

FOREIGN LANGUAGE MALAY

Paper 0546/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

It is encouraging to note that the number of candidates has increased for the 2009 session. There is usually a good performance for this paper, and as usual most scored almost full marks for **Section One**. For **Section Two** and **Three**, however, which demanded written answers to comprehension pieces as well as short writing exercises, many lost marks because they did not fully understand the texts. Marks also appear to have been lost due to carelessness and failure to read the questions properly. It appears that some candidates felt under time pressure and tended to write in haste, without, in some cases, giving sufficient thought to the questions. Learning to make best use of time and effort is to some extent a necessary part of preparation for this test.

A problem that occurs year after year, especially when dealing with comprehension questions, is that candidates tend to take chunks from a text, from the approximate section where they guess the answer to be. Answers were sometimes over-long, or randomly taken from mid-sentence, and did not carry sufficient meaning in terms of an answer to the question asked.

It is worth reproducing here a reminder from the previous year's Examiner Report:

Candidates should be reminded that where comprehension questions require answers in written Malay, it is up to them to find the precise answer in the text and, where necessary, rephrase it in such a way that it answers the question. Candidates who expect the Examiner to locate the required answer within a chunk of text copied out from the passage will not score.

I am, however, happy to note that almost all candidates wrote in the Malay language as opposed to Indonesian Malay, and that about 99 percent attempted all sections of the paper.

The overall performance is quite impressive, and Centres and Candidates are to be congratulated on their efforts.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

The vast majority of candidates achieved full marks for this exercise. However, those who had at least one wrong, had problems with **Question 5**.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

Almost all scored full marks. The answers are clearly in the pictures.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

Again, most candidates scored full marks. Those who did not faltered on **Question 15**.

Exercise 4 Question 16

Candidates were required to write a postcard to a friend about where they spent their holiday, what they did and what gift was bought for the friend. Candidates were given three pictures to guide them.

While many scored full marks, some seem to have been careless over the content they included. One of the common mistakes was the inclusion of the fact that the first picture is of a place somewhere in a tropical country with coconut trees, rather than clearly stated places in the western world. The second picture shows some people fishing. One of the candidates did not know the word for fishing, while others mentioned a range of other activities. The third picture is a picture of a cap. A handful mentioned clothes, masks and other gifts. Some used the English word cap, which is of course unacceptable. Another common mistake was the use of a classifier for the cap. Some used 'helai', which is wrong.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-23

For all the questions on this section, the vast majority clearly had no problems understanding the text and coped extremely well with the questions. The handful who encountered difficulty clearly did not understand the text to begin with, and answered on the basis of guesswork. This was evident from the parts of sentences selected randomly to answer the questions.

Exercise 2 Question 24

Again, most candidates did very well in this section, describing the kind of celebration that they enjoy and who they enjoy it with. Many went on to describe in detail what they do. However, I noticed a tendency to repeat answers: for example, why they like the celebration, in a kind of conclusion at the end of the essay. I feel this is indeed a waste, as more marks could be gained by being more creative and giving more information about the kind of celebration that they enjoy. Candidates just needed to stretch their imagination a little bit further.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 25-29

This is a multiple-choice exercise and as such did not require candidates to produce answers in written Malay. The majority of candidates coped extremely well.

Exercise 2 Questions 30-35

There are two particular questions here on which some candidates faltered, and this may well be due to carelessness. Candidates should take care to read the text at least twice to make sure they understand it before attempting to answer the questions. For example for **Question 31**, some candidates wrote that because of the heavy rain, there was a leak in the tent. However, this did not happen on the night of their arrival, but only after they were moved on the second night. Another problem Question was **Question 36**. The right answer is that a complaint will be made to the Camping Association, and not the Manager of the Camp.

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Paper 0546/03

Speaking

General comments

This Speaking Test was common to all candidates, whether Core or Extended, and, as in 2008, a wide range of performance was heard by the Moderators. However, the majority of candidates displayed excellent levels of competence and their range of communication skills was extremely good. They had been appropriately prepared for the test and were familiar with its requirements.

Administration

Regrettably, the Moderators reported an increase in the number of clerical errors. The following administrative problems were encountered:

