted on university entrance examinations have been conducted outside Ghana. Consequently, this study was undertaken to evaluate the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into selected Ghanaian universities. This study set out to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Which basic language skills are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?
2. What are the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana?
3. What are the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions?

4. Which approaches are used to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

The study was qualitative. Using three sampling techniques (multi-stage sampling, purposive sampling and convenience sampling), 18 English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination past questions were obtained from six universities found in Ghana. In addition, five lecturers (one each from five of the six selected universities) who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions of their respective universities participated in this study. The data for this study were obtained from semi-structured interviews (applied on the lecturers) and the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into the selected universities. Others were WASSCE English language component past questions and an IELTS descriptive document. Burnard's (1991) fourteen steps of conducting thematic content analysis was followed to analyse the data from the semi-structured interviews. O'Leary's (2014) eight steps of conducting document analysis was used to analyse the past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into the selected universities, the WASSCE English language component past questions and an IELTS descriptive document.

A summary of the major findings of this study, the conclusions, recommendations and possible future studies are presented in this chapter.

6.1 Summary of findings

The major findings from each research question are recounted in this section. These are presented sequentially from Research Question One to Research Question Four.

6.1.1 Which basic language skills are tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

The literature suggests that there are many types of English language examination questions, and each has particular competences that it seeks to assess. Researchers such as Bachman and Palmer (1982), Kunnan (1995), Davey, Lian & Higgins (2007), Everson (2009) and Powers (2010) have all conducted various investigations with the rationale of finding answers with respect to the most appropriate examination areas that can measure, comprehensively, candidates' readiness to handle higher learning tasks. The areas that the literature has emphasised as necessary for test takers to be tested in order to arrive at comprehensive language profiles for them are: Speaking, Writing, Listening and Reading (Hale, Rock & Jirele 1989; Stricker, Rock & Lee 2005; Chapman & Newfields 2008; Sawaki, Stricker & Oranje 2008; Powers, Kim & Weng 2008; Liao, Qu & Morgan 2010; Powers 2010; Bozorgian 2012; Jinghua & Constanzo 2013). It is, therefore, not surprising that internationally accepted tests such as TOEFL, TOEIC and the IELTS all test the four basic language skills to test the language profiles of such test takers (See 2.4: 38). The key findings in this domain were:

Basic language skills tested

The English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions used by the selected universities are not comprehensive. That is, only two basic language skills – Reading and Writing – were found to be tested by all the universities considered in this study. The other two crucial basic language skills – Speaking and Listening – were overlooked. This confirms the position of Powers (2010) who believed that many universities and colleges often do not test all the important language skills/areas. That the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations fail to test all the four basic language skills stands in opposition to the suppositions of Sawaki et al. (2008), Powers et al. (2008), Liao et al. (2010) and Bozorgian (2012) who indicate that none of the four basic language skills substitutes the other in an individual's language profile. These scholars posit that all the four basic

language skills must be tested to guarantee a language examination's comprehensiveness.

Reading and Writing were tested consistently across the 2016, 2017 and 2018 period considered in this study.

Reasons underlying the testing of only Reading and Writing

Logistical problems, time, negative perceptions about the technical and vocational educational system and the general lack of will on the part of the examiners are some of the reasons found to inform why Speaking and Listening were ignored by these universities in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

6.1.2 What are the differences and similarities in the competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and private comprehensive universities in Ghana?

The literature suggests that there are many types of questions that universities use to assess candidates for enrolment purposes, and each question has particular competence(s) that it seeks to assess (Bachman & Palmer 1982; Kunnan 1995; Davey et al. 2007; Everson 2009; Powers 2010). In this regard, an attempt was made to identify the differences and similarities that exist in the topical areas/competences tested in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations among the public (comprehensive and technical) and the private comprehensive universities in Ghana in order to paint a clearer picture about the examinations.

Technical universities

Pertaining to the similarities, Reading Comprehension and Essay Writing emerged as the most popular competences tested across the two technical universities whereas Synonymy and Summary were competences that were not frequently tested by both universities.

For the variations, Technical University 1 tested Subject-Verb Agreement, Spelling and Word Classes Identification whereas Technical University 2 did not test these competence areas. Also, Technical University 2 tested Literary devices, but Technical University 1 did not test this competence area.

Private universities

With respect to the similarities, Subject-Verb Agreement, Synonymy, Reading Comprehension and Essay Writing were the most frequently tested competences across the two universities.

As regards the differences, Punctuation, Dangling Modifiers, Run-on Sentences, Misplaced Modifiers and Sentence Fragments were tested by only Private University 1. On the contrary, Clausal Elements, Antonyms, Usage, Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions, Literary Devices and Registers emerged as the unique competences tested by Private University 2.

Comprehensive universities

For the similarities, Reading Comprehension, Synonyms and Antonyms were the commonest competences tested by the two universities. Pertaining to the differences, whereas Comprehensive University 2 paid a lot of attention to Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions, their counterparts from Comprehensive University 1 did little in this area. Moreover, whereas Essay Writing and Clausal Elements were tested by Comprehensive

University 1, their counterparts from Comprehensive University 2 did not test these competence areas.

All types of universities together

For the similarities, Reading Comprehension and Essay Writing emerged as the most popular and most tested English language competency areas among the universities selected for this study.

By and large, all the universities tested different competences. Word Class Identification and Spelling were unique to only the technical universities. Also, only the private universities tested test takers' competences in Dangling Modifiers, Run-on Sentences, Misplaced Modifiers and Sentence Fragments. Moreover, whereas the private universities and comprehensive universities tested test takers' English language competences in areas such as Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions, Usage, Antonyms and Clausal Elements, their counterparts in the technical universities did not test these competence areas.

The scope or coverage of the English language competences tested by the private universities was broader as compared to that of the technical universities and the comprehensive universities. Again, between the public universities (technical universities and comprehensive universities), the comprehensive universities performed better than the technical universities, as the scope of competences tested by the comprehensive universities was broader than that of their technical university counterparts. Even though there are many types of questions that universities use to assess candidates for enrolment purposes, and each question has particular competence(s) that it seeks to assess (Bachman & Palmer 1982; Kunnan 1995; Davey et al. 2007; Everson 2009; Powers 2010), the expectation was that the pattern of the tested topical areas would be, at least, similar for the three types of universities used in this study. That, unfortunately, was not the case.

6.1.3 What are the criteria used in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions?

As mentioned in Chapter Two Section 2.6, one key way of ensuring examinations quality is through the use of standardised examination question-setting criteria. In this direction, aspects of Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model guided the exploration of this first section. Seven thematic areas were explored here. These were: the processes followed by the examiners to set the questions, if a standard assessment model was used, whether the type/nature of the examinations informed the construct of the questions and whether the characteristics of the test takers were considered in the design of the questions. Others included whether the questions were pre-trialed before administration, whether the questions were reviewed over time and whether the examiners had been trained in language assessment.

The general finding was that the criteria used by the universities to set the questions were not desirable. That is, the criteria used by these universities fell short of key practices that could aid the setting of more fitting questions for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. This general finding is in opposition to the position of Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model which suggests a clear standardised process to English language question setting. Specifically, the findings are:

Processes followed to set questions

The universities followed different processes to set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions; no standard process was identified for any of the universities.

The process of setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions was left entirely in the hands of the examiners of these universities.

Use of an assessment model

None of the universities followed any language assessment model to guide them in the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions.

Consideration of type of examination in the construct of questions

Most of the universities considered the fact that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is a placement examination, and that informed how they set the questions. Only Technical University 2 and Private University 1 deviated from this positive practice.

Consideration of test takers' characteristics

Even though some of the examiners made attempts to consider the characteristics of the test takers in the setting of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions, their attempts were not appropriate.

Pre-trial of questions

Except for Comprehensive University 1, none of the other universities pre-trialed their English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions to establish the veracity or otherwise of the questions. This means there is always room for lapses to occur with respect to the nature and even scope of the questions.

Review of question-setting process

All universities reviewed their English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions and the process of setting them over particular periods to identify if there are possible lapses so that those lapses, if found, could be addressed. The review processes were, however, different for the universities.

Training of examiners in language assessment

Apart from Private University 1 and Comprehensive University 1 that train their language examiners on language assessment, the other universities did not offer any form of training to position the examiners to perform better in their assigned duty.

6.1.4 Which approaches are used to benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations?

As Boud (1995) indicates, examinations are integral components of the educational process, so ensuring that they fulfil the tasks they set out to fulfil is very crucial. Universally, one way of ensuring that examinations test what they ought to test is through benchmarking the examination to existing or known standards. This is because benchmarking is central to quality assurance (Camp 1989; Rosnick et al. 1995; Louis & BerVersloot 1996; Yorke 1999; Tsui & Andrews 2002; Bunton & Tsui 2002; Falvey & Corniam 2002; Scherman et al. 2011; Scherman et al. 2014). For this reason, the benchmarking domain for the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions domain was explored. The following were the key findings in this domain:

The examination the examiners benchmarked the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against

Most of the universities benchmarked the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against the WASSCE English language component. That is, three of the examiners (constituting more than half the number of examiners interviewed) revealed that they consider the standards of the WASSCE English language component in setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions. This finding falls within the classification of benchmarking by Camp (1989). Camp (1989) postulates that benchmarking against external best practice occurs when organisations look up to high standards set by other key industry players in order to aspire to reach such high standards.

Reasons behind the WASSCE English language component choice

The recurring reason was that the WASSCE is the standard examination recognised for admission of candidates into universities. That is, the WASSCE is the examination that most universities in Anglophone West Africa use to admit applicants, so these examiners used the same standards.

The responses of the examiners indicated that they followed the standards of the WASSCE English language component fully.

Similarities and differences between the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations and the WASSCE English language component

The examiners identified deviations or dissimilarities between the two types of examinations. These were in the areas of structure, basic language skills tested and topical areas or competences tested.

Private University 2 and Comprehensive University 1 appeared to be the closest to matching the WASSCE English language component standards in the area of competences tested, albeit there were deviations.

Basic language skills Comparison for 2016

The evidence from the questions revealed that:

In 2016, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations did not match up to the WASSCE English language component standards across all the six universities because whereas the WASSCE English language component tested Reading, Writing and Listening, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations tested only Reading and Writing. This finding is in opposition to

the position of Sawaki et al. (2008) who indicate that all the four basic language skills ought to be tested to guarantee the comprehensiveness of a language examination. In this direction, the two sets of examinations were deficient.

Comprehensive University 2 tested only 1 basic language skill (Writing) in 2016.

Competences tested in 2016

The evidence from the questions revealed that:

Out of the ten topical areas/competences tested in the WASSCE English language component, Private University 2 emerged as the university that came closest to matching the WASSCE English language component standards. However, Technical University 1, Technical University 2 and Private University 1 did very little in matching the topics/competence areas tested by WAEC in 2016.

Essay Writing and Comprehension emerged as the most popular competences tested by the universities because these competences received most of the attention. However, Literature, Clausal Elements and Registers were the least popular competences tested by the six universities.

The English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is generally woefully inadequate in comparison with the WASSCE English language component.

Basic language skills Comparison for 2017

The evidence from the questions revealed that:

In 2017, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations did not match up to the WASSCE English language component standards across all the

six universities because whereas the WASSCE English language component tested Reading, Writing and Listening, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations tested only Reading and Writing. This finding is in opposition to what Bozorgian (2012) indicates. Bozorgian (2012) avers that all the four basic language skills need to be tested to guarantee the comprehensiveness of a particular language examination. For this reason, the two sets of examinations were deficient.

Competences tested in 2017

The evidence from the questions revealed that:

Not much was done by the universities to match up to the WASSCE English language component standards. Thus, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is generally woefully inadequate in comparison with the WASSCE English language component.

Essay Writing and Reading Comprehension were the most frequently tested topical areas in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. Conversely, Clausal Elements received the least attention by the universities.

Private University 2, came closest to matching the WASSCE English language component standards with respect to the competences/topical areas tested. The worst performers were Technical University 1, Technical University 2 and Private University 1.

Basic language skills Comparison for 2018

The evidence from the questions revealed that:

In 2018, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations fell short of the WASSCE English language component standards across all the six universities. That is, whereas the WASSCE English language component tested Reading,

Writing and Listening, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations tested only Reading and Writing. This situation is not in consonance with the posits of Sawaki et al. (2008), Powers et al. (2008), Liao et al. (2010) and Bozorgian (2012) who indicate that none of the four basic language skills substitutes the other in an individual's language profile and that all the basic language skills must be tested to guarantee the comprehensiveness of a particular language examination. In this direction, the two sets of examinations were deficient.

Competences tested in 2018

The evidence from the questions revealed that:

The reach/scope of the WASSCE English language component could not be matched by all the six universities selected for this study in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

Reading Comprehension was the most tested competence area. On the reverse, Registers and Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions received scanty attention.

Private University 2 performed best in matching up to the competences or topical areas tested in the WASSCE English language component. The worst performers were Technical University 1 and Private University 1.

Comparison of basic language skills tested in the IELTS, the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations

The WASSCE is not comprehensive because it fails to test Speaking as the IELTS does.

Whereas the IELTS tested Speaking, Writing, Reading and Listening, the WASSCE English language component tested three basic English language skills (Reading, Writing, Listening). The English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance

Examinations tested only two of these basic language skills (Reading and Writing). Therefore, the scope of the WASSCE English language component is broader than the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, but narrow as compared to the IELTS. This situation contradicts the position of Sawaki et al. (2008), Powers et al. (2008), Liao et al. (2010) and Bozorgian (2012). These scholars advance that none of the four basic language skills substitutes the other in an individual's language profile, and that all the basic language skills must be tested to guarantee the comprehensiveness of a particular language examination. For this reason, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance examinations and the English language component of the WASSCE were deficient.

6.2 Limitations of the study

It would have been appropriate to stagger the years (2016, 2017 and 2018) in order to get much more significant outcomes with respect to the trend of the questions set. However, the researcher could not get older questions from all the universities to use for this study. This situation, therefore, necessitated the use of more recently set questions. The 2016, 2017 and 2018 past questions of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into the selected Ghanaian universities were, consequently, used in order to guarantee the availability of the necessary data for the study.

In addition, the original intention was to conduct six interviews. That is, each of the lecturers who set the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions for each of the six universities was to be interviewed. Unfortunately, the lecturer for Comprehensive University 2 turned down the interview request. Consequently, out of the six interviews originally intended to be conducted, five interviews were successfully conducted. Thus, the thematic content analyses done were based on five interviews.

Even though the researcher used convenience sampling to select the WASSCE English language component past questions, getting all the original questions proved very difficult. WAEC themselves could provide only the 2018 Paper 1 (Objective Test) and Paper 2 (Essay). They could not provide the Listening Test (Paper 3) which is made up of an audio tape and a response sheet. The researcher, therefore, had to roam some SHSs to obtain some of these questions. The researcher was able to obtain all the listening audio tapes for 2016, 2017 and 2018. In addition, the researcher could retrieve the 2017 Part 1 and Part 2 questions and the audio answer sheet for 2016. The researcher subsequently had to resort to books authored by Krampah (2006) and West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) 2013-2018 Past Papers and Chief Examiner's Report for Core Subjects (2019) (See Appendix G: 311). All attempts to retrieve the 2017 and 2018 listening response sheets proved futile.

It would have been ideal if, like the WASSCE English language component questions and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions, the past questions of the IELTS reflecting their years of setting (2016, 2017 and 2018) had been used to provide an even ground for the benchmarking. This, however, could not be achieved because the IELTS questions are kept under strict secrecy, so they are not in the public domain. This then necessitated the use of descriptions of the basic language skills tested in the examination which are made available on the IELTS website.

The comparison between the IELTS, the WASSCE English language component and the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions was, therefore, limited to only the basic language skills tested. For the basic language skills tested by the IELTS, the decision to tick all four of the basic language skills (See Table 19: 163) was informed by Bozorgian (2012) who investigated how Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing are related using the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) data – a research suggestive of the fact that the IELTS tests all of these four basic language skills. Also, the information provided in Appendix H which describes the general nature of the IELTS questions in the areas of the basic language

skills tested informed the decision to indicate that all the four basic language skills are tested in the IELTS.

6.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings that emerged from this study, ten main conclusions were drawn. Firstly, all the universities studied did not follow any standard assessment model to guide them in the setting of the questions. This suggests that the questions are set based on the haphazard processes which give room for possible deficiencies which could have been avoided had standardised models been used.

Secondly, apart from Comprehensive University 1 which largely followed standard question setting practices (criteria for setting the questions), the other universities studied had some marked shortfalls. For instance, the rest of the universities studied did not train the assessors in language assessment. It is safe to claim that the technical knowhow or competences the assessors need to position them to examine the test takers appropriately is likely to be short of expectations, thereby casting doubts over the quality of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions.

Thirdly, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions are not comprehensive. That is, out of the four language basic language skills necessary in determining the language profiles of test takers, only two were tested by the universities studied. This is a worrying situation since decisions on which candidates are qualified or not to enter the mainstream universities are likely to be flawed if the basic language skills tested do not cover all the four basic language skills (Speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening).

Also, Private University 2 was the best performing university in the area of competences tested when all the six universities were compared to the WASSCE English language component. The worst performers were Technical University 1 and Private University 1.

Regarding the similarities and differences between the universities, generally, Private University 1 covered a lot more competences than the other universities, albeit they were largely outside the scope of the WASSCE English language component.

Furthermore, Reading Comprehension and Essay Writing were the most frequently tested competences/topical areas in the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

Moreover, the WASSCE English language component is the examination that the studied universities benchmarked their English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examination questions against. Based on the fact that the WASSCE is a very well-recognised international examinations and also that it is the main conduit through which most applicants are considered for admission into universities in Anglophone West Africa, the universities found it expedient to aspire to the quality of the WASSCE English language component.

In addition, it is worth noting that the WASSCE English language component itself is not comprehensive since it tests just three of the basic language skills (Reading, Writing, Listening). Speaking, which is an equally crucial basic language skill, is overlooked. This is a lacuna which trickles down to the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. This notwithstanding, the coverage of the WASSCE English language component is wider/broader in comparison to the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations – a gap which was not expected to be detected, considering that the standards of the two examinations were to be similar because of the benchmarking of the latter to the former.

More so, the WASSCE English language component fell short in the area of the basic language skills tested when it was compared to the IELTS. That is, whereas the IELTS was comprehensive because it tested all the four basic language skills, the WASSCE English language component was deficient because it tested only Reading, Writing and Listening. Speaking was overlooked.

Because of the inherent weaknesses identified in the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, it is very likely that many weak/poor candidates may be admitted into the university system, and this will cause these candidates to struggle.

