

FIRST LANGUAGE THAI

Paper 0518/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Overall this year the performance of candidates was satisfying, with the majority demonstrating strong skills and competence throughout. It seems that candidates responded well to all the questions in clear, interesting and convincing styles.

Strong candidates wrote with flair and confidence, knowing how to select information and present it in their own words, using interesting structures and vocabulary. With understanding of the nature of the genres in each task, they knew what skills were needed in order to achieve them. Their answers were well thought out all the way through with clear organisation, signposting to guide the reader, and the relevant information needed. Their use of language was also successful – they wrote fluently and accurately in Thai, and as a result, their work read naturally, intelligently, and convincingly.

However, there were some cases where potential candidates did not understand the requirements well. Some wrote well and in a convincing manner, but inserted some of their own opinions for example in **Question 1**, or they wrote interesting questions but no answers in **Question 2** or they wrote well, with substantial and relevant information, but no emotional language to appeal to the reader in **Question 3**.

Weaker candidates encountered some problems. Not only were they unable to select relevant information and rephrase it in their own words, but they were also unable to organise their work in a sensible, effective manner. Hence their answers were difficult to read and understand.

Candidates should also be aware that colloquialisms and informal lexis need to be used in the right context: the tasks in this paper require a more formal style. Problems with spellings need to be considered, although this year candidates had fewer problems in this area.

Although it was good to see that the majority of candidates were able to answer all the questions, there were some who did not complete the paper due to pressure of time. Candidates need to be aware that all questions carry equal marks and they should plan their time accordingly.

It is pleasing to see that overall performance was good – an improvement on last year. On the whole, organisation skills proved to be effective. Candidates generally had no problems with selecting pieces of information and grouping them in the right order, whereas in the past, this was an issue. Also, the correct register, natural style, and spelling were much better than for last year's paper.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 1

Summarise two texts

In general, this year the majority of candidates did well. They knew what information to select, perhaps because the questions specifically indicated how to answer. Most of them wrote in their own words appropriately and effectively, interpreting information well and selecting information skilfully. However, weaker candidates, although they managed to locate information, either opted for only a 'topic sentence', with no evidence to support it, or gave only signposting of what they wanted to write, with no relevant supporting information from the texts. For example, some explanation was required as to why all seven ancient forests were important and where they were, or what activities the children at the conference did – not just the two Thai children's feelings and impressions.

Weaker candidates need to concentrate on selecting information without copying a whole chunk and on paraphrasing the text in their own words without inserting their own opinion.

Question 2

Write a script interviewing the two Thai children

This question proved to be a problem for quite a few of candidates, as they misunderstood the task required, writing only the questions, not the responses from the two Thai children. In some cases, the questions were very interesting, thoughtful, and relevant and the reader was able to anticipate what the answers would have been.

It is also worth mentioning that some candidates used very colloquial language, as if they were talking to their close friends. Register needs to be appropriate, and weaker candidates also need to concentrate on getting to the point and asking the right questions rather than allowing themselves to be diverted. As a result, interviews sometimes seemed rather thin, with opinions that were only marginally relevant.

However, stronger candidates were very competent and skillful – they knew how to write a very natural and persuasive script. Their work felt genuine, interesting and a pleasure to read.

Question 3

Write about a Thai scholar who is regarded as national treasure

Overall, candidates selected relevant information with supporting details. Strong candidates were precise and effective – their performance was excellent, with good use of emotional language. They wrote an interesting introduction without going off track, focused well on the point or points they wished to make and followed up with a strong conclusion.

However, there were quite a few cases where, although equipped with skills mentioned above, candidates did not write an introduction that led the reader to the text, hence the reader did not know why the texts were written. Again, the need to give signposting before giving supportive evidence was the issue that needed to be resolved.

Pronouns in addressing the Thai scholar also needed to be used carefully. Although this seems to be a minor point it can jeopardise the value of the work.

FIRST LANGUAGE THAI CONTINUOUS WRITING

Paper 0518/03
Continuous Writing

General comments

There was, as usual, a wide range of performance, with a pleasing number of candidates achieving very high marks. Candidates are familiar with the format of the paper and the types of choices available to them, and the overall standard continues to improve. There are a few candidates who struggle to communicate in the language, and there continue to be some candidates who have difficulties with grammar and punctuation, yet who still manage to express their ideas: all candidates show a good deal of creativity in their responses.

The paper offers a choice of nine diverse topics: these range from the imaginative or narrative, through to argumentative topics, where candidates have the opportunity to discuss an issue and argue a point of view. There is sufficient choice for all candidates to find a subject they are able to deal with and demonstrate their language skills.

Before they begin to write, candidates should read all the questions carefully and choose the style of composition they are most comfortable with. A few moments spent on planning the structure of their composition will make the eventual writing task simpler: for a narrative, the sequence of events can be established, together with a suitable ending; for a discursive composition, candidates will be able to marshal appropriate arguments and present a balanced view, or make their own case and offer an appropriate conclusion. Candidates need to consider carefully the length of their essays: those who write at considerable length often become more inaccurate the more they write, and their compositions are sometimes rather lacking in structure.

The most popular questions this year were **Question 8**, **Question 2** and **Question 6**. **Question 8** dealt with the problems of the global environment, and it was pleasing to see the amount of interest and concern this topic generated. **Question 2** was very accessible to all candidates, dealing with their own experiences, and **Question 6** asked candidates to present a justification for smoking. **Question 3** was the least popular this year. Candidates seemed equally capable of dealing with each of the different types of topic.

Candidates who were able to communicate their ideas and opinions clearly, using language appropriate to the style of composition they had chosen and expressing themselves fluently and accurately, scored well on this paper. They were able to use a variety of structures and vocabulary in well-linked sentences and paragraphs.

The majority of candidates were able to express some ideas in suitable language for the style of composition they had chosen. Their writing showed some features of clarity and accuracy though this was at times variable and might show occasional imprecision, or lapses in spelling, grammar or punctuation.

The weakest candidates were not always able to communicate their ideas clearly, and sometimes inaccuracies in language obscured meaning. The language and vocabulary used tended to be simple and lacking in variety, sentences and paragraphs often lacked linkages, and spelling and punctuation were of variable standard.

Candidates need to pay particular attention to sentence construction, making sure that they do not try to include too much in one sentence, and that there is some sort of link from one sentence to another and from paragraph to paragraph. Accuracy could also be given further attention.

Candidates should be reminded that they must make every effort to ensure that their handwriting is legible: Examiners cannot award high marks if they are unable to read the work submitted.