

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE O Level

GCE Swahili (7642)

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7642 Swahili Examiner's report

General

The examination paper was of average difficulty this year. As in previous years, passages requiring translation into English were well done compared to those which required to be translated into Swahili. Candidates found the latter difficult either through lack of proper vocabulary or an inadequate grasp of grammatical structures. Examples from Questions 1 and 2 are given below.

Questions 3, which tested elements of grammar, worked well in discriminating general as well specific knowledge of grammatical features. Areas of difficulty are shown below.

Question 4 required candidates to write an essay of about 250 words on one of four given topics. It must be emphasised that, as the examination is in Swahili, the essay itself must also be written *in Swahili*.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1 (a): Translation into English (25 marks)

The passage was a commentary on the domestic practice of parents sending children on small errands, and the advantages such practice had on the children's sense of responsibility. It contrasted this with child labour as a waged practice whose outcome could be harmful to the child and to her/his education and welfare.

Lack of vocabulary seems to be the main area of difficulty for some candidates. They were not familiar, for instance, with the usage of the following words and phrases:

Kuwatuma:	to send them (on errands)
Kutumika:	to be in service
Kuwatumikia:	to be in the service of
Utumishi:	service

This is a good example of Swahili derivatives from the stem of a single verb, in this case: -tuma, meaning to 'send'. The context in which the verb was used clearly shows the meaning to be 'to send on an errand' (as different, say, from 'to send a letter'). This nuance was missed by some candidates; some mistranslated as 'use' (from -tumia).

Ukaidi: 'unwillingness', 'reluctance', or even 'obstinacy'

Ukomeshe: from - koma: to put a stop (to something); - komesha is the causative, and

-komesha the passive

It is **recommended** that teachers should practice and revise in class the way a Swahili verb gives rise to extensions with different meanings. Another area for revision would be the identification and use of the passive which are present throughout the passage:

-wanapoitwa, 'when they are called'

- kutumwa, ,to be sent [on an errand];

- kuajiriwa, ,to be hired’;
- unaoendeshwa (na), ‘which is run by’

Question 2: Translation into Swahili

The process of translating into a target language tests all aspects of the candidates’ Swahili at one time. The passage gave ample scope for candidates to demonstrate both their grammatical skills as well as knowledge of vocabulary. The first part of the passage is about air pollution and the consequences of ‘global warming’, ideas which would be familiar to candidates. The second part of the passage links air travel to the first part and moves on to describe the writer’s experience of travelling between Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. The vocabulary here is lighter and personal rather than ‘serious’.

The following are some words and phrases which some candidates found difficult to translate.

Lakes: maziwa

Air: hewa (some translated this as ‘upepo’, wind)

Pollution: uharibifu

I like travelling by air: Napenda kusafiri kwa ndege. Some translated this as ‘Napenda kwenda kwa ndege’ (which might be colloquially correct, - as in the English, ‘I like going by air’).

Tourists: watalii

It is commendable that some students tried to get round the translation through the use of words and phrases which convey the meaning of the original, e.g.

Rising sea levels: maji kuongezeka baharini

Question 3: Translation of sentences into Swahili

The aim of the sentences is to test the grammatical elements of the language. It is recommended that teachers should get their students to be familiar with at least the following aspects of grammar. The letters (a) to (e) refer to the sentences in Question 3 of the examination paper.

(a) She is pleased with her new car; it has four doors.

Agreement with numbers: ‘four doors’, **milango minne**. The noun ‘car’, **gari**, can be followed by either ‘ina-’ or ‘lina-’ but it is important for agreements to be consistent.

(b) I hope that they will come to my office this afternoon.

The use of the plural in a verb: **watakuja**; possessive - **ofisini mwangu**; the alternative is ‘**kwenye ofisi yangu**’; demonstrative - **alasisi hii or jioni hii**.

(c) My mother always goes to the market on Friday mornings.

The habitual tense, with ‘**hu-**’ is tested here, thus: ‘**huenda**’. The use of the additional ‘**kila**’ is also acceptable but its omission is not wrong, as in: ‘**Mama yangu huenda sokoni (kila) Ijumaa**’. One or two students were not able to translate ‘Friday’. Teachers should revise in class the names of the days of the week.

(d) Why did they not sell their house after they moved?

The sentence tested an interrogative sentence in the past tense which also has a negative component. There is also agreement between 'house' and a possessive: 'their house', 'nyumba yao'. Some students could not translate the verb 'to move' which is a one-word verb in Swahili: 'kuhama'.

(e) If you do not think I should fly to Kampala, I won't.

Quite a few students found this conditional sentence difficult to translate. Although this construction has been repeated in recent examinations, the presence of three verbs in a sentence still poses problems, in this case: 'think', 'fly' and 'won't (fly)'. It is recommended that teachers should revise the conditional construction, especially in cases such as this where a subjunctive is required after the verb 'think': kama hufikiri (kwamba) niende.... Some students have used the literal 'niruke' for to 'fly'.

Question 4: Essay

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

- (a) The benefits of exercise.
- (b) Imagine that you are the captain of your team in a sports competition. Name the sport, and describe how you would motivate and prepare your team to win the next competition.
- (c) You heard a discussion on the radio on cooking. Someone said that all school children should be taught how to cook. Do you agree? Give your views for or against this idea, stating your reasons.
- (d) Write a letter to a friend describing the type of music that you like. Also mention your favourite singers and why you like them.

All topics were attempted. The best essays, as usual, were ones which were written according to a pre-determined structure and had interesting points to convey. In essay (c), for example, a good essay not only moved away from the stereotype of 'boys do not cook' to mentioning the practicalities of modern life.

A particular difficulty, which seems to be on the increase, is related to the division of words in Swahili. It is very important for students to realise that words in Swahili do not follow the division of English. 'I will not go' is not written as sita kwenda (with space in between them) but as one word: sitakwenda.

Statistics

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Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	66	56	47	42	37

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