

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in Sinhala (4SI0/01) Paper 1

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The scope and the principal aim of the examination have not changed. In general, it is to test candidates' overall ability to understand general descriptions of topic areas covering irrigation systems of the ancient Sinhalese, and the wild life of Sri Lanka including national parks. This involved formal grammar, vocabulary and style.

There were four questions but with a choice of one from four topics in the essay question (Question 4). A clear understanding of formal grammar, vocabulary and style were expected in all questions.

Question 1

There were five sentences given in English to be translated into Sinhala involving some complex grammatical structures. All these sentences covered general information. Though the sentences were not so difficult, most of the candidates were not aware of the Sinhala equivalents of the simple words like 'waterfall', 'hotel', 'sports centre', 'internet' and 'export' which the candidates of this level are expected to know. Only a small number of candidates achieved higher marks. Less able candidates seemed to have difficulty grasping the complexity involved and were unsuccessful to communicate the meaning of the original sentence.

Question 2

The passage given for translation into Sinhala was about national parks in Sri Lanka. Candidates found it more challenging to translate from English to Sinhala as they seem to be unaware of many Sinhala equivalent words for the words given in English such as 'leopard', 'African bush', 'rain showers', and 'splendid'. This is not only relating to vocabulary but also the misunderstanding of some sentences in the given context. Most of the candidates, who scored low marks, were mainly due to inadequate linguistic competence. Violation of basic rules of grammar, tenses and incorrect spellings were in evidence. Even when the meaning of the passage was communicated, the language appeared rather contrived and lack of consistency was observed. High scores went to candidates who possessed a good command of writing in the target language.

Question 3

The passage for translation into English was attempted fairly well compared. The passage was about the irrigation system in ancient Sinhalese. In encoding, finding the appropriate English equivalent for the few terms like, 'watina'(precious), 'paranno'(ancient people), 'jalaya randawa ganeema'(preserve), 'alawal kapeema'(building canals), 'wella' (dam), 'landesi'(dutch), and 'wee'(paddy) proved difficult for some candidates. This inadequacy of lexical skill and insufficient command of English were the reasons for lower scores.

Question 4

This part of the paper, the essay, generally produced good answers. This question gives candidates a chance to perform well and obtain marks. Four possible topics were given, and out of them question 4(b) 'The place you would most like to visit again and why' and question 4(d) 'Write about an annual event at your school' were equally popular. Most candidates had interesting ideas and those who had the linguistic ability to express their views scored very well. Less able candidates obtained lower marks because of inadequate command of the language and weak lexical skills. Excessive length, irrelevant ideas and poor presentation were also evident in some responses. However, the topics given provided opportunities for good self-expression.

Conclusion

Some candidates performed well, but the majority of the candidates did not manage to achieve high marks. This is because of a lack of proper understanding of grammatical structure of written Sinhala language. Some candidates showed an incorrect application of Sinhala grammatical structures and difficulty to understand and apply the tenses properly. Incorrect spelling and failure to comprehend the complexity of the grammatical structure were reasons for lower marks. Candidates should also be encouraged to further improve their fluency in their usage of literary Sinhala. In a few cases, where the candidates scored below the pass mark, linguistic competence was low and answers were almost incomprehensible.

Grade Boundaries

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