

FIRST LANGUAGE KOREAN

Paper 0521/01
Reading

General comments

Overall performance in the examination was very good. Most candidates demonstrated their comprehension of the texts and tasks very well. Many candidates produced work of exceptionally high standard, showing their ability to identify, analyse and evaluate relevant information from the texts and demonstrating an excellent use of vocabulary and complex sentence structures with accuracy in punctuation and spelling. Many candidates also used a clear and appropriate style of language for their answers, and wrote in full and syntactically complex sentences.

There were two areas which can be improved upon:

- Firstly, some candidates failed to paraphrase or use their own words in their answers, though they identified the relevant information correctly. Candidates were asked to write answers in their own words, but many simply copied the text directly into their answers. This had a negative impact on marks available for language.
- Secondly, a few candidates presented their answers in sentences that were syntactically too simple, i.e. bullet points or a list of notes. This again resulted in lower marks for language. Candidates are reminded that their responses are assessed on quality of language as well as content.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Generally, all of the sub-questions were answered successfully. However, some candidates failed to provide evidence that they comprehended the specific details of the text and the questions, and addressed questions only partially. For example, question 1(g) asked candidates to explain the reason for Pongu's sigh mixed with cigarette smoke, and the allocation of mark for this question was three points. Some candidates gave a very brief answer such as 'because Pongu felt sorry for his friend Chilbok'. Answers such as this did not warrant three marks, as they were inadequate. There were plenty of other reasons for Pongu to sigh. For example, Pongu felt sad that his hometown disappeared due to the construction of a dam and was unrecognisable. He felt sad that many of his hometown people, including himself, had moved to cities but failed to succeed, and had to come back to their hometown where they faced fierce competition to survive, running small fish restaurants, and losing their bond ('정') with each other. Another example could be found in question 1(k). This question asked what 'a rootless tree' symbolised. Some candidates answered simply 'it represents people from Pangwulje' or 'People without a hometown'. Though they both are partially correct, they cannot be eligible for the two marks available for this question. The 'rootless tree' symbolised people from 'Pangwulje' who not only lost their hometown due to the construction of a dam but also their whole way of living, since farming was the only thing they knew how to do. Candidates should pay attention to the mark allocation for each question in order to answer relevantly and adequately.

Even though, overall performance was exceptionally good, many candidates showed weakness in Korean traditional idiomatic phrases, such as 1(e) and 1(h). 1(e) asked what the meaning of '오장이 회까닥 뒤집혔다' was, which literally means 'the five viscera turned inside out'. The answer is 'became extremely, unbearably angry'. Many answered 'became insane, out of their mind'. 1(h) asked the meaning of '곶감꼬치 빼먹듯 하다'. This phrase means 'use up one's savings (in the text, their compensation money) bit by bit. Many failed to answer correctly to this question.

Question 2

The majority of candidates successfully identified, linked and explored the common themes of the two texts and answered the question effectively. However, a few candidates did not use a good summary style with an orderly grouping and good linkage of ideas. **Question 2** required candidates to write on the social and environmental impacts of the construction of a dam. Some candidates listed all the effects of construction of a dam, without grouping them into social and environmental. Some candidates even presented their answers in bullet points or a list of notes, without any relevant linkage. In addition, as pointed out earlier, some candidates did not present their answers in their own words, failing to demonstrate sophisticated use of vocabulary and structures. Copying the texts word by word into their answers resulted in gaining fewer marks for language.

FIRST LANGUAGE KOREAN

Paper 0521/02

Writing

Section 1 – Discussion and Argument

In general, the quality of writing was very good this year and candidates could relate well to the topics presented in the paper. Many candidates used good examples to support their argument and made relevant points with good structure. Candidates are commended for the range and relevance of their ideas and the ability to select and use appropriate vocabulary.

- (a) To what extent should the freedom of individuals be guaranteed / secured by a country?

This proved to be the most challenging question as only few candidates chose it. However, the quality of writing was excellent – the essays explored the definition of freedom and duty to country and the reason why freedom is important.

- (b) What do you think about the use of machines which can take over our jobs in the future? Discuss if you support the idea or not.

This was the most popular question. In general, those who chose this question seemed to have clear ideas about the topic. Many candidates made relevant points but the highest marks have been credited to those essays which had a solid structure, cohesive progression and used appropriate vocabulary.

- (c) ‘The comments in articles/news on Internet websites play an important role in the forming of public opinion.’ What do you think of this statement?

This was the third most popular topic. Again, like in Question (b), many essays were developed with good supporting arguments relating to the opinions expressed by candidates.

- (d) People generally tend to like brand-name products (clothes, bags, etc.). What do you think about this?

This proved to be the second popular topic, as one very familiar to the age group the majority of the candidature belongs to.

Section 2 – Description and Narration

Overall the questions for description and narration proved to be familiar to the candidates and candidates had no problems writing about them. As in previous years, writing a story was the most popular topic.

- (a) Describe the town/city that you live in.

- (b) Describe what you will be like in 10 years’ time.

Both (a) and (b) were chosen by about a quarter of the candidature each. The descriptions were generally satisfactory. Some candidates lacked direction or sequence while trying to describe an atmosphere or an object or people.

- (c) Write a story based on an event or incident caused by big or small lies.

This was the least popular topic for this section. Even though the topic itself was not difficult, the general quality of essays on this topic was not very satisfactory – mostly on account of a lack of structure.

- (d) Write a story beginning with 'The next day was a public holiday so I went to bed very late after watching a film. Suddenly I was awakened by the loud ringing of my mobile phone. It was still dark outside.'

This was the most popular question in Section 2. Candidates offered mostly straightforward stories with satisfactory identification of features such as setting, atmosphere and events. However, the culmination point was often missed out and the conclusion was not always effective or fitting.