Lastly, the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is used purely for selection/placement purposes.

6.4 Recommendations

A number of scholars have dealt with evaluation of university entrance examinations (particularly English language entrance examinations) in different countries such as South Africa, Japan and China, and their researches have resulted in the revision of various aspects of the examinations that they reviewed (O'Sullivan 1995; Brown & Yamashita 1995; Hernan 1995; Stapleton 1996; Yoshida 1996a; Davey, Chuan & Louise 2007; Sawaki, Stricker & Oranje 2008; Guest 2008; Powers 2010; Jinghua & Costanzo 2013; Mouton, Louw & Strydom 2013). In wanting same to happen in Ghana (based on the findings and conclusions of the study), the following recommendations are made:

The universities should consider placing a lot of emphasis on regularly training their examiners on language assessment. Until this is done, the many defects detected in the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations will be prevalent. The trainings should also be evaluated by these universities regularly to ensure that the right language assessment practices taught these examiners are implemented in order to ensure that the overall standards of the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations have been improved.

The English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations, generally, should be quality assured. That is, the entire process from planning to evaluation of the examinations must be monitored closely by these universities to ensure that: (1) the right

language testing approaches are adhered to by the examiners and (2) all possible lapses are detected and ameliorated as soon as possible.

The universities should consider adopting a standard language assessment model. This will be a key guarantee to ensuring that proper language assessment standards are practiced to the letter in order to improve upon the overall standards of the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. In this direction, Berry's (2018) ESOL test development model will come in handy.

It is recommended, additionally, that the authorities of these universities consider including tasks that test the neglected language skills – Listening and Speaking. Specifically, the Centres/Units/Departments which have the oversight responsibility for setting these questions should consider innovative approaches to ensuring that those skills that are absent are tested. In that regard, listening tasks such as students listening to audio tapes on conversations (using Ghanaian accent) about travel, selling and buying, visitation to the hospital, how to assemble a machine, how to carry out a process or visitation to a zoo, among others, can be included for candidates to respond to questions set on these real-life situations.

For Speaking, candidates should be interviewed. Group interviews with one interviewer and three interviewees, at most, is strongly recommended in order to cater for the potential large number of test takers and the possible shortfall in the number of skilled interviewees. Questions such 'tell me about yourself', 'describe your favourite teacher or relative', 'direct me to your house', 'describe your favourite animal' or 'explain how to operate an ATM' can help test candidates' speaking competences. A maximum period of 30 minutes can be set for each interview session. It is until these are done and done consistently that the examination can become a good predictor of the candidates' language proficiency profile based on which decisions about whether or not to place them in the mainstream university system can be made.

Alternatively, paired test-taker interaction for speaking can be modified and introduced by the universities' authorities. The modification will be equally effective because it can take care of the large numbers. Also, evidence suggest that the paired test-taker interaction approach to testing Speaking reveals a lot of hidden competences of test takers and is thus very useful (Brooks 2009; Galaczi 2014). In a bid to take care of potentially large numbers, four test takers can be assigned to a session and the interaction regulated by the examiner as is done in traditional Focus Group Discussions.

In order to make the WASSCE English language component a comprehensive examination comparable to other internationally recognised examinations such as the IELTS and the TOEFL, the West African Examinations Council must, as a matter of urgency, introduce a speaking component to the examinations. In doing this, candidates should be interviewed. Group interviews with one interviewer and five interviewees, at most, is strongly recommended in order to cater for the potential large numbers of candidates and possible shortfall in the number of expert interviewers. Questions such as 'tell me about yourself', 'describe your favourite teacher, relative, friend or food', 'direct me to your house', 'describe your favourite animal' or 'explain how to prepare your favourite meal' can help test candidates' speaking competences. A maximum period of 30 minutes can be set for each interview session. Alternatively, paired test-taker interaction for speaking can be modified and utilised by the universities' authorities. To take care of potentially large number of test takers, five test takers can be assigned to a session and the interaction regulated by the examiner as conducted in traditional Focus Group Discussions.

Topical areas/competences such as Clausal Elements, Literature, Registers, Summary, Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions that were largely overlooked by most of these universities should be given attention in order to make the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations comparable to the WASSCE English language component.

Because of the likelihood that many weak/poor candidates may be admitted into the university system and cause these candidates to struggle, an academic audit of candidates admitted through the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations should be carried out regularly by these universities in order to identify the attrition rate and the average performances of those candidates who successfully pass through the system. This will inform policy makers as to how well or badly, empirically, the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is faring as an alternative entrance examination.

In order to standardise the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations across the country as it is done for the WASSCE English language component, The Government of Ghana, through the National Council for Tertiary Education, should consider taking over the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations from the universities. That is, instead of allowing the universities to apply their own standards which have proven to be inconsistent and grossly inadequate to the WASSCE English language component standards, an examinations body with a national character must be formed to handle the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. This way, the expected standards will be achieved in order to improve upon decisions on admissions into universities in the country made through the English language component of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations.

The position of the author is summed up by Prof. Yankah (Ghana's Minister of State in charge of Tertiary Education):

It is long overdue for the mature student access exam to be rebranded...we cannot afford schemes that lead to the registration of great strides in enrolment ratios and at the same time make a negative impact on the quality of national productivity...If mature students' exams for entry to university should be taken more seriously, they should, perhaps, be standardised across board and administered by one credible

examining body just like WASSCE (West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination), rather than administered by respective universities using different standards (Ghanaweb 2018).

However, the implementation of this important call is long overdue, so it is incumbent on policy makers to, as a matter of urgency, implement this last recommendation in order to allow the full potential of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations to be realised.

The following recommendations are made to guide further studies in the area of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations. First of all, this study considered the nature and scope of Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into universities in Ghana. However, it focused on only the English language component of the examinations. Future studies can be conducted to look at the other components of the examinations, that is, the Mathematics, Science and the General Paper in order to paint a much holistic picture of the examinations.

In addition, this study basically looked at the nature and scope of the questions and the rationale behind the setting of the questions. However, the study did not consider the performances of the candidates who are admitted into the universities through this medium. Future studies can consider how the candidates who are admitted through this medium perform in the Communication Skills course (the academic literacy course all university first year students have to study to enable them function well within the academic discourse community) since placements examinations are predictors of future performances of candidates. This will provide another angle to determine whether the examination is authentic or not with respect to its predictability.

Closely related to this, a comparative study can be conducted to identify how the performances of the successful candidates of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations compare to that of their WASSCE counterparts in the Communication Skills course so that policy makers can get empirical data in the

form of test scores to ascertain how the products of the two sets of entrance examinations perform/respond to academic work in the mainstream universities. This will inform future decisions made on admissions through these two media.

Another research worth pursuing is the use of control groups in a longitudinal study. In the case of the first groups, the examinations can be used diagnostically aside its fundamental placement purpose to identify specific weaknesses successful candidates exhibit so that appropriate remedial pedagogies in the form of extra academic support can be given to them. The second groups will, however, not get any treatment (that is, the examinations will be used only as placement examinations, so there will be no extra academic support. The performances of the two groups in the Communication Skills course can then be compared to identify if it would be beneficial to use the English language component for dual purposes instead of the single purpose it is currently used for in the Ghanaian universities.

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Appendix A – Ethical Clearance

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:

Mr R Asafo-Adjei

Student No:

18022914

PROJECT TITLE: **Assessment of the English language component of the mature students' entrance examination into Ghanian University.**

PROJECT NO: **SHSS/19/ENG/03/2410**

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof EK Klu	University of Venda	Promoter
Prof GSK Adika	University of Ghana	Co - Promoter
Dr MJ Maluleke	University of Venda	Co - Promoter
Mr R Asafo-Adjei	University of Venda	Investigator – Student

ISSUED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: October 2019

Decision by Ethical Clearance Committee **Granted**

Signature of Chairperson of the Committee: 

Name of the Chairperson of the Committee: Senior Prof. G.E. Ekosse



University of Venda

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"A quality driven financially sustainable, rural-based Comprehensive University"

Appendix B – Evidence of Proofreading of Thesis

5th November, 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled – *AN EVALUATION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPONENT OF THE MATURE STUDENTS' ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS INTO SELECTED GHANAIAN UNIVERSITIES* – and authored by Mr. Ramos Asafo-Adjei has been thoroughly perused and proofread. All identified errors have been corrected, and effected. The dissertation is, at present, devoid of mechanical and grammatical problems with regard to the usage and orthography of English language.



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Appendix C – Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

I am Ramos Asafo-Adjei, a doctoral student of the Department of English, University of Venda, South Africa. I am conducting a research on the topic, 'An Evaluation of the English Language Component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into Selected Ghanaian Universities'. My study is qualitative and uses six universities. Three of the past questions administered over three years (2016, 2017 and 2018) will be required for analysis for this study. Additionally, you, being the lecturer in charge of setting the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations questions in your university will have to be interviewed. I will humbly request that you permit me to interview you and also to record this interview.

You will have to fill-in a consent form if you agree to participate in this study. Kindly note that any information you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. You will also not be identified in any of the study reports since the university will be given a pseudonym. You will, as well, remain anonymous in all verbal and written records and reports.

For further information, contact me either in person or through:

Phone number: +233 20 91 07 111

E-mail address: ramos.asafo-adjei@tpoly.edu.gh

Thank you!

Appendix D – Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read the participant information sheet and the nature and purpose of the study has been explained to me by Mr. Ramos Asafo-Adjei, a doctoral student of the University of Venda, South Africa.

I understand that as the lecturer who sets the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations of my university, I have to be interviewed in order to give a clearer picture of the phenomenon under study.

I also understand that all the information that I will provide will be treated as confidential and will be used for research purposes only. During the study, I shall be available for all activities of the study as well as freely give information to facilitate the study. I understand that while the information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified anywhere in the study through my real names.

I am also aware that the interview will be recorded and that I can withdraw from the study without penalty.

Signature of the participant.....

Date.....

For further information, please contact:

Ramos Asafo-Adjei

Tel.: +233 20 91 07 111

E-mail: ramos.asafo-adjei@tpoly.edu.gh

Appendix E – Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON EVALUATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPONENT OF THE MATURE STUDENTS' ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS INTO SELECTED GHANAIAI UNIVERSITIES

Thank you for willing to take part in this study. My name is Ramos Asafo-Adjei, a doctoral student of the University of Venda, South Africa, specialising in English language. The study seeks to understand the nature and scope of the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations into Selected Ghanaian universities.

Kindly note that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, so you can withdraw from the study at any point, without any penalty whatsoever. You will remain anonymous throughout the study because your name will not be mentioned in any stage of this study. The information you will provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Further information is contained in the Participant Information and Informed Consent sheets, which you will be required to read and fill in before providing responses for this interview. This interview may take about 30 minutes. Thank you for your help.

SECTION ONE

CRITERIA USED IN SETTING THE QUESTIONS

- 1) What processes do you follow to set the questions?
- 2) Do you have any assessment model that you follow in setting the questions?
 - 2a) If yes, please describe the model.
- 3) Do you consider the type of examination you are using to inform the construct of the test items?
 - 3a) If yes, how do you go about it?

- 4) Do you consider the characteristics of the test takers in the design of the questions?
 - 4a) If yes, which characteristics do you consider?
- 5) Do you pre-trial the questions before administration?
 - 5a) If yes, how do you go about it?
- 6) Do you review the questions and the process of setting them over given periods to identify if there are possible lapses so that they are addressed?
- 7) Have you been given any training(s) on language assessment?
 - 7a) If yes, what type of training(s) have you undergone?

SECTION TWO

BASIC LANGUAGE SKILLS TESTED

- 8) Which basic language skills do you test in the examinations?
- 9) Which specific test items do you generally use to test the language skills you have just mentioned in 8?

SECTION THREE

HOW THE EXAMINATION IS BENCHMARKED

- 10) Is there any standard examination anywhere in the world that the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations is benchmarked against?
 - 10a) If yes, which examination is that and how and why do you benchmark the English language component of the Mature Students' Entrance Examinations against it?
- 11) If yes to Question 10, are there any similarities and differences between the two examinations?

Appendix F – The Past Questions

F1

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 1
FACULTY OF APPLIED ARTS
LIBERAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT: ENGLISH AND LANGUAGES
MATURE EXAMINATION FOR ENTRY INTO HND PROGRAMMES - 2016

SUBJECT TITLE	English Language
TIME ALLOWED	105 Minutes
INSTRUCTIONS	Answer Section A and Section B , and choose one question from Section C .

Section A

From the words in brackets, select the one which will correctly complete each sentence.

Write down only the answers.

1. The price of these jeans (is/are) reasonable.
2. The books borrowed from the library (is/are) on my desk.
3. The boy who won the two medals (is/are) a friend of mine.
4. Bread and butter (is/are) our daily food.
5. The famous singer and composer (have/has) arrived.
6. The quality of the candies (is/are) poor.
7. Neither his father nor his mother (play/plays) basketball.
8. Neither parent (is/are) fond of playing football.
9. Many a student (has/have) made the same mistake.
10. The boss, together with his colleagues, (has/have) been robbed by the robber.

[10 Marks]

Section B – Comprehension

*You are advised to spend about **30 minutes** on this question.*

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow it.

More than a 100 people were killed in the tragic bombing of the Oklahoma federal building in 1995. About 6,000 die in Africa each day of AIDS. Between 8

,000 and 10,000 people die of starvation daily. Tragedies occur all around us, and we accept them out of necessity as a part of life. But sometimes the horrors of tragedy affect us in a new way: it overwhelms a nation and stuns the international community. This is what happened last week when two hijacked passenger planes hit the twin towers of the World Trade Centre and their resulting collapse killed thousands of people from several countries. News of the tragedy flashed around the globe. Everywhere, it seemed, people in uncomprehending horror listened to reports on their radios and watched endless replays on their televisions. Several countries declared days of mourning and scheduled services of remembrance. Now, one week after the attack, tokens of grieve and letters of condolence still flood US embassies and government offices worldwide. But why is the outpouring of grieve so much deeper for this tragedy than for others? Why is the attack not considered just a large scale repeat of the Oklahoma City bombing? Could it be that our grief is more than sorrow, and that our loss is much more than what lies in the rubble?

The Oklahoma City bombing was grievous and alarming, but localised. The bomber was soon arrested, his motives deduced and justice served. While lives were changed and a nation was /shaken, the world community remained composed. However, the September 11 attack unsettled us more, in part because the World Trade Centre stood for so much more than the Oklahoma Federal Building did. The twin towers symbolised American domination of world finances: they were a major centre for the internet, a hub for international businesses, and an emblem of American life. The fall of the towers struck violently at the nation's psyche, and the manner in which they were destroyed – with America's own airplanes, filled with many American passengers – has raised questions about America's security and future. Threatened to their core, Americans have demanded retaliation – But against whom? The terrorists' identity is not clear, and evidence seems elusive. In a sense, an unknown offender has injured Americans, who beat the air in the dark. In such a case, terrorism is aptly named, for America's outcry expresses more than sorrow – it expresses fear.

The fear that Americans feel come partly from the uncertainty related to this attack. The attackers demonstrated technical and planning skills that surprised Americans, making them question their safety and fear future attacks. Air travel, long considered safe, now includes security measures like armed guards, luggage searches, and bomb-sniffing dogs – all strategies to achieve safety. As Americans struggle to find answers in the shattered peace, nations are forming alliances, war seems imminent, and the world waits anxiously to see where it will all lead.

On September 11, 2001, America along with its Western allies lost its aura of invincibility. As the whole world watched, the towers fell, and we stumbled in shock and pain. Moreover, as time passes, America may fail to identify its enemy and to understand the attack. If this happens, the oppressed people of the world – to some extent victims of western culture – will take notice. It is now one week since the towers fell, and the world still grieves. However, mingled with this grief is the fear that we may be mourning not only for the lives lost, but also for our lost way of life.

- 1) What two major disasters were compared and contrasted in this passage? [5 Marks]
- 2) What does the writer mean by the expression, “*his motives deduced*”? [5 Marks]
- 3) What is the psychological effect of the bombing of the twin towers on Americans? [5 Marks]
- 4) The collapse of the twin towers did not affect people as much as the bombing of the Oklahoma Federal Building did. True/False. [5 Marks]

Section C – Answer only one question from this section.

Essays

Your answer should be about 400 words.

1. Write a story that illustrates the saying, “Nothing good comes easily”. [20 Marks]
2. HIV/AIDS cases are on the increase in Ghana. Write an essay in which you explain, at least, three causes of the spread of the virus. [20 Marks]

F2

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 1

CENTER FOR LIBERAL STUDIES – COMMUNICATION SKILLS UNIT

MATURE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS – JULY, 2017

SUBJECT TITLE	English Language
DURATION	150 minutes
INSTRUCTION	Answer all questions in all sections.

SECTION A

Rewrite the following sentences correcting all spelling errors.

- 1) I believe that all the perpetrators of the crime will scarter immediately the police arrive at the crime scene.
- 2) My father should pay his ten-month rent arears lest we face eviction immediately.
- 3) The news bulleting delivered yesterday focussed primarily on the effective distribution of portable water to rural communities.
- 4) I designed a questionnaire for everyone who truely belonged to the univesity.
- 5) MTN has agreed to sponser the programme in other to help improve the lifes of all in the community.

[10 Marks]

SECTION B – SUMMARY WRITING

Read the passage below carefully and answer the questions on it.

People from all over the world are curious about the future. They want to know whether they will succeed in a business enterprise, whether a new friendship or partnership is likely to prosper, and whether they will benefit from a proposed change in their lives. They think of mistakes they have made in the past, of the many occasions when they have said, 'If only I had known!', and this makes them even more anxious to know what will happen in the future.

It seems, from stories of ancient history, that Man has always believed that specially gifted people can see hidden things and foretell the future. The ancient Romans believed in omens and signs from the gods, and would visit trained 'augurs' to find out the opinion of the gods about any important step they were about to take. We know from

stories which have been handed down that our ancestors had similar beliefs. Before going to battle they might consult the Wanzam oracle for a forecast as well as to pray to the god for success, and some famous warrior would cast down pieces of cola-nut before his personal god to find out whether he would return victorious from the war.

Even today, this ability to see hidden or future events is still widely believed in. Some people believe in astrology or 'what the stars foretell'. Astrologers claim to be able to foretell events by studying the movements of the planets, and to be able to work out a 'horoscope' showing under what stars a child was born, thus revealing the child's character as well as its future destiny. In Europe, there are gypsy fortune-tellers who say they can read the past, present and future life of a person from the lines on his/her palm. Even more striking than these 'palmists' are the crystal-gazers, who claim to see far-away or future events simply by looking into a glass ball where they say they see the events unfolding like a moving picture. Other people believe that dreams foretell the future. The dreamers themselves are not usually asked about the future, as no one can tell what dreams he/she is going to have, or even if he/she will dream at all; but this may be the very reason why so many people are ready to believe in those who claim to have prophetic dreams. Another well-known group are the priests of some new religious sects who claim that they can see visions, and without whose prophecies the faithful members of the sect will not travel, or marry, or even change their job!

