Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Sinhala (4SI1) Paper 01: Reading, Writing and
Translation

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Introduction

This is the examiner's report for the International GCSE (9-1) Sinhala paper in 2020. This will be the second analytical report provided by the principle examiner regarding the examinations, started from the year 2019. Teachers and candidates may find it useful to read exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and comments of the principle examiner for questions 1-7. As mentioned above, this is the second examination of the new specification introduced in 2017 and the second opportunity for candidates to sit for another paper alike they have already seen in 2019.

The intention of this report is to give a short entry to get an idea of the performance of the candidates who sat for the examination in 2020. This paper consists of three sections. i.e. Section A: Reading Comprehension - 40 marks (40% A01), Section B: Writing - 40 marks (40% A02) and Section C: Translation - 20 marks (20% A03). Section A consists of 4 questions i.e. questions 1, 2, 3 and 4. Section B consists of 2 questions i.e. questions 5 and 6 and Section C consists of 1 question i.e. question 7. All these three sections are assessed through a 2 hours and 30 minutes examination. The total number of marks available is 100 for the paper. Every question in each section has a link to any of the themes in the specification.

Section A – Reading Comprehension

A01

Question 1 is a closed response test which is in another words is a gap fill or word drop question. It contains 6 marks. Question 2 is a multiple matching (three column multiple matching) question in which candidates read three texts (in three speech bubbles) by three different persons and respond to the statements below marking a cross in the grid provided. It contains 8 marks. Question 3 is a note taking (note completion) question which is a text from a certain source such as a web page or a paper cutting. Candidates have to fill the gaps appropriately in the statements given below. It contains 12 marks. Question 4 has two parts i.e. part 4(a) and part 4(b). Part 4(a) is an open response question which is a literary text that is an extract from a novel, short story, biography, etc. Candidates have to write short answers correctly in the spaces given below the text. It contains 10 marks all together. Part 4(b) is an extended writing question based on the question 4(a) in which there is a dialogue between two people as the text. Candidates have to summarize the opinions of each person. This question contains 4 marks i.e. 2 marks per each summary. The length of each test item is approximately given in the setter's guidelines. For example, word count of question 1 is in between 143 to 154 words. Similarly, the length of question 2 is between 176 to 182 words, question 3 is between 187 to 193 words, question 4(a) is between 220 to 226 words and question 4(b) is between 269 to 275 words. The texts are carefully selected from different sources with

a link to a certain topic in five themes in the specification. Total number of marks for the section is 40.

Section B – writing
A02

These two questions are writing tasks that can either be narrative or descriptive writings according to the task. Question 5 is comparatively a shorter piece of guided writing of about 85 words. There are four prompts provided in four boxes to support candidates to write on the given topic. It contains 14 marks. Question 6 is a longer writing task which is also a guided writing. More formal writing with register and style is expected to give a high mark. Candidates have to write a long essay type of about 145 words. There are three options given so that candidates can select one out of them to respond as they wished. The format of the question, for example, is to write a letter, an article, a report or an email, etc. This question contains 26 marks in total. These questions also have a link to a topic of the themes suggested in the specification. Total number of marks for the section is 40.

Section C – Translation
A03

This section consists only one question that is the question 7 (last question of the paper). A paragraph of about 93 to 99 words in English language is provided as the test item. Candidates have to translate it into the Sinhala language sensibly. The translation is successful if a Sinhala speaker can understand the translation without having understood the English text.

Summary of the questions in the paper

Section A – Reading Comprehension
Question 1

Candidates were asked to read a text about "Yala" one of the national wildlife sanctuaries (National Parks) in Sri Lanka. The content was what Yala is, where it is situated, how far it is from Colombo, its eco diversity, etc. Then the candidates were asked to choose the correct word for each statement from the box provided below the text. There were 12 words and an example given in the box. Candidates had to drop the correct letter (each letter represents a word/phrase) from the box into the answer grid against every statement. Majority of candidates had understood the rubrics and responded very well. A very few of them had not understood the task correctly, may be, because they were less able to read Sinhala language. An average number of candidates were satisfactory. The

most frequent correct answers given were 1(d) 300km, 1(e) wildlife sanctuary. Less able candidates had confused 1(a) Indian Ocean, 1(b) Yala East 1(c) eco systems and 1(f) wild animals. Most able candidates had answered all questions very well. The less able candidates had made common mistakes. The overall performance was up to the standard.

