

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE Swahili (4SW0)

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Question 1

This part of the examination is designed to test grammatical elements of the language.

Question 1a:

The sentence 'The food that is usually brought is not suitable' was testing candidate's knowledge of the passive tense, the o-relative and the 'hu' habitual tense. Some candidates were only able to translate a portion of the sentence. Some candidates read 'brought' as 'bought' and some candidates seem to struggle with prefixes. There was a lot of 'chakula linaloletwa', 'chakula inayoletwa'. Chakula belongs to one of the simplest noun classes, Ki/Vi.

Question 1b:

This question was testing the usage of a question mark. Some candidates misread the sentence thus rendering it to be a statement rather than a question – as is a particular characteristic of the Swahili language. Very few candidates used the 'je' interrogative. Also, they seem to confuse the verbs 'Kuoga' – to have a wash (body) and 'Kuogelea' – swim. These two verbs are very specific in Swahili.

Question 1c:

This question was testing the reciprocal verbal structure – 'kupigiana'. Some candidates did not use the 'na' ending which then made the sentence lose its meaning and some actually translated this as 'kupigania' – to fight for. Also most candidates did not know Swahili term for 'Prefect'.

Question 1d:

Here candidates were tested on the demonstrative 'huu' and knowledge of simple vocabulary – 'the tem rose'. Very few candidates knew that equivalent of the rose, 'waridi'.

In some instances, candidates also seem to confuse the verb 'kukua' – to grow and 'kuwa' – to be.

Question 1e:

This question tested the conditional 'ki' and the use of future negative. Most candidates translated 'I won't' as an incomplete word, 'sita'.

It is highly recommended to centres to teach and help candidates master the Swahili noun classes and to pay particular attention to Swahili prefixes.

Question 2

This question tests transmission and Quality of Language. The process of translating into a target language encompasses all aspects of the language including grammar and general vocabulary. This question was based on a camping trip undertaken by three siblings.

There was a clear distinction between the performances of less and more able candidates with the less able making simple mistakes such as translating 'south' as 'kaskazini', 'mashariki' etc.

Candidates use non-Swahili words such as 'wavyele' for parents and 'mabarobaro' to mean friends? There is also usage of slang such as 'kuenda majuu' and Swahili written as spoken in some cultures, for instance instead of 'kufanya' there was 'kufanyanga'.

Also there was some non-standard Swahili usage present which again stems from weakness in the Swahili noun classes. For instance many candidates placed nouns belonging to the N-class in the Ji-Ma class, so instead of 'ndugu', they use 'mandugu'. Confusion in the Swahili noun classes is what leads to wrong constructions such as 'mandugu matatu', instead of 'ndugu watatu', 'dada wetu' instead of 'dada yetu' – dada belongs to the N class.

There is also a great need to look at the –enye construction and its difference with the o-relative. –Enye is a grammatical component that forms adjectival possessives, for instance, 'mtu mwenye kitabu', 'viatu vyenye rangi' but it is used as 'how'. Therefore there was a bit of 'venye tutafanya' instead of 'tutakavyofanya', the latter being the correct way of using 'how'.

Question 3

The passage was constructed around what happens in court. Candidates seem to do better when translating into English. Most of the mistakes were based on confusion around vocabulary. Some candidates confused terms for 'mahakama', 'mahakimu' and 'mawakili'. Similarly, the term 'chumba' – a room, was taken as 'nyumba' – a house and colours - black, white and red seem to have caused a lot of confusion.

As in question 2 this question tests transmission and Quality of Language. The process of translating into a target language encompasses all aspects of the language including grammar and general vocabulary. It is highly recommended that basic grammatical structures are stressed and revised before future examinations.

The fact that candidates seem to do better when translating into English rather than into Swahili can be counteracted through their familiarization with Swahili writings.

Question 4

This question required candidates to express themselves in Swahili as it tested Communication and Content and also the Quality of Language. Candidates were to write an essay of 200-250 words on four topics:

- a) Describe what you consider to be the best film you have ever seen
- b) Imagine you are riding a hot air balloon near your school; what would you see?
- c) Young people should have the right to vote at the age of sixteen instead of eighteen. Write your views with reasons.
- d) Write a letter inviting your ex-teacher to attend your graduation party. Mention what will be happening and give directions to the venue.

Of the above essay questions 4d attracted the most candidates. The responses were written confidently with a number of very important issues being raised. The majority of candidates showed a very good grasp of current affairs, especially when discussing political issues and they also showed great creative flair while imagining their graduation ceremonies, describing their schools from above and also describing the films they had watched.

There are however some points to consider for future improvements:

1. Swahili is an agglutinating language – candidates tend to separate grammatical structures thence impairing what they produce. For instance, they write
 - Wa - nao- kutegemea instead of 'wanaokutegemea'.
 - Wa – li –nishauri instead of 'walinishauri'.
2. Candidates need to read good Swahili works by authors such as Farouk Topan, Adam Shafi etc so that they become familiar with the language as it is written in standard form. There is also a need for candidates to use Standard Swahili dictionaries so they may differentiate slang from standard.
3. Using appropriate idiomatic expressions in their work. For instance those who use expressions such as 'asiyefunzwa na mama hufunzwa na dunia' – resulted in scoring higher marks. Swahili has a number of metaphors and sayings that embellish and show flair. These should be used in essays.
4. Although letter writing was done well by the majority of the candidates however, there were a number of responses that had no addresses or had placed the address of the receiver where the sender's should have been which then made them lose marks on structure. Also, some candidates had formal structured letters with informal language which were a contradiction. Lastly, letter writing should be distinguished from any other type of writing with addresses, date, heading, salutation, body and an appropriate

conclusion.

5. Essay structures need to be re-visited prior to exams. Some candidates do not have an Introduction, a Body and a Conclusion in their essays, nor do they use paragraphs to separate ideas. These are extremely important in essays.

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