

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2

### 1. GENERAL COMMENTS

The standard of the paper compared favourably with that of previous years. The overall performance of candidates is low and in some cases very poor.

### 2. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' STRENGTHS

(1) Use of language:

The good candidates displayed some degree of proficiency in the use of idiomatic English. Their grasp of rudiments such as grammar, tense and punctuation was commendable. Sentence structure and sentence construction were well managed. Sentences were well constructed and straight to the point and revealed variety of patterns. Candidates could write fluid idiomatic English with apt register which was quite refreshing to read.

(2) Vocabulary and use of register:

The good candidates demonstrated mastery in this area. This was quite evident in the essay-writing which demanded some amount of technical language, especially the article-writing task on 'The usefulness of the mobile phone'. In addition, candidates also showed knowledge of formal and informal uses of language in the letter-writing and the story-writing tasks.

(3) Handling of subject matter:

There was mature handling of subject matter in most of the essays. Candidates advanced cogent points and well-argued presentations. In the letter-writing and article-writing tasks, points were exhaustively discussed with good development of ideas drawn from the candidates' experience of life and their readings. There was evidence of transfer of knowledge from other subject areas. Unlike in previous years when candidates scored less marks for Content on account of the paucity of ideas and lack of development of points, this year's performance has revealed a great deal of improvement in this area.

### 3. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' WEAKNESSES

Candidates' knowledge of basic grammar, tense and sentence construction was poor. In some cases you could not tell whether you were reading English or some other language. Those candidates who managed to present something readable to some extent had their

work marred with grammatical, tense and expressional errors. E.g. “He would went”, “He didn’t goes”, etc.

Some of the candidates resorted to all manner of sub-standard usage of the English Language and, even, sometimes outright vernacular (Twi) translation.

There were blatant errors of punctuation such as misuse of capital letters. There were also run-on sentences. One could see many one-sentence paragraphs of so many lines.

#### 4. SUGGESTED REMEDIES

Students should be assisted to cultivate the habit of reading good story books: not only for pleasure but also to identify and make use of literary devices used in the stories. Also there should be an organized and structured system of writing exercises aimed at equipping students with good writing skills.

Students should be encouraged to do supplementary reading both in and out of the classroom environment. Materials such as novels, library books, newspapers, comics, etc. could be of help. Nothing short of this can produce the proficiency in the use of idiomatic standard English that we expect from candidates at this level.

Candidates should also be made to partake in quizzes, debates and ‘spelling bees’ to sharpen their linguistic capabilities.

#### 5. DETAILED COMMENTS

##### **Question 1**

**You have been installed a chief in your hometown. Write a letter to your friend in another school telling him, at least, two things you intend doing to develop the town.**

This was a test in informal letter-writing. The candidates were required to write a letter to a friend. In this letter, he should spell out two distinct things he would do to improve his town as the chief. This question demanded that the candidate know the formal features of the informal letter. He is also required to organize these stylistic features with the topic in such a way as to bring out what he/she considers to be developmental needs of a community.

This was, by far, the most popular question. Most of the candidates who attempted it did quite well bringing out developmental projects and issues such as good roads, toilet and sanitary facilities, schools, hospitals, etc. Formal features were well handled and the good candidates did well to create the tone of informality and conviviality in interesting opening pleasantries and choice of expression.

A few candidates deviated totally by misunderstanding the topic to mean a chief being installed in their community. This is quite unfortunate because the rubric was clear enough.

## **Question 2**

**Write an article for publication in one of the national newspapers on the topic: The usefulness of the mobile phone.**

This was a test in article-writing. The candidate was required to write an article for publication in a national daily on the topic, "The usefulness of the mobile phone". The candidate is expected to state at least two useful things the mobile phone does and discuss them adequately. There is no room here at all for exposing the negative aspects of the mobile phone.

The good candidates did quite well with the subject matter displaying knowledge of and usefulness of technology. They cited such positive aspects as: ease of communication, enhancement of business, ability to do research on the internet, ability to look up information, ability to look up the meaning of words, etc. some people veered into the disadvantages of the mobile phone contrary to the rubric.

## **Question 3**

**Write a story which ends with the expression: *So it pays to be kind to strangers.***

This was a story-writing test. Candidates were required to write a story that ends with the expression 'so it pays to be kind to strangers'.

Only a few candidates attempted this question and the over-all performance was not very encouraging because the quote could not be fully illustrated by the narratives. Many of the candidates only wrote some story and tagged on the expression. The expression required that candidates show how being kind to strangers can end up being beneficial in the long run. These elements are the ingredients of a story: a beginning/introduction, a climax and a resolution/conclusion. Many of the narratives lacked these basic ingredients.

## **Question 4 - Comprehension**

Generally, the performance in this section of the paper fell below expectation with many candidates scoring well below pass mark.

It was observed that candidates did not take the trouble to understand the passage well enough before supplying answers to the questions. In many cases, candidates copied blindly from the passage. Even where candidates chanced to locate the right context of an answer, no effort was made to reshape or adapt the copied part to answer the given

question. For instance, Question 4(a), ‘*State why the writer went to the coast*’. Candidates’ answer: “*My desire to win gold and also to see the sea drove*”. This is most unfortunate. It cannot be understood whether, by this kind of answer, the candidates really understood the passage and the specific question.

Most of the candidates are in dire need of developing essential stock of vocabulary to be able to understand what they read and be able, also, to do the vocabulary-replacement task. Vocabulary replacement according to context also posed a great challenge to candidates. This was an exercise to test candidates’ word-power and contextual meaning of words. These are skills that teachers must emphasize in the teaching of comprehension.

Candidates’ knowledge of grammatical categories such as adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, etc. is poor. Thus candidates cannot distinguish adjectives from nouns, e.g. ‘kind’ versus ‘kindness’, ‘compassion’ versus ‘compassionate’, etc.

Common literary devices such as ‘repetition’, ‘metaphor’, ‘simile’, ‘alliteration’, etc. should be clearly differentiated in the teaching of the set texts. Students should also read the set texts.

#### **Question 5 - Literature**

The performance in this section was not encouraging. Most candidates did not seem to have read the texts themselves. Their answers revealed that some of them might not have even had the set texts or else there were no teachers to teach this aspect of the syllabus.

The questions were simple enough

Teachers should endeavour to make the texts as interesting as possible for the students. Some effort should also be made to uncover literary devices used in the text to enhance the students’ interest in the texts.