There has been a great deal of argument about this ability to see things which are happening miles away, or which have not yet happened. It is sometimes called 'second sight' or 'the sixth sense'. Those who believe in these strange powers mention numerous instances of predictions from seers or fortune tellers which later turned out to be true, like that of the American woman, Mrs. Jean Dixon, who prophesied the tragic assassination of President Kennedy. They also say that the belief in second sight is so old and so widespread that there must be some truth in it.

The sceptics, who believe that there is no such thing as second sight, point out that many old and widespread beliefs have been found out to be mere superstition, disproved by science. They say that for thousands of years people all over the world thought that illness was caused by evil spirits and witches, until nineteenth century science discovered the real cause – germs. Furthermore, they say that any guess about

the future will turn out either true or not true, that is, there is a fifty per cent possibility (or a 50/50 chance) of it turning out true. Why then should people declare that the 50 per cent that turn out true are cases of second sight, and then either find some excuse for the cases which turn out false, or conveniently forget about them, since they are not so striking? Also, the sceptics say that many predictions are so vaguely worded – ‘you are thinking of making a change in your life’ or ‘someone near to you is planning an action which may turn out to your disadvantage’ – that they can easily be interpreted to fit almost any normal happening in a person’s life. They argue that if these seers really see, they should be able to make definite predictions like: ‘You are thinking of travelling to Kwesimintsim by bus next Thursday’.

What are we to make of it all? One thing is for certain: whatever the truth of the matter may be, there is far less second sight than people claim; for there are so many people anxious to pay for secrets of the future that a large army of false prophets has sprung up, making money by deceiving people into thinking that they can supply information, when all they do is to cleverly make vague forecasts and lead their gullible customers to fill in the details.

- 1) In **two** sentences, one for each, state any two groups of people who claim to have ‘second sight’. [7 Marks]
- 2) In not more than five words, summarise the main argument of the sceptics. [7 Marks]
- 3) In not more than **six** words, summarise the last paragraph. [8 Marks]
- 4) In not more than **five** words, summarise the main argument of those in favour of the sixth sense. [8 Marks]

SECTION C – COMPREHENSION

Read the ensuing passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

More than a 100 people were killed in the tragic bombing of the Oklahoma federal building in 1995. About 6,000 die in Africa each day of AIDS. Between 8,000 and 10,000 people die of starvation daily. Tragedies occur all around us, and we accept them out of necessity as a part of life. But sometimes the horrors of tragedy affect us in a new way: it overwhelms a nation and stuns the international community. This is what happened last

week when two hijacked passenger planes hit the twin towers of the World Trade Centre and their resulting collapse killed thousands of people from several countries. News of the tragedy flashed around the globe. Everywhere, it seemed, people in uncomprehending horror listened to reports on their radios and watched endless replays on their televisions. Several countries declared days of mourning and scheduled services of remembrance. Now, one week after the attack, tokens of grieve and letters of condolence still flood US embassies and government offices worldwide. But why is the outpouring of grieve so much deeper for this tragedy than for others? Why is the attack not considered just a large scale repeat of the Oklahoma City bombing? Could it be that our grief is more than sorrow, and that our loss is much more than what lies in the rubble?

The Oklahoma City bombing was grievous and alarming, but localised. The bomber was soon arrested, his motives deduced and justice served. While lives were changed and a nation was shaken, the world community remained composed. However, the September 11 attack unsettled us more, in part because the World Trade Centre stood for so much more than the Oklahoma Federal Building did. The twin towers symbolised American domination of world finances: they were a major centre for the internet, a hub for international businesses, and an emblem of American life. The fall of the towers struck violently at the nation's psyche, and the manner in which they were destroyed – with America's own airplanes, filled with many American passengers – has raised questions about America's security and future. Threatened to their core, Americans have demanded retaliation – But against whom? The terrorists' identity is not clear, and evidence seems elusive. In a sense, an unknown offender has injured Americans, who beat the air in the dark. In such a case, terrorism is aptly named, for America's outcry expresses more than sorrow – it expresses fear.

The fear that Americans feel come partly from the uncertainty related to this attack. The attackers demonstrated technical and planning skills that surprised Americans, making them question their safety and fear future attacks. Air travel, long considered safe, now includes security measures like armed guards, luggage searches, and bomb-sniffing dogs – all strategies to achieve safety. As Americans struggle to find answers in the shattered peace, nations are forming alliances, war seems eminent, and the world waits anxiously to see where it will all lead.

On September 11, 2001, America along with its Western allies lost its aura of invincibility. As the whole world watched, the towers fell, and we stumbled in shock and pain. Moreover, as time passes, America may fail to identify its enemy and to understand the attack. If this happens, the oppressed people of the world – to some extent victims of western culture – will take notice. It is now one week since the towers fell, and the world still grieves. However, mingled with this grief is the fear that we may be mourning not only for the lives lost, but also for our lost way of life.

- 1) What two major disasters were compared and contrasted in this passage?
[7 Marks]
- 2) What does the writer mean by the expression, “*his motives deduced*”?
[8 Marks]
- 3) What is the psychological effect of the bombing of the twin towers on Americans?
[7 Marks]
- 4) The collapse of the twin towers did not affect people as much as the bombing of the Oklahoma Federal Building did. True/False? [8 Marks]

SECTION D – ESSAY WRITING

- 1) Road traffic accidents are on the increase in Ghana this year. Write an essay in which you explain, at least, three causes of this problem.
[30 Marks]

F3

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 1
MATURE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION – JULY, 2018

SECTION A

IDENTIFY THE WORD CLASSES IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES.

1. The **bridegroom** rode a fine white **mare**.
2. A cool breeze **is blowing** lately.
3. There were many flowers dotted all over the **green** grass.
4. We could see flowers **everywhere**.
5. Clouds sailed **above** the rooftops.
6. **Hurrah!** We have won the match.
7. The sky was covered with clouds, **but** it didn't rain.
8. The man became aware of **an** insect buzzing around him.
9. **Cruelty** to animals should be prevented.
10. **He** climbed Mt. Everest last year.

SECTION B

Rewrite the following sentences given below, beginning each **proper noun** with **capital letter**

11. sam and jenny will be in cape coast this july.
12. The river pra flows throw kwahu planteau.
13. The planet sature is between jupiter and Uranus.
14. The new restaurant in Takoradi is kfc.
15. In accra the chief language spoken is english.

SECTION C

Choose the correct verb in each pair of brackets.

16. Mr Adamu (go / goes) for a walk every morning.
17. All that glitters (is /are) not gold.

18. The wages of sin (is/are) death.
19. The government (has broken/ have broken) all their promises.
20. God (love/ loves) me.
21. Our teachers (teach/ teaches) well.
22. The government (has broken/ have broken) its promises.
23. He (knows/ know) the demonstrators.
24. The family (is/ are) a very happy one.
25. The football team (is playing/ are playing) very well.

SECTION D

IDENTIFY THE SUBJECT, VERB AND OBJECT (S.V.O STRUCTURE) IN SENTENCES BELOW.

26. Little John was a friend of Robin Hood.
27. The furious lion jumped the fence.
28. Sekondi Hassacas football club supporters are unhappy.
29. The old man killed the cat.
30. Abu danced gracefully.

SECTION E

COMPREHENSION

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions below.

As human beings, we have been polluting the air from the time we lit our first fire, washed our cloths in the rivers and threw our trash on the ground. When land was used up or the river became dirty we moved on to another place. The earth could at first **handle** the problem because there were plenty of fresh air, land and water. But with the rise in population and the spread of industry, this is no longer true. Now, our environment is becoming overburdened with waste, and our air and water are getting polluted. All the different kinds of pollution are connected. What happens to the air affected the land, and what happens to the land affects the water around us, which intend affect the air. Pollution has become **a threat to our environment** and the urban **dweller** suffers most. Of all

forms of pollution, noise is perhaps the most inescapable for the urban dweller. It pursues him in the street and into the privacy of his home and even **envelops** him in at his work place. We may not yet know the price we pay when our hearing is affected or we suffer from nervous tensions, but scientist reports that, when animals are made to listen to excessive noise, they become cheerless, exhibits disinterest, and grow violent. Noise also interferes with the sexual activities of animals. This may not apply to humans.

31. What according to the writer have been the main causes of pollution to the modern world? (2 marks)

32. Why does the city dweller finds noise pollution unavoidable? (2marks)

33. What impact does excessive noise have on animals? (2marks)

34. For each of the following words or phrase, find another word that means the same and which can replace it in the passage (1mark each)

i) handle

ii) envelops

iii) a threat to our environment

F4

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 2

DEPARTMENT OF LIBERAL STUDIES

MATURE STUDENTS' ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS, 2016

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

COURSE GROUPS: (EEE/MCE/BUT/CVE/PUS/SMS/ACT/MKT/TOR/STA/HCIM/FAS)

TIME ALLOWED: 2HRS

SECTION A

(Choose only one question from this section)

1. Write an essay expressing your views on the need for all Ghanaians to practice good hygiene in the country.
2. What in your opinion are the possible causes of maternal mortality in the country?
3. Write an essay about your mother.

SECTION B

(Read the passage and answer all the questions that follow)

Last night, a thirty-two-seater bus caught fire in my town. There has been no previous sign that anything was amiss. Its young driver was reversing into an alley when suddenly; a huge explosion shattered the silence of the dusk. Smoke started spreading. Ten minutes later tongues of fire licked their way into the thickening darkness.

Some of the women bystanders screamed hysterically as if they thought piercing screams could quench the fire. Some took to flapping, and whisking, whipping their fingers in the fluttering way most women generally show extreme agitation. Others slammed their

palms first on their bellies again and again. Still others wailed that of all the catastrophes that could befall mankind, that particular burning spectacle was the very worst.

As spectators started milling around, and the women kept up a sturdy wailing and gnashing of teeth, one man remembered to run home and telephone the fire service. When he rushed back to announce that the fireman would be down directly, the women breathed a sigh of relief. They mumbled their hasty thanks to the man, and then off they went again, screaming their heads off as the fire raged on. One blast followed another as the tyres exploded. When the fuel tank exploded with a huge bang, the women shrieked the more. They know there was nothing more to be salvaged; and their hearts went out to the vehicle owner and his family.

Meanwhile, the men had gathered in a circle a safe distance away. Their eyes were focused on the smothering bus; their minds could not have been farther off. They were now discussing the inflationary factors that were ending the cedi hurtling down.

Everyone had forgotten about the call to the fire service. One long hour and half later there came suddenly the whining drone of the fire engine. As the women fell back they started booing expressing their scorn loud and clear. One asks sarcastically, "Are you coming to water the burnt offering?" The hooting and the booing rose again. Two of the men stepped forward, and, calmly asked the fireman to explain to the women what had happened to them since his station was not far away.

The women shrieked their displeasure and jeered again. One female voice yelled above the noise, "Spare us the cold rationalization. Just make that bus come back to us."

QUESTIONS

- (1) In three sentences, one for each, state three qualities that characterize women.
- (2) In three sentences, one for each, state three qualities that characterize men.

F5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 2
DEPARTMENT OF LIBERAL STUDIES
MATURE STUDENTS' ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS, 2017
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

COURSE _____ GROUPS: _____ HND _____
(EEE/MCE/BUT/CVE/PUS/SMS/ACT/MKT/TOR/STA/HCIM/FAS)

TIME ALLOWED: 2HRS

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer any one question from Section A and all questions from Section B

SECTION A

1. The debate about the power of the President of Ghana's to remove the Commissioner of the Electoral Commission of Ghana has generated so much heat in the Ghanaian media. What is your opinion about this delicate matter?
2. What in your opinion are the possible causes of road traffic accidents on most Ghanaian highways?
3. Write an essay about your favourite relative.

SECTION B

All over the world till lately, and in most of the world today, mankind, in its sexual life, has been following the course of nature; that is to say, it has been breeding up to the maximum. To let nature take her extravagant course in the reproduction of human race may have made since in an age in which you were letting her take course in **decimating** mankind by the casualties of war, pestilence, and ***famine***. Being human, we have at last revolted against that senseless waste. We have started to impose on nature's **heartless** play a humane New World order of our own. But, once man has begun to interfere with

nature, he cannot afford to stop half way. We cannot, with **impunity** cut down the death rate and at the same time allow birth rate to go on taking nature's course .We must consciously try to establish equilibrium or, sooner or later, famine will occur again. And here we come back to the heart of our problem. The death rate can be reduced by public action taken by few; the birth rate can be stabilized only by private action taken by many.

What is the true end of man? Is it to populate the earth with the maximum number of human beings that can be kept alive simultaneously by the world's maximum food supply? Or is it to enable human beings to lead the best kind of life that spiritual limitations of human nature allow? The first two possible **objectives** seem irrational. What matters, surely, is not that the surface of this planet should hold, say four thousand million instead of three thousand million living human beings; what is notable is that living things, whatever their number, shall develop the highest capacities of their nature.

QUESTIONS

- a. For each of the following words underlined in the passage, give another word or phrase that means the same and which can replace it in the passage,
(i) decimating (ii) famine (iii) heartless (iv) impunity
(v) heart (vi) objectives
- b. In what way according to the passage has mankind been following the course of nature.
- c. What does the writer suggest mankind should do about its birth rate and death rate?
- d. What will happen if mankind fails to take action on its birth rate and death rate?
- e. What figure of speech is the expression "To let Nature take her extravagant course" ?
- f. "that senseless waste".
 - (i) What is the grammatical name given to the above expression ?
 - (ii) What is its function in the sentence?
- g. What, according to the passage is the "true end" of man?
- h. Quote a sentence from the passage to support your answer.

F6

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 2
DEPARTMENT OF LIBERAL STUDIES
MATURE STUDENTS' ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS, 2018
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

COURSE _____ GROUPS: _____ HND _____
(EEE/MCE/BUT/CVE/PUS/SMS/ACT/MKT/TOR/STA/HCIM/FAS)

TIME ALLOWED: 2HRS

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer any one question from Section A and all questions from Section B

SECTION A

1. Write an essay explaining why you wish to be enrolled at Technical University 2.
2. In an essay, write down the reasons why you think that rape victims need counseling?
3. Write an essay about your favorite relative.

SECTION B

Read the passage below carefully and answer the questions that follow.

From time immemorial, African lady drivers have been so rotten by their men folk. Whenever a lady driver bursts a tyre, all she had to do was get out of her car and look helpless. Soon, a male driver came along, stopped, replaced the problem tyre and drove safely off. Most lady drivers, therefore, never bothered to learn how to soil their daintily manicured hands with tyre- changing.

Last Monday, Maria had a puncture. As she had done on previous occasions, she got out, stood by her car and donned her poor- defenseless- woman look. Soon a blue Toyota came into view, Maria breathed a sigh of relief; her salvation, she thought, was at hand.

The male driver zoomed past waving at Maria as if he recognized her for a long- lost friend. Another male driver passed by, a third, then a fourth, and then a fifth touring car drove past her. Every one of the male drivers acknowledged Maria with a hand wave, as if, to assure her that she had indeed, been spotted and recognized for a woman in distress.

Maria was beginning to wonder where traditional African Chivalry had gone when a sixth car glided by. Its driver waved, drove about fifty metres up the beach road, reversed slowly, parked about twenty metres away, and beckoned to her. She thought that was odd, since the normal thing would have been for him to come up to her car, and not the other way round. She did not have a choice; it was she, who was in trouble. So up she walked to the driver and said ‘oh thanks for stopping sir, I have burst a tyre andThe man cut her short with a happy chuckle. ‘Beijing?’ she asked. ‘Yes, Beijing’ said the man, still chuckling. ‘Couldn’t they empower you women there to change your own tyres too? Before Maria could recover her composure the man got down and solved her problem for her.

- a) Why did African lady drivers not learn how to change their car tyres?
- b) Her salvation, she thought, was at hand what does this expression mean?
- c) What did Maria think had caused the male drivers to ignore her?
- d) Why did Maria walk up to the man?
- e) From the passage, what did the man expect Beijing to have done for women?
- f) i. What part- of – speech is ‘poor- defenseless- women’
ii. What is its function?
- g) For each of the following words underlined in the passage give another word or phrase that means the same and can replace it in the passage.

- i. Rotten
- ii daintily
- iii zoomed
- iv distress
- v. composure

h. What figure of speech is in the expression “The male driver zoomed past waving at Maria?”

F7

**PRIVATE UNIVERSITY 1
ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS FOR THE SELECTION OF MATURE STUDENTS TO
THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE, 2016/17 ACADEMIC YEAR
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
SESSION 4**

TIME ALLOWED

2 HOURS

Candidates are required to answer all questions in this Paper for a total of 100 marks.

This Section consists of three parts, as follows:

- Part 1: **Essay (40 Marks)**
- Part 2: **Comprehension (30 Marks)**
- Part 3: **Structure and Usage (30 Marks)**

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN THE ANSWER BOOKLET.

Remember to write your Index Number on the Answer Booklet.

Candidates should read carefully the instructions given under each sub-section before answering the questions. Candidates who mis-read instructions will be penalized.

At the end of the examination, CANDIDATES MUST ENSURE THAT THEY DO NOT TAKE AWAY ANY QUESTION PAPER/ANSWER BOOKLET FROM THE EXAMINATION HALL. FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL MERIT A COMPLETE CANCELLATION OF RESULTS.

The question paper and answer booklets must be surrendered to the Invigilators after the examination. Offenders will be penalized.

PART 1: ESSAY (40 MARKS)

Answer ONE question only;

All questions carry equal marks. Credit marks will be awarded for good organization and clarity of expression.

1. The mass media, including TV, radio, newspapers have a great influence on people and especially on the younger generation. It plays an important role in shaping the opinions and positions of the younger generation. Argue for or against this statement.
2. Write an essay for publication in one of the national dailies on the importance of university students dressing properly.
3. There has been a rise in cases of fire outbreaks in major market centres in Ghana. Discuss some of the causes of fire outbreaks in markets centres in Ghana. Suggest possible solutions.

PART 2: COMPREHENSION (30 MARKS)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Choose the option you consider the most appropriate response to each question.

Five Chinese women are sitting upright in their chairs, designer handbags at their heels, listening attentively to a trendy Chinese Tatler magazine photographer describe how to pose in public. He is talking makeup, light and cheekbones. The room is decorated with Pierre Frey wallpaper and the participants sip tea out of a Bernardaud tea set. Notepad in hand, they are learning the dos and don'ts of camera etiquette.

