

Examiners' Report

GCE O Level Sinhala (7641)

June 2006

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Sinhala 7641 - CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

General Comments

It was rewarding to read a large number of exam papers in which candidates had demonstrated an excellent command of both English and Sinhala. The majority of candidates performed well in Questions One and Two, effectively communicating the main points with a sound grasp of lexis and syntax. However, when it came to idioms, a noticeable number of candidates had resorted to literal translations of these expressions. Also noticeable were common errors such as subject verb agreement, use of the definite and indefinite articles and spelling. Less able candidates often seemed to struggle for lack of a range of vocabulary.

Question One

Translation – Sinhala to English

Candidates showed evidence of enjoyment in translating this passage, which was about the creator of the national anthem of Sri Lanka. Even though a large number of candidates seemed to have struggled with the last two paragraphs, they managed to convey the gist of the passage.

The first paragraph

The following words proved to be challenging to some candidates:

- 'creator' of the national anthem / 'writer' was also accepted
- 'artist' / 'painter'
- 'screenplay writer' / 'film write'r was also accepted
- 'maestro' / also accepted were 'sir', 'honourable' Samarakoon
- 'clerk' / 'peon' / 'secretary' – 'postman' was not accepted

A few candidates had even translated the name of the national anthem 'Sri Lanka Matha' into English which was unnecessary as it is a proper noun.

The second, third and fourth paragraphs were translated with confidence by the majority of candidates, while the last two proved to be challenging, in both lexis and syntax. A number of candidates confused the tenses, especially in the fourth paragraph which contained direct speech. A significant number of candidates were not secure about the difference in English between 'say' and 'tell' and 'listen' and 'hear.'

Question Two

Translation – English to Sinhala

The passage about a toddy tapper proved to be fairly accessible to students in terms of grammar and vocabulary. The definition of 'toddy tapper' was given as 'someone who picks coconuts', taking into consideration candidates who might not be familiar with toddy tapping. However, a sizeable number of candidates displayed knowledge of the term while others used the given definition. Both terms were

accepted and candidates were not penalised. Some candidates were not confident in using inverted commas for direct speech.

The following words proved to be challenging to some candidates:

- leather tool belt
- estate
- thunderstorm
- local coconut farm

Question Three

Translation – five sentences – English into Sinhala

This question proved to be the most challenging to candidates as it has been in other sessions. It is essential that candidates are able to identify and transmit specific grammar points. However, lexically, the sentences were not as ‘demanding’ as in the previous session. The most challenging sentence in terms of syntax and lexis proved to be sentence (e) with candidates having difficulty with the passive voice as well as appropriate terms in Sinhala for ‘neighbour’ and ‘security check’. Occasional use of colloquial vocabulary was evident as well as careless omission of pronouns, incorrect subject verb agreement and spelling.

Suggested activity: Do vocabulary lists of selected topics from the candidate’s surrounding. Some suggestions are garden, shopping, school, place of worship and celebrations.

Question Four

*Write 200-250 words in Sinhala, on **one** of the following topics:*

- a) *If I win a lottery...*
- b) *Start your essay with ‘She could not believe what she had just heard...’*
- c) *Do computers save our time or waste our time?*
- d) *Write a letter to your grandmother who lives overseas about your O level results.*

It was felt that the general standard of the essays had improved over the last couple of sessions.

Essay topics (a), (c) and (d) were the most popular while a few candidates had written on topic (b). The majority of candidates responded with somewhat predictable pieces of writing, especially in the letter, and ‘If I win a lottery,’ while more able candidates had produced excellent work, which were imaginative and engaging. It is important to remember that while producing accurately written work with a wide range of vocabulary, idiom and structure, it is also important to be imaginative and grab the attention of the reader.

This section also proved to be the most difficult for the weaker students, who had not attempted to write more than a few lines.

GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	80	66	52	48	43

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