

Explanation of mistakes in sample of French written work

1. [F.A.]

'l'issue' is a false friend or deceptive cognate of 'the issue' in English. A better lexical choice here would be 'la question' or 'le problème'. The expression 'à l'issue de qc' does exist in French and means 'as a result/consequence of stg'.

2. [T.]

'a existé' is a tense error and may result from a direct translation of the English 'existed'. However, the imperfect – as opposed to the passé composé – tense is required here. The marginalisation of the French suburbs was an implicitly enduring phenomenon, rather than a one-off occurrence, and 'existait' should therefore be used to convey this duration or state.

3. [prép.]

'en' is a preposition mistake. While individual calendar years do take 'en' (e.g. 'J'obtiendrai mon diplôme en 2010'), references to decades take 'dans' + the definite article.

4. [O.]

'1850s' is a spelling error most probably due to English interference. When referring to decades in French, no plural '-s' is needed.

5. [p.p.]

'décrivit' is a past participle formation error possibly caused by the approximate application of the past participle model of the '-re' verb 'suivre'. While 'suivre' has as its past participle 'suivi', 'décrire' follows the same pattern as 'écrire' (of which it is a compound), i.e. 'écrit'.

6. [#]

'exotique' requires a plural '-s' agreement as it modifies 'les sauvages'.

7. [~]

'une évidente distinction' is a word order error where the English 'adjective + noun' structure has been used with an adjective which follows the noun in French.

8. [pron.]

'qu' is a relative pronoun mistake. Only the object relative pronoun 'que' elides (loses the 'e') before a noun to become *qu'* whereas it is the subject pronoun *qui* which is required here and which is always invariable.

9. [art.]

'des autres' is a common article error. Rather than the partitive article 'des', d' should be used here as the meaning is 'in other French cities [in general]' and not 'in the other French cities [specifically]'.

10. [F.A.]

'cités' is a false friend of 'cities' in English. While historically, 'la cité' was used to designate the fortified part of a French town, in modern French, it denotes variously 'a housing estate', 'a university hall of residence' or the oldest part of specific French towns. 'villes' or 'grandes villes' were required in this context.

11. & 12. [T.] & [ad.]

était créé' involves both a tense and a past participle agreement error. This should be in the passé composé: while the 'barrière psychologique' may have remained in place for many years, it was only created once. The past participle needs an additional '-e' to agree with the feminine singular 'barrière' in this passive construction.

13. [O.]

'[Les] français' is a spelling error and should be capitalised as it denotes a noun of nationality and as such, follows the same rule as its English equivalent, 'the French'. It is the adjective of nationality in French which – like all French adjectives – begins with a lower case letter.

14. [conj.]

'disait' is a conjugation mistake which should be formed in the 3rd person plural ('disaient') to agree with its subject, 'les Français'. While this erroneous 3rd person singular conjugation would not be apparent in spoken French, it needs attention in written form!

15. [m.m.]

'avaient intrus' is an inexistent verb which was possibly formed due to confusion with the French noun 'un intrus' ('an intruder'). Viable alternatives include 's'imposer' or 's'encruster'.

16. [reg.]

'ça' is a register slip which is only used in formal academic writing for stylistic effect. If that effect is not intended (as is the case in the sample), 'cela' would be stylistically preferable.

17. [T.]

'n'ont pas arrêté' is a tense error. As the rise in immigrants from African countries is still apparent at the time of writing, the present tense must be used, regardless of how long ago the action being denoted began. The general tense usage rule here is therefore: 'depuis' + present = on-going action/state.

18. [prép.]

'à' should be 'de' as the verb 'arrêter de faire qc'. However, the pronominal form of the verb does take 'à': 's'arrêter à faire qc'.

19. [ac.]

'représentaient' contains an accent mistake as the first 'e acute' should be a simple 'e'. This error may have been caused by transcribing the pronunciation of the English verb 'represent' into French.

20. [O.]

'39.3%' has presumably been caused by the direct transcription of the English decimal point into French where a comma is required.

Corrected Version of the Written Sample

La question des immigrés en France n'est pas nouvelle. L'image des banlieues en marge de la société **existait** avant la Révolution française. **Dans** les années **1850**, Alexandre Privat-d'Anglemont a **décrit** le ghetto parisien de la Villa des Chiffonniers comme «une colonie de sauvages **exotiques**». Aujourd'hui, il y a **une distinction évidente** entre le centre de Paris et ses environs **qui** est sans parallèle dans **d'autres grandes villes** européennes. Le périphérique indique où étaient les remparts et les limites de municipalité. Une barrière psychologique **a été créée** entre les gens qui vivent de chaque côté de ce mur symbolique. **Les Français** à cette époque **disaient** que les immigrés **s'étaient imposés** et prenaient leurs emplois, mais **cela** n'est pas le cas.

Depuis les années soixante, les immigrations africaines **n'arrêtent pas d'augmenter**; les originaires des pays d'Afrique **représentaient 39,3%** de la population de la France en 1999.