London Examinations
GCE Ordinary Level

Mark Scheme and Examiners' Report for Sinhala 7641

May/June 2000

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Mark Scheme and Chief Examiner's Report
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SINHALA 7641, MARK SCHEME

Question 1 – Translation from Sinhala into English

This part of the paper is marked out of thirty.

- 25 negative marks, subject to usual deductions for errors and omissions
- 1 mark off for serious error or omission
- ½ mark off for minor error or omission
- up to 2 marks off for a phrase or part of a sentence which distorts the meaning of the message in the sentence
- up to 4 marks for spelling
- 5 positive marks for elegance/fluidity of expression

Question 2 – Translation from English into Sinhala

This part of the paper is marked out of thirty.

Marks should be distributed in the following way:

- correct decoding   7
- correct encoding   8
- linguistic accuracy   8
- cohesion/fluidity   7

Question 3 – Sentences testing grammatical knowledge

This part of the paper is marked out of fifteen.

Deduct ½ mark for each minor error.

Question 4 – Short Essay

This part of the paper is marked out of twenty-five.

Marks should be distributed in the following way:

- relevant content   10
- quality of language   10
- accuracy of spelling   5

SINHALA 7641, CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

General Comments

The majority of candidates performed well in all parts of the paper and overall marks showed an improvement over last year. In the case of weaker candidates, the factors responsible for lower scores were inadequate linguistic competence and deficient lexical skills. Spelling too proved to be a problem. In a few cases (scoring below 20%), linguistic competence was so low that what was written was almost unintelligible.

Question 1

The passage for translation into English was generally well attempted. The extract given was from a biography of Marconi. Correct decoding* posed no problems for the majority of candidates; but in encoding*, finding the appropriate English equivalent for a few terms like 'signal', 'wave', 'radio' and 'electronic', proved difficult for some. This inadequacy of lexical skill and insufficient command of English were the reasons for lower scores. Perhaps the narrative nature of the passage helped to produce some good answers. However, the fact that the achievements of several scientists were mentioned in the passage caused some confusion.

Question 2

The passage given for translation into Sinhala was an extract from an essay on conservation of water. Here too, the overall performance of candidates was generally very good. Except in a few cases, proper decoding of the passage did not seem to present any problems. However in the encoding, a few words such as 'climate', 'weather', 'desert' and 'parched', were not correctly translated. In the case of candidates who scored low marks, this was mainly due to inadequate linguistic competence. Violation of basic rules of grammar and incorrect spelling were in evidence. Even when the meaning was acceptable, the language appeared rather contrived; and lack of cohesion was observed. High scores went to those candidates who possessed a good command of the written idiom.

Question 3

This was clearly the part of the paper which candidates found most difficult. The exercise was to translate into Sinhala some sentences involving rather complex grammatical structures and with a particular emphasis. The marks obtained rarely exceeded 10 out of 15, the main reason being the candidates' inability to grasp the complexity involved and to convey this correctly in translation. Very often the emphasis in meaning of the original sentence was lost in the translation. Another common mistake was to break the sentence into two in the translation. Some candidates were not aware of the Sinhala equivalents of some words such as 'novels', 'career' and 'amendment'.

Question 4

This part of the paper, the essay, generally produced the best scores. Three possible topics were given, and out of them (a) A National Festival and (b) Life in the Year 2001, were equally popular. Most candidates had interesting ideas and those who had the linguistic ability to express them scored very well. In the case of candidates who

obtained low marks, the factors responsible were inadequate command of the language and weak lexical skill. Excessive length, irrelevance of ideas and poor presentation were also in evidence in some responses. Spelling too was a weak area. However, the topics given provided opportunities for self-expression and good candidates scored high marks.

* decoding: understanding the meaning of the passage
  encoding: finding the precisely equivalent expression in the other language

SINHALA 7641, GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	70	55	40	35	30

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.