The course entitled “How to pose elegantly in front of the camera” is one of many offered by Institute Sarita, a modern-day version of European finishing schools that caters to Chinese nouveaux riche. Other courses offered by the school, located in the trendy Sanlitun district of Beijing, include how to raise children, proper table manners and luxury brand pronunciation. “Most of my clients had an embarrassing moment, overseas or during a business dinner. They come here because they want to make things easier for themselves,” said Sara-Jane Ho, the perfectly groomed school founder, as she sat in a drawing room furnished with imported French antique furniture. “It’s mostly learning about how to behave in an international environment,” said Ho, who herself studied etiquette at the Institut Villa Pierrefeu in Switzerland, one of the last proper finishing schools in the world. So far she has attracted a couple hundred wealthy Chinese to her courses. She is opening a Shanghai branch in May.

With 190 billionaires and more than two million millionaires, China tags just behind the US in number of high-net-worth individuals, according to research from Forbes magazine and Boston Consulting Group. Many of these fortunes have grown rapidly, in lock-step with China’s newly expanding economy and multiplying business opportunities. Some who find themselves newly wealthy have little knowledge or training in how to behave in international business or social events. “The country was so isolated 30 years ago,” said Ho. “The spike in wealth has happened in a compressed time. This transformation has created a lot of pressure on individuals.”

As a result, some businesspeople may appear uncouth and blunt to their western or Asian counterparts. Finesse, on the other hand, can smooth many business transactions. “Simply knowing how to be comfortable with a knife and fork can be a deal clincher,” said James Hebbert, who represents Seaton, a British etiquette school in China. Clients who attend etiquette courses in China include government officials, children enrolled in overseas schools, wives looking to entertain important guests and those who enjoy travelling abroad.

“There is a huge demand all along the spectrum,” said Hebbert, whose clients were first primarily drivers of Rolls Royces wanting to dress the part, then evolved to middle-class

customers in search of a British-lifestyle experience. “In just a few years, I have seen a real shift in clientele. More and more Chinese are travelling. They see the advantage of having an international edge.” If learning how to peel an orange with a knife and fork may seem slightly superfluous in Europe, in China the newly rich are ready to pay what it takes to acquire the manners that come with their new status. “The next time I visit Milan and dine in a nice restaurant I can confidently tell my husband he shouldn’t hold his knife like a dagger,” said a participant of a two-hour Western dining etiquette course with James Hebbert in Shanghai, who didn't want her name used.

Media and even the Chinese president have been critical of how some Chinese travellers have behaved on trips. On a September trip to the Maldives, Chinese President Xi Jinping suggested Chinese citizens be “a bit more civilised when travelling abroad.” With more than 100 million Chinese travelling in 2014, misbehaviours have grabbed headlines worldwide. Among the most extreme: defacing an Egyptian sculpture, throwing boiling water on a flight attendant and urinating outside. In October, China’s National Tourism Administration issued strict guidelines on how to behave while travelling. In a 64-page booklet, Chinese tourists are warned against peeing in swimming pools, stealing life jackets from planes and leaving footprints on the toilet seat. Punishments for such behaviours include fining tour operators and blacklisting rude tourists.

“The Chinese have no manners. It’s just not something that is taught by parents. I am always surprised when men hold the door for me in Paris. This would never happen in China,” said Yue-Sai Kan, a Sino-American TV host and producer, and author of *Etiquette for the Modern Chinese*, a national bestseller that has sold more than three million copies. Today, Kan lectures on etiquette and trains Chinese contestants for the Miss Universe contest.

While some of what is perceived as rude by Westerners stems from cultural issues — the notion of public space and privacy is very different in China — other ill-manners date back to the Cultural Revolution when all that was seen as sophistication was considered bourgeois and severely punished. “Let’s say that when you’re struggling to get food you are not thinking about private space,” Ho explained.

What can seem to an outsider as impolite today — such as pushing, queue barging, speaking loudly or picking your nose in public — is common behaviour for the majority of Chinese. But as China opens up and engages with the world awareness is growing among the population on how they are being perceived overseas.

To disassociate themselves from this reputation, many of the new elite are seeking refinement at etiquette schools. At the same time, they are looking to good manners as a new form of status symbol. “[The Chinese] understand that their position as the most powerful country in the world puts them in a situation where they need to learn about other cultures and behaviours so as to smoothen political and business relationships,” said Viviane Neri, principal of Institut Villa Pierrefeu, in an email. “Before, it was about owning a big car,” said Hebbert. “Now the rich are looking for something else to make the difference.”

Answer the following questions

1. Mention four courses taught by the Institute Sarita according to the author. (4 marks)
2. According to Sara-Jane Ho, why do people patronize her institute? (2 marks)
3. What factors, according to the passage have made most Chinese learn Western manners? (4 marks)
4. Mention four classes of people who patronize the study of Western manners. (4 marks)
5. According to the passage, the government of China has taken measures to ensure that its citizens behave properly when they travel abroad. Mention these two strategies taken by the government. (2 marks)
6. What is the reason, provided by the author, to explain why it seems that the lack of “Western manners” seem to be engrained in the Chinese culture? (4 marks)

7. The words below have been underlined in the passage. Provide a word or phrase for each of the listed words that has a very similar meaning and can replace the word in the passage (1 mark each)
- a. Learning
 - b. Located
 - c. Wealthy
 - d. Misbehaviours
 - e. Manners
 - f. Issued
 - g. Evolved
 - h. Common
 - i. Uncouth
 - j. Acquire

PART 3: STRUCTURE & USAGE (30 MARKS)

SECTION A (10 marks)

Correctly punctuate the passage below by re-writing it.

Miscommunication can lead to a pleasant surprise. My surprise began yesterday when I asked my husband to pick up a few items at the supermarket. When he was on his way out the door at the last minute he asked do you need anything. Get something for lunch I said. I told him to buy some turkey sandwiches, potato salad and apples. He came back with all the wrong items a frozen turkey instead of turkey sandwiches sweet potatoes instead of potato salad and an apple pie instead of apples.

SECTION B (10 marks)

The following sentences are faulty. Re-write them correcting the faults in the sentences.

1. Too salty, Tanya needed a glass of water.
2. It wasn't easy we had a very difficult time at the mall.
3. Finding the man, the bicycle was taken from him.
4. The job which was advertised yesterday in the Daily graphic newspaper at 8:00pm.
5. They saw a fence behind the house made of barbed wire.

SECTION C (10 marks)

Select the best option that ensures that the subject and the verbs in the sentences agree.

1. Some of her characters (the exact number of them _____ not important) _____ based on real people.
 - a. Are, is
 - b. Are, are
 - c. Is, is
 - d. Is, are
2. Each of the pages _____ carefully written and revised. The cover page as well as the back page _____ beautifully designed.
 - a. Was, was
 - b. Was, were
 - c. Were, was
 - d. Were, were

3. Neither superficiality nor verbosity _____ her writing which _____ an interesting style.
- Damages, have
 - Damages, has
 - Damage, have
 - Damage, has
4. Great technical skills or philosophical depth _____ rare in a popular novelist. Most of such novelists receive the best recognitions and often _____ at places of honour.
- Are, sit
 - Are sits
 - Is, sit
 - Is, sits
5. Four hundred pages _____ a substantial amount to read but the plot _____ along swiftly.
- Are, move
 - Are, moves
 - Is, move
 - Is, moves

F8

PRIVATE UNIVERSITY 1
ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS FOR THE SELECTION OF MATURE STUDENTS TO
THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE, 2017/18 ACADEMIC YEAR
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
SESSION 1

TIME ALLOWED

2 HOURS

Candidates are required to answer all questions in this Paper for a total of 100 marks.

This Section consists of three parts, as follows:

- Part 1: Essay (40 Marks)
- Part 2: Comprehension (30 Marks)
- Part 3: Structure and Usage (30 Marks)

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN THE ANSWER BOOKLET.

Remember to write your Index Number on the Answer Booklet.

Candidates should read carefully the instructions given under each sub-section before answering the questions. Candidates who mis-read instructions will be penalized.

At the end of the examination, CANDIDATES MUST ENSURE THAT THEY DO NOT TAKE AWAY ANY QUESTION PAPER/ANSWER BOOKLET FROM THE EXAMINATION HALL. FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL MERIT A COMPLETE CANCELLATION OF RESULTS.

The question paper and answer booklets must be surrendered to the Invigilators after the examination. Offenders will be penalized.

PART 1: ESSAY (40 MARKS)

Answer ONE question only:

All questions carry equal marks. Credit marks will be awarded for good organization and clarity of expression.

1. The hiplife songs of today have been chastised for not being educative but rather sexually provocative. Write an essay sharing your opinions on the discussion.
2. Write an essay sharing your opinion on the topic “technology has done more harm done good”.
3. There has been a rise in suicide cases among the youth of Ghana. Write an essay to discuss some possible causes of these cases and suggest some solution to the problem.

PART 2: COMPREHENSION (30 MARKS)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Choose the option you consider the most appropriate response to each question.

Did you know that some people don't do their reading assignments? It's shocking, but it's true. Some students don't even read short texts that they are assigned in class. There are many reasons for this. They may be distracted or bored. They may be unwilling to focus. They may be unconfident readers. Whatever the reason, it has to stop today. Here's why.

Reading stimulates your mind. It is like a workout for your brain. When people get old, their muscles begin to deteriorate. They get weaker and their strength leaves them. Exercise can prevent this loss. The same thing happens to people's brains when they get older. Brain power and speed decline with age. Reading strengthens your brain and prevents these declines.

You can benefit from reading in the near-term too. Reading provides knowledge. Knowledge is power. Therefore, reading can make you a more powerful person. You can learn to do new things by reading. Do you want to make video games? Do you want to design clothing? Reading can teach you all this and more. But you have to get good at reading, and the only way to get good at something is to practice.

Read everything that you can at school, regardless of whether you find it interesting. Reading expands your vocabulary. Even a "boring" text can teach you new words. Having a larger vocabulary will help you better express yourself. You will be able to speak, write, and think more intelligently. What's boring about that?

Do not just discount a text because it is unfamiliar to you. Each time you read, you are exposed to new ideas and perspectives. Reading can change the way that you understand the world. It can give you a broader perspective on things. It can make you worldlier. You can learn how people live in far away places. You can learn about cultures different from your own.

Reading is good for your state of mind. It has a calming effect. It can lower your stress levels and help you relax. You can escape from your troubles for a moment when you read, and it's a positive escape. The benefits of reading far outweigh those of acting like a doofus. So do yourself a favor: the next time you get a reading assignment, take as much as you can from it. Squeeze it for every drop of knowledge that it contains. Then move on to the next one.

Answer the following questions. In the questions 1 to 10, select from the options, the best answer to the questions. (2 marks each)

1. Which best expresses the main idea of the second paragraph?

- a. Reading is exciting.
- b. Reading strengthens your mind.
- c. Age affects the body in many ways.
- d. Working out keeps your body in shape.

2. Why does the author think that you should read books that are boring?

- a. You will eventually grow to love them if you read them enough.
 - b. You will get better grades in reading class.
 - c. You will make your teacher very happy.
 - d. You will learn new words.
3. Which best expresses the main idea of the third paragraph?
- a. Reading can benefit you.
 - b. You can learn to program video games or design clothing by reading.
 - c. You can learn amazing things and become a better person by reading.
 - d. Knowledge is power.
4. Which is **not** a reason given by the author why students fail to complete reading assignments?
- a. Students may be bored.
 - b. Students may be distracted.
 - c. Students may be unwilling to focus.
 - d. Students may be tired.
5. Which best expresses the author's main purpose in writing this text?
- a. He is trying to persuade students to do their reading work.
 - b. He is teaching people how to become better readers.
 - c. He is explaining why people don't do their reading work.
 - d. He is entertaining readers with facts about the mind and body.
6. Which best describes the author's tone in the first three sentences?

- a. Surprised
- b. Sarcastic
- c. Informative
- d. Irate

7. Which of the following is **not** one of the author's main points?

- a. Reading broadens your perspective and makes you a better person.
- b. Reading is a relaxing activity with positive mental side effects.
- c. Reading helps you perform on tests and get into selective schools.
- d. Reading keeps your mind in shape and prevents losses due to age.

8. Which is **not** one of the author's arguments in the fifth paragraph?

- a. Reading gives you a broader perspective on the world.
- b. Reading changes the way that you understand the world.
- c. Reading helps prepare you for your job in the real world.
- d. Reading teaches you about distant lands and cultures.

9. Why does the author believe that reading is good for your mind state?

- a. It has a calming effect.
- b. It can lower your stress levels.
- c. It can help you relax.
- d. All of these

10. Which title best expresses the main idea of this text?

- a. *Reading: Good for the Mind in Many Ways*
- b. *Reading: The Key to a Successful Academic Future*
- c. *Reading: Improve Your Vocabulary While Being Entertained*

d. *Reading: The Best Way to Improve Your Writing Skills*

11. The words below have been underlined in the passage. Provide a word or phrase for each of the listed words that has a very similar meaning and can replace the word in the passage (1 mark each)

- a. assigned
- b. shocking
- c. workout
- d. decline
- e. powerful
- f. practice
- g. intelligently
- h. broader
- i. lower
- j. benefits

PART 3: STRUCTURE & USAGE (30 MARKS)

SECTION A (10 marks)

Use appropriate punctuation marks in the following sentences.

1. We had a great time in France the kids really enjoyed it
2. Some people work best in the mornings others do better in the evenings
3. What are you doing next weekend
4. Mother had to go into hospital she had heart problems
5. Did you understand why I was upset
6. It is a fine idea let us hope that it is going to work
7. We will be arriving on Monday morning at least I think so
8. A textbook can be a wall between teacher and class

9. The girls father sat in a corner

10. In the words of Murphys Law Anything that can go wrong will go wrong

SECTION B (10 marks)

The following sentences are faulty. Re-write them correcting the faults in the sentences.

1. Stuck in the mud, the rescue services rushed to the man's assistance
2. The boy was here we played with him.
3. The bicycle taken from him.
4. The job which was advertised yesterday in the Daily graphic newspaper at 8:00pm.
5. Soaring high above the fields, we could see the eagle clearly.

SECTION C (10 marks)

Rewrite the following sentences using the appropriate form of the verbs in parenthesis

1. The man with the roses (look-looks) like your brother.
2. Each of the girls (look-looks) good on skis.
3. Either the workers or the boss (deliver-delivers) the merchandise.
4. One hundred dollars (is-are) not a lot of money to some people.
5. Whatever idea the newspapers support (influence/influences) the public

F9

PRIVATE UNIVERSITY 1
ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS FOR THE SELECTION OF MATURE STUDENTS TO
THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE, 2018/19 ACADEMIC YEAR
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
SESSION ONE

TIME ALLOWED

2 HOURS

Candidates are required to answer all questions for a total of 100 marks.

This Section consists of three parts, as follows:

- Part 1: Essay (40 Marks)**
Part 2: Comprehension (25 Marks)
Part 3: Structure & Usage (35 Marks)

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN THE ANSWER BOOKLET.

Remember to write your Index Number on the Answer Booklet.

Candidates should read carefully the instructions given under each sub-section before answering the questions. Candidates who mis-read instructions will be penalized.

At the end of the examination, CANDIDATES MUST ENSURE THAT THEY DO NOT TAKE AWAY ANY QUESTION PAPER/ANSWER BOOKLET FROM THE EXAMINATION HALL.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL MERIT A COMPLETE CANCELLATION OF RESULTS.
The question paper and answer booklets must be surrendered to the Invigilators after the examination. Offenders will be penalized.

PART 1: ESSAY (40 MARKS)

Answer ONE question only; Your answer should be about 400 words long.

All questions carry equal marks. Credit marks will be awarded for good organization and clarity of expression.

1. Drug abuse is a menace to the society which should be checked. Write an essay suggesting possible ways of preventing drug abuse.
2. Religion is an important part of human society and every member of the society must subscribe to a religious faith. Write an essay discussing the truth of the statement.
3. Write an essay on the topic “Politics has done more harm than good in Ghana”.

PART 2: COMPREHENSION (25 MARKS)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a human viral disease that damages the immune system, undermining the body’s ability to defend itself from infection and disease. It is the final stage of a chronic infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Though its mode of transmission differs from that of other infectious viruses, health officials continually grapple with the public’s unfounded fear concerning the potential for HIV transmission by other means. Therefore, to allay these fears, scientists have documented the three ways by which HIV infections spread.

First, HIV transmission occurs most commonly during intimate sexual contact with an infected person, including genital, anal, and oral sex. The virus is present in the infected person’s semen or vaginal fluids. During sexual intercourse, the virus gains access to the bloodstream of the uninfected person by passing through openings in the mucous membrane – the protective tissue layer that lines the mouth, vagina, and rectum – and through breaks in the skin of the penis. In the United States and Canada, HIV is

most commonly transmitted during sex between homosexual men, but the incidence of HIV transmission between heterosexual men and women has rapidly increased. In most other parts of the world, HIV is most commonly transmitted through heterosexual sex.

Another mode of HIV transmission is through direct contact with HIV – infected blood or blood component. This occurs when people who use heroin or other injected drugs share hypodermic needles or syringes contaminated with infected blood. Sharing of contaminated needles among intravenous drug users is the primary cause of HIV infection in Eastern Europe, particularly, in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Moldova. Epidemics of HIV infection among drug users have also emerged in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan in Central Asia. HIV infection can also occur, though less frequently, when health workers accidentally stick themselves with needles containing HIV – infected blood or expose an open cut to contaminated blood. Some cases of HIV transmissions from transfusions of infected blood, blood components, and organ donations were reported in the 1980s.

Finally, HIV can be transmitted from an infected mother to her baby while the baby is still in the woman’s uterus or, more commonly, during childbirth. The virus can also be transmitted through the mother’s breast milk during breastfeeding. Mother-to-child transmission accounts for 90 percent of all cases of AIDS in children and it is particularly prevalent in Africa, where the number of women infected with HIV is ten times the rate found in other regions.

In short, HIV differs from other infectious viruses in that it dies quickly if exposed to the environment, and no evidence has linked HIV transmission to casual contact with an infected person, such as a handshake, hugging, or kissing, or even sharing dishes or bathroom facilities. Studies have been unable to identify HIV transmission such as an insect bite or inhaling virus – infected droplets from an infected person’s sneeze or cough. Thus, sexual intercourse with an infected person, contact with contaminated blood, and transmission from an infected mother to her child are the only known means of HIV transmission.