- Missing MS1 (computer-printed) Mark Sheets: the Moderator copy of the MS1 Mark Sheet must be included with the materials for moderation to allow Moderators to check that totals have been correctly transferred from the Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet.
- Transcription errors: some Centres recorded different marks on the MS1 Mark Sheets from those recorded on the Working Mark Sheet (Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet). It is essential that all clerical work is completed with care and Centres are reminded, in the interest of their candidates, that it is their responsibility to check that Total Marks are correctly transferred to the MS1 Mark Sheet.
- Errors in addition of marks: Centres are reminded that they must ensure that the addition of each candidate's marks is checked before transfer to the MS1 Mark Sheet.
- The name of the conducting Examiner should be included in the space allowed for this purpose on the Working Mark Sheet (Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet).
- Incorrect candidate numbers: it is crucial that names and numbers on all documentation are correct.
- Use of more than one Teacher/Examiner per Centre: where large Centres wish to use more than one Teacher/Examiner, permission to do so must be requested from CIE well before each Oral examination session. Where permission is granted, internal moderation procedures will need to be put in place in the Centre to ensure that candidates follow a single rank order. Such Centres will then submit a recorded sample of 6 candidates, across the range, in the usual way, but ensuring that the work of all Teacher/Examiners is covered.
- No access to recording by some Centres: this was due to the fact that the recording onto CD-R by Examiners had been based on an unfamiliar programme which was not compatible with any of the computer programmes used by Moderators. Centres are reminded to comply with the instructions on recording as some recordings had to be re-sent to CIE to be re-formatted with familiar programmes used by Moderators. This then affected the length of time spent on moderation. One Centre sent recordings on tape recorded at non-standard speed. Another sent two types of recording to represent different groups under different Examiners; one on tape and the other on CD. However, the CD was blank and, as a result, only the recording on tape was moderated. This obviously meant that internal moderation could not be fully conducted.
- Missing Working Mark Sheet: some Centres did not include their Working Mark Sheets, which should ideally be despatched with the cassettes.
- Missing examination details and labels on cassettes: some Centres did not put any details or labels on cassettes, making it very difficult for Moderators to make sense of the recordings. This is even more difficult in the case of Centres with large numbers of candidates.
- Inappropriate conduct of examinations: one Centre was found to have fed answers by whispering to a candidate during the Role play tasks, and the action was clearly recorded on tape. Centres are asked to be aware that such intervention constitutes malpractice.

Quality of recording

The vast majority of Centres had taken great care to ensure the audibility of their samples, but work from a very small number was inaudible in places. This was sometimes the result of poor positioning of microphone/tape recorder. Centres are reminded of the need to check all equipment prior to the test in the actual room in which the examination will take place. Examiners should also remember to announce the name and number of each candidate on the recording – the candidate him/herself should not do this. Once started, the recording of each candidate must be continuous, e.g. the tape must not be paused/stopped during an individual candidate's test.

Timings

Timings were usually good (15 minutes per candidate), but some Centres persist in not examining candidates for the correct amount of time. Some tests were very long and did not comply with the requirements of the examination. Please remember to ensure that all candidates receive similar treatment in terms of timing.

Preparation of candidates

Most Centres had prepared their candidates in an appropriate way and there was evidence of spontaneous, natural conversation in the two conversation sections. There were, however, a small number of Centres in which candidates were over-prepared. Centres are reminded that under no circumstances must candidates know in advance the questions they are to be asked in the examination. It is also important that the Examiner varies questions between candidates. If candidates are over-prepared, it becomes difficult for Moderators to hear evidence of the ability to cope with unexpected questions in a variety of tenses, and candidates are denied access to the top bands of the mark scheme. However, it is obvious that Examiners in a few Centres lacked preparation; the Examiners confused the Role play tasks with the Conversation sections and this unfortunately affected the marks awarded to candidates. It was pleasing, however, to note that in the large majority of Centres, Examiners did manage to engage their candidates in a lively, spontaneous and engaging way, following up leads wherever possible. Such Examiners used a variety of questions with different candidates and pitched the level of questioning according to the ability of the candidate being tested.

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well applied in Centres and marking was often close to the agreed standard.

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Paper 0546/04
Continuous Writing

Question 1

- (a) **Question 1a** required the candidate to write a letter to a leader who was bringing a group of visitors to the candidate's School. Candidates were required to write about their School, what they liked or disliked about the School and why. They were also required to write about the programme for the visit.

Most candidates handled this question very well, as they could certainly identify with a very familiar subject – their School. Most wrote about the facilities available in the School and many chose to write about their pet hate – canteen food. However, a handful of candidates did not quite understand the word '*jadual*' – programme or schedule of the visit and some did not write about it at all, while others totally missed the point. Most candidates treated this letter as a semi official letter where they could afford to be informal.

More candidates chose this rather than **Question 1b**

- (b) This question required candidates to know how to handle formal letters, producing a formal letter to an organisation which had advertised for candidates who were willing to work during the holidays.

While many wrote in a formal manner answering on all the points given, i.e. why you want to work, why you consider yourself suitable for the job, and asked three questions regarding the job, there was a handful who failed to do so.

One very important issue on this type of task is the use of correct pronouns. It is obvious that the letter is to be addressed to an official of the Tourism Board, therefore a certain degree of respect must be given to the person handling the application. The form of address should be *Tuan/puan* and after that he/she should be addressed as *anda* (the polite form of you) and not *awak* – a less polite form usually used among friends. Also, candidates must never use the pronoun *aku* (the less formal form of I) .

Question 2

This question required candidates to continue a story from an outlined situation. (You were walking back from School with a group of friends when you saw a teenager snatching a lady's handbag at a bus stop. What happened after that?)

The important phrase here is "What happened after that?" Some candidates, while writing in the most interesting manner and in beautiful language, chose to ignore that question but proceeded to write in great length and detail from the start; walking back from School, eating and chatting with friends, instead of continuing the story and answering the question. Candidates must remember that they are required to write only 130-140 words. These candidates who wrote in great detail had less opportunity to gain marks, because some of what they produced was not relevant to the question. Also, in some cases, by the time they had answered the question, they had exceeded the number of words required.

At the same time, there were many well-prepared candidates who exploited the task in a controlled but thorough manner, displaying imagination and creativity in their answers and producing very readable compositions.