

SWAHILI

Paper 3162/01

Paper 1

General comments

A significant change this year was the introduction of an exercise which tests the comprehension skills of the candidates, as well as their linguistic competence. Further comments on this question are given below but it may be noted here that some candidates performed well in this question, while others tended to rely rather heavily for their answers on the wording as given in the text.

As in previous years, candidates tended to perform well in the translation from Swahili into English, and slightly less well in the translation from English into Swahili. Writing and constructing sentences in Swahili continues to be more challenging for most candidates than rendering sentences in English.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1: Translation into English

This passage narrates the experience of a young mother, Roda, taking her young son, George, to spend the day with his grandmother. Her car is hit by another car while she is waiting at the traffic lights. Both mother and son are unhurt; they are saved by their seat belts (and also an airbag in the case of Roda).

Most candidates performed well in this question. The meaning of the passage was successfully conveyed and the only mistakes or omissions were with specific vocabulary.

The vocabulary that seemed to pose the most problems was that used in relation to parts of the car, specifically *puto* (*bofu*) *la mpira* (airbag) and *usukani* (steering wheel). Some candidates struggled to produce the correct meaning of *bibi* in this context, often translating it as 'wife', rather than 'grandmother'. Another word which candidates found difficult was *kushinda*, 'to spend the day'; they are more familiar with its other meaning of 'to win'.

Question 2: Translation into Swahili

The passage was on climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and the preparations for it. While some candidates coped well with the translation, others found it difficult. The main errors were grammatical, particularly in subject agreement between singular and plural, and also in verbal agreements. Examples of common errors included:

- *mwaka iliyopita/ miaka iliyopita*, rather than *mwaka uliopita/ mwaka jana*
- *warafiki* as the plural for 'friends', rather than *rafiki* or *marafiki*
- *matembezi mrefu/ndefu/refu*, rather than *matembezi marefu*
- *miezi mbili zilizopita* or *mwezi mbili iliyopita*, rather than *miezi miwili iliyopita*
- *msaada/usaidizi nyingi*, rather than *mwingi*
- *matatizo walizokabili*, rather than *waliyokabili*
- *Mlima Kilimanjaro ipo Afrika ya Mashariki* rather than *upo*
- *kuiangalia/tazama* and *kuipanda* rather than *kuuangalia* or *kuupanda*

Compared to the rest of the passage, the last paragraph proved to be the most challenging. Very few managed to convey the notion of '[being] proud of their achievement'. Some even struggled to convey the phrase 'East Africa' in Swahili; erroneous translations included *Afrika kushoto* (left Africa), *Afrika kusini* (South Africa), *Afrika kaskazini* (North Africa) and *Afrika magharibi* (West Africa). The terms 'brother-in-law' and 'equipment' were also found relatively to be tricky to translate.

Question 3: Comprehension

It was encouraging to note that most candidates showed they had understood the passage, which discussed the use of mobile phones on Lake Victoria. The questions were not only aimed at testing the ability to extract relevant information from the text, but also at getting candidates to convey information in a manner that demonstrated linguistic competence. There were also open-ended questions that encouraged candidates to express their own views.

A number of candidates found it difficult to answer the questions in their own words. Some wrote out the question and then wrote a single-word answer or lifted entire passages which may or may not have included the actual answer. It is strongly recommended that candidates are discouraged from this practice as it limits their chance to score marks. Centres are advised to instruct candidates in the skill of obtaining information from the passage, and then conveying that information in their own words. It is not expected that candidates produce synonyms for every phrase or word from the text they may want to use in their response, but they have to show that they can manipulate information from the text linguistically, especially syntactically.

Question 4: Essay

The topics this year were:

- (a) Describe the celebration of an event in the family.
- (b) 'You must have money in order to succeed in life and to be happy'. Discuss.
- (c) Write a letter to a newspaper suggesting ways of reducing pollution in the world.

On the whole, the question was answered well. The better essays not only had something interesting to convey, but conveyed it in language that was largely free of errors. As in previous years, the better essays were the ones which were well planned. Centres will need to keep emphasizing to candidates the importance of planning. In topic (a), for example, a good essay described the event itself but mentioned other aspects as well, e.g. the effects the event had on the family, or the fact that the event brought together people who had not met for years, etc.