Questions

1. According to the passage, in what two ways is HIV different from other viruses?

2. List two ways a mother can transmit HIV to a baby.
3. For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and can appropriately replace it in the passage.
 - a. damages
 - b. transmitted
 - c. mode
 - d. primary
 - e. cases
 - f. casual
 - g. commonly
 - h. accidentally
 - i. allay
 - j. lines
4. Mention three ways by which HIV/AIDS can be transmitted.
5. Suggest a suitable title for the essay above.

PART 3: STRUCTURE & USAGE (35 MARKS)

SECTION A (10 marks)

Correct the faults in the following sentences

1. Those expensive disposable contact lenses.
2. Kofi came home, he wore a blue shirt.
3. Atomic bombs killed more than 250,000 people a thousand died as a result of radiation poisoning.
4. Going through my notes, my wife walked in with a pack of biscuits.
5. The Nigerian senator tall dark and handsome was praised by the lady who asked the questions I met at the conference.

SECTION B – 10 MARKS

Re-write the passage below to make all the subjects agree with the verbs

Korea have many interesting sites. The Kumgansan Mountains of North Korea rivals the Alps in beauty, whereas the Hallyosula Waterway contain many picturesque islands. It are also the place where Admiral Yi, one of Korea's greatest war heroes, developed the first warship. The Emille Bell, which were cast in AD771, stand over eleven feet high, and it contain twenty-five tons of copper. Every year, thousands of tourists from all over the world visits the National Museum and other places. No tourist have ever regretted visiting Korea and I am sure none will ever regret because the Koreans ensure that each visitor get value for his/her money.

SECTION C – 15 MARKS

Re-write the passage below with its correct punctuations

My exwife possesses unenviable qualities deception dishonesty and disrespect for authority. Some people like women with such attitudes, others dislike that. In the words of Boadi one mans poison is another man's meat. I could complain all day but who cares. I have now learnt and now enjoy the Yentie Obiaa phenomenon.

F10

PRIVATE UNIVERSITY 2

2016

READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY

SECTION A: ESSAY

Answer 2 questions. Answer Question 1 and any other question from this section

1. Write a letter to the Director of Health Service in your municipality discussing at least three ways in which the quality of health care in your community can be improved.
2. Write a letter to your friend and present to him or her at least three reasons for choosing to attend Private University 2 over other University.
3. Write a story ending with the statement: If I had known the truth, I would not have acted the way I did.
4. Write an article suitable for publication in a national newspaper on the need to promote local industry in your country.
5. Describe a city you recently visited.

SECTION B COMPREHENSION

READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE CAREFULLY AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON IT.

It is unfortunate that sometimes the misconceptions of our childhood, if not corrected, can shape our subsequent actions and seal our fate. I remember clearly the case of Kofi Mensah. An uncle had taken him along to the city from our village, Bandana. Although he was already eight years old, he was not attending school because his parents had been too poor to send him to school. But now his benevolent uncle was going to put him in school in the city. How lucky for him, we all thought.

But to our greatest surprise, three months later Kofi was back in the village! When we asked him why, he gave us chilling accounts of school. For him, the strict rules of school robbed one of the carefree liberty that village life offered and school meant wicked teachers who flogged pupils mercilessly. As a result, he had not only decided to stop attending school, but also instigated a number of his classmates to do the same. Subsequently, they would pretend to leave for school each day but end up in a secret place and while away the hours until school was over. When the school authorities found out what Kofi had done, he and other truants received the frogging of their lives and were suspended for two weeks. But Kofi never went back to school.

Two years later, when my own elder brother took me with him to the same city to start school, Kofi's chilling accounts of school were all frightened fresh on my mind. That was why on the first day of school, with a pounding heart and reluctant steps, it took me an hour to drag myself to school and I arrived very late. The teacher on duty, who happened to know how close my brother's house was to the school, asked me, "When did you leave home for school?"

"One hour ago, Sir", I replied.

"And it took you a whole hour to get to school from a distance of less than half a kilometer on the first day of school?"

As the teacher motioned to me to receive my punishment for coming late, he muttered in a voice full of concern, "we have a sacred duty to mould you children into responsible adults, my young man.

"Spare the rod and you will spoil the child". That comment brought an instant understanding to me and I comported myself to receive my well-deserved punishment.

Today, as a university lecturer, I look back to those days and I remember Kofi Mensah and his misconceptions were never corrected, he had ended up a mere illiterate farmhand, too poor to send his own children to school.

- (a) What misconception did Kofi Mensah have about school?
- (b) How did he react to this misconception?
- (c) For what **two** offences was Kofi Mensah punished in school?
- (d) Why did it take the narrator's a long time to get to school on the first day?
- (e) What changed the narrator's previous view of school?
- (f) How would you describe the narrator's attitude to Kofi Mensah's present situation?
- (g) ... *who happened to know how close my brother's house was to the school...*
 - (i) What grammatical name is given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
 - (ii) What is its function?
- (h) For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage:
 - (i) benevolent;
 - (ii) chilling;
 - (iii) pounding
 - (iv) motioned;
 - (v) mould.

SECTION C: SUMMARY

[20 Marks]

Read the following and answer the questions that follow:

Poverty! Can anyone who has not really been poor know what poverty is? I really doubt it. How can anyone who enjoys three square meals a day explain what poverty mean? Indeed, can someone who has two full meals a day claim to know poverty? Perhaps, one begins to grasp the real meaning of poverty when one struggles really hard to have one miserable meal in twenty-four hours. Poverty and hunger are cousins, the former always dragging along the latter wherever he chooses to go.

If you are wearing a suit, or a complete traditional attire, and you look naturally rotund in your apparel, you cannot understand what poverty entrails. Nor can you have a true feel of poverty if you have some good shirts and pairs of trousers, never mind that all these are casual wear. Indeed, if you can change from one dress into another, and these are all you can boast of, you are not really poor. A person begins to have a true feel of what poverty means when, apart from the tattered clothes on his body, he doesn't have any other, not even calico sheet to keep away the cold at night.

Let us face it, how can anyone who has never slept outside, in the open, appreciate the full, harsh import of homelessness? Yet that is what real, naked poverty, is. He who can lay claim to a house, however humble, cannot claim to be poor. Indeed, if he can afford to rent a flat, or a room in town or city, without the landlord having cause to eject him, he cannot honestly claim to be poor. The really poor man has no roof over his head, and this is why you find him under a bridge, in a tent or simply in the vast open air.

But that is hardly all. The poor man faces the world as a hopeless underdog. In every bargain, every discussion, every event involving him and others, the poor man is constantly reminded of his failure in life. Nobody listens attentive when he makes point, nobody accepts that his opinion merits consideration. So in most cases, he learns that he has neither wisdom nor opinion.

The pauper's lot naturally rubs off on his child who is subject not only to hunger of the body but also of the mind. The pauper lacks the resources to send his child to school. And even in communities where education is free, the pauper's child still faces an uphill task because the hunger of the body impedes the nourishment of the mind.

Denied access to modern communication media, the poor child has very little opportunity to understand the concepts taught him. His mind is rocky soil on which the teacher's seeds cannot easily germinate. Thus embattled at home and then at school, the pauper's child soon has very little option but to drop out of the school.

That is still not all. Weakened by hunger, embattled by cold and exposure to the elements, feeding on poor water and poor food, the pauper is an easy target for diseases. This is precisely why the poorest countries have the shortest life expectancies while the longest

life expectancies are recorded among the richest countries. Poverty is really a disease that shortens life!

QUESTION

In six sentences, **one** for **each**, summarize the problems of the poor man.

SECTION D: OBJECTIVES

[20 Marks]

Circle the letter that corresponds to the appropriate answer.

What is the **grammatical name** of the underlined words as used in the following sentence?

1. The boy in the white sweater is my brother.
 - A. Adjectival phrase
 - B. Adverbial phrase
 - C. Noun phrase
 - D. D. None of the above

2. To forgive is divine.
 - A. Adverbial phrase
 - B. Noun phrase
 - C. Adjectival phrase
 - D. None of the above

3. The man directed us to the second floor
 - A. Noun phrase
 - B. Adverbial phrase
 - C. Adjectival phrase
 - D. None of the above

4. The lesson at the beginning of the book is easy.
 - A. Noun phrase
 - B. Adverbial phrase
 - C. Adjectival phrase

D. None of the above

*In each of the following sentences, there is a word underlined and one gap. From the list of words lettered A to D, choose the word which is **nearly opposite** in meaning to the underlined word and that can fill the gap in the sentence (5 - 8)*

5. Many Christians often forget the temporal responsibilities of their leaders.

- A. Spiritual
- B. Secular
- C. Permanent
- D. Material

6. Documentary films are more factual than ones

- A. Historical
- B. Fictional
- C. Scientific
- D. Comical

7. It is advisable to avoid apathy and embrace.

- A. Bravery
- B. Leniency
- C. Satisfaction
- D. Enthusiasm

8. The work demands communal rather than..... effort

- A. Independent
- B. Isolated
- C. Special
- D. Individual

*Choose the word or group of words that **best completes** each sentence (9 - 18)*

9. Afrifa is the _____ of the three boys

- A. Much taller
- B. More taller

- C. Most tallest
D. Tallest
10. No sooner had the bell gone _____ the students assembled.
A. When
B. Then
C. Than
D. Before
11. The farmer, as well as his sons _____ maize.
A. Grow
B. Grows
C. Were growing
D. Have been growing
12. One of my classmates _____ elected the SRC president of the university
A. Was
B. Have been
C. Were
D. Are being
13. My friend and counselor _____ gone.
A. Have
B. Is
C. Are
D. Were
14. This book belongs to John and Paul; it is _____
A. Their's
B. Theirs
C. Theirs'

D. Their

15. I'm afraid of that dog of _____

- A. You
- B. Yours'
- C. Your's
- D. Yours

16. We were all amazed at the wonderful feast,?

- A. Isn't
- B. Aren't we
- C. Weren't we
- D. Isn't he

17. I told you not to cross the road alone,?

- A. Shall I
- B. Didn't I
- C. Have I
- D. Wouldn't I

18. We do not know what the future holds for us _____?

- A. Do we
- B. Don't they
- C. Can we
- D. Isn't it

*Choose the interpretation you consider **most appropriate** for each of the sentences below.*

19. The traders are cashing in on the increased number of buyers to increase price.

This means that.

- A. The traders brought along a lot of cash
- B. The traders have more cash to import goods
- C. The traders are taking advantage of the numerous buyers
- D. The traders have become very rich

20. The wanted man reported to the police on his own accord. This means that he reported

- A. Without being forced
- B. After agreement with the police
- C. As he was advised to do
- D. Unaccompanied by the police

F11

PRIVATE UNIVERSITY 2

MATURE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION 2017/2018
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TIME: 2 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read all instructions carefully.

Be ORDERLY and NEAT in the presentation of your material.

Answer ALL questions.

SECTION A: MULTIPLE-CHOICE [20 Marks]

Circle the letter that corresponds to the most appropriate answer.

1. What is the **grammatical name** of the underlined words as used in questions 1 to 4?

The boy in the white sweater is my brother.

- E. Adjectival phrase
- F. Adverbial phrase
- G. Noun phrase
- H. None of the above

2. To forgive is divine.

- A. Adverbial phrase
- B. Noun phrase
- C. Adjectival phrase
- D. None of the above

3. The man directed us to the second floor.

- A. Noun phrase
- B. Adverbial phrase
- C. Adjectival phrase
- D. None of the above

4. The lesson at the beginning of the book is easy.

- A. Noun phrase
- B. Adverbial phrase
- C. Adjectival phrase

D. None of the above

*In each of the following sentences, there is a word underlined (and one gap). From the list of words lettered A to D, choose the word which is **nearly opposite** in meaning to the underlined word and that can fill the gap in the sentence (5 - 8)*

5. Many Christians often forget the temporal responsibilities of their leaders.

- A. spiritual
- B. secular
- C. permanent
- D. material

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- A. historical
- B. fictional
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- D. comical

7. It is advisable to avoid apathy and embrace.

- A. bravery
- B. leniency
- C. satisfaction
- D. enthusiasm

8. The work demands communal rather than..... effort.

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- B. isolated
- C. special
- D. individual

*Choose the word or group of words that **best completes** each sentence (9 - 18)*

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A. grow
B. grows
C. were growing
D. have been growing
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A. was
B. have been
C. were
D. are being
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14. This book belongs to John and Paul; it is _____
A. their's
B. theirs
C. theirs'
D. their
15. I'm afraid of that dog of _____
A. you
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16. We were all amazed at the wonderful feast. _____?
A. Isn't it
B. Aren't we
C. Weren't we
D. Isn't he
17. I told you not to cross the road alone. _____?

- A. Shall I
- B. Didn't I
- C. Have I
- D. Wouldn't I

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*Choose the interpretation you consider **most appropriate** for each of the sentences below.*

19. The traders are cashing in on the increased number of buyers to increase price. This means that the traders _____.

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- B. have more cash to import goods
- C. are taking advantage of the numerous buyers
- D. have become very rich

20. The wanted man reported to the police on his own accord. This means that he reported _____

- A. without being forced.
- B. after agreement with the police.
- C. as he was advised to do.
- D. unaccompanied by the police.

SECTION B: COMPREHENSION

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

It is unfortunate that sometimes the misconceptions of our childhood, if not corrected, can shape our subsequent actions and seal our fate. I remember clearly the case of Kofi Mensah. An uncle had taken him along to the city from our village, Bandana. Although he was already eight years old, he was not attending school because his parents had been

too poor to send him to school. But now his benevolent uncle was going to put him in school in the city. How lucky for him, we all thought.

But to our greatest surprise, three months later Kofi was back in the village! When we asked him why, he gave us chilling accounts of school. For him, the strict rules of school robbed one of the carefree liberty that village life offered and school had wicked teachers who flogged pupils mercilessly. As a result, he had not only decided to stop attending school, but also instigated a number of his classmates to do the same. Subsequently, they would pretend to leave for school each day but end up in a secret place and while away the hours until school was over. When the school authorities found out what Kofi had done, he and other truants received the flogging of their lives and were suspended for two weeks. But Kofi never went back to school.

Two years later, when my own elder brother took me with him to the same city to start school, Kofi's chilling accounts of school were all frightened fresh on my mind. That was why on the first day of school, with a pounding heart and reluctant steps, it took me an hour to drag myself to school and I arrived very late. The teacher on duty, who happened to know how close my brother's house was to the school, asked me, "When did you leave home for school?"

"One hour ago, Sir", I replied.

"And it took you a whole hour to get to school from a distance of less than half a kilometer on the first day of school?"

As the teacher motioned to me to receive my punishment for coming late, he muttered in a voice full of concern, "we have a sacred duty to mould you children into responsible adults, my young man."

"Spare the rod and you will spoil the child". That comment brought an instant understanding to me and I comported myself to receive my well-deserved punishment.

Today, as a university lecturer, I look back to those days and I remember Kofi Mensah and his misconceptions were never corrected, he had ended up a mere illiterate farmhand, too poor to send his own children to school.

Now, answer the following questions on the above passage:

- a) What misconception did Kofi Mensah have about school?
- b) How did he react to this misconception?
- c) For what **two** offences was Kofi Mensah punished in school?
- d) Why did it take the narrator a long time to get to school on the first day?
- e) What changed the narrator's previous view of school?
- f) How would you describe the narrator's attitude to Kofi Mensah's present situation?

- g) ... *who happened to know how close my brother's house was to the school...*
- (i) What grammatical name is given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
 - (ii) What is its function?
- h) For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage:
- (i) benevolent
 - (ii) chilling
 - (iii) pounding
 - (iv) motioned
 - (v) mould

SECTION C: SUMMARY [20 Marks]

Read the following passage and answer the question that follows

Poverty! Can anyone who has not really been poor know what poverty is? I really doubt it. How can anyone who enjoys three square meals a day explain what poverty means? Indeed, can someone who has two full meals a day claim to know poverty? Perhaps, one begins to grasp the real meaning of poverty when one struggles really hard to have one miserable meal in twenty-four hours. Poverty and hunger are cousins, the former always dragging along the latter wherever he chooses to go.

If you are wearing a suit, or a complete traditional attire, and you look naturally rotund in your apparel, you cannot understand what poverty entails. Nor can you have a true feel of poverty if you have some good shirts and pairs of trousers, never mind that all these are casual wear. Indeed, if you can change from one dress into another, and these are all you can boast of, you are not really poor. A person begins to have a true feel of what poverty means when, apart from the tattered clothes on his body, he doesn't have any other, not even calico sheet to keep away the cold at night.

Let us face it, how can anyone who has never slept outside, in the open, appreciate the full, harsh import of homelessness? Yet that is what real, naked poverty is. He who can lay claim to a house, however humble, cannot claim to be poor. Indeed, if he can afford to rent a flat, or a room in town or city, without the landlord having cause to eject him, he cannot honestly claim to be poor. The really poor man has no roof over his head, and this is why you find him under a bridge, in a tent or simply in the vast open air.

But that is hardly all. The poor man faces the world as a hopeless underdog. In every bargain, every discussion, every event involving him and others, the poor man is constantly reminded of his failure in life. Nobody listens attentively when he makes a

point, nobody accepts that his opinion merits consideration. So in most cases, he learns that he has neither wisdom nor opinion.

The pauper's lot naturally rubs off on his child who is subject not only to hunger of the body but also of the mind. The pauper lacks the resources to send his child to school. And even in communities where education is free, the pauper's child still faces an uphill task because the hunger of the body impedes the nourishment of the mind.

Denied access to modern communication media, the poor child has very little opportunity to understand the concepts taught him. His mind is rocky soil on which the teacher's seeds cannot easily germinate. Thus embattled at home and then at school, the pauper's child soon has very little option but to drop out of school.

That is still not all. Weakened by hunger, embattled by cold and exposure to the elements, feeding on poor water and poor food, the pauper is an easy target for diseases. This is precisely why the poorest countries have the shortest life expectancies while the longest life expectancies are recorded among the richest countries. Poverty is really a disease that shortens life!

Question: In six sentences, **one** for **each**, summarize the problems of the poor man.

SECTION D: ESSAY

Answer 2 questions. Answer Question 1 and any other question from this section.

1. Write a letter to the Director of Health Service in your municipality discussing at least three ways in which the quality of health care in your community can be improved.
2. Write a letter to your friend and present to him or her at least three reasons for choosing to attend Valley View University over other universities.
3. Write a story ending with the statement: "If I had known the truth, I would not have acted the way I did."
4. Write an article suitable for publication in a national newspaper on the need to promote a local industry in your country.
5. Describe a city you recently visited.