Question 2

Candidates were asked to read three speeches made by three students (Victor, Kumari and Piyal) about Industries in Sri Lanka. They spoke about agriculture, tea plantation and garment industry. Then there were six statements with an example in a grid below the reading passages for candidates to put a cross against each statement correctly. One statement i.e. B. (Speaks about uniforms) did not match with any of the speakers. Statements D and F matched with one speaker each and A, C, and E matched with two speakers respectively. Candidates were then asked to put a cross in the right box against each statement under the name of the speaker. Most able candidates had responded the questions very well as a whole. Less able candidates had made a few mistakes. A majority of candidates had confused statements D and F (United Kingdom with United States.) This mistake was made by the majority of average candidates. A majority of candidates had successfully answered the other statements. Some candidates had marked crosses in too many boxes unnecessarily thereby failing to score full marks for this question.

Question 3

Candidates were asked to read a text about Munidasa Kumarathunga, a veteran author and linguist lived in Sri Lanka. Then candidates were asked to fill in the gaps correctly with appropriate information from the text in the statements given below. The most frequently correct answers given were (a) 1887, (b) literature and (i) Shiksha Margaya. A number of candidates had shown some success in answering to (c) influence of Sanskrit language too. Less successful candidates had not been able to answer to statements (d) extra ordinary linguistic ability and creative thinking, (e) Pali and Sanskrit, (f) eight, (g) influence of Great Britain and (h) to promote and style of music. Some candidates had written anything with no sense at all while a very few had not made any attempt. Overall performance was satisfactory.

Question 4(a)

Candidates were asked to read a text provided about Scouts Movement, an extract from a book called "Nellikele Weerayo" written by Nimal Bandara. Candidates were then asked to answer the questions correctly in the spaces given below. The most frequently correct

answers given were (i) about Scouts Movement (ii) a few scouts working together (iii) the hat and the uniform (iv) 19,000,000 and (vii) they are loved by many and they love the country. Less successful candidates had difficulties in answering questions (v) does not have any discrimination over race, religion, etc. and (vi) to initiate new scouts groups in schools and enrol new members to those groups. Some candidates had written anything with no sense at all while a very few had not made any attempt. Overall performance was satisfactory.

Question 4(b)

Candidates were asked to read the opinions of two speakers (Ganesh and Mohammad) for and against co-curricular activities and extracurricular activities in schools. And then asked to summarise the two views in the spaces given below. A majority of candidates had given reasonably good summaries. Some had used extra sheets to provide their summaries where either they had made a mistake in their first attempt or not being able to manage with the spaces provided. The least able candidates had not attempted to answer the question while some had just copied a line or two from the original text or had written senseless lines of words in the spaces.

Section B – writing
Question 5

Candidates were asked to write a short account of about shopping. There were four prompts provided to guide candidates to write a full account referring to the past, present and future timelines. The four prompts provided to guide candidates were "traditional shopping methods", "modern shopping methods", "a recent shopping" and "next shopping". Last two prompts referred to past and future tenses. A majority of candidates had written reasonably good answers to get a considerable score. Most answers proved to be candidates' personal experiences that they had recently experienced. Most able candidates had understood the instructions as given but less able candidates had not understood them properly. Those less able candidates had not answered the question as intended. Some candidates had misunderstood what "shopping" means in Sinhala. They had mixed it up with "travelling or touring" and answered incorrectly. They had answered what they had seen during their tour instead what they had bought during their shopping. A very few candidates had not made any attempt to write anything while some had written something at least to get a mark or two.

Question 6

Frequently answered option was option 1. 'Fast Food'. An average number of candidates had also chosen other two options i.e. option 2. 'Customs' and option 3 'An Environmental Protection Programme'. The most able candidates had performed very well covering all three bullet points in each option. Less able candidates had written their entries fairly in general as they had felt the topic that they had chosen to write. A few had no idea of what they were supposed to do, may be, since they had a little knowledge about the format of an essay writing or less ability to handle the language in its style or register.

