

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE Sinhala (4SI0)
Paper 01

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General Introduction

The International GCSE Sinhala paper tested candidate's overall ability to understand accurately general descriptions of topic areas, covering customs and religion and past and present social situations of historical importance of native Sri Lanka. Some questions were focussed on the required level of understanding as to whether the candidate has acquired the competence and knowledge which they need to apply in a given situation, whether it is formal or informal. This involved formal grammar, style and vocabulary and also spoken Sinhala as appropriate in the relevant social context.

There were four questions (compulsory) but with a choice of one from four topics in the essay question (question 4). A clear understanding of formal grammar, vocabulary and style was expected in all questions apart from in question 1, where candidates had the option to employ a less formal style.

Question 1

There were five questions – one question and four statements. Here candidates were expected to construct accurate answers in order to obtain full marks. The question 1(a) was a question from an ordinary social situation where one would employ a less formal style, ie spoken Sinhala, however, the majority of candidates constructed high literary sentences as opposed to giving a simple spoken Sinhala equivalent such as:
'Karunakarala mehee indala guvan totupalata bas eken yanne kohomada kiyanna.'

There were some candidates who were unable to translate the Sinhala word for 'airport'. The next question, 1(b) was to test candidate's ability to express distance and directions in Sinhala. Many candidates incorrectly expressed the words 'south' and 'about'. Similarly, candidates continued to answer with a high literary statement which was often full of incorrect sentences. The simple word for my elder brother is '*magee ayya*' in Sinhala however, this was only recognised by a few candidates. Candidates should note that adopting literary words of a high variety with expressions to interpret simple situations will fail to score many marks.

Many candidates were unable to translate the adjective 'ripe' and there were similar difficulties throughout question 1(e) including confusion with the Sinhala word for 'novels'. Centres should be aware that candidates cannot expect or predict the type of questions they will be getting in this category, where they have to use their clear understanding of ordinary situations and to use the appropriate vocabulary.

Questions 2 and 3

These two questions are translations – from English to Sinhala and Sinhala to English. Question 2 is an account of a very popular July-August festival at Kataragama. The passage is written in simple English and has no idiomatic expressions. The majority of responses had mistranslations for

words including, 'Buddhists', 'Muslims' and 'Christians'. Candidates should read the passage fully in order to understand the contents clearly. Many candidates also misunderstood the meaning of 'followed by' thus giving an incorrect meaning. For candidates to score highly on this questions centres should encourage candidates to participate in some wider reading to ensure they are exposed to a variety of terms and events.

Question 3 relates to a short account of international trade activities in Sri Lanka during the Anuradhapura Period. Many candidates were unable to translate the following words into English: '*pracalita*', '*itihaasagnayan*', '*at dath*', '*pabalu*', '*vamsa katha*' and '*tiru badu*'. Mistranslations can lead to poorly constructed sentences which were often the result of using the incorrect category of verbs and phrases (past tense) in English.

Choosing incorrect vocabulary can also lead to low scores for this question. The majority of candidates used the words diamonds for gems, drugs for alcohol, elephant tusks or teeth for tusks, angels for agents or representatives and appeared not to have not heard or read about chronicles or inscriptions. Furthermore, the word '*itihhasagnayan*' appeared to be unheard of. As a result, many candidates failed to score many marks for this question.

Question 4

Here candidates were required to write an essay of between 200-250 words, and had a choice of four topics. The majority of candidates chose to write a letter to a friend describing how they spent their Christmas or New Year's holiday. In some essays, candidates used many colloquial expressions and style as they would speak at home. Marks were deducted in those instances as candidates are required to produce a piece of written work with a degree of standard and quality for the examination. This was a popular topic and many candidates scored highly in this question however, some marks had to be deducted from the essays which exceeded the allowed word limit of 250. Candidates should observe the special instructions attached to any particular question to avoid losing marks.

Question 4 (a) was not as popular with candidates . The majority answered to a high standard with arguments employing effective vocabulary and style. However, some candidate did go beyond the allowed word limit, in some cases by an additional 100-150 words. Candidates should be wary of this practice of not adhering to the word limit as they are likely to be penalised.

Conclusion

Many candidates revealed a lack of proper understanding of grammatical structure of written Sinhala language, particularly the syntax, and the tendency to mix standard constructions with the colloquial usage. In places where the candidates were unable to find the appropriate standard of written words and phrases, they opted to use the spoken Sinhala grammar and style thus generating some creole type sentences.

The Sinhala language exists in a significant disparity between the spoken and the written variety, with pauses in some serious structural problems for the language learner. Therefore in teaching Sinhala, this structural disparity has to be taught and explained clearly to all candidates in order to avoid making errors at a later stage.

Grade Boundaries

This year a mark adjustment has been applied to the final marks awarded to candidates. The final mark that appears on scripts and on Results + is accurate, however, they have been scaled to match the final grade boundaries from summer 2011. This is to ensure that there is a consistent standard from last year to this year.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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