F12

PRIVATE UNIVERSITY 2
END OF PROGRAMME EXAMINATION, JUNE 2018
MATURE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

TIME: 3 HOURS

MARKS OBTAINABLE: 157

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer all questions

Read all instructions carefully

SECTION A: ESSAY (100 MARKS)

Answer **two** questions from this section. Question **one (1)** and any other question.

Your answer should not be below **300** words.

1. Most of the major cities in your country get flooded whenever it rains. Write a letter to the Municipal Chief Executive of your area discussing the causes of the flooding and suggest solutions. (50 marks)
2. Write an article suitable for publication in a national newspaper on the benefits of the free senior high school system in your country. (50 marks)
3. Some people are of the opinion that public universities are better than the private ones.
4. Write a letter to your friend who lives abroad explaining the importance of private universities to him/her since he/she has been pestering you over the issue. (50 marks)
5. You are the elected chairperson of the Youth Association of your community which is facing sanitation problems, especially littering. Write a speech you would deliver at your inauguration, highlighting, **at least three** causes of littering and suggest ways to control it. (50 marks)

6. Write a story to illustrate the saying: *Look before you leap*. (50 marks)

SECTION B: COMPREHENSION (20 MARKS)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

The great white shark is at the top of the marine food chain. In the shark family, it is the king. It will eat anything, even other sharks. However, as it gets older, bigger and slower, it develops a **preference** for seals, penguins and carrion, especially dead whales. In locating the food, most sharks use all their senses, including excellent vision. Their sense of smell is **incredible** and their ears are aided by pressure-sensitivity cells along each side of their bodies. Nothing escapes this eavesdropping system, which is attuned to vibration in the water. Sharks also have sixth sense, which enables them to detect the weak electrical fields emanating from the beating heart or the swimming muscles of a **potential** prey.

The white shark's most fearsome assets are its huge head, its black eyes and its razor sharp serrated teeth. The circulatory system of the white shark is different from that of most other sharks. Its blood temperature is about three to five degrees Celsius above water temperature. This speeds up digestion and adds to its strength and endurance. It is known that the white shark spits out its wounded prey after an initial powerful bite. Then it waits for the victim to die before eating it. Why does it use this bite-and-spit strategy? Experts **speculate** that this is because of its eyes. Unlike other sharks, the white shark has no eyelid-like membrane to protect its eyes. Rather, it rotates them in their sockets when a collision is **imminent**. At the moment of impact, the eye is left exposed, perhaps to the flaying claws of a seal. Therefore, for the white shark, a quick **mortal** strike and release is common behaviour.

The public image of sharks has been greatly coloured by the novel *Jaws*, which was turned into a popular movie. Overnight, the white shark becomes evil incarnate. However, it is not a demon craving for human flesh. The smell of blood does not drive it into a feeding frenzy as it does to certain other sharks. Nevertheless, it is a dangerous animal that should be treated with caution and respect.

QUESTIONS

- a) How do sharks use their sixth sense? (2 marks)
- b) In what significant way is the circulatory system of the white shark different from that of other sharks? (2 marks)
- c) What, according to the passage, is the probable reason why the white shark waits for its victim to die before eating it? (2 marks)
- d) (i) What is the writer's attitude to the white shark? (2 marks)
(ii) Quote an expression from the passage to support your answer. (1 mark)
- e) *The circulatory system of the white shark...*
(i) What grammatical name is given to this expression as used in the passage?
(1 mark)
(ii) What is its function? (2 marks)

f) *However, it is not a demon craving for human flesh.*

What figure of speech is contained in this expression? (2 marks)

- g) For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage. (6 marks)
- i) preference
 - ii) incredible
 - iii) potential
 - iv) speculate
 - v) imminent
 - vi) mortal

SECTION C: SUMMARY (12 MARKS)

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

Scientists have made spectacular advances in genetic engineering in the last fifty years. The benefits of this genetic revolution to mankind are immense and almost limitless. In the field of medicine, many of the diseases that have hitherto proved incurable can now be eradicated using genetic engineering. It is now possible to identify the specific gene responsible for any given disease and to replace the diseased gene with a healthy one. This new technology can now be used to cure such serious diseases as diabetes, sickle-

cell anaemia and cancer. Geneticists (specialists in genetic science) claim that there are several other medical benefits that can be derived from this new science. They assert that by increasing the neurons in the brain, we could slow down the ageing process.

Scientists are now on the threshold of being able to redesign the human body to make it function more efficiently. This interesting aspect of preventive medicine involves the intervention of the doctor to ensure that the foetus contains no diseased gene that can develop into a disease later on. Moreover, scientists can now build or develop organs for transplant surgery. Patients who need heart or kidney transplant no longer have to wait endlessly for donors or be worried that the donated organs would be rejected by their body's immune system. Perhaps the greatest benefits of the genetic revolution are in the areas of crop and livestock production. Cloning or the creation of a new plant or animal from the genetic information carried in one cell has already been done with plants and animals. The result is the production of grains that yield their own fertilizer or can be grown in factories without sunshine and soil. Already in the United States of America, genetically modified (GM) potatoes, tomatoes, apples etc are on sale in supermarkets.

The main difference between these GM products and their conventionally produced counterparts is that the former are usually bigger and have a longer shelf-life than the latter. Consequently, most shoppers would rather go for the GM products, all other things being equal. GM livestock are usually a good bargain. Imagine being offered a chicken the size of turkey or a sheep almost as big as a cow. If the price and the taste are comparable then the housewife would naturally prefer the GM breed, just as we now prefer the so-called "Agric" fowls to our smaller local breed.

There are, however, serious potential dangers. The greatest risk is the escape-by accident or by design of harmful microbes from the laboratory into a world that has no difference against them. Some scientists have speculated that the HIV virus may have originated from such an accidental escape. The world has not forgotten the case of Adolf Hitler who, in furtherance of his project of creating "a superior race" abused scientific knowledge and plunged the world into World War II. For this reason, many governments

have been cautious, or even reluctant to give the geneticists the necessary approval to implement the result of their researches. There is no guarantee that man can be trusted not to use this new found “power” for destructive ends.

QUESTIONS

a) In **four** sentences, **one** for **each**, summarize four benefits of genetic engineering to man. (8 marks)

b) In **two** sentences, **one** for **each**, state two dangers inherent in genetic engineering. (4 marks)

SECTION D

LEXIS AND STRUCTURE

(25 MARKS)

SECTION 1

*From the words lettered **A** to **D**, Circle the one that **best completes** each of the following sentences.*

1. Yvonne scrabble every Saturday morning.

- A. playing
- B. plays
- C. is playing
- D. play

2. Don't make so much noise. Hester to study for her examination!

- A. try
- B. tries
- C. tried
- D. is trying

3. Sheila coming to class throughout the term.

- A. has been

B. has

C. have been

D. have

4. Sorry, Sandra can't answer the call. She an examination.

A. has been writing

B. has written

C. is writing

D. writes

5. Have you the green book since you came?

A. being reading

B. been reading

C. are reading

D. reads

6. It at Oduom last night.

A. rains

B. rained

C. raining

D. has been raining

7. How many students in your class in Accra before?

A. has lived

B. have lived

C. is living

D. are living

8. Babies when they are hungry.

A. cries

B. cried

- C. are crying
- D. cry

9. Clement: "What in the evenings?"

Gloria: "Usually, I watch TV or read a book."

- A. you doing
- B. you do
- C. are you doing
- D. do you do

10. Joseph: "What?"

Paul: "I'm trying to fix my calculator."

- A. you doing
- B. you do
- C. are you doing
- D. do you do

11. Comfort her blue jeans today, but usually, she a skirt or a dress.

- A. is wearing / wears
- B. wears / wearing
- C. has wearing / wears
- D. have wearing / wears

12. Sorry, you can't borrow my calculator. I it.

- A. was using
- B. using
- C. are using
- D. am using

13. In the classroom:

Vicentia: "Why haven't you been coming to class?"

Rebecca: "..... travelling since the beginning of the term"

- A. I'm
- B. I'm being
- C. I've
- D. I've been

14. At what time

- A. the bus leaves?
- B. leaves the bus?
- C. is the bus leaves?
- D. does the bus leave?

15. Gladys: "Is Paul the prefect?"

Mamuna: "

- A. No, she isn't
- B. Yes, he isn't
- C. Yes, he is
- D. No, he is

REGISTER

*In the following passage the **numbered gaps** indicate **missing words**. Against each number in the list below the passage, **four choices** are offered in columns lettered **A** to **D**. For each gap, underline from the options provided for that number, the word that is **most suitable** to fill the gap.*

When you watch the evening news, do you ever think about how **-16-** from all over the country are gathered and then **-17-** on the screen to you? Follow me on a journey through the TV news. First, a **-18-** happens. Second, the network dispatches a **-19-** and a camera crew from that region to cover the story. At the scene, they ask questions and **-20-** the event. When they return, the story is fed by satellite into the network's headquarters in

Accra. There, **-21-** examine the report and the film, deciding on which parts to keep and which to throw away. Once these decisions are made, **-22-** outline all of the news stories for the day, figuring out the exact minutes and seconds, just how much **-23-** each story will get on air. Finally, it is time: the newscasters are ready. The **-24-** are seated in front of the cameras. The videotape machines are cued. Lights, cameras, action, “Good evening, **-25-**. This is the six o’clock news.”

A B C D

16. stories/ poems/ accidents/ problems
17. packed/ pounded/ presented/ positioned
18. event/ story/ problem/ happiness
19. operator/ presenter/ reporter/ editor
20. computer/ solar/ request/ film
21. editors/ programmers/ readers/ presenters
22. officers/ producers/ publishers/ executives
23. money/ strength/ time/ space
24. news programmers/ news reporters/ news signs/ anchor persons
25. Ghana/ America/ Africa/ Nigeria

F13

COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY 1
MATURE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION, 2016
ENGLISH LANGUAGE (CORE)

NAME:.....

REGISTERED NO:.....CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE:.....

STUDY CENTRE.....TIME ALLOWED: 2 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS: ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN SECTION A & ONE EACH IN SECTION B & C

SECTION 1

In each of the following sentences, there is a word underlined and one gap. From the list of words lettered A to D, choose the word that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the underlined word and that will, at the same time, correctly fill the gap in the sentence.

1. The Philistines fought bravely because of their pessimism.
 - A. Depression
 - B. Dynamism
 - C. Timidity
 - D. Optimism
2. When Esi was promoted, she rose from the bottom to theof her career.
 - A. Apex
 - B. Level
 - C. Median
 - D. Length
3. This story is exciting but there are some.....Parts.
 - A. Big
 - B. Lengthy
 - C. Torn

- D. Boring
4. The turmoil of the country side contrasts sharply with thein the city.
- A. Dense
B. Turmoil
C. Traffic
D. Laxity
5. William Shakespeare was a prolific writer in the eighteenth century.
- A. Profound
B. Sterile
C. Redundant
D. Independent
6. The woman spoke to us in impeccable English, while her husband's language was.....
- A. Excited
B. Cheeky
C. Faulty
D. Complete
7. Meticulous students usually do better in examinations that.....ones.
- A. Dull
B. Careless
C. Intelligent
D. Stupid

From the list of words lettered A to D, choose the one that best completes each of the following sentences.

8. Crude oil is first.....before we get petrol.
- A. Sieved
B. Refined
C. Strained
D. Drained

9. Serious cases of indiscipline in schools often need.....measures to check them.
- A. Drastic
 - B. Full
 - C. Wicked
 - D. Dreadful
10. Theof a word is best determined by its use in a sentence or a group of words.
- A. Duty
 - B. Worth
 - C. Function
 - D. Performance
11. The students should be careful because the tutors can'tAny longer with his rudeness.
- A. Put off
 - B. Put up
 - C. Put by
 - D. Put on
12. The provost of our College was given a standing.....after his speech
- A. Reception
 - B. Position
 - C. Ovation
 - D. Order

*After each of the following sentences, a list of possible interpretation of the sentences is given. Choose the interpretation that you consider **appropriate** for each sentence.*

13. Who will give an offer? This car is going for a song. This means the car
- A. Has a song in it
 - B. Has a radio cassette in it

- C. Uses a musical engine
 - D. Is being sold very cheaply
14. Joe has been insulting Esi for a long time; it is now time Esi squared up with him.
This means Esi should
- A. Ignore him completely
 - B. Turn her back on him
 - C. Insult him back
 - D. Square her shoulders at him
15. Our leader's response clearly begged the question. This means that our leader.....
- A. Did not answer correctly
 - B. Evaded the question
 - C. Asked for explanation
 - D. Did not understand the question
16. Emil swept the board during the 46th Congregation. This means Emil.....
- A. Gave a speech
 - B. Won nearly all the prizes
 - C. Was very serious
 - D. Was not present
17. Azumah won the fight hands down. This means he won.....
- A. After a very tough fight
 - B. Without using his hands
 - C. Very easily
 - D. Only shamefully
18. In academic work, awareness of what is relevant to be done is essential
- A. Worthless
 - B. Lively
 - C. Vital
 - D. Useless
19. Atesinate suppresses malaria though it may not cure it.
- A. Removes

- B. Subdues
 - C. Promotes
 - D. Aggravates
20. Soccer matches often generate hatred and bitterness among supporters.
- A. Ruin
 - B. Destruction
 - C. Disturbance
 - D. Animosity

SECTION B
ESSAY (40 marks)

*Answer one question **only** from this section*

All questions carry equal marks. Your answer should not be less than 300 words

1. Write an article suitable for publication in a national newspaper in the menace of secret cults in our schools and colleges.
2. Write a letter to the Headmaster of your school or college discussing the positive impact of the computer on education.
3. You are the main speaker in a debate on the topic: Learning about the past has no value to those of us living today. Write your argument for or against the motion.

SECTION C
COMPREHENSION (30 marks)

You are advised to spend about **30 minutes** on this section

4. Read the following passage **carefully** and answer the questions on it.

Mr S. A. Nyarko stood under the huge canopy he had set up for the guests in front of his newly completed bungalow, feeling on top of the world. There it was, a three-bedroom structure, glittering in the bright African sun. After thirty years in public service, he was quitting the “Tenants club”. One after another, the guests started to arrive, greeting Nyarko and his wife with an embrace or a handshake as was appropriate. Before long, the chairs arranged under the huge canopy were fully occupied.

Soon, it was time for the programme to start. The Master of Ceremony clutched the microphone and announced that he was setting the ball rolling. After singing a few chorus of praise, he called on a man earlier designated for the role to offer the opening prayer. After that, he invited a man dressed in a three-piece suit, to chair the occasion. Some others were similarly ushered to the high table.

After the chairman’s opening speech, in which he congratulated Mr S. A. Nyarko and wished him on his moving into the house, the celebrants’ dance followed. Nyarko was all smiles as he led his wife to the open floor and danced to the acclamation of all. The musicians now went into frenzy, drumming and sinning. Everybody was free to dance and the floor was soon crowded. Amidst the deafening drumming, the bandleader eulogized Nyarko.

Even as this was progressing, food and drinks were served. There was almost no end to what was available. Some asked for second, and in a few cases, a third helping of both food and drinks. This continued till late evening. Eventually some, who were slaves to liquor, lost their senses. By now, most guests had started to leave. Finally, the programme wound to a close. Only a few guests remained, mainly those who were so steeped in liquor that they could not see clearly. Some had in fact fallen asleep in their chairs.

At the stage, an official of Newstar Support Bank, who had watched the entire celebration in disbelief, called Nyarko aside. Whispering into his ears, he said, “Congratulations once again, however, the more I should remind you that repayment of your loan should begin

immediately. Remember, the more earnestly you address yourself to the settlement of the loan, the more you'll debar us from calling on the auctioneers." Nyarko was jolted into reality.

- a) What was the purpose of the gathering?
- b) How did the audience respond to the celebrants' dance?
- c) What evidence is there that Nyarko had taken the trouble to care for his guests?
- d) (i) What is the anti-climax in the passage?
(ii) Why is this anti-climax?
- e) What is the attitude of the bank official to celebrations?
- f) ...who were slaves to liquor...
 - (i) What figure of speech is used in this expression?
 - (ii) What does it mean?
- g) ...earlier designated for the role
 - (i) What is the grammatical name given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
 - (ii) What is its function?
- h) For **each** of the following words, find another word or phrase which **means the same** and which can replace it as it is used in the passage:
 - (i) Appropriate;
 - (ii) Clutched;
 - (iii) Helping;
 - (iv) Steeped;
 - (v) Earnestly.

F14

COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY 1
MATURE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION, 2017
EDUCATION AND BUSINESS PROGRAMME
ENGLISH LANGUAGE (CORE)
EXAM CODE: 01

NAME:.....

REGISTERED NO:.....**CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE:**.....

STUDY CENTRE:.....**TIME ALLOWED: 2 HOURS**

Instructions:

1. Answer ALL Questions in Section 'A' and Section 'C' in the answer booklet.
 2. Answer **one (1)** Question in Section 'B', in the answer booklet provided with each question starting on a fresh page.
 3. Do not do any rough work on the question paper.
-

SECTION A [Answer ALL Questions in this Section] (20 MARKS)

SECTION 1

In each of the following sentences, there is a word underlined and one gap. From the list of words lettered A to D, chose the word that is nearest in meaning to the underlined word or expression.

1. Ama is worse than slender, she is.....
 - A. fat
 - B. emaciated
 - C. sleek
 - D. degrading
2. Over-indulgent parents describe their headstrong children as.....
 - A. insincere
 - B. solvent
 - C. sympathetic
 - D. compassionate
3. Nana has been so inactive these days that she has become.....
 - A. inept
 - B. languished
 - C. alert
 - D. sluggish

4. Joe's parents pleaded that their son only made a careless mistake; but the Headmaster insisted that it was a serious.....
 - A. blunder
 - B. faulting
 - C. decree
 - D. regulation
5. When you love an annoyingly pig-headed person very much, you may say he is merely.....
 - A. annoying
 - B. irritating
 - C. gallant
 - D. obstinate

SECTION II

In each of the following sentences, a word has been underlined. From the list of words lettered A to E, choose the one word that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the underlined word and which at the same time, fits into the context of the sentence.

6. Sister Felicia would give anything for the serenity of the Convent.
 - A. depression
 - B. solemnity
 - C. turmoil
 - D. wilderness
7. Pip groaned that he could feel his valour oozing away.
 - A. spirits
 - B. cowardice
 - C. blood
 - D. bravery
8. The artist gave his lady very delicate features.
 - A. sickly
 - B. fine
 - C. robust
 - D. remarkable
9. When he realized that he had lost his fortune, he turned malevolent.
 - A. ambivalent
 - B. insolent
 - C. obsolete
 - D. benevolent
10. Although Musa is a member of the royal family, he is very uncouth.
 - A. youthful
 - B. impoverished
 - C. refined
 - D. ill-mannered

SECTION B – ESSAY (40 marks)

Answer one question only from this section. Your answer should be about 300 words.

