

## ISE III

### Sample Independent listening task – Media panics

#### Examiner rubric

You're going to hear part of a lecture about the media. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

*The task will play once.*

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

*Give the candidate some blank notepaper.*

Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me the speaker's attitude to media panics in general, and in particular concerns about the effects of technology on language use. Are you ready?

*The task will play once.*

Now tell me the speaker's attitude to media panics in general, and in particular concerns about the effects of technology on language use. You have one minute to talk.

#### Audio script

There is nothing new about media panics. Every year there seems to be a fresh reason for the public to panic, according to newspapers and television, whether it's falling standards in education or the rising tide of rubbish in our cities. But in these different tales of woe, there's a common factor: the cause is generally attributed to the youth of today and their strange new ways. One year long hair raises the vision of chaos, anarchy and disobedience; a decade later our worries are focused on hair styles that are too short. The world moves on, but is it progress or decay? It's a bit like the glass half-full or glass half-empty example – more a matter of perception, than having any actual basis in reality.

Our fears in the 21st century centre on advances in technology. Despite enjoying all the benefits, we feel pessimistic about the consequences. People claim they're not worried for themselves, but for those who have less judgement – the young, the less educated. Yes, there's convenience and enjoyment to be had in modern computer technology, but surely there must be a downside. Think, for example, of what has happened to language and communication. No longer do we have to write a letter by hand, first finding the pen and ink, carefully composing a letter on paper, then buying a stamp and taking the envelope to the post-box. A few key strokes on the computer, or worse, the tablet or smartphone, and a message is sent and received in seconds. Let alone the skills of handwriting, there is no need even to spell or punctuate correctly. Some fear that words themselves will soon be redundant, as emoticons or the latest emojis replace them. Human communication will revert to the early human's grunts, gestures and basic signs and pictures, they fear. There are regular news stories, after all, about children beginning to use text message abbreviations in their school essays. Did the same outcry and handwringing greet the advent of the printing press, I wonder?

This invention of Johannes Gutenberg's in the 15th century revolutionised language and communication, replacing the laboriously handmade book with the potential to produce multiple copies with ease. There is nothing new about printing. It is established and familiar, used by old and young, and so it holds no fears. We would hate to do without the comfort of ready access to print. And yet, when the printing press first emerged, this new young invention was also viewed with suspicion by society's elders.

#### Answers

Main point/gist: The speaker is talking about media panics, in particular worries about the effects of modern technology on language use (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable).

- ▶ Speaker is sceptical about the validity in general – the word 'panic' suggests a hysterical response.
- ▶ They note that it usually concerns the young, suggesting a prejudice, and that the cause changes – even becoming the complete opposite (long versus short hair).
- ▶ They use the glass half-full/half-empty example to show that it's not objective, but it all depends on your viewpoint.
- ▶ Regarding language use in particular, the speaker seems to mock the idea that language is suffering, by exaggerating – mentioning the quill pen with nostalgia and the idea of reverting to cave-man grunts.
- ▶ The comparison with the invention of the printing press illustrates how everything new becomes familiar in time.