

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

International GCSE Swahili (4SW0)
Paper 1

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General Comments

The level of difficulty this year was similar to the past year. At the same time there is a resemblance in errors made. For example, despite it being tested in the past few years consecutively the use of negative future tense 'won't' (which normally ends with a verb as a suffix in Swahili), students still make the same mistakes as explained below:

Question 1 Sentences Testing Grammatical Knowledge

This part of the examination tests grammatical elements of the language. These aspects of the grammar are important in structuring sentences and need to be grasped at this stage of language learning. Teachers must pay attention to these and it is recommended that students are not only familiar but confident in using them.

- a) We expect the new pilot not to travel to China day after tomorrow.
Testing future negative tense on 3rd person singular 'asisafiri'; this was sometimes given erroneously as 'asi**hitaji**' using **need** as the verb instead of **safiri** travel.
- b) Maria's grandfather now has agreed to live in the city of Dar es Salaam. Testing reference to size kijiji (diminutive) mji (average) jiji. (large) A lot of the students did not differentiate between jiji and mji, and so lost some marks.
- c) Mt Kilimanjaro is 2,277' higher than Mt Kenya. This was particularly tricky because students did not distinguish between unit of measurement feet and part of the body.
- d) I passed my driving test the very first time. This question looked to test the qualifier 'endesha **gari**' as opposed to simply 'endesha' which means diarrhoea.
- e) If they don't think we should go to the new swimming pool; then we won't. This question tested the use of the verb in conjunction with future negative tense. This sequence negative subject prefix 'ha' subject infix 'tu' future tense infix 'ta' and the verb 'enda' to give 'hatutaenda'. A number of students did not include the verb, and so gave the incomplete word 'hatuta'. Some students also did not differentiate between the pronoun 'they' and 'you singular' therefore erroneously giving 'ukifikiria' instead of '**wakifikiria**'.

It is recommended that Swahili verb behaviour in sentence structure is covered. In addition to this, verb derivatives should be understood thoroughly so as to give candidates confidence in transmission of meaning.

Question 2 Translating into Swahili

In this question candidates are tested for transmission and quality of language. The process of translating into a target language encompasses all aspects of the language including grammar and general vocabulary. The question comprised of 3 parts. The first part defines a bank giving a variety of its uses. The second part describes the surrounding and inside environment of a particular bank. The third part describes the people often found in banks. The vocabulary therefore is more formal than informal even though it does not rule out some ordinary statements. The following table shows a list of some of the words students found difficult. It is recommended that teachers pay attention to these and familiarise their students with them:

English words	Correct Swahili words	Incorrect Swahili words
Taxi	Teksi/taksi	Texi/texti
Jacaranda	Jakaranda	Jacaranda
Surrounded	Zungukwa	Suroundiwa
Religious leaders	Viongozi wa dini	Viongozi makanisani
City	Jiji	Mji
Account	Akaunti	Accounti

It is specially recommended that words with similar sounds as in English are dealt with in terms of spelling. As above table demonstrates, Swahili does not have letter 'x' and letter 'c' is not used alone, and it is usually accompanied by 'ch'. Also students should avoid mixing English and Swahili as in above word 'suroundiwa' in formal examinations.

Question 3 Translating from Swahili to English

The passage was a family setting in the rural areas during school holidays. It was a commentary on food and health issues. It discussed pros and cons of general diets especially habits that lead onto obesity. While the transmission was generally fine, the vocabulary was more problematic. The list in the table below shows some of the areas of weakness that need to be addressed.

Swahili word	Correct English word	Incorrect English word
Mjane	Widow	Guest/young woman/aunt Jane
Isitoshe	Furthermore/in addition	If it is not enough
Hivi karibuni	Soon	Recently/ this welcomer
Alifariki	S/he died	S/he kicked the bucket
Shangaa	Surprised	Shocked

Note that idiomatic expressions like “kicked the bucket” were used in some cases. It is recommended that teachers discourage their students from inappropriate language use.

In addition there was confusion in regards to gender – some students wrote “my aunt, he...” or “my aunt who is a widower”. Besides, Swahili language distinguishes between paternal and maternal aunts. Very few candidates did this in the phrase “our paternal aunt who is a widower”. In order to avoid loss of marks teachers should address this in the syllabus.

Also, it is worth noting that in translation of the word “doctor” in most cases students assumed that this referred to a male doctor. There is no reason why this should be the case; and such mistakes must be avoided.

Question 4

Candidates were required to write an essay of about 250 words on the following topics:

1. Voting is every citizen's right.
2. 'The internet service should be free in our country.' Do you agree? Why?
3. Imagine that you are the chairperson of a debating club. You are listening to both sides of this argument: 'Speaking Sheng is better than speaking standard Swahili'. Explain what viewpoints the participants hold and why.
4. Write a letter to a friend describing your favourite athletic game. Mention your favourite players and why you like them.

This question tested communication and content and also the quality of language. This was done mostly just satisfactorily but in some cases exceptionally well. However, some students tended to make some errors that denied them marks they could have achieved easily. The following are points to consider.

1. Instead of "upigaji kura" or voting, some candidates wrote "upikaji kura", or cooking votes. This indicates confusion in similar sounding words.
2. Omission of consonants in words like "kujiweka" or placing oneself to "kujieka"
3. Confusion between adjectives "ye yote" anybody and "yo yote" anything
4. Candidates who chose the letter option did not necessarily remember to place the address date topic etc or even to conclude the letters. These are serious omissions when one is writing a letter.
5. Some candidates used Swahili idiomatic expressions perfectly and to their advantage. Other candidates just listed these without any obvious link between statements made. Swahili proverbs enhance communication but again these in some cases were just thrown around at random without demonstration of a deeper meaningful understanding of Swahili. This if anything devalued the quality of language.
6. Candidates do not seem to know that there is no division of words in Swahili. For example, "tunahitaji" or *we need* should not be written as "tuna hitaji"

All topics were attempted, and most candidates demonstrated confidence in the essay writing structure. In addition, the questions on voting and use of the internet were the most popular. The letter writing option had a nearly as popular response but those who chose it were not necessarily equipped with the letter writing pre-determined structure.

It is recommended that teachers pay special attention to essay writing skills; letter writing skills and reported speech skills (necessary for question 3). Candidates at this level ought to have acquired enough vocabulary and grammatical structures to be able to express themselves confidently. It is very important for students to realise different types of letters and different requirements in essays.

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