1. Write a letter to a pen friend of yours who has not written to you before, telling him/her at least **three (3)** problems facing your country, and suggesting solution to them.
2. Describe a typical traditional marriage ceremony you witnessed recently and state **two (2)** things you admired about it.
3. Write a story beginning with: “At first I thought it was a joke but.....”
4. Give an account of an excursion you made with your course-mates to a place of interest in your country. Describe what you saw and what you gained.

SECTION C – COMPREHENSION (40 MARKS)

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

PASSAGE

Once upon a time there was a group of workers who lived together. Nimo, their leader was literate, but unreliable. The other workers were honest, but ignorant.

One day Nimo called a meeting and suggested that the others should join him in a new business enterprise. They agreed. They sold their cattle, sheep and goats to raise the money, while Nimo went in search of a suitable plot of land. Within a month they had bought a plot. It was no accident that Nimo assumed all the main responsibilities; he was the treasurer, secretary, chairman, and everything else you can think of. It was Nimo who purchased the plot with the money the others had raised, and he registered it exclusively in his name; Mr. John Kojo Nimo, Plot No. 10, Oguaa.

As soon as he had so public-spiritedly performed these tasks, Nimo called his colleagues and said, ‘Now, my friends, we have the plot of land and the license containing all our names. Let us now make bricks and carry them to the site of our new premises.’ The others enthusiastically agreed. Within six months, the business premises were completed. Without informing the others, Nimo began to embark on a number of lucrative business ventures, buying this, and selling that, until he became quite wealthy. Within a surprisingly short time, he constructed extension to his premises, and took on additional employees.

One day, Bashiru, a shareholder, approached Nimo for some financial assistance: his wife was sick, and he wanted to take her to hospital. He tried to reason with Nimo, who ordered him to leave the premises immediately.

Filled with a mixture of rage, frustration and embarrassment, Bashiru went to inform the other shareholders about what had happened. They were all amazed, and decided at once to send a deputation to see Nimo.

They found him sitting in his office. The spokesman, Owusu, demanded an explanation. 'You are wasting your time,' Nimo said bluntly. These premises are mine, and I can prove it. In fact, I advise you to leave at once, as you are trespassing.

The people were stunned. Owusu could not stomach this barefaced treachery. In an instant, he had knocked Nimo sprawling to the ground. Some of Nimo's employees rushed in to assist him, and the workers were finally ejected from the premises.

The people were arrested by the police, and taken to court. In the proceedings that followed, Nimo stated his case, and produced documentary evidence to prove his claim to the land and premises. It was an open-and-shut case. The people were sentenced to seven years imprisonment and thirty strokes of cane.

Back in the village, the local chief called a meeting. He addressed the meeting as follows:

'As the law says, ignorance is no defence'. Owusu and his friends could not be acquitted on the grounds of ignorance, Nimo exploited their ignorance, cheated them on their rightful dues, and even had them put in jail. Even today, I am sorry to say that there are still Nimos among us who seek to exploit us. Do you want this to happen again?'

'No! They replied, with one voice'.

'Then we must all learn, Education is the key to justice and progress.'

QUESTIONS

- 1) Who was the leader of the group?
- 2) How did the people raise money to start the business?
- 3) What necessitated Bashiru's demand for financial assistance?
- 4) How would you describe Bashiru's mood when he was denied assistance?
- 5) In **one (1)** sentence, describe the character of Nimo.
- 6) Why were some of the workers jailed?
- 7) Was the chief happy with what Nimo did? Give reasons for your answers.
- 8) What does the chief mean by, ... 'there are still Nimos among us...'?
- 9) What is the grammatical name for the underlined words

- i. Suitable plot of land
 - ii. Others enthusiastically agreed
 - iii. The workers were ejected from the premises.
- 10) Explain each of the following words with words which are the same or nearest in meaning.
- i. Enthusiastically
 - ii. Shareholder
 - iii. Lucrative
 - iv. Deputation
 - v. Stunned
 - vi. Documentary evidence
- 11) Give the opposite of the following words as they are used in the passage:
- i. Rage.
 - ii. ignorant
 - iii. purchase
 - iv. literate

SECTION III

From the list of words lettered A to D, choose the one that best completes each of the following sentences.

- 12) You should not have taken.....by appearance
- A. out
 - B. in
 - C. on
 - D. for
- 13) Realizing that further resistance was useless, the gunman turned himself.....to the police.
- A. up
 - B. down
 - C. in
 - D. on
- 14) Although his first book was turned....., Safiatu was not discouraged.
- A. of
 - B. aside
 - C. down
 - D. in
- 15) 'I reckon it will go.....for ours yet,' he said.
- A. of
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- C. over
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- 16) They hurried away, leaving the messenger to clear.....the mess.
- A. off
 - B. up
 - C. down
 - D. over
- 17) No one should be expected to work for such asalary.
- A. frugal
 - B. meagre
 - C. minimal
 - D. basic

SECTION IV

After each of the following sentences a list of possible interpretations of the sentence is given. Choose the interpretation that you consider most appropriate for each sentence.

- 18) The new TV daddy bought a month ago is nothing but a Dead Sea fruit. This means that.....
- A. The TV was bought near the beach
 - B. The TV has been drowned in the sea
 - C. Daddy bought the TV together with some fruits
 - D. The TV appears valuable but it was not.
- 19) Most politicians in Africa are fond of blowing their own trumpet. This meant that politicians.....
- A. Can be good trumpeters
 - B. Like to boast of their achievements
 - C. Can be good musicians
 - D. Support most musicians to be trained.
- 20) The Mensah's treat their arrogant maidservant as an Aunt Sally. This means that.....
- A. They respect the maidservant
 - B. They call their maidservant Aunt Sally
 - C. They subjected the maidservant to abuse the mockery

- D. The real name of the maidservant is Aunt Sally
- 21) The construction company in charge of the Church project was asked to go back to the drawing board. This means that.....
- A. They should start again on the project
 - B. They should draw the project on the board
 - C. Use the drawing board often
 - D. They should try a different approach to do their work.

F15

COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY 1
COLLEGE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
MATURE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION, 2018

NAME:.....

REGISTERED NO:.....**CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE:**.....

STUDY CENTRE.....**TIME ALLOWED: 2 HOURS**

Instructions:

1. Answer ALL Questions in Section 'A' and Section 'C' in the answer booklet.
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SECTION A [Answer ALL Questions in this Section] (20 MARKS)

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 - D. The real name of the maidservant is Aunt Sally

21) The construction company in charge of the Church project was asked to go back to the drawing board. This means that.....

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- B. They should draw the project on the board
- C. Use the drawing board often
- D. They should try a different approach to do their work.

F16

COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY 2
MATURE STUDENTS ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS, APRIL, 2016
[ENGLISH LANGUAGE]

TIME: 2 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer all questions in each section by shading the correct answer on the shading sheet provided.

SECTION A:

From the alternatives A-D, choose the one that most appropriately completes the sentence.

1. He was posted to the police.....to deal with administrative issues.
 - a. headquarters
 - b. headquarter
 - c. headquarters'
 - d. headquarter's
2. Theon Peter's skin may be as a result of chicken pox.
 - a. rush
 - b. rushes
 - c. rash
 - d. rashes
3. There.....two alligators at the edge of the swamp this morning.
 - a. was
 - b. were
 - c. is
 - d. have been
4. News of events in foreign countries.....this country in minutes.
 - a. reaching
 - b. reach
 - c. reached
 - d. reaches
5. Ask them.....car was run over by the armour car.
 - a. whose
 - b. whom
 - c. who
 - d. whoever
6. Mrs. Abafum teaches in the Akropong School for the
 - a. dead
 - b. deaf
 - c. death

- d. deafs
7. This is a special program for.....
- a. Marriage couples
 - b. Married couple
 - c. Married couples
 - d. Marry couples
8. I went home.....my mother was not there.
- a. also
 - b. so
 - c. accordingly
 - d. but
9.the policemen left the cell, the inmates started smoking again.
- a. As soon as
 - b. No sooner had
 - c. Soon
 - d. Pretty soon
10. I agreed to his marriage proposal.....he was not very attractive.
- a. but
 - b. hence
 - c. although,
 - d. when

From the alternatives lettered A-D, choose the one that is opposite in meaning to the underlined words.

11. The brash voices of the drunkards made it impossible to sleep.
- a. loud
 - b. muted
 - c. hasty
 - d. quite
12. His contribution consolidated their victory over the enemies.
- a. strengthened
 - b. blessed
 - c. weakened
 - d. awakened
13. The president felt refreshed by the time the convoy got to the apex of the mountain.
- a. excited
 - b. recharged
 - c. happy
 - d. exhausted
14. Kevin was in a fantastic mood when he met the panellists.
- a. good

- b. awful
 - c. unbelievable
 - d. bizarre
15. After gulping down mouthfuls of fresh air, we all felt giddy on our feet.
- a. frustrated
 - b. busted
 - c. steady
 - d. shaky

From the alternatives lettered A-D, choose the one that best explains the statement.

16. Last weekend's win was a feather in the cap of Accra Hearts of Oak. This means
- a. Accra Hearts of Oak has a feather in their cap
 - b. Accra Hearts of Oak won a big honour
 - c. Accra Hearts of Oak failed to score
 - d. Accra Hearts of Oak has a poultry farm
17. Albert could not put up with his younger brother's uncouth behavior. This means
- a. Albert could not house his brother
 - b. Albert travelled and left his brother
 - c. Albert could not tolerate his brother
 - d. Albert loves his brother.
18. Victor is so naughty; he is fond of pulling people's legs. This means
- a. Victor is a tease
 - b. Victor is friendly
 - c. Victor is dangerous
 - d. Victor likes fighting
19. It is very dangerous to turn a deaf ear to the truth. This means it is dangerous
- a. to be deaf
 - b. not to listen to the truth
 - c. to keep quiet
 - d. to live among the deaf
20. When you hold your tongue, you save yourself a lot of troubles. This means
- a. When you put your hand in your mouth
 - b. When you hang your tongue out
 - c. When you keep quite
 - d. When you go to bed

From the alternatives lettered A –D, choose the one that is most nearest in meaning to the underlined words.

21. The journey through the mountains proved more hazardous than we anticipated.
- a. firm

- b. safe
 - c. risky
 - d. waste
22. The tension between those two is too palpable to go unnoticed.
- a. nice
 - b. attractive
 - c. hidden
 - d. obvious
23. That Professor is an accomplished economist.
- a. a skilled
 - b. an uncommon
 - c. an infamous
 - d. a famous
24. When his appointment was terminated, Owusu's threats were not taken seriously.
- a. appoint
 - b. intimidations
 - c. redeployed
 - d. enterprising
25. Women must respect the decency of womanhood.
- a. flaunt
 - b. cherish
 - c. expensive
 - d. relish

F17

COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY 2
MATURE STUDENTS ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS, APRIL, 2017
[ENGLISH LANGUAGE]

TIME: 2 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer all questions in each section by shading the correct answer on the shading sheet provided.

SECTION A

Read the passage below carefully and answer the questions based on it.

A candidate in an examination hall is a close cousin of the boxer in a ring. Both are fighting for a prize, or at least, for some commendation. Their goal is to win and each victory should pave the way for promotion up the ladder. The examination candidate is not a very normal person for the simple reason that he is under severe pressure. Although he is alert and his pulse is fast, he is liable to commit numerous elementary errors without knowing it. Thus, he may repeat or even omit a word in a sentence without notice. He could miss the spelling of a word or interchange the positions of two words in the same structure. If he reads over, which he hardly ever does, he may see what was originally in his brain rather than what is on the paper. As a result, most errors escape him.

More alert than ordinary times too, his brain can play funny tricks on him in the examination hall. For instance, while struggling with a question, he may suddenly remember a joke or a long forgotten obscure incident. Again, right in the examination hall, **whilst his pen is dancing on the paper**, a beautiful tune or a favourite song could come to mind as if his mind is saying: "My Paddy, forget this task and enjoy some music." Often times, a point that needs to be remembered would never come until long after the paper had ended. All attempts to recall it may prove unsuccessful. Yes, facts could remain evasive and only resurface after the paper. The candidate in an oral examination is the worse victim. His problems are heightened by the fact that his fate depends entirely on the examiner's assessment of his appearance rather than what he would say. The facial expression of the examiner could be demotivating and intimidating and that could lead to errors not only in pronunciation but in the presentation of facts as well.

Yet, an examination candidate need to be frightened. He needs all the calmness he can to muster courage and take the examination, be it oral or written. He should sleep soundly before the examination; trusting that all the preparations he had made earlier will not fail him at the hour of need. The fact is one forgets more when one is tired, especially, when one panics unnecessarily.

1. According to the passage, why is a candidate in the examination hall likened to a boxer in the ring?
 - a. Both are serious people in the examination hall.
 - b. Both are fighting for a prize, or at least, for some commendation.
 - c. Both have paved their way for promotion up the ladder.
 - d. Both are Nobel Prize winners.
2. The examination candidates is not a very normal person because.....
 - a. He is under severe pressure
 - b. He is alert and his pulse is fast
 - c. He is not liable to commit elementary errors
 - d. He is unlikely to miss the spelling of a word
3. Give a synonym of the word “originally” as used in the passage.
 - a. permanently
 - b. ordinarily
 - c. initially
 - d. latter
4. What figure of speech issued in the expression below as shown in the passage?
‘whilst his pen is dancing on the paper’
 - a. simile
 - b. metaphor
 - c. personification
 - d. synecdoche
5. Give an antonym of the word “demotivating” as used in the passage.
 - a. encouraging
 - b. dissuading
 - c. demoralizing

d. discouraging

From the words lettered A to D, choose the word or group of words that best completes each of the following sentences.

6. Crude oil is first.....before we get petrol.
 - a. sieved
 - b. drained
 - c. refined
 - d. strained
7. Even though most Christians would prefer the gospel tunes, a lot more of them would dance to themusic as well.
 - a. foreign
 - b. secular
 - c. circular
 - d. local
8. Joseph had constantly.....the truth in Adelaide's explanation.
 - a. afforded
 - b. arranged
 - c. affirmed
 - d. told
9. A little humour isin every sermon or speech.
 - a. idle
 - b. ideal
 - c. slight
 - d. drastic
10. Be careful, Peter, I can't.....with your rude manners anymore.
 - a. put off
 - b. put on
 - c. put by
 - d. put up
11. The felling of trees and the indiscriminate burning of the forest contributes to environmental.....
 - a. discrimination
 - b. degradation
 - c. sanitation
 - d. digression
12. There has been some.....in the media that the price of petrol products is likely to go up.
 - a. theories
 - b. visions
 - c. speculations
 - d. desires

13. The chief of my village had.....for more than fifty years before independence.
- reigned
 - reined
 - ruined
 - rained
14. Theof the waiter was that we eat fried rice and chicken but since that was very expensive, we were.....with the fried plantain and beans stew.
- recommendation: content
 - suggestion; hungry
 - interdiction; happy
 - relish; okay
15. The police had assured all the teaming fans that they had put in place.....measures to check.....at the Accra Sports Stadium.
- spectators; disturbances
 - possible; alarming
 - stringent; hooliganism
 - hooliganism; rioting
16. The examiners promised that the examinations were going to be very easy.....?
- Isn't it
 - Wasn't they
 - Hadn't she
 - Didn't they
17. The students came on.....knees to apologize to the teachers.
- bended
 - crooked
 - broken
 - disguised
18.entered the classroom when the students began to murmur to one another.
- Hardly the new teacher had
 - The new teacher hardly had
 - Hardly had the new teacher
 - The hardly new teacher

From the words lettered A to D below each of the following sentences, choose the word or group of words that is nearest in meaning to the underlined word or phrase as it is used in the sentence.

19. Workers in the organisation received paltry salaries.
- fantastic
 - different

- c. appropriate
 - d. low
20. I strongly believe that the economic intervention programmes can gain ground in this village.
- a. compensate
 - b. empower
 - c. make progress
 - d. compound
21. It is paramount that as citizens, we endeavor to participate in nation building.
- a. important
 - b. chief
 - c. optional
 - d. considerable
22. We should try at all times to allow our reason to prevail upon our emotions.
- a. defeat
 - b. dampen
 - c. overcome
 - d. rattle

In the following sentences, there is one word underlined and one gap. From the list lettered A to D, choose the one word that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the underlined and that will, at the same time, correctly fill the gap in the sentence.

23. The importation of potato is prohibited while that of rice is
- a. licensed
 - b. inhibited
 - c. approved
 - d. suspended
24. All the teachers approved of Emmanuel's behavior but.....that of Juliet.
- a. disagreed
 - b. exposed
 - c. respected
 - d. condemned
25. We thought we had completed the project but the investigations revealed that the work had just.....
- a. continued
 - b. commenced
 - c. finished
 - d. changed

F18

COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY 2

2018/2019 ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

INSTRUCTION: ATTEMPT ALL QUESTIONS

TIME: 2 HOURS

ALL QUESTIONS CARRY EQUAL MARKS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Read the passage below carefully and answer the questions based on it.

Three weeks before the fateful examinations began I was reckless enough to fight the College Principal's son. He was a fellow final year student with whom, up till then, I had had no quarrel at all. He was stout and inclined to be a little overbearing at times; but then a flint needs contact with another flint in order to spark fire. Knowing this, I had been forced to develop from the start an easy-going and tolerant disposition just to accommodate him. However, I am most certain that as the examinations drew nearer and nearer our nerves became tauter, and our tempers shorter. Everything made us extremely impatient as we became easily emotional.

One day, during a discussion on our future careers, Owusu declared unnecessarily loudly that, he believed all persons from the North should return to live and work there and not disturb others in the South by sharing the few social amenities with us. With such an unguarded statement from him, I suddenly found my anger rising like mercury as I devoured him with my piercing look. I asked him why that statement in as calm a voice as I could assume I should. But he replied with a sneer by quoting a Sagrosan proverb whose meaning was roughly that, 'even a man who does not know where he is going ought to at least, know where he had come from'. The general laughter that greeted this proverb was deafening and the humiliation unthinkable as it brought my temper to a boiling point.

I was tall and well-built, but so was he. Three strides took me to his side and one hefty blow floored him. By the time the people around succeeded in separating us, Sagrosan blood had splashed on the white washed classroom wall and snaking its way down in earnest. As was the custom with us, the fight was as much verbal as physical, and a torrent of abuse directed mainly against the other's antecedent was flowing freely out of

each other's battered mouth. We were bloody, sweaty, and dusty when it was all over but only halfway through our respective stock of abuse. The marks we had succeeded in leaving on each other's face and neck were too distinctive to be hidden by any sort of artifice or plastic surgery. The summons to the principal's office duly came after lunch that same day and the **thrashing** that followed gave each one of us moments of deep mortification that drove home the utter futility and wastefulness of making issues of tribal divisions and sentiments in a land where so much else required our attention and energies.

