

ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

The standard of the paper compared favourably to those of previous years. The comprehension passage was readable, interesting and of the type that the candidates can easily identify with because of the interest level. The same can be said for the essay topics. Indeed, none of the questions can be considered to be outside the scope and ability range of candidates at this level.

The general performance was comparable to those of previous years in terms of quality and output of the written materials. Candidates' performance was average though there were occasional outstanding scripts.

2. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' STRENGTHS

Use of Language

The good candidates demonstrated a good grasp of the structure and idiom of English. Their understanding of the rudiments of English such as grammar, tenses, spelling and punctuation was, to some extent, commendable. Sentences were well constructed and controlled. There was variety in sentence patterns. Some of the candidates wrote excellent idiomatic English with apt register.

Vocabulary and Use of Registers

The appropriate use of vocabulary in discussing a particular issue was obviously a mark of good writing. Some of the scripts demonstrated this quality especially in the essays. For instance, in the essay on how the computer has aided students in their study, registers that even some examiners were not familiar with were used by the candidates.

Development of Points and Length of Essays

There was improvement in the way points were developed. The good candidates marshalled points and developed them with illustrations drawn from experiences of school life and their own reading. There is evidence of transfer of knowledge from other subject areas. Unlike in previous years when candidates lost marks as a result of paucity of material, this year saw a great deal of improvement.

Rubrics

In most cases, rubrics were correctly interpreted. This was a positive development in contrast to what prevailed in previous years when candidates did not pay close attention to instructions, for example, omitting a subsection of a question or answering a part of a two-pronged question.

3. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' WEAKNESSES

Expression

A recurrent problem in candidates' essays was the use of sub-standard and unidiomatic English. Most of the candidates have not mastered the structure and idiom of the English Language. They wrote grammatically incorrect sentences and outright vernacular translations. Consequently, most candidates did not get beyond average mark in respect of expression.

Short Essays

Some of the candidates' essays fell short of the required length due to inability to develop points fully. Most times, candidates only gave topic sentence points without discussing them.

4. SUGGESTED REMEDIES

- (1) Library reading should form an essential aspect of language work in schools; there should be a coordinated and structured library reading programme in schools to help the candidates to develop their reading and writing skills.
- (2) Teachers need to step up the teaching of rudiments such as grammar, tense, punctuation, spelling and sentence structure.

5. DETAILED COMMENTS

Question 1

Write a letter to your friend telling him or her three ways in which the computer has made learning easier for students.

This question was to test candidates' ability to write informal letter type and to combine the features of this type with a discussion of ways in which the computer has made learning easier and faster for students. This is by far the most popular question of the three questions. It was quite exhaustively treated by most of the candidates who cited points such as, ability to do research with the computer, the use of internet facilities to broaden one's outlook of the world and situations, finding the meaning of words, etc.

However, some candidates failed to fully comprehend the import of the question and deviated into areas such as how the computer is easy to learn, how computer affects life generally in the world, etc. Most candidates failed to bring the formal features.

Question 2

Write an article for publication in a national newspaper discussing at least two reasons why students should cultivate the habit of reading.

This question was a test in expository writing in the article format. The question demanded that the candidate gives reasonable discussions of why reading habit should be cultivated by students. This was a straight forward essay requiring such points as how reading helps in language acquisition, vocabulary, expression, broadening the horizon of the reader, etc.

This question was not very popular, and those who attempted it did not give points that are worthwhile. Additionally, essays were short and did not give room to the candidates to come to grips with the issues.

Question 3

Describe one national event that took place recently and state at least two effects it had on the people in your area.

This was by far the most unpopular question. The description of an event should be deemed to be popular with candidates, but this was not the case. The question demanded a description of a national event such as sports, state burial, election, etc. The question was in two parts; a description of the event and the effects the event had on the people in the candidates' area.

It is necessary that teachers of English Language at this level generate sufficient interest in the description of events in candidates so as to equip them with the skills of description such as use of picturesque language, logical sequence of events, spatial organisation, chronological sequence of events, etc.

Question 4 - Comprehension

The comprehension passage was quite interesting. Most candidates performed creditably well, scoring very high marks. Only a few of the candidates performed poorly. It could be observed that those who performed poorly did not fully comprehend the passage. There were some candidates who reproduced portions of the passage for answers without attempting to adapt them to the questions.

Some of the questions were relatively easy to handle by most candidates but the 'attitude' and 'mood' questions were a bit unfamiliar, especially the latter, which only a handful of candidates did correctly.

Another area of difficulty was the vocabulary replacement bit. Candidates could not find suitable replacements for given vocabulary. Some candidates provided multiple answers in this section and some too, gave words and phrases that could not fit their respective contexts grammatically.

