

# SWAHILI

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Paper 3162/01

Paper 1

## General comments

The performance of the candidates was similar to last year. Translation from Swahili into English is usually found 'easier' than the other way round, and this year was no exception. Areas of difficulty appeared mainly in vocabulary and grammar. Examples and, where appropriate, recommendations, are given below in the comments on individual questions.

## Comments on individual questions

### Question 1(a): Translation Swahili to English

The passage is narrated in the first person. It describes the slightly unusual life style of the narrator's sister and her husband. They live on a boat which they sail along the East African coast and islands during holidays. Although the passage relates to the boat and life at sea, the vocabulary is neither exclusively, nor mainly maritime, but reflects that of ordinary life. The following words, phrases and grammatical constructions presented some difficulty to some candidates:

*ardhi*: the word means 'earth', and like its English equivalent, it can refer both to the ground (or firm terrain) as well as to the world as Earth. In this instance, the context makes it clear that the meaning of terra firma is meant.

*nanga*: anchor

*kulia*: for eating. The term refers to the dining room. Some candidates translated this as 'crying', possibly misreading the word as *kullia*

*vyoo*: toilets (in the plural, singular: *choo*), misunderstood as *vioo*, mirrors

*bandari*: harbour

*upepo ... uliyochafua*: the wind which made the sea rough; some candidates gave the basic meaning of 'dirty', *chafu-*, and accordingly mistranslated the phrase as 'the wind made the waters dirty'.

*Huwaalika marafiki*: they used to invite friends. The use of the *hu-* (habitual) tense needs to be noted and reinforced in class.

### Question 1(b): Translation Swahili into English

The topic of the passage is the built-up environment in East African cities. It poses two questions: whether the construction of buildings in cities has reached its limit, and, secondly, how such densely built environments affect human lives. The passage then goes on to discuss the findings of a report of environmentalists on this topic. This passage is slightly more difficult than the previous one in that some of the vocabulary is more challenging:

*wanamazingira*: environmentalists. This is a compound word made up of *wana*: 'of, belonging to, children of', and *mazingira*, 'environment, circumstances'. The combination gives us the meaning of 'environmentalists'. Such compound words are common in Swahili, and students are most likely to be familiar with them, e.g. *wanachama*, 'members of a party' (singular, *mwanachama*).

*ujenzi*: construction

*umezua*: (it) has given rise to

*mipaka*: limits, boundaries (singular: *mpaka*); one or two candidates mistook the word for a plural of *paka*, a cat.

*kunaathiri*: it influences

*shughuli*: business, transaction(s)

*usalama*: security. An interesting translation was 'peace'.

*mapendekezo*: recommendations (singular: *pendekezo*). One candidate linked this directly to *kupenda*, to like, love, and translated the word as 'likings'. Candidates are strongly advised to learn the different meanings that can be derived from a verb.

## Question 2: Translation English into Swahili

This passage and the essay in **Question 3** assess the candidates' competence of writing in Swahili. The passage tests the grammatical knowledge of the candidates and their range of vocabulary. The passage was on farming, an important activity in developing countries. Some of the words which were found challenging are given below:

farming: *ukulima*; some translated the word as *upandaji*, planting/growing.

development: *ukuzaji*, *maendeleo*. One or two candidates used the word *usawazaji*, equalising.

self-reliant: *kujitegemea*

products: in this context, a better translation is *mazao*.

Equipment: *vifaa* (better translated in the plural)

shortage (of water): *upungufu (wa maji)*

## Question 3: Essay

The topics this year were:

- (a) "Tourism brings many benefits to a country and must be encouraged". Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give your reasons.
- (b) If you had the opportunity of acting in a film or a television drama, what character would you choose? Why?
- (c) 'My favourite town'

Of these topics, the favourite seems to have been (c), with (a) as a close second. It is recommended that teachers should encourage students to make a plan for their essay, and to pay special attention to the requirements and scope of the question. For example, those who attempted the essay on tourism talked about its benefits, but some of the better candidates also referred to its disadvantages. Indeed, the word 'many' in the question left the door open also to mentioning some of the disadvantages that tourism might bring to a country. Some candidates linked tourism to Government policy; a good example was a referral to the policy on the conservation of animals. The same applies to topic (c): 'My favourite town'. Simply giving a list of what you like about a town or a city would not make a good essay. But discussing the merits of a place, and placing that discussion in context, makes the essay interesting. For example, a discussion of Mombasa would mention why it is a favourite city to a particular individual; but it might also mention its importance to the Kenyan nation as a whole (e.g. as a port) as this widens the scope of the essay, making it more interesting to read.