Question 7

The passage given (in English language) was 'Climate in Sri Lanka'. A majority of candidates had translated the article into Sinhala to secure a reasonable mark. An average number of candidates had roughly translated it as they had understood the text. Some candidates had not translated some words/phrases such as climate, the lowlands, tropical, an average, temperature, in the higher grounds, altitude, during the height of the monsoon, four seasons, the south-west monsoon, north-east monsoon and central regions into Sinhala. Most of the candidates has mistaken climate with weather as well.

Summary and advice to centres

Marks lost in this examination are most typified by answers provided in the following questions.

Section A
Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4.

These questions tested candidates understanding of key vocabulary items listed in the specification for foundation level. Candidates should be aware these are the items that will be tested.

Tips
Question 1

Yala National Park is a well-known park in Sri Lanka so that candidates should know what they are going to read about. Advise candidates to read the rubrics in Sinhala carefully before they start to answer the question. For example: Fill in the blanks; write the correct letter in the box. Advise candidates to use the reading time available and select the correct letter from the box to fit properly in the blanks. Tell them write the "letters" in the appropriate boxes instead of writing the words in the spaces.

Question 2

The question titled 'Industries in Sri Lanka' provides an important clue. Advise candidates to read the rubrics carefully before they start to answer the question. For example: Some of the sentences or people might have more than one cross or none. Advise candidates to use the reading time available to think about the question title and the key words they are likely to hear. Candidates sometimes crossed too many boxes in the grids. Advise candidates to check the number of marks available for each question. These are noted at the bottom of each question set. For example: (Total for Question 2 = 8 marks)

Questions 3, 4(a) and 4(b)

These questions asked candidates to briefly respond to questions asked in Sinhala. The questions titled ' Kumarathunga Munidasa' and 'Scouts Movement' are reading passages. Advise candidates to read (skim or scan) the texts carefully and write correct phrases in the gaps to fit the questions asked. Short answers only are required. Too much information given can sometimes negate the correct response. Q4(b) is a summary writing question. Advise candidates to read the views of the speakers and brief their opinions (the gist of the ideas) in the space provided as guided.

Section B

Questions 5 and 6

These questions asked candidates to write essays about the given topics in Sinhala.

Tips

Advise candidates to follow the bullet points as guidelines to write compressively a full account to get full marks. For example, in Q 5 Shopping - Traditional shopping methods, Modern shopping methods, A recent shopping, Your next shopping. These suggestions direct candidates to give a brief introduction to the topic and three timelines that they should use in their piece of writing. Advise candidates to use style (register of language appropriately) and also to check grammar and spelling. Some candidates had confused "saappu sawaariyak" with "sawaariyak" in Sinhala. Advice candidates to read the prompts carefully before they start writing their essays. Candidates had selected one option from Q6 but answered to another by making mistake such as crossed 6(a) and answered 6(b) or 6(c). A majority of candidates had not met the basic requirement to achieve full marks because of either not being able to cover all three bullet points or not being able to show the ability to use past and future tenses correctly as the question intended to use. Some had written very long yet others had very short answers. Advice candidates to see the number of words required in the instructions. And also ask them to use a formal language to suite the task rather than using the day-to-day spoken

language. For example, Q6 option 1 the command word/phrase was to 'write a speech'. A majority of candidates, therefore, had used simple spoken language as they generally speak in Sinhala rather than using the standard written language as expected in the guidelines.

Section C
Question 7

This is the only question candidates get to translate into Sinhala. Advise candidates to be aware of the Sinhala equivalents for English words. Advise candidates to carefully read the English text sentence by sentence or meaningful chunk by chunk. Also advise candidates to translate the text using a separate sheet of paper first and then make amends to it before they write the correct Sinhala text in the exam paper.

Tips

Advise candidates to take one English phrase/clause/sentence separately and translate it into Sinhala first and then rewrite all of them as a meaningful passage with correct sequence marks to make the translation a proper Sinhala version of the given English text.