1. Which of these is not bodily evidence that the fight between the two students was brutal?
 - a. sweaty, bloody and dusty bodies
 - b. distinctive marks on the necks
 - c. high stock of abusive language unused
 - d. battered mouths
 - e. marks on faces that cannot be hidden
2. What was the ultimate cause of the fight?
 - a. all persons from the north should use amenities from the south wisely
 - b. all persons from both north and south have Sagrosan blood
 - c. all persons from the south must live and work in the north
 - d. all persons from the north must live and work in the north
 - e. all persons must share amenities only in the south.
3. Which of the characters in the story was tall and well-built?
 - a. Owusu
 - b. Owusu and the narrator
 - c. the narrator
 - d. none of them
 - e. the persona
4. Give a synonym of the word "deafening" as used in the passage.
 - a. are sounding
 - b. calming
 - c. noiseless
 - d. resonating
 - e. inaudible
5. What figure of speech is used in the expression below as shown in the passage?
.....' blood had splashed on the white-washed classroom.....'
 - a. Simile
 - b. metaphor
 - c. personification

- d. pun
 - e. onomatopoeia
6. What is the meaning of the expression below as used in the passage? '.....the fight was as much verbal as physical.....'
- a. There were exchange of blows as well as insults
 - b. There were insults directed at each other's antecedent
 - c. There were hefty blows mingled with Sagrosan blood
 - d. There were physical blows but not insults
 - e. None of the above.

From the list of words lettered A to E, select the word or words which will appropriately fill the blank space in each sentence.

7. The results of the opinion.....did not represent the outcome of the 2016 elections.
- a. pole
 - b. poll
 - c. pool
 - d. pull
 - e. poles
8. Ebony.....to the occasion when she was asked to propose the toast.
- a. raised
 - b. rise
 - c. rised
 - d. raise
 - e. rose
9. Evelyn refused to marry John because he was.....into the Nsawam Prisons.
- a. incorporated
 - b. casted
 - c. incarcerated
 - d. improvident
 - e. conferred
10. My children admired theelephants
- a. two fat Indian
 - b. fat two Indian
 - c. Indian two fat
 - d. two Indian fat
 - e. Indian fat two
11. He had thought that his wife would be angry,.....?
- a. did he
 - b. hadn't he

- c. wouldn't he
 - d. didn't he
 - e. hasn't he
12. The match was virtually a..... for the home team as the visitors offered little or no resistance.
- a. walk through
 - b. walk up
 - c. walk on
 - d. walk away
 - e. walk-over

From the words lettered A to E below each of the following sentences, choose the word or group of words that is nearest in meaning to the underlined word or phrase as it is used in the sentence.

13. Research shows that Daraprim suppresses malaria however is very expensive
- a. removes
 - b. promotes
 - c. subdues
 - d. aggravates
 - e. stimulates
14. Mary contends that her story is analogous to that of the farmers'.
- a. similar
 - b. analytical
 - c. strange
 - d. dissimilar
 - e. disparate
15. Martha is a pleasant lady, she simply exudes good nature
- a. builds
 - b. reeks
 - c. issues
 - d. emits
 - e. takes in
16. The Ministers have been criticized for their ostentations lifestyles.
- a. exclusive
 - b. triumphant
 - c. lordly
 - d. flamboyant
 - e. extravagant
17. I don't believe that her husband is as indigent as she wants all of us to believe
- a. stem

- b. hostile
- c. prudent
- d. affluent
- e. impoverished

In the following sentences, there is one word underlined and one gap. From the list lettered A to E choose the one word that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the word underlined and that will, at the same time, correctly fill the gap in the sentence.

18. They made several nasty comments about the leader but I find him.....
- a. arrogant
 - b. prudent
 - c. annoying
 - d. pleasant
 - e. horrid
19. The motorist claimed that splashing the water on the pedestrian was accidental but not.....
- a. avoidable
 - b. incidental
 - c. deliberate
 - d. unnecessary
 - e. unintentional
20. If you do not drive carefully you may be charged for.....
- a. drunkenness
 - b. recklessness
 - c. over speeding
 - d. ignorance
 - e. cautiously

Read the following questions carefully and choose the correct answer to each of them from the options lettered A to E.

21. The sequence of events in a play or prose is called.....
- a. plot
 - b. theme
 - c. resolution
 - d. setting
 - e. climax
22. A story in which animals talk and behave like human beings is called.....
- a. personification

- b. satire
- c. parody
- d. tragedy
- e. fable

23. When someone writes about his/her own life, the piece of work is called a/an.....

- a. biography
- b. autobiography
- c. satire
- d. eulogy
- e. parody

Read the extract below and answer questions 24 – 25 which are based on it.

A woman is like the sea
She alone knows her depths
The varied lives thriving within the debris and toxins she loathes to harbor
But which are safe as long as she is the only custodian.

24. From the poem, a woman could well be described as.....

- a. innocent
- b. chaotic
- c. complex
- d. wasteful
- e. erudite

25. The Line 1 of the poem above is a literary device known as a/an.....

- a. euphemism
- b. metaphor
- c. metaphor
- d. simile
- e. allusion

Appendix G – WASSCE Chief Examiner’s Report for 2016, 2017 and 2018

CORRECT RESPONSES TO OBJECTIVE TEST:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1

<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>RESPONSE</i>	<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>RESPONSE</i>	<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>RESPONSE</i>	<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>RESPONSE</i>
1	A	21	C	41	B	61	C
2	B	22	A	42	D	62	A
3	C	23	B	43	A	63	C
4	C	24	A	44	D	64	C
5	B	25	D	45	A	65	B
6	D	26	C	46	D	66	D
7	C	27	A	47	A	67	B
8	A	28	C	48	B	68	C
9	C	29	A	49	C	69	A
10	C	30	A	50	C	70	D
11	B	31	D	51	C	71	C
12	A	32	D	52	B	72	D
13	C	33	B	53	D	73	A
14	B	34	A	54	C	74	B
15	A	35	C	55	D	75	D
16	D	36	B	56	A	76	A
17	A	37	C	57	A	77	A
18	D	38	D	58	C	78	C
19	C	39	C	59	B	79	D
20	C	40	D	60	B	80	B

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT FOR

ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

The standard of the paper compares favorably with that of previous years. The paper conformed to the requirements of the WASSCE syllabus. The essay topics were indeed topical and fell within the scope of the candidates. The comprehension and summary passages were related to the general circumstances of the candidates. There was clarity in all the questions.

2. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' STRENGTHS

- (1) Candidates were able to come up with relevant ideas for the content of the essays. A few were able to write full length essays.
- (2) There was quite some improvement in paragraphing.
- (3) A good number of candidates displayed knowledge of the formal features of the various essay types.
- (4) A few were able to find correct answers to some of the questions in sections B and C.
- (5) Quite a few displayed skills in answering summary questions.

3. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' WEAKNESSES

- (1) A good number could not write full length essays.
- (2) They displayed a lack of grasp of the mechanics of the language.
- (3) Candidates' spelling especially of common words was poor.
- (4) They performed poorly in the two-sided essays. They paid more attention to one side leaving the other.
- (5) Candidates still have difficulty locating answers in the summary and comprehension passages.
- (6) Identifying grammatical names and functions remains a major problem of most candidates.

4. DETAILED COMMENTS

Question 1

A good number of candidates attempted this question. The few good ones presented the desired chatty atmosphere. The formal features were in place.

However, many of them flopped due to their poor language and their narrow understanding of the expression "learn a trade". Their weakest point had to do with incorrect use of tenses.

Question 2

Many candidates avoided this question. The few who answered it had the formal feature in place. For content, only a small number understood what is meant by "corrupt practices". This affected their performance adversely.

Question 3

Quite a number of candidates answered this question. Candidates were required to state the causes of poor performance in English Language in public examinations and suggest measures to improve the situation. Lots of ideas were presented and useful measures were also suggested to improve the situation. However, poor language and inability of candidates to recognize that tone and attitude used in formal discourse was required in answering this type of question, affected them adversely.

Question 4

This question was not popular with the candidates. The question required candidates to highlight problems of their local government areas and how they would deal with them as the in-coming chairman. The very few candidates who attempted this question performed poorly. The formal features were absent in most of the answers and the language was also poor. A few, however, got it right and raised pertinent issues in their essays.

CORRECT RESPONSES TO OBJECTIVE TEST:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE (CORE) 1

<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>RESPONSE</i>	<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>RESPONS- E</i>	<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>RESPONSE</i>	<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>RESPONSE</i>
1	D	21	C	41	B	61	B
2	B	22	D	42	A	62	A
3	B	23	D	43	C	63	D
4	A	24	B	44	D	64	B
5	B	25	C	45	A	65	D
6	C	26	A	46	D	66	C
7	A	27	B	47	A	67	A
8	A	28	D	48	D	68	D
9	C	29	B	49	B	69	C
10	D	30	B	50	D	70	B
11	A	31	D	51	C	71	C
12	D	32	D	52	D	72	B
13	B	33	B	53	C	73	A
14	C	34	B	54	C	74	C
15	C	35	C	55	A	75	D
16	B	36	A	56	B	76	A
17	B	37	D	57	C	77	B
18	C	38	B	58	A	78	A
19	A	39	A	59	D	79	D
20	C	40	D	60	B	80	B

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT FOR

ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

The standard of the paper compares favourably with that of previous years. The essay topics were based on the familiar topics usually set for the English Language Paper 2. Suffice it to say that all sections of the syllabus were covered and the candidates had enough to choose from. The comprehension passage was straight forward and was about an issue that is familiar to all students. The summary passage was equally straight to the point and dealt with topics that fall within the domain of the candidates.

2. SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' STRENGTHS

- (1) Candidates were able to write full length essays and came out with relevant points and ideas to satisfactorily answer the questions.
- (2) There was quite some improvement in paragraphing.
- (3) A good number of candidates were able to answer the questions on letter writing, adhering to the features that were relevant.
- (4) A few were able to answer the comprehension questions well and scored good marks.
- (5) Quite a few displayed skills in answering summary questions.

3. SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' WEAKNESSES

- (1) A majority of the candidates could not write full length essays.
- (2) They displayed a lack of grasp of the mechanics of the language.
- (3) Candidates' spelling especially of common words was poor.
- (4) Candidates still have difficulty locating answers in the summary and comprehension passages.
- (5) Identifying grammatical names and functions remains a major problem of most candidates.

4. SUGGESTED REMEDIES

- (1) Students should be given more exercises in essay writing and teachers must guide candidates on how to answer questions.
- (2) The reading culture must be inculcated in the students to enable them pick up some of the mechanics of writing and to develop their vocabulary.
- (3) Teachers should take candidates through some spelling drills to improve upon their spelling.
- (4) Grammar should be taught thoroughly to enable students differentiate between grammatical terms and figures of speech.
- (5) Students should be given regular exercises in summary to make them grasp the techniques of answering summary questions.

5. DETAILED COMMENTS

Question 1

A good number of candidates attempted this question. The good ones presented the atmosphere the question demanded. The formal features were in place. However, a number of them flopped due to their poor language. Their main problem had to do with wrong use of tenses. Others also treated it as a formal letter and this affected them adversely.

Question 2

Very few candidates answered this question. Those who attempted it were able to write the formal features correctly. For content the candidates showed understanding of what is meant by "crime rate". They were able to state factors that led to increase in crime rate and offered good suggestions to tackle the problem. A few, however, wrote it as a formal letter. They got the first part right but the second part was poorly treated.

Question 3

This was another popular question which most of the candidates attempted. They were able to write the formal features. They stated the situation that prevailed before the construction of the new roads and the havoc that it caused. While some stated lots of benefits to be derived from the new roads others failed to tackle this part of the question.

Question 4

Not many candidates answered this question. The few who attempted it wrote letters instead of a speech. Again some of those who attempted the question rather stated needs of the entire community as in the provision of electricity, roads and hospitals. They therefore scored very poor marks.

Question 5

This was not a popular question among the candidates. Just a few attempted it. They displayed some understanding of the statement. However, they had a problem sustaining the flow of the narrative. Some started very well but got lost in the middle of the narrative.

Question 6 - Comprehension

The passage was very interesting and very much within the scope of the candidates. Yet the candidates' performance was woeful. Quite a number of them showed outright misunderstanding of the questions. There was a strong indication that the candidates had not studied the literature part of the language course. The vocabulary items were poorly answered. Candidates were unable to supply words or phrases that meant the same and could replace those in the passage. Also, many of them were not able to identify correctly, the grammatical item and its function.

Question 7 - Summary

The summary passage was about a topic that is very popular with the students. A good number of the candidates did not do well at all in this part of the paper. They were unable to identify the main ideas of the passage and differentiate them from their supporting ones and illustrations. Many of them resorted to mindless lifting as if they were answering questions on comprehension. Teachers should, therefore integrate the skills to be learned in their lessons and give students more exercises in summary as much as possible.

CORRECT RESPONSES TO OBJECTIVE TEST:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE (CORE) 1

QUESTION	RESPONSE	QUESTION	RESPONSE	QUESTION	RESPONSE	QUESTION	RESPONSE
1	C	21	B	41	C	61	C
2	D	22	B	42	A	62	A
3	B	23	C	43	B	63	D
4	C	24	B	44	A	64	B
5	C	25	B	45	A	65	A
6	C	26	A	46	B	66	A
7	D	27	D	47	B	67	D
8	C	28	A	48	D	68	B
9	C	29	B	49	D	69	B
10	B	30	C	50	C	70	C
11	B	31	C	51	D	71	C
12	A	32	A	52	A	72	D
13	C	33	B	53	B	73	D
14	D	34	C	54	C	74	A
15	B	35	A	55	A	75	B
16	A	36	C	56	D	76	A
17	B	37	B	57	B	77	B
18	D	38	D	58	B	78	B
19	C	39	C	59	A	79	A
20	B	40	B	60	D	80	A

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE (CORE) 2

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

The standard of the paper is comparable with that of previous years. The paper conformed to the requirements of the WASSCE syllabus. The essay topics were quite topical and interesting. The summary and comprehension passages were also interesting and fell well within the scope of the candidates.

2. SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' STRENGTHS

- (i) Candidates were able to generate ideas and displayed good knowledge of the formal features of the essays.
- (ii) There was an improvement in the choice and use of appropriate vocabulary.
- (iii) A good number of candidates showed a marked improvement in their sentence structure and punctuation.
- (iv) Some candidates showed a clear understanding of the comprehension and summary passages and provided appropriate responses.
- (v) Quite a few displayed skills in answering summary questions.

3. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' WEAKNESSES

- (i) A number of candidates wrote rather long essays which made them loose focus.
- (ii) Poor punctuation, poor spelling and wrong use of tenses were dominant in some of the essays.
- (iii) Candidates could not differentiate between the topic sentence and the illustrations in the summary test.
- (iv) Some candidates resorted to copying portions of the passage as their answers to questions on the comprehension passage.
- (v) Candidates used unacceptable contractions that have become common on social media.
- (vi) Identifying grammatical names and functions remains a major problem of most candidates.

4. SUGGESTED REMEDIES

- (i) Candidates should read widely on a variety of subjects in order to enrich their vocabulary.
- (ii) Teachers should give more exercises, especially on grammar, and mark them in order to give feedback to the students.
- (iii) Candidates should be taught the formal features of essay types especially speech, debate and letters.
- (iv) Grammar teaching should be intensified especially identifying grammatical names and functions.
- (v) Grammar and spelling drills should be organised for the candidates in order to improve their writing skills.

5. DETAILED COMMENTS

Question 1

The candidate is required to write what he intends doing after secondary school and ask his brother for support. Most candidates were able to answer this question coming up with very good points well elaborated. The tone was appropriate, and the right features used.

Question 2

This was a popular question and most of the candidates answered it. They did very well bringing out all the formal features of an article and discussing into detail the demands of the question.

Question 3

Quite a number of candidates answered this question. Candidates were required to state the usefulness of a computer laboratory and the need to build and furnish one for the school. The question is in two parts and most candidates did justice to it. They clearly stated the usefulness of computers and the need to build and equip a laboratory with them.

Question 4

This question was not popular with the candidates. The question required candidates to argue for or against the motion. Not many candidates attempted this question. However, the few who did gave a good account of themselves.

Question 5

Just a few candidates answered this question. These candidates flopped due to lack of understanding of what the saying meant. The few who attempted it drew a blank as, at the end, the illustration did not reflect the saying. Candidates did not understand the saying, thus their poor performance.

Question 6

The passage was very interesting and well within the scope of the candidates as they are used to such competitions. The problem areas were questions a, b, and g. Many students chose to quote from the passage directly and that was wrong. Most of the students could not explain the expression. The vocabulary items were quite well done but again they got the tenses mixed up.

Question 7

The summary passage was a contemporary one talking about the importance of the types of food we eat. Nevertheless, most candidates resorted to copying whole parts of the passage as answers. The candidates clearly could not differentiate between topic sentences and illustrations. Most candidates found it difficult to answer the questions appropriately.

Appendix H – IELTS descriptive document

IELTS™

Academic Reading

Duration: 60 minutes

Texts for the Academic Reading test are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers.

A variety of tasks is used, including: multiple choice questions, identifying information, identifying writer's views/claims, matching information, matching headings, matching features, matching sentence endings, sentence completion, summary completion, note completion, table completion, flow-chart completion, diagramme label completion, short-answer questions.

Listening

Duration: 30 minutes

The Listening test is the same for both Academic and General Training versions of IELTS and consists of four recorded monologues and conversations.

Academic Writing

Duration: 60 minutes

The Academic Writing tests consist of two writing tasks of 150 words and 250 words.

In Task 1, test takers are asked to describe some visual information (graph/table/chart/diagramme). They need to write 150 words in about 20 minutes. In Task 2 test takers are presented with a point of view or argument or problem. They need to write their response in 250 words in about 40 minutes.

Speaking

Duration: 11–14 minutes

In the Speaking test, you have a discussion with a certified examiner. It is interactive and as close to a real-life situation as a test can get.

There are three parts to the test and each part fulfils a specific function in terms of interaction pattern, task input and test taker output.

In Part 1, you answer questions about yourself and your family. In Part 2, you speak about a topic. In Part 3, you have a longer discussion on the topic.

The Speaking test is the same for both Academic and General Training versions. Each of the three parts is designed to test a different aspect of your communication ability.