

FIRST LANGUAGE THAI

Paper 0518/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

In general, candidates performed competently and there were only one or two whose poor use of Thai grammar and vocabulary suggested they should not have been entered for a First Language examination. The best candidates did extremely well, answering the questions intelligently, doing exactly what they were asked to do and yet producing answers that were very individual in terms of content and style. They understood how to manipulate the texts, adapting the material to their purposes and writing with precision, fluency, and persuasiveness. One important feature of the work of stronger candidates, which was very evident, was the ability to use formal and informal language appropriately. Successful candidates were aware of when to use written as opposed to spoken styles. In addition, stronger candidates tended to write with a high level of accuracy and fluency – using Thai rather than English structures. Candidates need to try and master these skills in order to do well in this examination.

The following are also worth mentioning to candidates:

- the importance of reading instructions carefully and then following them to the letter.
- the importance of reading through what they have written – quite a few candidates made spelling mistakes, often in quite simple words.
- the importance of managing their time efficiently – there was evidence of some rushed/incomplete final answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Summary and comparison drawing information from two texts

This proved to be the most difficult task on the paper. Candidates experienced various problems. Some were not quite sure what was required and included a great deal of personal opinion and comment or undertook a critical analysis of the two texts. Others understood what was required, but then found it difficult to group ideas together and write coherently; they were not able to read in depth and pick up on more subtle details of the passages, concentrating exclusively on what was obvious. Some candidates simply copied out large chunks of the texts, failing to show that they had understood what they were reading and were capable of selecting what was necessary for the purposes of the task.

Question 2

Interview based on the same two texts

Candidates coped much better with this task than they did with the previous one. They were able to select relevant information and wrote with a flair and imagination, capturing the flavour of a genuine interview. Successful candidates followed the instructions and used the information from the two given texts – not their general knowledge or personal opinions –, and wrote creatively, employing the kind of language appropriate to the genre. Weaker answers tended not to stick to the point, e.g. they included too much scene setting, too much background for the characters involved, as well as material that was entirely irrelevant to the question set.

Question 3

Plea for a charity donation

Candidates, in general, scored high marks on this question. The style and content of answers were appropriate and candidates showed a great deal of creativity. A large number of candidates wrote convincingly and persuasively – they clearly had the intended readers very much in mind. It is worth reminding candidates that to produce a successful answer in any genre, they need to be aware of their readers. There were a few candidates who did not cope well with this task: they did not know how to appeal to the reader, either because they adopted a dry, almost news-like style without emotional appeal or because they exaggerated the situation to the point that it became unbelievable or because they wrote from such a high moral standpoint that the reader was alienated.

Paper 0518/03
Continuous Writing

General comments

As was the case last year, the standard of writing was very mixed.

The most successful candidates were those who displayed a confident and accurate use of language. Their writing was fluent, they used a variety of sentence structures and a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. Spelling was accurate, paragraphs were linked and well planned. These candidates addressed the topic relevantly throughout and held the interest of the reader.

In average answers, language use was largely accurate with mistakes tending to occur when attempts were made to use more sophisticated structures. A range of vocabulary was in evidence though it was not always used precisely. Sentences showed some variation of length and type. Spelling of simple vocabulary was correct, but complex words caused problems and punctuation was not consistently accurate. Although the candidate was aware of need to use paragraphs, these were not strongly linked and the overall structure of essays lacked balance and order. The writing was mainly relevant but the sense of audience was not strong.

The weakest candidates tended to produce work which contained frequent errors, sometimes resulting in a blurring of meaning. Vocabulary and sentences were simple and there was not much variety. Paragraphing was rather haphazard (indeterminate length, not always sequenced, unnecessarily short or long, etc). The weight of error and awkwardness of style was such as to detract from the content.

The following are specific areas requiring attention:

- There were too many candidates whose essays were written as if they were chatting to a friend: they should be reminded to write in a register appropriate to the question they have chosen to answer.
- Tone marks need to be clear and accurate.
- The word-length on the cover is intended as guidance and Examiners do not count words, but candidates should be reminded that essays of half-a-side in length cannot attract high marks.
- Use of adjectives and adverbs.